

Fears and Hopes for an English-speaking World

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1 Introduction

The emergence of English as an international language (EIL) in the latter half of the twentieth century is well documented, as are various objections to the spread of English and the ways of English-speaking societies. However, the discussion of the spread of EIL and its implications too often flows into certain conceptual forms, limiting the range of speculation while leaving contradictions in place. The aim of this article is, first, to show how the conventions we use may impede analysis of the EIL phenomenon and, second, to undertake a more speculative study of possible developments in a world spanned by the English language. Special attention is given to the role played by the media of mass communication in the spread and use of English.

2 Reconsideration of conventions

2.1 The vocabulary of social criticism

Ideologies are not merely particular systems of representation or ways of seeing. They are also ways of excluding and limiting, for they set the boundaries on what we are able to understand as possible.

(Grossberg et al. 1998: 183)

There is a natural and undoubtedly healthy tension between the urge to speculate out of naïve curiosity and the more worldly-wise urge to relate phenomena to conventional forms. Our discussions of the spread of English

inevitably refer to the fact of that spread, and then to whatever else we accept as fact. They cannot be entirely speculative; but they can, on the contrary, become decidedly reactive, following channels of correlation to current wisdom and attracting further reaction, while speculative inquiry is deferred. In discussions of a subject such as EIL and its social impact, which must be correlated with notions of culture and consciousness, there is a need to become especially wary of reliance on a certain category of established forms that severely restricts speculation about social phenomena while pushing contradictions below the rhetorical surface. That category comprises the vocabulary, and what have come to be the ellipses, of Marxist discourse.

It is proper that the subject of consciousness as a social product should often be discussed in the language of Marxist critique, for the subject itself “could not be formulated before the time of Karl Marx” (Enzensberger 1974: 3). What is problematic is not the presence of socialist language in faithfully socialist writings, but its presence elsewhere. Though we are past the heyday of radical chic, when the word *imperialism* served as a shibboleth signaling one’s innocence by dissociation from the powers that be, there is no turning back to the much earlier day when Marx’s terminology (which did not include *imperialism*) was firmly joined with his thought and had not yet been appropriated and expanded by another ideology: Leninism (Kautsky 1994). This is problematic in several ways, not least of which is the difference between genuine Marxism and genuine Leninism, but that is a subject on which the reader must turn to Kautsky and others. A more subtle kind of restriction is placed on our discussion, and a great potential for ambiguity introduced into it, by the wider use of Marx’s or Lenin’s language. This occurs when a critique that makes prominent use of such language, like Phillipson’s *Linguistic Imperialism*, becomes a talking point, and its discourse of strife becomes a frame for further discussion. It also occurs when writers’ remarks are attuned to a calculation that their audience is receptive -- or vulnerable -- to “Marxist” rhetoric. The vocabulary of criticism then does not merely inhibit speculation; it inhibits criticism as

well. The following example is offered as an illustration of the way in which generic language may be used to guide us within the bounds of established conceptual forms while rushing us past the most extreme ethical contradictions.

Two generic vocabularies, those of socialist ideology and of green activism, contribute to the title of Tsuda Yukio's "Hegemony of English vs. Ecology of Language: Building Equality in International Communication" (1997), which was originally delivered as a speech at the Third International Conference on World Englishes. The speech itself arouses curiosity about its author's intentions. He begins by tracing his critical motives to personal experience with English-speaking academics and others, in whom he finds an unvarying linguistic arrogance, a "natural expectation that I, the Japanese-speaker, would speak English" (Tsuda 1997: 21). Then odd feelings about multilingualism (odd for a pluralist) come through in a complaint to the conference audience: "I am right now suffering from the inconvenience of using a language other than my own" (Tsuda 1997: 22).

