Global English: Past, Present and Future

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Abstract

English is unquestionably the universal lingua franca in every field. The justification that it is a consequence of the linguistic superiority of English is denied in this paper, which analyses the role of the UK and the US as perpetrators of the linguistic hegemony of English, and attempts to identify the sociopolitical factors that led to this state of affairs.

While acknowledging the benefits of the existence of a global lingua franca, its effects on other societies and languages are critically analysed. Therefore, both sides of the debate whether English is a tool for international communication or a killer language are presented. Correct language planning, especially in education, is highlighted as a requirement for efficient cohabitation for English and other languages.

Variation in English is presented as proof that even the global lingua franca is affected by language change. In addition, this paper makes an attempt to predict the linguistic and sociolinguistic future of global English, considering the role of human involvement as central, but adapted to a world where technology is highly present.

Keywords: English as a lingua franca, linguistic imperialism, Linguistic Human Rights, language planning, global English

Table of Contents

List of Figures

1. Introduction

Beginning since the British colonial times the English language has kept growing in importance due to the economic power of the United Kingdom and later the United States of America. A rise in the use of English has accompanied cultural globalisation, making English the *global lingua franca* it is today. Section 2 presents various factors that caused the widespread dominance of English in sectors such as culture, academia, the media and education among others.

Both former colonies and other countries have included English in their culture to some extent. In order to understand the impact of English on various societies, different models of world Englishes will be analyzed providing examples in section 3. Section 4 addresses the importance of being an English speaker in the current globalised world, listing benefits of knowing the language. Some authors, mainly Nelson, Phillipson and Skutnabb Kangas, consider the presence of English a threat for *linguistic diversity* and *Linguistic Human Rights* (LHR). The impact of the spread of English on other languages will be dealt with in section 5, focusing on education and language planning as tools for language preservation in section 6. By contrast, other authors such as Crystal, Lin and Mufwene see having a universal lingua franca as something beneficial for international communication and globalisation, as we will see in section 7.

Current trends in phonology, vocabulary and grammar in the different varieties of English presented in section 8 will be taken into account in order to predict the future of the English language from a linguistic point of view. In section 9 the uncertain sociolinguistic future of global English will be addressed.

2. How English Became Global

Before English obtained the global status it currently has there were other widely spoken languages too: Vikør (2008) states that Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, Slavic and French among others were used as *lingua francas* in different periods of time. It is unlikely that

the spread of these languages originated because of linguistic reasons. Crystal (2012, p. 156) defends the axiom that all languages are structurally equally complex, despite the lack of inflectional endings, the absence of grammatical gender and the non-use of honorifics of English, which have been cited to explain the language's expansion. The languages that have dominated the world in history are not easier, better-sounding, more practical or more complete languages than any other. Their dominance was related to the history of the territories where they were originally spoken. Crystal (1967, p.36) cites the aphorism made popular by the scholar Max Weinreich "A language is a dialect with an army and navy", which perfectly encapsulates the reason why those languages obtained such power. Additionally, it also explains these languages' downfall once their status as a global power decayed.

In addition to Crystal (2012), Nelson (2007) and Wright (2016) agree that some languages, e.g. English, Spanish and French, are dominant over others due to completely non-linguistic factors. Nelson (2007, pp.201-202) attributes the current dominance of European languages to the fact that European countries enjoyed a better land and wildlife for farming, which allowed faster growth and development. Societies became more complex once the basic need of feeding was solved, and thus, they started invading territories for further expansion. The linguistic and cultural globalisation we are going through are claimed to be consequences of those differences in the ecosystem.

The expansion of English over French began with the rise of the British Empire over France, which had been the last dominant global power until the 18th century. "As previously in the case of French, the dominance of English was often justified from a linguistic perspective and reasons found in the 'excellence' of its syntax and lexis for its adoption and spread" (Wright, 2016, p.159). However, Wright (2016, p.156) argues that the growing interest in the language correlated with military victory, vigorous colonial expansion and increased trade abroad, industrialisation and political reform in the 18th century. Moreover, she lists a number of other factors that created the perfect social context for the spread of English, which includes the already mentioned British colonialism and trade, but also science and technology, ideology and religion.

Wright (2016, pp.156-158) explains that during the colonial period, two different British organisation structures were adopted in the colonies: the first model of colonies

is the one established in North America and Australasia, where British colonists defeated the locals and settled in their territories. In this model native languages were assassinated together with the population that spoke them, and English replaced the local languages. On the other hand, the British did not exterminate complete populations in other regions, but used the inhabitants as slaves in plantations and mines. This system was common in Africa and Asia, where the survivors were forced to learn the language of the invader, English to be able to communicate with them. As a consequence of British colonialism, many languages and cultures were eliminated, and English began to spread all over the world.

Figure 1. Territories of the British Empire throughout its history. From "List of countries and territories where English is an official language", 2021, *Wikipedia*. Retrieved May, 27, 2021, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_and_territories_where_English_is_an_official_language.

According to Heaton 1963 (as cited in Wright, 2016: 158), the impact of Britain on trade in the 19th century caused English to become the lingua franca in the sector.. Economic power attracted people who traded with England or the United States to learn their language, at least to a minimum level of knowing fishing, industry and trade slang.

The swift technological advance of England is a consequence of the previously mentioned factors. Resources obtained exploiting the colonial territories, combined with the interest in science of the Enlightenment (which lasted from the seventeenth to the beginning to the nineteenth century), gave birth to the Industrial Revolution (1760 to 1840). English became a prerequisite for access to new technologies in the advanced countries from Europe and the rest of the world, and has since then been the language for science. The consequences of the British Empire taking the scientific lead can still be noticed nowadays, when the majority of publications of all academic fields, including language teaching and learning, are in English. This paper will examine the impact of English on education in Section 5.1.

Ideology and religion also played a key role in the spread of English. Many important philosophers of the time of the British Empire's expansion wrote in English: John Locke (1632–1704), David Hume (1711–1776), Adam Smith (1723–1790) and Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832), to name some examples. The European elite required English in order to access those philosophical texts. Not only that, English being the language for intellectual movements was a sign of status for the British Empire, and therefore, their language. Moreover, the British Empire became a role model for parliamentary democracies. The English language and Christianity spread together due to colonialism. Christian missionaries preached their religion in the colonies, annihilating the local religious beliefs of the conquered territories. In the eyes of the British people, the colonised territories were underdeveloped in every field, and religion was no exception. Hundreds of religions and cultures were wiped out and replaced by Christianity. The invaders justified their actions saying they were somehow spreading the gift of progress with the expansion of their customs and beliefs, which were considered superior to the rest. This arrogant ideal of colonialism, which has been regularly found in the texts of the British imperial period, is perfectly exemplified in this quotation:

> Ours is the language of the arts and sciences, of trade and commerce, of civilisation and religious liberty. It is the language of Protestantism – I had almost said, of piety. It is a storehouse of the varied knowledge which brings a nation within the pale of civilization and Christianity. (Read 1849, quoted in Bailey 1991: 116)

Crystal (2012) adds communications as another major reason for the global spread of English. English has since the birth of these sectors dominated the Internet, the popular music industry, the press and broadcasting with giants such as the BBC and *The New York Times*, and motion pictures with Hollywood. Citizens of most nations are exposed to the culture of English-speaking countries through the media, even involuntarily in some cases. People are constantly surrounded by music, movies, TV shows, and advertisements of products of American or British origin. Cultural and linguistic globalisation go hand in hand. Follows (2018) gathered data about the languages used in films released between 2003 and 2017, and came to the conclusion that 81,4% of them were in English.

For centuries, Britain was one of the biggest empires in the world, and dominated the market. Nonetheless, following the World Wars, the British Empire started to wane despite their victory in both wars. During the second half of the twentieth century, former British colonies obtained their independence, following the liberation of the most important one, India, the jewel in the crown of the British Empire, on 15 August 1947.

After decolonisation, many historians predicted that the English language would lose strength worldwide, and especially in the former colonial territories, as had previously occurred with other lingua francas of the world. Its global dominance was sustained by their role in science, economy and politics. Therefore, once World War II ended, and stronger world powers -mainly the United States and the Soviet Union- overcame the United Kingdom, there was a chance a new language would fulfill the role that English previously did. Crystal (2012), Nelson (2007) and Wright (2016) claim the rise of the United States in the fields of economy, politics, the military, culture and technology to be the reason why English remained the *universal lingua franca*. The fact that the new biggest power spoke the same language as the previous one prevented the waning of the language. Crystal (2012, p.154) includes the necessity of a code that allowed global communication in order to ensure peace after the World Wars as another reason for the permanence of English. The newly independent territories maintained the English language, as it was still a lingua franca that allowed forming international relationships with other countries. Even nowadays, the United States keeps dominating the aforementioned fields, and therefore, English continues to be the language with the

most overall speakers in the world, 360 million as their first language and 1.35 billion people in total, according to Lyons (2017).

Ethnologue (2021) includes data on the number of the most spoken languages and classifies their speakers taking into account if they speak their language(s) natively or not. Data regarding the four most spoken languages is presented in Figure 2.

