

LINGUISTIC MINORITIES AND GLOBALIZATION: THE LIMITS OF LIBERAL THEORIES

by Selma K. Sonntag
sonntag@mcmaster.ca
Visiting Research Chair, McMaster University
Professor, Humboldt State University

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INTRODUCTION

At the most general level, this paper is an attempt to engage political theorists and sociolinguists on the issue of Global English.¹ More specifically, I am interested in exploring if and how liberal theories of state accommodation of linguistic diversity can be extrapolated to the global level. Only recently, according to Daniel Weinstock (2003: 269), have liberal theorists been debating amongst themselves if and how the state should accommodate linguistic and national minorities. Will Kymlicka and Alan Patten, Canadian political theorists like Weinstock, make a similar observation, but interestingly enough in the *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* in 2003, a clear recognition on their part that applied linguists have been grappling with these language policy issues for some time.

I will examine two “groupings” of liberal theorists: procedural liberals and liberal culturalists.² I will first

¹ Support for the research for this paper was provided by a U.S.-Canadian Fulbright award for 2007-08, during which I occupied the Visiting Chair for Globalization and Cultural Studies in the Institute for Globalization and the Human Condition at McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario. Given the nature of the research award, my focus in this paper is almost exclusively on Canadian political theorists. A different, and perhaps better, justification for this focus is that Canadian scholars tend to be much more attuned to language issues, at least in comparison to U.S. scholars. I would like to thank Catherine Frost, a Canadian political theorist at McMaster University, for her helpful comments on an earlier draft.

² See Frost (2008) for use of these particular labels.

outline the premises and assumptions of liberal theories of state accommodation of linguistic minorities. These assumptions differ to some extent between the two sets of liberal theorists (procedural and cultural), leading to different assessments of state accommodations of linguistic minorities. These differences become magnified in certain ways when we extrapolate to the global level, leading to different concerns about the global spread of English. We can then compare these liberal concerns with issues regarding global English raised by sociolinguists. I will conclude by suggesting that a Gramscian theoretical approach provides a more insightful account of the concerns raised by sociolinguists than liberal theorizing provides.

LIBERAL THEORIES

The contemporary liberal theories that I propose to examine stem from the classical political liberalism of the likes of John Stuart Mill, David Hume, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and John Locke. Although these early political theorists were complimented by those who emphasized classic economics, such as Jeremy Bentham, David Ricardo and Adam Smith, my treatment here will tend to political liberalism. The best known contemporary theorist in this political lineage is John Rawls. I will be examining, then, Rawlsian liberalism applied to language policy, in the works of procedural liberals who have written about language issues, such as Alan Patten, Thomas Pogge and Daniel Weinstock. In the 1980s,

Rawlsian procedural liberalism was challenged by the likes of Michael Sandel and Charles Taylor, leading to the prolonged liberal-communitarian debate in political philosophy. This gave rise to liberal culturalism or multiculturalist liberal theories (see Frost 2008), the best known proponent being Will Kymlicka. Of course, it is important to note here that it is difficult to peg scholars into particular theoretical holes, hence there is always room for disagreement as to who is *really* a procedural liberal and who is a liberal culturalist.

All of the varieties of liberalism that I will be examining here share certain basic assumptions. The starting point, or “unit of analysis,” for all these theories is the individual. Furthermore, it is assumed that the individual has certain rights that the state is obliged to protect. The most basic formulation of these rights is the autonomy of the individual. Political liberalism extols the autonomous individual free to make her own choices about the good life. The liberal state should create the conditions for the individual to exercise her autonomy. It is the individual and not the state that decides on the good life to pursue. In this basic schema, the liberal state is neutral resulting in a liberal society with a variety or plurality of choices about the good life.

From these basic liberal premises, it is typical to derive a set of individual rights, such as free speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of religion, freedom of conscience, privacy, etc. These individual rights are assumed to facilitate and enhance individual autonomy. They are negative freedoms, in the sense of Isaiah Berlin, because they restrict what the state can do, preventing it from promoting a common good life. They proscribe an absence of state interference in an individual’s choice of the good life. Nevertheless, liberalism does not mean an absence of governing and the liberal democratic state needs to make collective decisions about procedures and policies. In this sense, then, it is conventional to see majoritarian representative democracy as conducive to liberalism, compatible with individual autonomy through the aggregation of individual votes, tempered by deliberation and protection of individual rights. Some also claim liberalism’s compatibility with capitalism, based on separation of the political and economic spheres, with the state only creating the conditions for individuals to pursue their economic interests (such as the protection of private property and the prevention of monopolies).