After listing various English words that he has previously used for his theme, *eigo-shihai* (literally, "English domination"), Mr Tsuda explains why he has settled on "hegemony of English":

Rhetorically and stylistically speaking, "hegemony" is very effective in catching people's attention and getting them to think about the problem. ... [and] the term "hegemony" is an important concept elaborated by the Italian Marxist scholar Antonio Gramsci. However, my use of the term does not necessarily mean I am a Marxist scholar or critical theorist. But the use of the term "hegemony" at least indicates that I am a scholar motivated critically and politically to make a critical and political statement about the global linguistic situation.

(Tsuda 1997: 22)

It seems that we are being teased with hints of an underlying counter-discourse which we are pointedly instructed to overlook. The tease works well enough, since leftist statements on international relations are sometimes hard to tell from rightist ones, in Japan. A common feature is the call for increased Asian solidarity and less intimate ties with the West, a point on which far-left and far-

right interests coincide. A telling variation of this is the expression of annoyance that “I, the Japanese-speaker” should be relied upon to use a widely-known Western language instead of being catered to in Japanese. Ian Buruma reports a strikingly literal example in his review of a published discussion among prominent intellectuals in Japan:

It was not good enough, said Professor Tsuruta, for Japanese intellectuals to talk only to one another; there had to be a way of making the world sit up and take notice. How? Not by learning foreign languages, said Nishio, for that only produces “translation people”. No, Japanese must be able to assert themselves more, just as Westerners do: “It should be regarded as normal for us to sit in a Paris hotel and place our orders in Japanese, just as foreigners use English in Japan.”

(Buruma 1989: 254)

The last speaker seems to assume that, were it not for English hegemony, his own language would be accommodated by French waiters as a matter of course. Like Mr Tsuda, he is oblivious of the various other people who are entitled to the same convenience in theory and therefore cannot claim it in practice, beginning with the many speakers of such languages as Chinese, Arabic, Spanish, Hindi, and Russian. Perhaps these men are thinking of the respect due to their own country’s economic power. They are not thinking seriously of equality in international communication.

Signs of ideological regression in seemingly progressive rhetoric point to the ethical contradictions mentioned above. For romantic-nationalists in Japan (not a majority, but a privileged minority), the premise of Western arrogance fits neatly with nativist cultural ideals and revisionist history. The cost of this self-gratifying discourse has been to keep Japan, as a regional Center, on uneasy terms with its own Periphery. Questions of “hegemony”, after all, exist at the regional level as well as the global. They do not simply pit one part of the human race against all the rest. International relationships are complex; and it is not, as Phillipson (1992b) claims, the mere complexity of a hierarchical network integrating Western elements with Westernized ones. Though one society’s cultural guardians feel beleaguered by English and its speakers, they themselves may be

accused of cultural conceits or economic designs that threaten still other societies. For those other societies, and for their own minorities in turn, a language brought in from far away may be a valuable cultural ally. It is widely agreed that the acceptance of English is not due to any intrinsic suitability or neutrality (Crystal 1997; Kaplan 1987; Phillipson 1992a). However, a language that comes from outside a particular region may indeed serve as a neutral medium for purposes of communication across sociopolitical lines within that region (Bisong 1995; Smith 1983). Even its rhetorical constraints may be desirable as constraints on the rhetoric of others. The defensive nativism that blends so easily into the atmosphere at conventions on linguistic pluralism can seem quite offensive when the conventioners have gone home.

When words are chosen for their attention-getting effect or their ideological imprimatur, they test our will to remember exactly why we care about such things as the social implications of language change, and exactly what fears and hopes we should entertain when we imagine an English-speaking world. Similarly, words may, by their face relevance to the subject at hand, cause us to speed inattentively through crucial turning-points in a line of thought. A prime example is the word *culture*.

2.2 Conceptions of culture

Hence the passion for invented forms, ideals which men make. Once upon a time we were integral, we were Greeks. (This is the great myth of the Greeks, which is historically no doubt quite absurd, but dominated the Germans in their political helplessness -- Schiller and Hölderlin and Hegel and Schlegel and Marx.)