Languages with the most native speakers

Languages with the most speakers

Native Speakers   Other Speakers
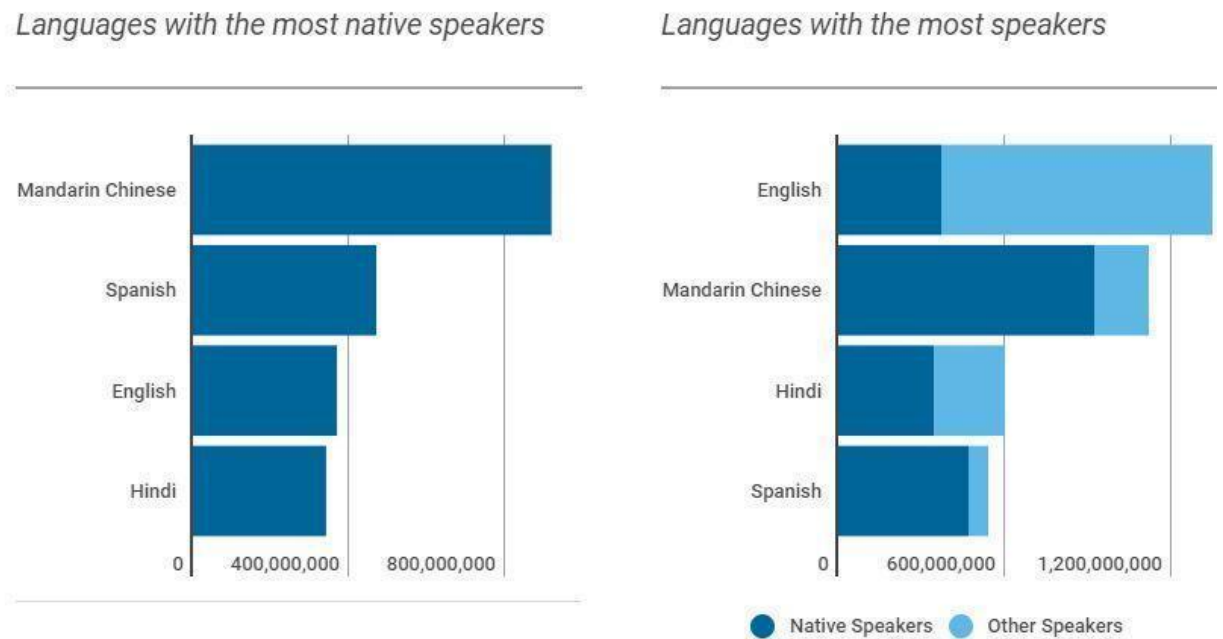
Figure 2. Languages with the most native and total speakers. From "What is the most spoken language?", 2021, *Ethnologue*. Retrieved May, 27, 2021, from
https://www.ethnologue.com/guides/most-spoken-languages#:~:text=If%20you%20count%20only%20native,first%20language%20(native)%20speakers. Copyright 2021 by SIL International.

Figure 2 shows that most of the speakers of English speak it as their L2, while Spanish and Chinese have more native speakers because the territories where they are natively spoken are more populated. Section 4 will critically analyze the reasons and the consequences of most of the speakers of English being non-native.

3. World Englishes

English is currently widely spoken in many countries around the world, as shown in Figure 3. This section chronologically presents six different classifications of *world Englishes* that have been proposed in the last forty years. McArthur (1998)

describes these models as *geopolitical* ones, opposed to the *chronological* and *biological models* from the nineteenth century.

Although the models include geographical information and linguistic origin of the varieties, they classify *world Englishes* taking into account variants such as status, regions where they are spoken and the proficiency of speakers. These models were created in a short span of time, but different authors considered different sociolinguistic aspects. The fact that as many as six models were created to describe the same situation is an indicator of the complexity of the task. They are included here to provide a more complete understanding of the current sociolinguistic state of the Anglophone world.
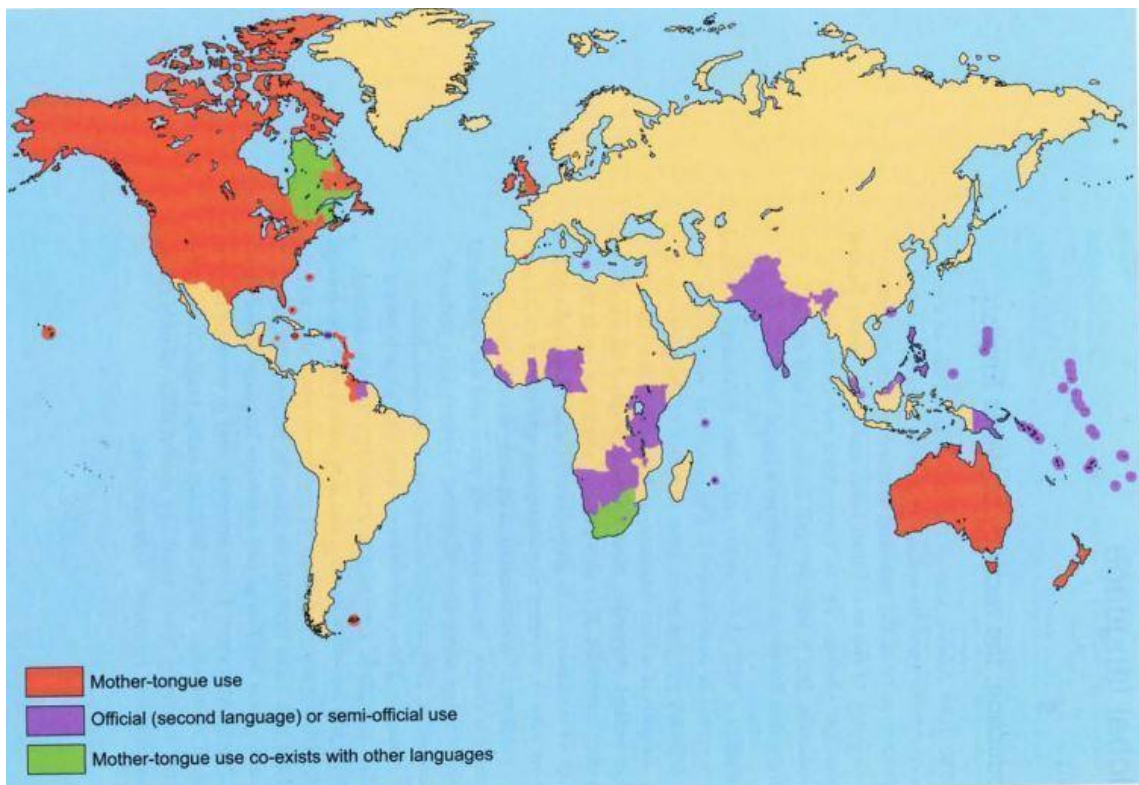
Figure 3. The use of English around the world. From "English in the world today", 2016, *The Open University*. Retrieved May, 27, 2021, from https://www.open.edu/openlearn/ocw/mod/oucontent/view.php?printable=1&id=5907. Copyright 2016 by The Open University.

3.1. Peter Strevens's World Map of English (1980)

Peter Strevens represents world English on "a map of the world on which is superimposed an inverted-tree diagram resembling the branching models of

Indo-European" (McArthur, 1998, p. 95). American and British English are considered the main two branches, and other varieties are divided into smaller groups in either of them. American English has daughters in the Caribbean and Asia, and British English in Africa, the Caribbean, Southern Asia and Australasia. Strevens's map of English is presented in Figure 4.
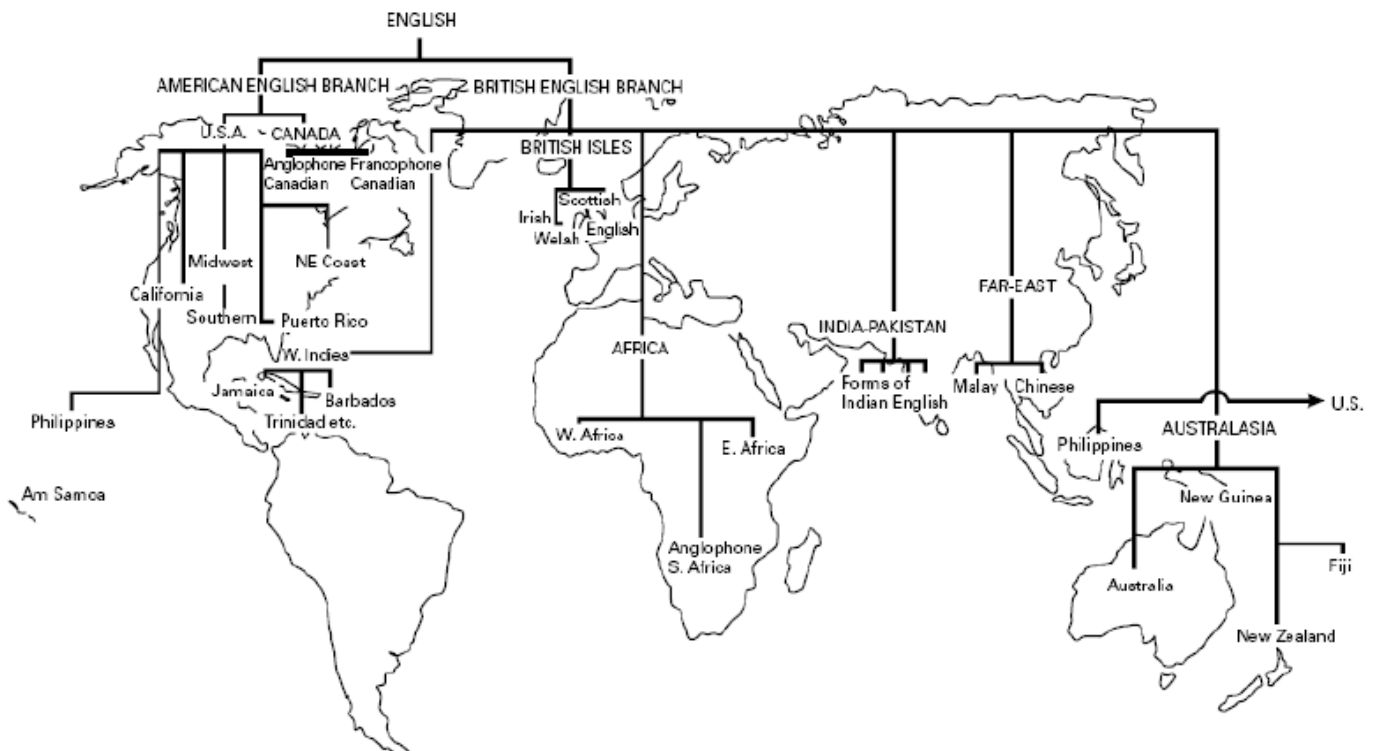
Figure 4. Peter Strevens's World Map of English. From "Models of English", by T. McArthur, 1998. *The English Languages*, p.94. Copyright 1998 by Cambridge University Press.