Procedural liberals stress this minimalist view of the state. They emphasize the negative duties, or non-interference, and impartiality of the liberal state. The

state’s main responsibility, accordingly, is to design sets of procedures by which individual autonomy will be protected and enhanced. These procedures should fair, through equal treatment of individual citizens. Thusly, the state can pursue its purpose of creating the conditions in which an individual can exercise personal autonomy.

Liberal culturalists have complicated rather than jettisoned procedural liberalism. A complication to the liberal foundation of individual autonomy, noted by Charles Taylor (1992) and stressed by Will Kymlicka (1995), is that individuals do not make choices independent of context. The unencumbered individual exercising her autonomy does not exist. Kymlicka argues that individuals make choices in the context of their societal culture. For Kymlicka (1995: 76), a culture is societal if its values and symbols are defused throughout a “range of human activity” so as to “provide its members with meaningful ways of life.” Linguistic and national minorities most often have viable societal cultures “centered on a shared language” (Kymlicka 2001: 25) that differ from the culture (and language) of the dominant society in contemporary multicultural liberal democracies. Since individual autonomy is exercised in a societal cultural context, the state must protect and enhance such societal cultures if it is to fulfill its obligation to create the conditions for the individual to exercise her autonomy. The most common way that liberal states accommodate minority societal cultures is through what liberal culturalists call external protections and internal restrictions.³ These accommodations entail intervention by the state, i.e., they are positive duties of the state.

A second complication proffered by liberal culturalists is that the state cannot always be neutral. That is, the state does more than provide the rules of the game. And even in setting up the rules of the game, the state infuses its actions with implicit values and moral objectives. Most often these are the values and morals of the dominant or majoritarian culture. In other words, despite the rule of law and equal treatment characteristic of liberal democracies, the state cannot always be fair and equal. At best, it can be even-handed (Carens 2000), trying to balance out its (dominant culture) biases on a case-by-case basis (see Shachar 2001).

³ Self-government and special representation rights are also prominent state accommodations in at least some liberal democracies. These are beyond the scope of the present paper. For a critical analysis of the liberal state’s granting of self-government, see Sonntag 2006.

LIBERALISM AND LANGUAGE POLICY

In this section of the paper, I will draw out the implications for language policy of the liberal culturalists' complications to procedural liberalism. In particular, I want to compare and contrast the procedural liberals' and liberal culturalists' positions on linguistic neutrality, as well as their positions on external protections and internal restrictions for linguistic minorities.

According to liberal culturalists, one of the clearest instances where the neutrality of the state proves impossible is in language policy.⁴ While the state can be neutral in regard to religion for example,⁵ it must use (a) language(s) to communicate with its citizenry. In choosing a language, or even multiple languages, the state exhibits a linguistic bias, most often that of the linguistic majority or dominant groups.

While procedural liberals recognize that the state must use (a) language(s) in its interactions with its citizenry, they tend to espouse a language ideology which conceives of language as a medium of communication rather than a marker of identity.⁶ Hence the state can be culturally neutral in adopting (a) particular language(s) for purposes of state. The state only needs to use or condone the use of minority languages when the potential for miscommunication impinges on individual rights. The most obvious case would be in safety cases, involving the protection of personhood, but could be extended to, for example, multilingual balloting to ensure that individual citizens can exercise their political rights to freely choose their representatives.

Alan Patten, a Canadian-American political theorist at Princeton who writes extensively on language policy issues, has offered perhaps the most developed defense of linguistic neutrality, in which he attempts to satisfy those who claim that language is a medium of communication as well as those who emphasize language as a marker of identity. For Patten (2003a: 370), a state can be neutral in its language policy, in the sense of being fair and evenhanded, even if, for practical reasons, any given communication between the state and an individual, or group of citizens, is in a particular language. In this view, a policy of official multilingualism would be neutral because it would "establish fair background

⁴ See Patten 2003a, p. 357, footnote 3 for a listing of liberal theorists who "claim that neutrality is impossible in the area of language policy."