(Berlin 1999: 87)

The word *culture*, which can hardly be omitted from discussions of language and its uses, represents such a variety of widely differing notions that it nearly amounts to a curse on communication. With reference to the global influence of EIL, it can range in meaning from the canonical “high” culture of literature that supports a people’s intellectual life, to the ancient culture of folkways (Bisong

1995; Pringle 1985). In EIL teaching, it may emphasize the currently prevailing way of life in a society: “what the British do on holidays and what Americans have for breakfast” (Smith 1983: 19). In treatments of the mass media, it more often means the popular culture of entertainment. It may even imply a neurosis, as in “a culture of voracious consumption” (Ettema & Whitney 1994: 15). There is a sense of the word *culture* that implies a comparative inadequacy in other words such as *nation* or *tribe*; that connotes an organic, sentient character formed by experience, and thus makes it possible to discuss Herder’s notion that “the value of every culture resides in what that particular culture seeks after” (Berlin 1999: 63). Finally, by extension of the previous sense, there is the use of *culture* as a nationalist’s refuge, a territory of proprietary truth which is not to be trod upon by outsiders. Lacking a collection of good substitutes for this word *culture*, one must remain aware not only of the risk of confusion, but also of a choice to be made: whether to conceive of culture more as property or as experience.

I think he felt that some part of the culture he had inherited by right as a native speaker of English was being alienated from him by the participation of others who hadn't inherited it by birth, or at least not through the mother tongue.

(Pringle 1985: 129)

The convention of regarding culture as property, as some sort of identity-plasma that exists within social structures, may be universal now. It will not be denied here that culture tends to pass into “being” for us because of our need to surround ourselves with static forms to which we can refer. It is suggested, however, that in a world increasingly linked by mass-communication media, transportation, and commerce, let alone an international language, culture should be thought of more as experience that follows patterns and that may cross traditional lines of identity to be shared and influenced by some people -- though not all -- throughout the world.

2.3 Plannability

Unprecedented global changes in patterns of experience make it risky to speculate about the future of EIL, but perhaps riskier still to rely on accustomed responses. Though the spread of EIL is often treated as an issue that demands a response from language policy planners (Crystal 1997; Kaplan 1987), the greater risk may be that of overestimating the efficacy of planning. Classroom learning is only one process through which English may enter a society. In many cases it seems that other processes, such as mass-media consumption and creative use, are “contributing more to the diffusion and functional range of English than are the planned strategies” (Kachru 1994: 150). The unplanned elements of the EIL phenomenon appear to comprise something more inventive than a movement to adopt other people’s language code. Kachru (1986, 1992, 1994) finds ample evidence that people in societies where English has the status of an additional language are reducing its “otherness”, not only by developing non-native Englishes, but also through a process he calls the Englishization of indigenous languages, including

the development of new registers and styles, and the development of code-mixed varieties in languages of Asia and Africa with English.
(Kachru 1994: 144-145)

It seems that EIL is spreading much more by pull than by push, and that it is being put to use as a human-language “source code” for the gradual development of independent but convergent linguistic varieties. If that is so, then what may be needed, rather than a plan for apportioning functions between English and indigenous languages, is contemplation of the ways in which contact tends to be maintained between the English language and non-Anglophone societies, and of those functions that pertain to English in contact; particularly, the functions of the media of international communication.

3 Speculations on media and EIL

3.1 Media criticism

In this century, much of the criticism of the media economy has been shaped to some degree by Marx and his followers.

(Grossberg et al. 1998: 384)

Before considering the relationship between EIL and the mass media, let us return briefly to the subject of Marxian ideologies. Here, their limitations become quite clear. After appreciating their substantial contribution to media studies, one must soon begin to look beyond it.