3.2. Tom McArthur's Circle of World English (1987)

As shown in Figure 5, McArthur's model of world English presents a wheel with a hub labelled *World Standard English.* Eight different regions of the world are presented using eight spokes, and another eight regional varieties surrounding the hub. A list of subvarieties completes each region of the world.
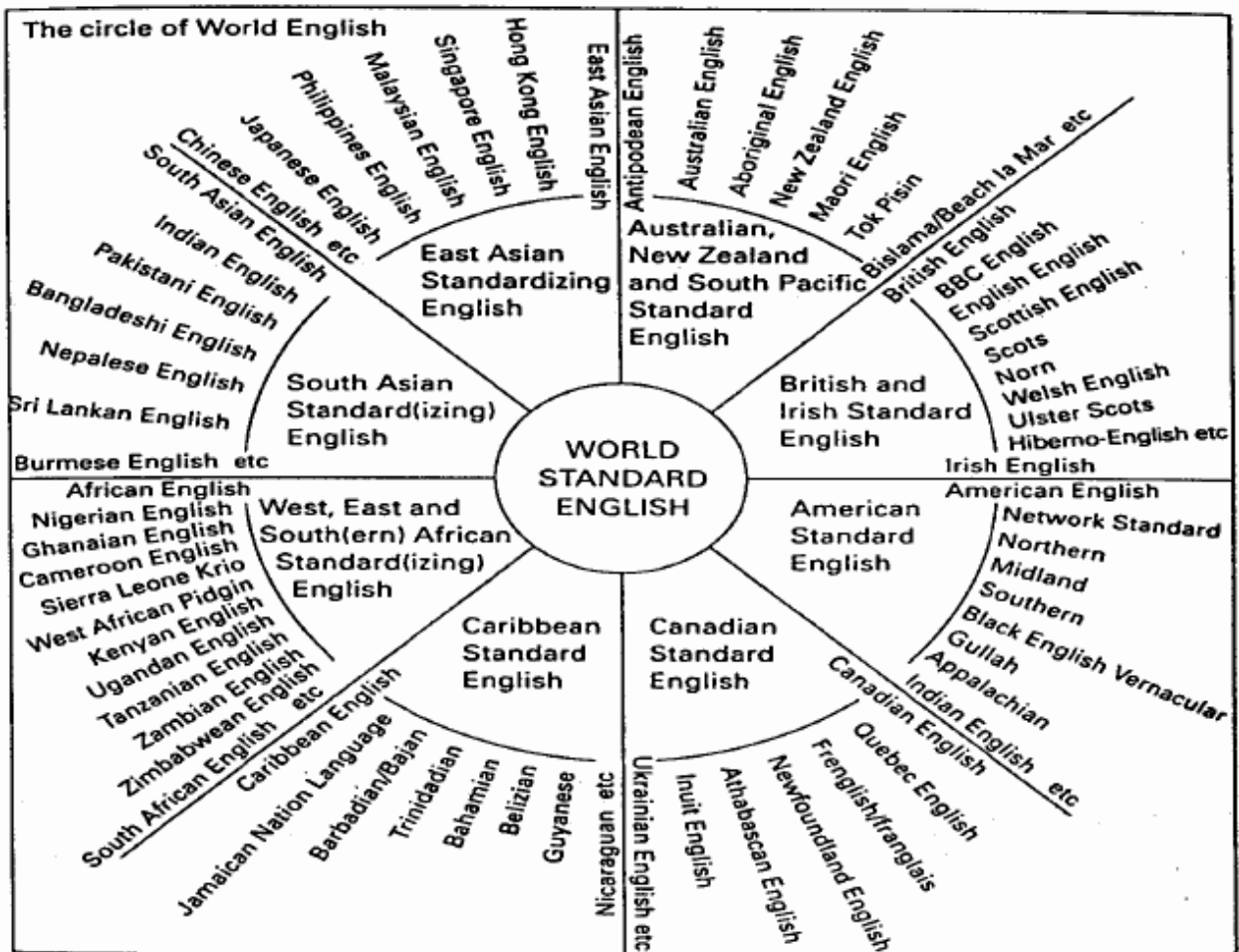
Figure 5. Tom McArthur's Circle of World English. From "Models of English", by T. McArthur, 1998. *The English Languages*, p.97. Copyright 1998 by Cambridge University Press.

3.3. Braj Kachru's Three Concentric Circles of English (1988)

The *Three-Circle Model of World Englishes* explained in Kachru (1988) and Kachru (1992) is the best known model to group different varieties of English around the world, and therefore the one this paper will use as a reference to classify varieties of English. These are included in one of the three circles depending on social factors such as whether English fulfills the role of L1 or L2 in the community, and what social spheres it is used in. Kachru's model from 1992 is shown in Figure 6, as it is the newest version. The difference between the figures presented in Kachru (1988) and Kachru (1992) is that the former presents the circles horizontally, while the latter presents them vertically.
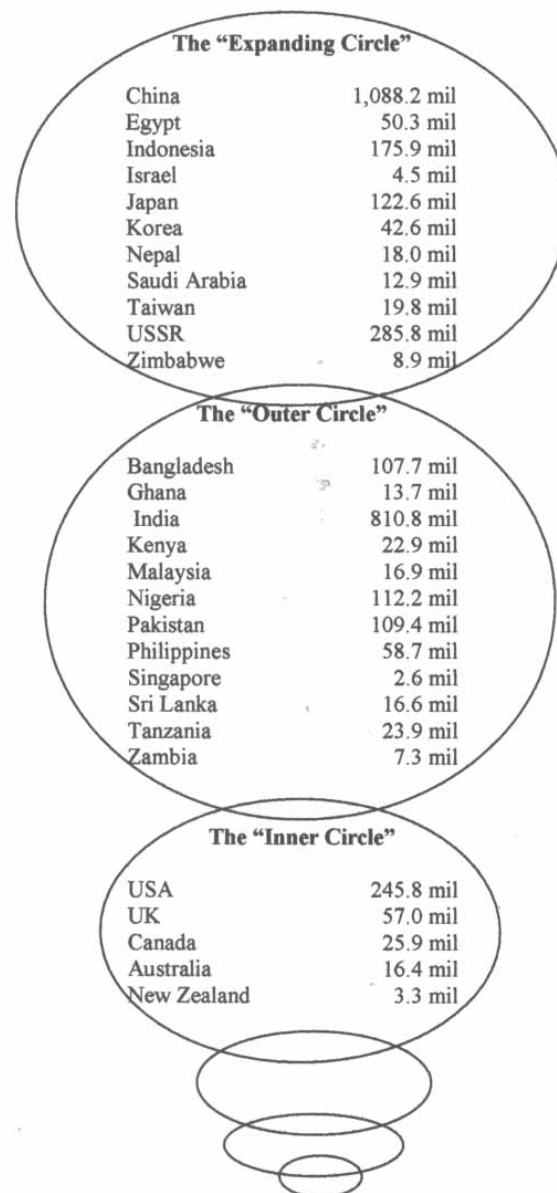
Figure 6. The Three-Circle Model of World Englishes. From "*The Other tongue: English Across Cultures*", by B. Kachru, 1992. p.356. Copyright 1982, 1992 by the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois.

The defining feature of countries that belong to the *Inner Circle* is that English is used as a native language (*ENL*). The Inner Circle is the one that includes the least countries, and these are mostly used as an example of "proper English". These Englishes are therefore called *norm providing*. The UK, Ireland, the USA, Australia, New Zealand and Canada are considered the only members of the Inner Circle, although there are more countries where English is the most spoken language that do not belong to the Inner Circle, such as Nigeria and Jamaica, to name a few.

The *Outer Circle* mostly consists of countries where English is spoken as a second language (*ESL*) as a consequence of either British or American colonisation. Most of the countries included in this circle are multilingual to some extent, but English is often used in education, the media, the administration and legislation. The English used in these countries is often heavily characterised by local vocabulary and non-standard grammar. These Englishes are therefore referred to as *norm developing* in Kachru (1992). Former American and Asian colonies such as India, Singapore, Costa Rica, Namibia and Kenya are considered examples of Outer Circle countries. World Englishes (2021) adds that "Countries where most people speak an English-based creole and retain standard English for official purposes, such as Jamaica and Papua New Guinea, are also in the Outer Circle."

The last circle is called the *Expanding Circle*. Its growing size is considered a consequence of the global impact of English and it refers to the countries where despite never being colonised by English-speaking countries, the language is taught as a *foreign language* (*EFL*) and is prestigious as a means for international relations. Relatively richer and more developed countries than those of the Outer Circle form the Expanding Circle: Japan, the Netherlands, Russia and China for instance. These countries teach English based on the one used by the members of the Inner Circle, so they are usually considered not to have their own variety of local English, and are therefore called *norm dependent*.

3.4. Manfred Görlach's Circle Model of English (1988-90)

Görlach's Circle Model of English consists of two parts. Just like McArthur's Circle of World English in Figure 7, Görlach's Circle Model of English displays eight world regions, enclosed by subregional semi-standards. McArthur (1998, p. 98) highlights that what makes Görlach's model unique is that it includes pidgins, creoles, "mixes" and "related languages", such as *Anglo-Norman, Krio, Saramaccan, Scots* and *Tok Pisin,* distinct yet related languages whose "Englishness" as such is rejected. These are represented in Figure 8, under the main circle shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7 (Circle Model diagram)

Anglo-Romani
Scots

Brit.
B1 E

Gujerati E

Yorkshire
dialect

Newfl.
Maritime
Ottawa Valley d.