⁵ However, Modood (2007) disputes that the state can be neutral even in this regard. See his discussion of the short-comings of secularism, disestablishment, and separation of church and state.

⁶ For a treatment of language ideologies, see Schieffelin et al. 1998.

conditions under which speakers of different languages can each strive for the success and survival of language communities with which they identify" (Patten, 2003a: 370).

Patten argues, however, that there are strong reasons to deviate from this linguistic neutrality, in favor a sole dominant language. The two most important reasons for favoring a "common public language" are to ensure democratic deliberation (Patten 2001; 2003a: 378) and social mobility (Patten 2003a: 380). The link between democratic deliberation and a common public language is a venerable liberal one. Patten (2003b: 311) quotes Mill in support of this linkage, and similar, although less language policy-focused, argumentation can be found among theorists of democratic participation and deliberation such as Jurgen Habermas. As we shall see below, this position resonates with the cosmopolitan democrats at the global level.

The liberal principle of equality is invoked in regard to the link between social mobility and the state promoting a particular language as the common public language. Patten (2003a: 380) argues in Rawlsian liberal fashion that one's life chances should not be limited or proscribed by virtue of being a member of a linguistic minority. If the linguistic minority community does not have a viable societal culture, then the liberal principle of fairness and equality in life chances trumps neutrality in establishing a language policy.⁷ To deny minorities access to the common public language is to risk ghettoizing them (Patten 2003a: 381). The social mobility argument is also amply represented at the global level, as we will see below.

Patten (2003b: 313) ends up prioritizing "language as an instrument of communication," even though he acknowledges the claim "that for some people language is a central and defining feature of identity." Furthermore, his analysis of language as a feature of identity is primarily a rational choice or cost-benefit type of analysis. For Patten (2003b: 313), language as an identity marker means that individuals have "attitudes and preferences" which may include preferences for the minority language. Language policy could be oriented toward an efficient allocation of resources so as to satisfy the largest number of individuals in their preferences (Patten 2003b: 315) and/or toward creating a neutral playing

⁷ Patten seems to conflate social mobility with a viable societal culture. In other words, it seems to me that liberal culturalists are arguing that the state cannot be neutral in regard to language precisely because the language(s) the state uses determines the language of social mobility, not the other way around as Patten seems to imply.

field on which communities of speakers of different languages can compete (as outlined above).

The framing of linguistic identities as “attitudes and preferences” suggests a high degree of malleability to an individual’s linguistic identity and dovetails with an interest-group view of politics. As a result, many procedural liberals tend to analyze language policy in terms similar to liberal analyses of most social and economic policies in liberal democracies: there are winners and losers when non-ascriptive groups made up of individuals acting in their own rational self-interests compete with opposing groups on a particular issue for state resources. This model is often extended to languages themselves, resulting in pronouncements about languages that most applied linguists would find dubious⁸: Weinstock (2003: 263, 257), for example, talks in terms of languages competing, some of which are more “communicatively efficient” and others that are “geared to face-to-face communities.” A “rational” individual in a modern society/economy would prefer the more efficient language.

The state’s *raison d’être*, according to liberals, is to protect and enhance personal autonomy. For procedural liberals, this means that the state must not interfere with individuals exercising their linguistic preferences. This entails, then, a minimalist language policy based on state non-interference or negative freedoms of the individual against the state. Such a linguistic *laissez-faire* policy, as Pierre Coulombe (1993: 143) calls it, “is derived from the need to promote autonomy,” as opposed to “the need to promote identity.” Accordingly, then, when the state adopts interventionist language policies, procedural liberals such as Weinstock (2003) perceive them to be coercive and to preclude choice by the individual, and hence illiberal. According to Weinstock (2003), because a rational individual would freely choose an efficient language, policies preserving face-to-face languages are coercive and illiberal. Weinstock (2003: 262) argues vehemently against “language policies that use coercive measures to preserve languages against the choices of the members of a linguistic community.” In other words, not only are minority language preservation policies illiberal and irrational, but they are undesirable by (rational) members of the linguistic minority.⁹

⁸ Although Patten is careful to avoid making this kind of mistake. See Patten 2003a.