The most perspicacious writings on the implications of mass media may be crowded with Marxist themes. Enzensberger's earlier essays (1974), for example, recur endlessly to "the productive forces", and yet they penetrate with a deeply disturbing acuity (and, ultimately, an intellectual impartiality) that makes them essential sources for the present study. Often, however, the use of a conceptual structure shaped by Marxist thought has had a confining effect. If we know what Marx thought of human consciousness -- and what Lenin thought of impartial criticism -- this literature holds few surprises. That is not to say that it is always cynically political. Anyone, having recognized in the mass media an enormously powerful coalition of corporate and conservative interests, may feel an overriding sense of urgency to oppose it. What will be suggested here is that a preoccupation with political dichotomies or with nineteenth-century social structures may cause us to overlook two things: first, the potential for a self-propelled media economy, facilitated by a common language, to overwhelm the world's conservatives, corporatists, and radicals together with its consuming public; and, second, some reasons to believe that it will not overwhelm the public, regardless of political struggle.

3.2 English-language media and colonization

One of the tenets of media criticism is that the media of mass communication

are essentially instruments of control that “expand and train our consciousness -- in order to exploit it” (Enzensberger 1974: 10). This has its corollary in criticism of EIL. Though Kaplan (1987) cites an inevitable process by which the technologies of information management and communication tend to spread the language of their developers, Phillipson and other critics see the spread of English and its media as propagating the influence of those who control the Anglophone societies. For Phillipson, that means primarily British Thatcherites who would turn their language into a global Raj. For Tsuda, it means American pushers of

Hollywood movies, rock and roll music, videos, McDonald’s hamburgers, Coca Cola, ... which are increasingly becoming the major components of contemporary life ...

... Americanization of global culture legitimates the hegemony of English. And the hegemony of English, in turn, serves to facilitate the Americanization of global culture (Tsuda 1997: 24)

Since it has been suggested that the social consequences of EIL teaching, which Phillipson (1992b) says the British government aims to dominate, may be less than those of contact with English through the predominantly US-based media, let us follow the American connection further. The pervasiveness of US-made media content has long been estimated at “more than 50 percent of the worldwide film viewing ... (and even more so of TV ‘sitcoms’)” (Brzezinski 1993: 96). While theories attributing this dominance to governmental designs or anticompetitive business practices seem to lack validity (Wildman 1999), it would still seem plausible that English-language products are accomplishing mental colonization, were the colonization metaphor itself not seriously flawed.

The United States, especially in its multiculturalist era, can hardly be accused of exporting an ancient, race-bound national character comparable to those which critics of EIL might wish to preserve in other societies. It would be equally meaningless to speak of American colonization through the canon of Western civilization, the gentleman-scholar’s literary guide to the good life, when that canon has already been marginalized at the source (Cowen 1998;

Glazer 1997). What is meant by mental colonization, it seems, is the selling of a mindset that enters into the current consciousness of American society and dynamically identifies with American interests. However, this line of thinking relies on at least one false assumption: that US-based media must serve American masters.

With the acquisition of 20th Century Fox by Murdoch's Australian-based News Corporation, of Columbia Pictures Entertainment by Sony, of MCA's Universal by Matsushita, and of MGM-Pathé by the French bank Crédit Lyonnais, Warner, Paramount, and Disney remained the only major Hollywood studios in American hands.

Sony Pictures Entertainment owned two major film studios -- Columbia and TriStar -- and CBS Records was renamed Sony Music. Sony was accused of 'buying the soul of America' -- verbiage that echoed the xenophobic protests in other countries against domination by American media. ...

The purchase of MCA by Japan's Matsushita Electric Industrial Company in 1990 meant that over a third of the three big networks' prime-time schedule was produced by foreign-owned companies. ... Matsushita's acquisition of MCA raised questions about the possible censorship of films and books in deference to the new owners' sensibilities. ... Matsushita's president, Akio Tani, 'visibly agitated', refused to answer a question as to whether the company would permit MCA's Universal Studios to make films that might be interpreted as being critical of Japan. Subsequently, significant alterations were made in the script of a Universal film based on the travails of an American baseball player hired by a Japanese team. ... the United States was beginning to encounter some of the same anxieties that other countries had experienced for years in the face of what nationalists termed American 'media imperialism.'