New England d.
Native
Indian E

B1 E / BEV

Hawaiian
'Pidgin'

Irish E
Scottish E
English E Welsh E

Melbourne E

Aborig E

Pitcairn

N.T.Kriol
Tok Pisin
Sol. Pijin
Bislama

AusE
NZE
Papua
NG

PhilE
MalE
SgE

IndE
PakE
Lancan E

Tamil E
Bulter E

BrE

Ante-
podean
E

CanE

New Engl
Northern
Southern

International
English
IntE

UsE

CarE

S Asian
E-es

African E-es

Jam E
Guy E
Barbad E

WAf E   EAf E   SAf E

LibE
Ghan E
Nig E

Kenyan E
Tanz E

Zamb E
Natal E
Afrikaans E

Jam E/C
Cam E/C
Bajan
Bah E/C

Sranan
Djuka
Saramaccan

Krio, Cameroon PE

Figure 7. Manfred Görlach's Circle Model of English. From "Models of English", by T. McArthur, 1998. *The English Languages*, p.101. Copyright 1998 by Cambridge University Press.

Figure 8 (Circle Model diagram)

pidgins
(creoles)

dialects, ethnic E
(cre-
oles)

subregional

ENL

ESL

regional

nati-   onal

IntE

standards

semi-standards

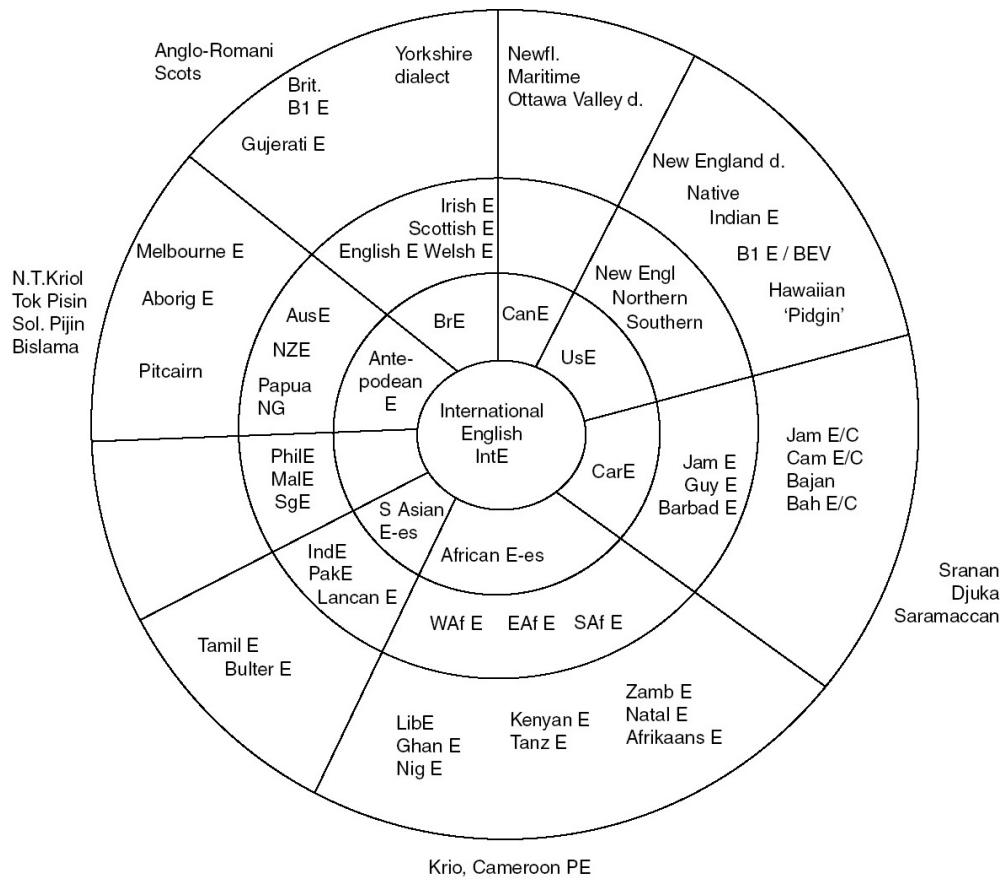semi-/non-standards

related
languages

mixes
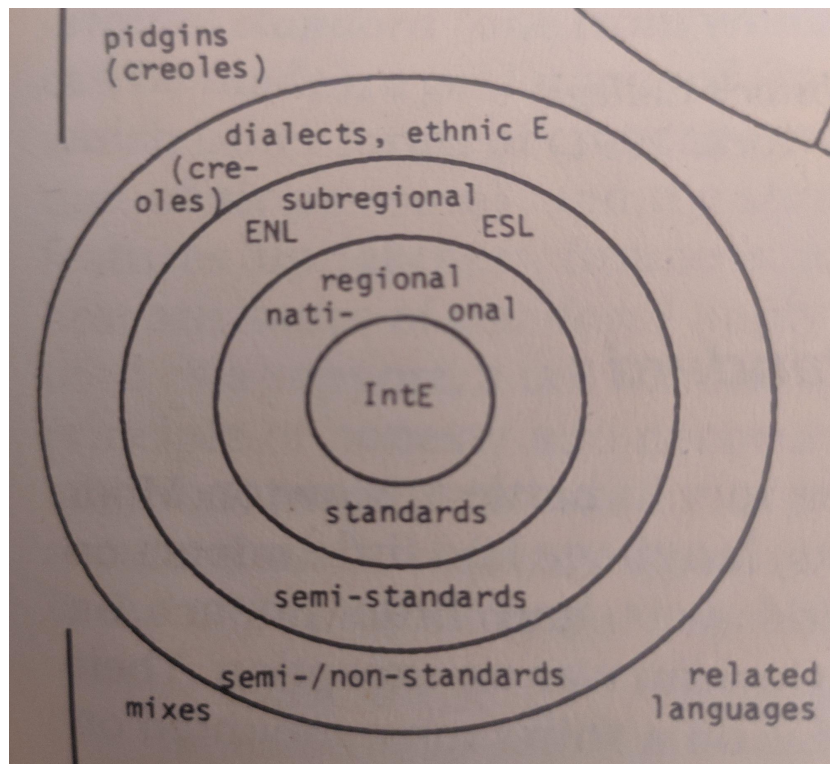
Figure 8. Manfred Görlach's Circle Model of English. From "Models of English", by T. McArthur, 1998. *The English Languages*, p.101. Copyright 1998 by Cambridge University Press.

3.5. Edgar W. Schneider's Dynamic Model of Postcolonial Englishes (2007)

This model incorporates sociolinguistic factors in the relation between indigenous people and colonial settlers to describe the process of language change in *postcolonial Englishes*. As seen in Figure 9, five phases of the evolution of world Englishes are presented taking into account the variables History and politics, Identity construction, Sociolinguistics of contact / use / attitudes and Linguistic developments / structural effects. Schneider's model defends that postcolonial Englishes go through these five stages. The most important idea for my paper is that although colonised people consider the settlers' English the norm at phase 2, they eventually develop a new variety with elements of the indigenous languages due to the strong language contact, as shown in phases 4 and 5.

The evolutionary cycle of New Englishes: parameters of the developmental phases

Phase	History and politics	Identity construction	Sociolinguistics of contact/use/attitudes	Linguistic developments/structural effects
1: Foundation	STL: colonial expansion: trade, military outposts, missionary activities, emigration/ settlement; IDG: occupation, loss/sharing of territory, trade	STL: part of original nation; IDG: indigenous	STL: cross-dialectal contact, limited exposure to local languages; IDG: minority bilingualism (acquisition of English)	STL: koinéization; toponymic borrowing; incipient pidginization (in trade colonies)
2: Exonormative stabilization	stable colonial status; English established as language of administration, law, (higher) education,...	STL: outpost of original nation, "British-plus-local"; IDG: individually "local-plus-British"	STL: acceptance of original norm; expanding contact; IDG: spreading (elite) bilingualism	lexical borrowing (esp. fauna and flora, cultural terms); "-isms"; pidginization/creolization (in trade/plantation colonies)
3: Nativization	weakening ties; often political independence but remaining cultural association	STL: permanent resident of British origin; IDG: permanent resident of indigenous origin	widespread and regular contacts, accommodation; IDG: common bilingualism, toward language shift, LI speakers of local English; STL: sociolinguistic cleavage between innovative speakers (adopting IDG forms) and conservative speakers (upholding external norm; "complaint tradition")	heavy lexical borrowing; IDG: phonological innovations ("accent," possibly due to transfer); structural nativization, spreading from IDG to STL: innovations at lexis-grammar interface (verb complementation, prepositional usage, constructions with certain words/word classes), lexical productivity (compounds, derivation, phrases, semantic shifts); code-mixing (as identity carrier)
4: Endonormative stabilization	post-independence, self-dependence (possibly after "Event X")	(member of) new nation, territory-based, increasingly pan-ethnic	acceptance of local norm (as identity carrier), positive attitude to it; (residual conservatism); literary creativity in new variety	stabilization of new variety, emphasis on homogeneity, codification: dictionary writing, grammatical description
5: Differentiation	stable young nation, internal sociopolitical differentiation	group-specific (as part of overarching new national identity)	network construction (increasingly dense group-internal interactions)	dialect birth: group-specific (ethnic, regional, social) varieties emerge (as LI or L2)

Figure 9. Schneider's Dynamic Model of Postcolonial Englishes. STL= Settlers speech community, IDG= Indigenous speech community. From "*Postcolonial English: Varieties around the world*", by Edgar W. Schneider, 2007, p.56. Copyright 2007 by Edgar W. Schneider.

3.6. Marko Modiano's Centripetal Circles of International English (1999)

Modiano was aware of the role of English as a lingua franca, and proposed his own classification accordingly. In his model, shown in Figure 10, Modiano presents a central circle labelled *Proficient in International English*, which includes speakers who are mutually comprehensible to other speakers of ELF. This means that they do not have strong regional accents and can communicate cross-culturally. Another circle surrounding the central one is named *Native and foreign language proficiency*. It collects speakers of English who can communicate with speakers of the same variety, but not with speakers of different varieties, unlike those from the central group. A third circle surrounding the previous two includes *Learners of English*, i.e. speakers who are learning English as a foreign language, but are not completely proficient yet. Outside these three centripetal circles there is yet another group labelled *People who do not speak English*, which is self-explanatory. Modiano's model could be interpreted as a metaphor, where speakers who can use English to communicate with the most people are in the centre, and those who cannot belong in one of the outer circles according to the degree of mutual intelligibility with other speakers of English. The most extreme case is not speaking English at all, which would leave them outside of many metaphorical circles.
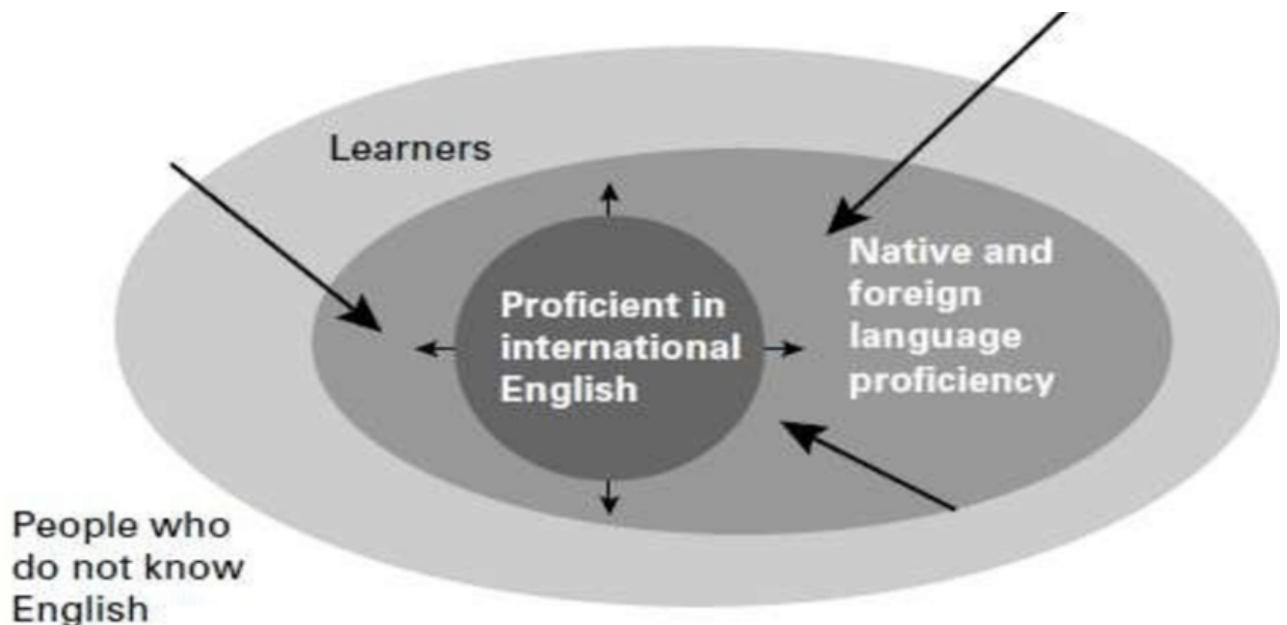

Figure 10. Modiano's Centripetal Circles of International English. From "International English in the Global Village*"*, by Marko Modiano, 1999, *English Today*, *15*(2), p25. Copyright 1999 by Cambridge University Press.

15

4. Learning English as an L1 or L2 in the Current Globalised World

The status of English as a Lingua Franca makes it an indispensable language for many. This results in differences between people who learn English natively and the rest, who often decide to learn it as an L2. Grin (2007) analyses the mutual impact of language planning and economy. The example of immigrants in the USA is given in his paper to prove how complex the matter of the impact of language on the economy is: workers who speak English as their L1 use language as a justification for the wage gap between locals and immigrants, something that could easily be regarded as language-based discrimination. However, it is well known that learning a second language improves the chances of employment, and therefore has a symbolic capital in current society. Grin (2007) also collects a widespread worry about the unfairness of one language being the universal lingua franca. The speakers of this language enjoy both social and economic privileges over those who are required to learn the language as an L2: having a native proficiency in the global language, enjoying a wider access to cultural and academic content, not having to go through the process of learning another language (which is costly in terms of time and money), their L1 giving them many more opportunities of all kinds, etc. Furthermore, Grin (2007) estimates that the UK and Ireland save up to tens of millions of euros a year on language teaching and translation.

Figure 11 divides the countries of the world into groups according to the use and the status of English. The Anglosphere, which consists of the countries that belong to the Inner Circle in Kachru's model, is represented using light green. Additionally, the rest of groups are formed by contrasting the status -official, co-official or unofficial- and use - whether it is a majority or minority language- of English.
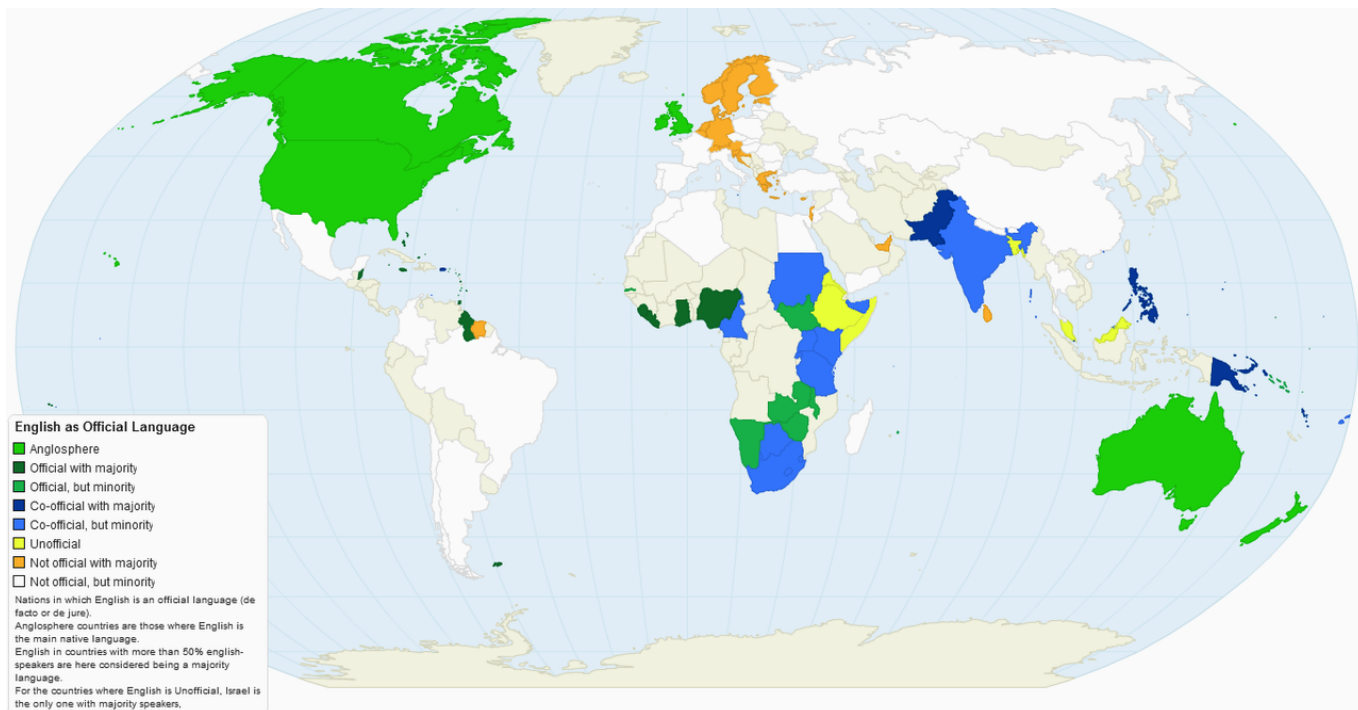
Figure 11. Nations in which English is an official language (de facto or de jure).
🟩 Anglosphere 🟩 Official as majority language 🟩 Official as minority language 🟦 Co-official as majority language 🟦 Co-official as minority language 🟨 Unofficial (but widely spoken as a second language) 🟧 Not official as majority language ⬜ Not official as minority language. From "List of countries and territories where English is an official language." 2021. Retrieved May, 27, 2021, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_and_territories_where_English_is_an_official_language.

In the current state of affairs, language planning is obliged to include English to some extent. Grin (2007) contrasts the data of foreign language learning in the European Union, and highlights that 85% of Europeans are expected to learn English (most as an L2), while second language learning in the United Kingdom is decreasing. Authors such as Skutnabb-Kangas (2017) have opted to support *Linguistic Human Rights*, and a new model of multilingual societies that the linguistic hegemony of English endangers. This model will be further considered in the following section.

5. Linguistic Imperialism: Ecolinguistics as a Response to English as a Killer Language.

The fact that so many people learn English means that other languages could be being left behind by their own speakers. In recent years, there has been an increasing

interest in *ecolinguistics* in response to the death of many indigenous languages, partly due to the advance of English. Ecolinguistics is a complex field that studies the connections between the physical, biological and cultural environment and the speakers of languages. Many authors (Nelson, 2016; Phillipson, 2009; Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2017; Dastgoshadeh & Jalilzadeh, 2011) have reported the urge for a solution to *language death*.