(Bogart 1995: 50-51)

The emergence of dominant economic powers outside the Anglophone societies may conceivably change the colonizing mission, if one is to be postulated, of their media agents. It is perhaps another error, however, to assume that corporate managers of any nationality can continue for long to indulge insular sentiments while competing for profits in a global market. The margin of tolerance for non-profit-motivated decisions must be small and shrinking in a market known to business advisors not as an agent of control, but as "a harsh taskmaster [that] rewards those who produce the results it demands but pun-

ishes those who don't" (Bryan *et al.* 1999: 15). This is the terrible logic of corporate gigantism and globalization: that every partisan motive -- personal will, ideology, national sentiment, human sentiment -- becomes patently irrational and so untenable. It implies that the products of media corporations will not lend themselves to mental colonialism, but will, with relentless efficiency, interact with consumers to achieve maximal economic results.

3.3 Media collaboration

Something that is often missing both from media criticism and from criticism of the spread of English is a recognition that those who supply the thing in question are, to a great extent, conspiring with the many who demand it, to the irrelevant annoyance of the few who deplore it. In Marxist critique, this oversight is almost inevitable. It reflects the conviction (actually more Leninist and Platonist than Marxist) that it takes intellectuals to show ordinary people where their fundamental interests lie. It also reflects the uncomprehending disappointment with which those intellectuals have watched millions choose a modicum of affluence instead of revolution. Critics of EIL have been faulted for implicitly denying that people who choose to retain or adopt the English language in a post-colonial world

are sophisticated enough to know what is in their interest, and that their interest includes the ability to operate with two or more linguistic codes in a multilingual situation.

(Bisong 1995: 131)

Media critics, in concentrating their attention on the unidirectional nature of media distribution and on the ownership of the means of production, have chronically failed to acknowledge that with increasing affluence, the historically alienated "masses" become part of a powerful audience for profit-driven mass media.

While foreign audiences have been enthusiastic consumers of U.S. films and programs, policymakers and film and television producers in these countries, and academics almost everywhere, have been much more critical -- seeing American video exports as threats to

domestic cultures and cultural industries.

(Wildman 1999: 115)

What this means is not that ordinary people are masters of the system, but that they are active collaborators in it. To understand the real danger implicit in the spread of English-language media products and the linguistic ability to consume them, one must begin to contemplate the nature of this collaboration between producer and consumer.

Wildman (1999) finds that media flows are best explained by a microeconomic model which holds that production companies respond efficiently to the current incentives of a diversely segmented global media market.

The model predicts that profit-maximizing producers will spend more to produce films and programs targeted (by language or content) to the linguistically and culturally defined audience segments that generate substantial film and television revenues ... More is spent on films and programs produced for the high-revenue linguistic and/or cultural audiences because viewers value the greater production value purchased with larger production budgets ... The extra audience appeal purchased with a larger budget also makes a film or program more attractive to viewers with different languages and cultures, which are generally located in other countries.

(Wildman 1999: 117)

While this behavior shows responsiveness to consumer demand, it also shows a distinctly degenerative tendency; not necessarily in quality, but certainly in variety. Viewers who prefer “actor’s films” must expect the same frustrations as classical music lovers in Los Angeles, where, according to the US news media circa 1990, there were more than two hundred commercial radio stations, *all* of which were targeting the lucrative markets for popular music genres. This basic “profit-maximizing” tendency is reinforced by careful demographic attuning for advertising purposes (Ryan & Wentworth 1999). Today, even film producers have their advertisers: companies that pay to have products inserted as conspicuous props or written into dialogue, a common practice known as product placement (Miller 1990). The potential influence of this practice on the settings, content, and tone of films and television programs can be imagined.