Languages die when they have no native speakers and are no longer being passed on to children (Nelson, 2016, p.200). It is important to distinguish between the concepts of *language death* and *language shift*. The former refers to situations where the last speakers of a certain community pass away, be it due to a natural disaster, a famine or a genocide, for example. *Language shift*, which is more common nowadays according to Nelson (2016, p.201), is said to occur when the whole community switches to speaking another language. In those cases the language dies because of the lack of language transmission. This is why supporters of ecolinguistics encourage *additive bilingualism* -when a bilingual maintains their first language and culture while they acquire a second one- over *subtractive bilingualism* -when a speaker learns a second language at the expense of their first language-. *Subtractive bilingualism* leads to the loss of often endangered L1s over time, which also entails the loss of cultural identity.

Dastgoshadeh & Jalilzadeh (2011) describes the correlation between language and identity. Although they acknowledge the advantages of knowing the international language, they emphasise the cultural loss the death of a language means for individuals and the loss of academic data it entails for ecolinguistics.

As will be discussed in the following section, many countries have opted to include English in their curricula, which is a completely legitimate decision given its global importance. Its value in the *linguistic marketplace* is higher than any other languages', and it is the language that people use as a lingua franca in most of the globe. According to ecolinguistic authors, this has been done at the expense of leaving local languages unprotected. It is claimed that the dominance of global English has resulted in unbalanced power relations between *native* English speakers and *non-native* English

speakers (Lin, 2013 p.8). Placing the symbolic value of English over the cultural value of endangered languages could even be considered an act of *linguicism*. Skutnabb-Kangas defines *linguicism* as "ideologies, structures and practices which are used to legitimate, effectuate, regulate and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (both material and immaterial) between groups which are defined on the basis of language." (Skutnabb-Kangas 1988: 13, 2000, as cited in Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2017).

This situation can be captured by Phillipson's (1997, p. 238) notion of *linguistic imperialism*: "A theoretical construct, devised to account for linguistic hierarchisation, to address issues of why some languages come to be used more and others less, what structures and ideologies facilitate such processes, and the role of language professionals."

The sociolinguistic situation in the Basque Country is a good illustration of how English is sometimes given more importance than one of the languages of the community, the minority language Basque in this case. Although the situation is not as extreme -there are cultural movements and support from the Basque Government and other non governmental entities to disseminate the language -, many parents prefer their children to learn English rather than Basque, because they consider it more useful in the future. These linguistic attitudes are directly linked to the status of a language, and are an indicator of the level of endangerment of it. If the opinion that "Basque is unnecessary because everyone speaks Spanish/French here, it is better to learn a global language such as English/Mandarin" spreads to the majority of the community, it would be hard to maintain the minority language alive. It is thanks to measures and decisions by the Basque Government that support the use of Basque in education that the majority of children in the autonomous community are educated at least partially in Basque, and become proficient in the local minority language. This example reveals the important role of language planning in a community.

To prevent those situations, Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas (2017) have dedicated their careers to the defence of *Linguistic Human Rights*. Several factors affect linguistic diversity and the maintenance of languages. All in all, it seems that education is the most effective method to raise awareness of language maintenance, although there

is abundant room for further progress in determining models to prevent language shift and ensure that the LHR of each individual are ensured. The following section will deal with the importance of language planning, especially in education, for the preservation of languages in the face of the threat of English.

6. Language Planning

Language planning denotes both language planning practices, that is, organised interventions by politicians, linguists and others in language use and form, and the academic discipline whose subject matter is the study of these practices.[1] It originated in the time of decolonisation, starting in the middle of the twentieth century as a consequence of the high diversity of languages in colonial countries, mainly in Africa. Language planning was necessary to establish the role of local indigenous languages and the pre-independence languages (English, French, Portuguese, Spanish), which have in many cases been kept in education. Thus, a major criticism of language planning is that it initially attempted to implement in former colonies the traditional European nation state, in which citizens are unified around a common standard language (Ferguson 2006, pp.3-4).

According to Language Planning (2021), language planning includes *status planning*, which decides in which domain a language or a dialect should be used; *corpus planning*, which makes prescriptive decisions about language use; and *acquisition planning*. I will focus on the latter, which aims to influence language status, distribution and literacy through education.

Given the importance of speaking English fluently, school and university curricula around the world include English, often as a Foreign Language. This is done following different models of language planning in education that will be presented in this section.

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[1] Definition taken from Ferguson 2006, p.1.

In areas where English is the L1, education is often 100% monolingual, although courses to learn other languages such as Mandarin, Spanish, French, Hindi and German are part of the curriculum too.

In countries where it is co-official with the local language(s)[2], English is typically the language of instruction due to its higher prestige and the international possibilities it offers. Ssebbunga-Masembe (2003) analyses the situation in Uganda, Kenya and Zimbabwe in regards to how *English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI)* affects the education in such multilingual and multicultural countries. His study observed that students do not gain a particularly high proficiency level in English, because it is only seen as a tool, and is therefore not taught properly. If we add widespread poverty and a lack of opportunities for education, it is evident that this system implemented in many former British colonies is not the most effective. Ytsma (2001) adds that in some cases of primary education EMI is detrimental to the acquisition of the knowledge a school is supposed to teach, because language is taken as the main goal.

Many countries of the Expanding Circle also teach EFL. This section focuses mostly on European countries because there is abundant data compared to other parts of the world. The most extreme case of the impact of English is that of regions where education has (almost) completely shifted to English. Institutions that teach the highest levels of education are usually those where English is exclusively used as the EMI. Wiseman & Odell (2014) mention the increase in masters delivered in English in European countries besides the UK and Ireland as proof of the growth of EMI. 560 master programmes were delivered in English in 2002, in comparison to the 6,800 that were available in 2012.

Other institutions have opted to include EFL classes starting from primary education to ensure that their students have an intermediate proficiency in English, but use the local language(s) as media of instruction for the rest of the classes. Thus, the L1 is given more importance, but students also become proficient in English. In bilingual areas, English is acquired as an L3 besides the first two local languages. Ytsma (2001,

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[2] Dark blue in places where it is the majority language and light blue where it is a minority language in Figure 11, p.19.

p.14) explains that in those cases "an originally bilingual school system was combined with foreign language teaching. (...) Examples are to be found in Catalonia, The Basque Country, Friesland (The Netherlands) and in Finland."

In some bilingual areas that receive a large number of immigrants, the language of origin of immigrants is taught together with the two local languages, with the aim of educating them as trilinguals. Ytsma (2001, p.15) mentions the Foyer model set in the 80s in Brussels, which was the first to implement this system.

Some monolingual areas have also opted for trilingual education, although this system is uncommon. Ytsma (2001, p. 15) gives the examples of Eijsden (The Netherlands) and Lebanon, areas where both French and English are taught as foreign languages, together with the local languages (Dutch and Arabic, respectively).

The high variation in language policies indicates that there has been little agreement on what the best measures for language planning in education are to date. Moreover, in the numerous areas where EFL is taught, *language teaching strategies* differ. Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas (2017, p.315) lists some fallacies about English language teaching in addition to claiming them to be based on policies from the colonial period:

> English is best taught and examined monolingually (the monolingual fallacy); the ideal teacher is a native speaker (the native speaker fallacy); the earlier English is taught, the better the results (the early start fallacy); the more English is taught, the better the results (the maximum exposure fallacy); if other languages are used much, standards of English will drop (the subtractive fallacy).

It is important to bear in mind that the production of English teaching materials and the provision of native teachers who work abroad are a huge profit for the UK, India and the USA. The English teaching sector earned the UK around £11.3 billion for educational exports fifteen years ago. (Kinnock 2006, as cited in Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2017, p.315). Furthermore, English has become the language of teaching in many educational institutions. Students all over the world are getting used to being taught in English starting at very young ages, and higher education is being

monopolised by the English language in many countries. The huge presence of English in all academic fields forces students and researchers to find sources and even publish their work in English. According to Hamel (2013, p.323), only 0.5% of magazine articles about natural sciences and 2.5% of articles about social sciences are in Spanish, one of the most spoken languages.

Hamel (2013, pp.327-328) presents data about the five most used languages in research papers, split into two categories: natural sciences (shown in Figure 12) and social sciences (shown in Figure 13). There is a significant difference between the two fields: the impact of English on the area of natural sciences has been growing since 1910, whereas social sciences, composed of newer fields, have always been dominated by English.
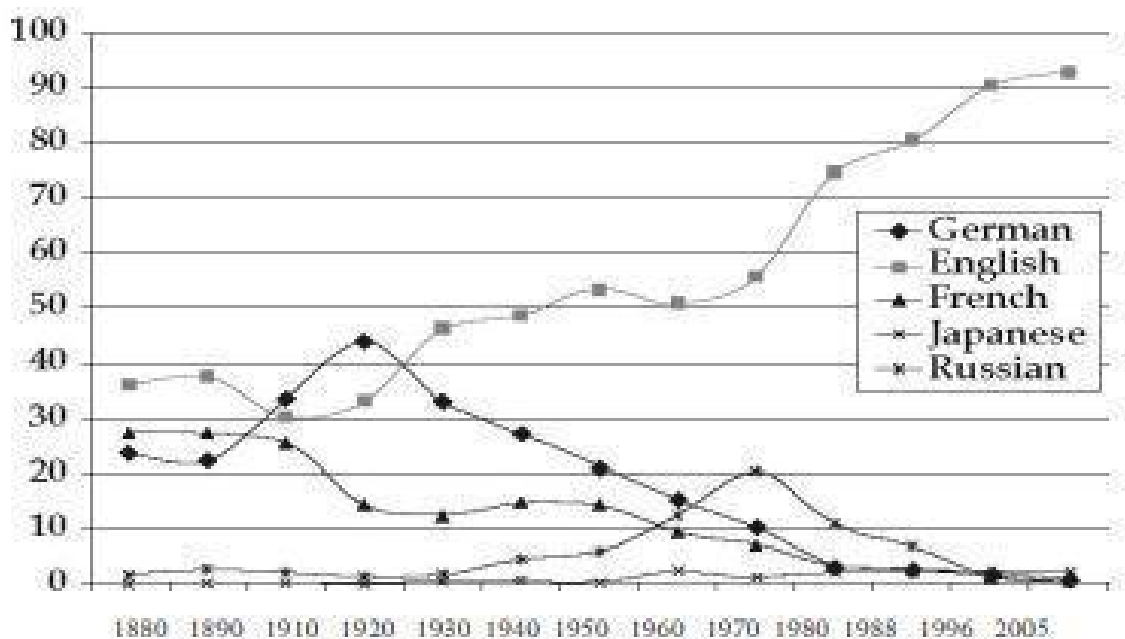

Figure 12. Evolution of use of languages in natural science publications from 1880 to 2005. From "The field of science and higher education between the monopoly of English and plurilingualism: elements for a language policy in Latin America", by R. E. Hamel, 2013, *Trabalhos em Linguística Aplicada*, *52*(2), pp.327-328).
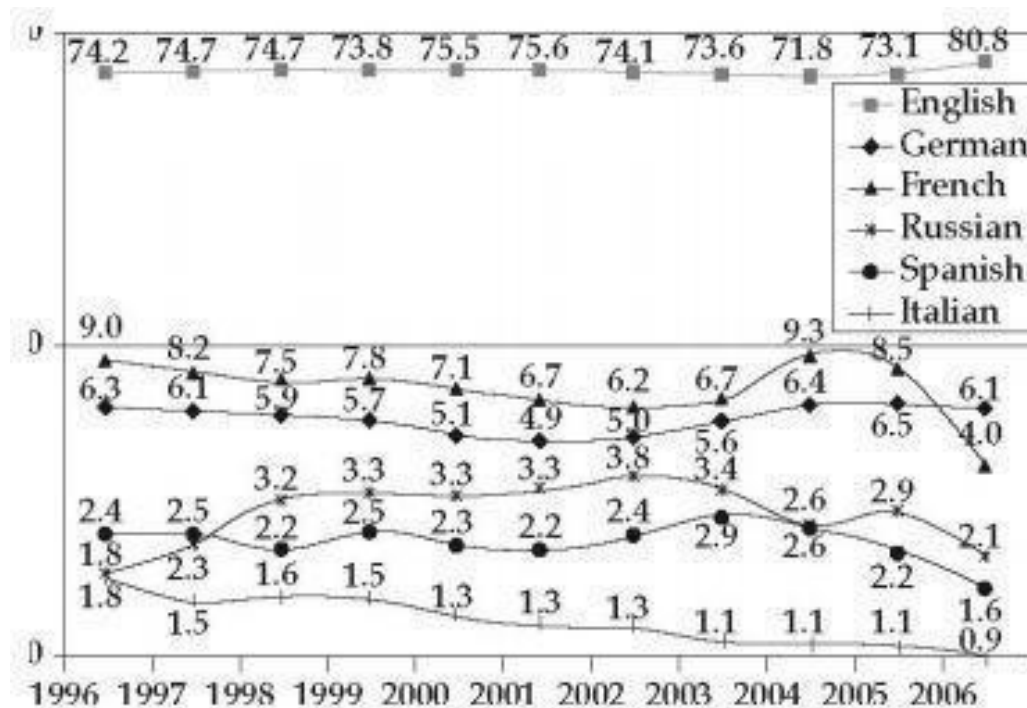
Figure 13. Evolution of use of languages in social science publications from 1996 to 2006. From "The field of science and higher education between the monopoly of English and plurilingualism: elements for a language policy in Latin America", by R. E. Hamel, 2013, *Trabalhos em Linguística Aplicada*, *52*(2), pp.327-328).

The widespread belief that some languages are not "complex or intellectual enough" for higher education is a direct consequence of the said monopoly[3]. This misconception is against the aforementioned axiom that all languages are structurally equally complex and can fulfill the same purposes, but some choose to be educated in English over their L1 nonetheless.

7. Is the Linguistic Hegemony of English a Threat?

One of the most critical authors on the topic of *linguistic hegemony* is Mufwene (2010). He considers Crystal's, Skutnabb-Kangas's and Phillipson's views too alarmist and defends that globalisation and language spread have been part of history. In his brief

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[3] It also harks back to the long-standing belief that English is superior (see quotation on p. 7)

analysis of former British colonies, Mufwene (2010) concluded that cities adapt the impact of globalisation to their local traditions, which proves that English is not the killer language often claimed to be. Moreover, he believes the term *Global English* to be exaggerated, as most of the people in the world, and especially in rural areas, do not have any interest in speaking the language. Not only that, the findings of his study support the idea that English will evolve differently in the communities where it is spoken, and adds that "the notion of a global English with uniform structural features all over the world is a utopia we may as soon forget about" (Mufwene, 2010, p.47). I will deal with variation across world Englishes in section 8 below.

The study by Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas (2017) observes obfuscation in the terminology referring to the current situation of English around the world. They argue that claims such as English being the global "language of choice" are false overgeneralizations. They consider that politicians and other people of the elite of the "English-speaking" world are behind such Anglocentric ideas. Nevertheless, they admit that English serves as a lingua franca in many areas, alongside other languages. The importance of English in the international market is undeniable, although it might be exaggerated for the interest of some, according to the authors.

One criticism of much of the literature on linguistic imperialism is that it focuses mostly on the senders but not on the receivers. Lin (2013) claims that cultural and linguistic imperialism are blamed on countries where English is spoken as a native language in Phillipson's work, although most people there are simply educated in English because it is the local language. Instead, he emphasises the role of those who learn EFL as the ones who perpetuate the hegemony of English. Nonetheless, he admits that although countries around the world do have a choice, it is constrained by "functionalist" or "hegemonic" reasons (Lin, 2013 p.7)

Phillipson (2009) also challenges Crystal's claims that English should currently be maintained as the global lingua franca because it allows better international relations, and criticises his neutral point of view concerning such a controversial topic as *linguistic imperialism*. Phillipson considers globalisation a threat for linguistic diversity and believes language professionals are having an active role perpetuating it. He

borrows the term *"nuclear English"* from Quirk (1981) to describe the persistence of a few to create and expand a standard for global English through teaching.

8. The Linguistic Future of World English: Homogenisation or Diversity?

The large number of countries in which English is spoken either as an L1 or L2 has caused the phonology, vocabulary, and grammar of English to evolve differently around the globe, generating extremely high variation.

Examples of variation in the phonology include the plosivisation of dental fricatives in Irish English, i.e. pronouncing *think* as /tɪŋk/ instead of using [θ] as most varieties of English and the use of the glottal stop in most British accents e.g. /ˈwɔːʔə/. The variation in countries from the Outer and Expanding Circles frequently originates in the local language(s), as speakers have a different phonetic repertoire from the English one. For instance, Gribanovskaya (2020, 375-376) assures the most prominent phonetic feature of Namibian English to be the pronunciation of the [r] phoneme. Many speakers of English in Nigeria belong to the Oshiwambo ethnic group. The "l" and "r" are exchanged in their language called Ovambo[4], a feature that also affects the English pronunciation of Oshiwambo people. Zavyalova, V., et al. (2016, pp. 82-83) claims that Russian English lacks five English consonant sounds: θ, ð, dʒ, ŋ and w, and that this may cause English speakers of Russian origin to have difficulties in distinguishing minimal pairs such as *clothe vs close* or *faith vs face*.

Figure 14 compares several distinctive phonological features across different varieties of English around the world.

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[4] The Oshiwambo language is spoken in the north of Namibia and the south of Angola (Ovambo language, 2021)

Varieties of English/ Phonological features	RP	Southern Irish English	Scottish English	Welsh English	North American English	Southern Hemisphere English	West African English	Indian English
Rhoticity	✗	✔	✔	✗	✔	✗	✗	✗
Intervocalic alveolar-flapping	✗	✗	✗	✗	✔	✔ (In AusEng and NZEng)	✗	✗
TRAP-BATH split	✔	✔	✗	✔	✗	✔	✗	✔
POOL-PULL merger	✗	✔	✔	✗	✗	Only in NZEng	✗	✗
COT-CAUGHT merger	✗	✗	✔	✗	✔	✗	✗	✔

Figure 14. Phonological variation in English across varieties.[5]

Regarding vocabulary there are hundreds of examples. The aforementioned emerging world Englishes import vocabulary and expressions from the countries' local language(s). This causes concepts to be referred to using more than one word form, or the borrowing of new terms to describe specific concepts that English lacks. For instance, Irish *spalpeen* (a poor migratory farm worker in Ireland, often viewed as a rascal or mischievous and cunning person), Australian *cozzie* (swimming costume) or American *realtor* (state agent).[6] Indian English has included the *lakh* and the *crore*, measures of the Indian numeral system that mean one hundred thousand and ten million respectively, into Indian English. Sawant (n.d., p.4) explains that many Indians will use the phrase *ten lakh* to express a million when they speak English, for example.

Figure 15 collects vocabulary items that originated across different varieties of English around the world.