Herein lies the danger alluded to above. Precisely because producers must satisfy consumers as efficiently as possible while also satisfying advertisers, they have an incentive to focus on certain types of film that are known to be well received, and to use their creative skills making compromised works palatable. Because they cannot deny our freedom of choice, they must develop ways of reinforcing our sense of self-satisfaction when we exercise that freedom narrowly and repetitiously. One aggressive device, the surrogate audience of on-screen bystanders who applaud the protagonists' happy ending (Miller 1990), apparently travels well: it closes the 1997 film *Titanic* (basically a conventional youth film with theme-park-like stimuli), which was enormously popular in Japan and elsewhere. Indeed, in an informal online survey conducted by the BBC, the ending of *Titanic* was voted the best ending in film history (BBC 2003). Such ingratiating devices coax us to be good collaborators: happy media insiders indifferent to the choices we are never offered. The spread of English through the mass media, like the spread of popular culture, is not less fateful for being careless.

The influence of movies on the viewing audience is uncertain, but many observers agree with the view of the German director Wim Wenders: 'People increasingly believe in what they see and they buy what they believe in ... People use, drive, wear, eat and buy what they see in the movies.' If this is so, then the fact that most movies are made in the English language must surely be significant, at least in the long term.

(Crystal 1997: 91)

It is well known that marketing planners today target consumers between the ages of 18 and 49 (Potter 1998; Ryan & Wentworth 1999). When it comes to movies, the upper end of the target range is apparently much lower. This threatens a vicious cycle in which all media consumers receive "possibility models" designed for those who are known to do the most discretionary spending with the least discretion, while media-oriented young people are denied knowledge of other models.

Enzensberger was early to recognize the essence of producer-consumer

collaboration in the media: that buying what we see is not primarily a matter of buying goods, but of buying reassurance that we know how to live. The main business of the mind industry, as he calls it, “is not to sell its product: it is to ‘sell’ the existing order” (Enzensberger 1974: 12). The great danger apparent in global penetration by English-language media is that they will tend to establish a complacent reciprocity among the English-speaking strata of all societies; that the mutual consumption of certain media products (wherever they may be produced), of certain material icons and linguistic styles, will become sufficient grounds for mutual understanding and approval. This, not hands-on domination by plutocrats, is the looming danger in a world where young people “grow up corporate”, referring their lives to commercial images (Nader 1996: 3). Since English tends to spread internationally along certain social strata, but not others, “often ... dividing the society into language-based castes” (Tickoo 1994: 39), there could even emerge a global nation of English-speakers who must live in a state of cultural estrangement from their immediate neighbors. Kaplan (1987) and others envisage a division of functions between EIL and indigenous languages, with the indigenous languages remaining the bases of identity and personal relations. However, there is no compelling reason to believe that the third or fourth generation of young people fluent in EIL will continue to maintain that division instead of identifying with the most cosmopolitan class to which they belong.

While the Internet offers, for the first time, a global medium of communication with a many-to-many structure, in contrast to the one-to-many flow of other media, that structure pertains more to the exchange of messages than to the presentation of possibility models. Corporate sites may be surpassed in beauty by those of some individual Web authors, but surely not in visits paid. Even in exchanging messages and obtaining information, users increasingly look to corporations for secure services and convenient interfaces that define the online experience (Rushkoff 1999; Shapiro 1999). In any case, although the Internet remains a promising medium of uncontrolled communication, when

English-speakers of the future communicate through it they may well do so in a persona already influenced by the manipulations of the more intensely sensory media.

Such is the apparent danger. However, like all extrapolations from trends in human affairs, this one is going too far.

3.4 New Englishes and influences

The joys with calmness

(Inscription on a pad of stationery by Nihon Hallmark K.K.)

Even without looking beyond the experience of mass media and language contact, two large but nevertheless circumscribed fields of human experience, it is possible to detect a pattern of factors that may lead to benign assimilation of the syndrome described above:

1. The increasing difficulty of control inherent in expanding systems.
2. The indispensability to media industries of creative people.
3. The establishment of new Englishes and the disappearance of communicative inequality.
4. The need for media products matched to changing demographics.
5. The transformation of English language and discourse by previously non-native varieties.