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[5] Data gathered from Trudgill, P., & Hannah, J. (2017)
[6] Definitions and synonyms from *Cambridge International Dictionary of English* (1995)

Varieties of English	Southern Irish English	Scottish English	Welsh English	North American English	Southern Hemisphere English	West African English	Indian English
Distinctive vocabulary	to cog (to cheat)	aye (yes), ashet (serving dish)	del (a term of endear ment)	rookie (first year member e.g. on a team)	AusEng: unit (flat, apartment) NZEng: an identity (a well-known character) SAfEng: dorp (village)	balance (change i.e money returned to a customer)	durzi (tailor), crore (ten million), lakh (one hundred thousand)

Figure 15. Variation in vocabulary in English across varieties.[7]

Even the most common grammar is also affected in some countries where English and the local language(s) are in strong contact. Sawant (n.d., p.3) lists several features of Indian English. For example, the use of the present perfect in Indian English in contexts where Standard English would require using the past simple is widely accepted in the country, i.e. saying "*I have bought it yesterday*" instead of "*I bought it yesterday*". Another characteristic feature of Indian English grammar is the use of the progressive tense in stative verbs: *I am understanding it. She is knowing the answer*; Sawant (n.d., p.3) attributes the latter to an influence of traditional Hindi grammar. Zavyalova, V.,et al. (2016, p. 102) explains how conditional sentences are constructed differently in Russian English due to the local language's influence. Despite being a norm dependent variety from the Expanding Circle, Russian speakers often cannot avoid using the future form in all conditional clauses:

Standard English: He said that if he had time he would come.

Russian English: He said that if he *will have* time he *will come*.[8]

Figure 16 presents variation in grammar in English varieties around the world.

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[7]Data gathered from Trudgill, P., & Hannah, J. (2017)
[8] Example borrowed from Zavyalova, V.,et al. (2016, p. 102)

Varieties of English/ Grammatical features	RP	Southern Irish English	Scottish English	Welsh English	North American English	Southern Hemisphere English	West African English	Indian English
Auxiliary shall	✔	will	will	✔	will or should	will	✔	✔
Negative used to					he used not to go, he didn't use to go	he usedn't to go		
Plural verbs with collective nouns	✔					✗		
Universal tag question isn't it?	✗			✔			✔	✔
Reduplication of adjectives and adverbs for emphasis				✔				
Regularisation of irregular verbs					✔			
Progressive aspect for stative verbs			✔	✔			✔	✔
after + -ing perfect		✔						
Pluralisation of non-countable nouns							✔	

Figure 16. Grammatical variation in English across varieties.[9]

Szőke (2017, p.26) observes that many patterns are repeated in non-native English speech. Typical features in different varieties of English include regularisation by means of analogy and levelling. Mixing types of conditionals, consonant cluster simplification (e.g. using wan /wɒn/ for want /wɒnt/), regularisation of irregular plurals such as *luggages* and *advices*, regularisation of irregular verbs (*they singed*), the use of simplified question tags (*is it?*), and the use of progressive verb forms to express durative actions in stative verbs (*I am having two brothers*) are changes that have

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[9] Data gathered from Trudgill, P., & Hannah, J. (2017)

happened in different communities in the world. These examples provide evidence of the tendency towards simplification and regularisation of English.

American English is dominant and British English is prestigious around the world, but they are not considered the only correct ways of using the language anymore. In a time when diversity and individual cultural identity are less stigmatised and even pursued, people may find the confidence to use the local new Englishes of their countries and leave behind the monopoly of traditionally prestigious varieties. Furthermore, if the numerous varieties of the language keep growing apart, mutual intelligibility may be affected, giving birth to new languages originating from current English. The future of Global English is further analysed in section 9 below.

9. Predictions about the Sociolinguistic Future of World English

As was mentioned in the previous section, English has evolved differently in different communities. Consequently, it is hard to predict what English will look like in the future linguistically. As for its sociolinguistic status, this paper has underlined in section 2 that it depends entirely on factors such as wars and cultural globalisation, which are hardly predictable in the relatively stable world we live in today.

Crystal (2012, pp.167-177) attempts to describe the direction of English as a global language while admitting that its future is uncertain. He mentions the two cases of New Zealand English and Singlish (a hybrid of English, Chinese and Malay) in Singapore to show that the trend of punishing local features when speaking English is losing credibility and strength. Policy makers and language planners, supported by the *National Curriculum for England* (Department for Education, 2014), have realised that the impact of local varieties on English is inevitable, and have begun to consider it enriching. The current mindset values local languages and their input to English, while at the same time holding that standard English should be maintained for international

communication. Crystal (2012) adds that if varieties of English keep growing apart at the current pace, we will soon arrive at a stage when mutual intelligibility will decrease and translation will be required as a consequence of code-switching[10].

Pool (2010) agrees with Crystal (2012) that it is hard to predict what the world will look like linguistically in the future. He also presents a simplified theory on how globalisation and new technologies may affect linguistic diversity. Pool's theory holds that the progress in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) both promotes and diminishes linguistic hegemony. On the one hand, new technologies allow global interaction and therefore promote globalisation in language, among other spheres, and thus promote linguistic homogenisation. We can observe this following the top path in Figure 17. On the other hand, the technologies also allow the creation of sophisticated tools oriented to language preservation, preventing homogenisation from occurring, as is shown in the bottom path of Figure 17. Pool (2010, pp. 142-143) sees progress in ICT as a tool that could allow globalisation and linguistic diversity to co-occur. His prediction is schematised in Figure 17.
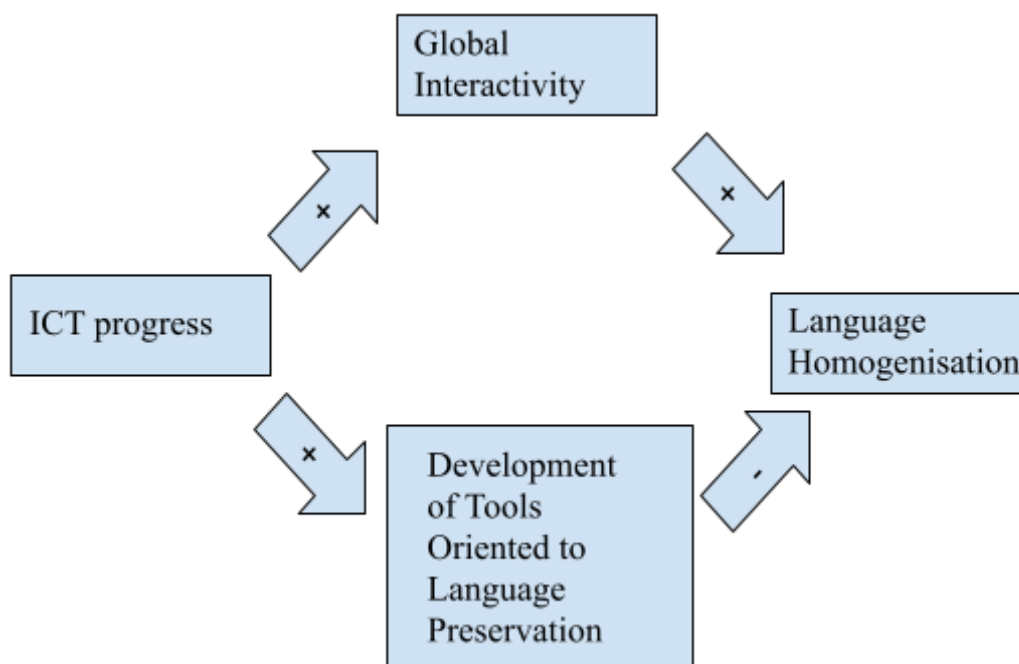

Figure 17. Effects of ICT progress on globalisation and linguistic diversity. (+) means an increase and (-) means a decrease. Adapted from "Panlingual globalization", by J. Pool, 2010, *The Handbook of Language and Globalization,* p. 143.

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[10] *Cambridge International Dictionary of English* (1995) defines code-switching as "the act of changing between two or more languages, dialects or accents when you are speaking."

Nonetheless, he is pessimistic about language preservation because he believes the reason more and more languages are endangered is not the lack of tools to preserve them. Instead, Pool (2010, p.142) considers the human factor to be responsible for this phenomenon. More precisely, he blames the unpopularity of language maintenance movements for the death of languages. As explained earlier, languages become extinct because of *language shifts* in most of the cases. (UNESCO 2003: 2 – 4) highlights that endangered languages that have died rarely show resistance. The lack of generational transmission of a language often results in language death, because there are no young speakers of the language and its transmission is interrupted. A language not being used in the public spheres (law, education, the media, culture, etc.) and negative prestige are factors that contribute to language shift, because they decrease language transmission. Therefore, LHR defenders like P and S-K attempt to raise awareness about language preservation and support movements that aim to improve the prestige of native languages.

10. Conclusion

This paper has attempted to demonstrate that the global importance of a lingua franca depends on social factors rather than purely linguistic ones and has listed socio-political reasons that make a language become global. The specific reasons for the spread of English since the sixteenth century have been presented to support that claim, starting with British colonialism and its cultural consequences. This study has also shown the impact of the English language in former colonial areas and other countries that have introduced English in their culture. Diverse literature on the topic has been presented to analyze the implications of English as a lingua franca from different perspectives. The global instrumental value of the English language has been emphasised throughout this paper, and a critical view of how it impacts minority languages and cultures has also been presented. I have additionally attempted to highlight the importance of language planning and especially education for the preservation of Linguistic Human Rights, and as a means for minority languages and English to live side by side effectively.

Variation in the English language has also been examined as another major consequence of its status as a global lingua franca. Examples from the three circles of

world Englishes by Kachru (1992) have been used to show that English is evolving independently in different communities, but this paper has also included a reflection on certain features that are repeated in geographically different varieties. Different hypotheses about the social and linguistic future of the English language (Crystal, 2012; Pool, 2010; Szőke, 2017) have been taken into account, though there is widespread agreement that it is uncertain.

Future research should analyse the evolution of Global English and assess its impact on other languages. Future research should therefore concentrate on the investigation of language change and determine whether there is convergence or divergence of the different varieties of English, as well as describing the prestige and the use of English in different communities.

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