Enzensberger (1974) cites the prediction of systems theory that, as the means of communication and the volume of content multiply, mechanisms of control must become impossibly inefficient. This has implications for both consumers and creators of films for public exhibition and home video viewing, and still more for those of program material for television, a medium that “devours over 100 hours of original drama each week, on the [US] networks alone” (Bogart 1995: 274). Consider, then,

the media’s dependence on [people] capable of innovation, in other words, on potential troublemakers. It is inherent in the process of creation that there is no way to predict its results. ... This is an industry which has to rely, as its primary source, on the very

minorities with whose elimination it is entrusted: those whose aim it is to invent and produce alternatives.

(Enzensberger 1974: 14)

Consider, further, the changes that should be wrought by the spread of EIL in factors that affect access to the process of creation in the global media. If English is indeed accepted by a society as a valuable linguistic asset, it will be readily available for consumption and use. The young will learn it early and will come to use it with native competence. The term will no longer be “native-like”, for English will, after all, have developed into an international language. Varieties of idiom other than the historical native ones will be well established (Kachru 1986). Educated speakers of the various Englishes will have enough in common linguistically, and perhaps culturally, to communicate with each other effectively in their accustomed idioms (McArthur 1994), while the approximation of general models of pronunciation will make their speech globally intelligible (Jenkins 1998). It will no longer be necessary to adopt the norms of UK or US English (although personal motives for doing so may remain). Inequality in international communication will tend to disappear for those who acquire their local English thoroughly, and, if the findings of Kachru and others are a guide, contact between varieties of English will bring mutual enrichment.

Growth in an English-speaking regional audience for media products, and any growth in its wealth, will affect demographic patterns in ways that can only increase the region’s value as a market segment and cause its inhabitants’ tastes to be taken into account more, consequently increasing the value of the talents of creative people and the skills of production executives from that region. Such changes in the pattern of consumer-producer collaboration, with people outside the old Anglophone societies increasingly active in both roles, should promote what Enzensberger calls the creation of alternatives, ultimately to the benefit of people everywhere.

Creation, however, is useless without appreciation. If anything, it is the intelligent reception and appreciation of ideas, more than their creation and dis-

tribution, that is needed in a globalizing world. Achieving “media literacy”, an awareness of the workings of the consciousness industry, can help; however, it can also result in paranoid, paralyzing mistrust (Potter 1998; Rushkoff 1999). The cultivation of a more balanced receptivity is an area in which the traditional English-speaking and other Western societies stand to benefit from the ferment of Englishes in contact. Exposure to different ways of expressing things in the English language, and different things to express -- in the media of communication, in interpersonal relations, and also in the classroom -- can be extremely invigorating.

The spread of English is usually discussed with regard to the benefits and losses that may result for those in Asia, Africa, or elsewhere who accept it into their societies. If, as Tickoo (1994: 40) graciously states, this language “has proved to be the greatest gift of the British Empire”, then the givers can hope to receive a greater gift in return: an English language expanded as a medium of expression, and perhaps as a medium of thoughtful reception as well.

6 Conclusion

It was found that discussion of the spread of English as an international language is liable to be hampered by the critical vocabulary used, and by a misplaced emphasis on issues of planning. A speculative study was then undertaken with particular regard to the relationship of the mass media to the EIL phenomenon. It indicated that while English-language media are not instruments of “mental colonization” by native-speaking societies, the media economy does work to foster complacency and conformism in those who consume its products. It also suggested that such trends as the recognition of new varieties of English, the general attainment of communicative equality, and changes in patterns of audience influence should counteract the conformist tendencies of the global mass media. Finally, it was concluded that the same trends hold the promise of influencing the English language and Western principles of discourse to the benefit of the traditional native-speaking societies as well as others.

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