⁹ To be fair to Weinstock, he does note that under certain historical contingencies, linguistic competition may not be fair, leading to coerced linguistic assimilation or even, possibly, rational preference for minority language preservation. However, his limited

Whereas Weinstock assumes that most rational individuals of a minority language community want to assimilate to the dominant language, Thomas Pogge (2003), also working within the procedural liberal framework, makes the opposite assumption. Pogge uses many of the same arguments Weinstock makes to argue against “accommodation rights for Hispanics in the United States.” Where he differs from Weinstock, however, is that he assumes that linguistic minorities *want* to preserve their language. Accordingly, linguistic minorities must have a different ideology (not necessarily a liberal or rational one)—that of language as an identity marker (cf. May 2003: 124-125). In Weinstock’s scenario, linguistic minorities are clamoring to adopt the dominant language but are prevented from so doing by the state adopting coercive language policies that protect minority languages; in Pogge’s scenario, linguistic minorities dig in their heels and oppose linguistic assimilation. In other words, it is the minority groups themselves that are coercively protecting the minority language. For procedural liberals, not only should the state not protect minority languages (Weinstock’s argument), but the minority group should not coerce the linguistic choices of individual members of the group.¹⁰ Yet Pogge’s examples of Hispanics in the United States also suffer from a similar faulty factual base, similar to Weinstock’s (see footnote 3 above). Pogge’s examples include a member of a Hispanic national minority (Chicanos in New Mexico) and a third-generation immigrant

examples are factually flawed: in apartheid South Africa, according to Weinstock (2003: 257), Blacks chose to linguistically assimilate “as a means of accessing economic opportunity unfairly monopolized by the dominant language group.” Of course, in reality, Black South Africans did not choose to assimilate to Afrikaans (the whole point of the Soweto riots). Fictional reality seems to be a recurring problem for procedural liberals. For example, Patten (2005) develops an elaborate abstract logic for protection of linguistic rights of minorities within minorities that is supposed to be applicable to more than his implicit particular case of Anglophones in Quebec. But his example of another relevant case, Flemish speakers in Wallonia, is non-existent. For a general critique of liberal theorists’ ahistorical analyses of language policies, see May (2003) and May, Modood and Squires (2004).

¹⁰ The contradiction that an individual’s language choices in the context of the dominant society are “free” and non-coercive, while language choices in the context of minority communities are pressured and coerced, is apparently lost on most procedural liberals. Liberal culturalists are more attuned to the contextual pressure of the dominant society, while obsessively fretting about illiberal tendencies within minority communities. As I will demonstrate toward the end of the paper, a Gramscian analysis does a much better job of taking into account the historical contingencies operating in both the dominant and minority societies that impinge on the freedom of choice so fundamental to liberals.

from Mexico. In both cases, Pogge assumes that these two (hypothetical) young individuals speak little English or poor English, and that the reason for their poor English is because of decisions made by their parents to preserve their mother-tongue. Apparently, it is still unfortunately the case that not everyone is aware of the fact that most third-generation Hispanic immigrants to the U.S., let alone young Chicanas in New Mexico, are monolingual English-speakers.¹¹

Let us set aside, at least for the moment, the factual and historical inaccuracies of Weinstock and Pogge's accounts and instead focus on their arguments against what liberal culturalists would call "external protections" and "internal restrictions." External protections are offered by the state to protect the minority group from encroachment by the dominant group. A particularly clear example is when the state prohibits outsiders from buying land in a minority area, such as tribal areas (e.g., in India). Giving a more normative definition, Shachar (2001: 17) identifies external protections as state accommodations that "promote justice between groups" (e.g. between dominant and minority groups). Linguistically, this could be done by the state using the minority language in official business or mandating maintenance bilingual education. In these cases, the minority language is protected from encroachment by the dominant language.¹² As we saw above, Weinstock's argument against external protections is that these protections are preventing linguistic minorities from exercising their free choice (to assimilate to the dominant language) and hence constitute a violation of the fundamental right of personal autonomy.

Pogge's argument, in contrast, takes aim at internal restrictions. Internal restrictions are measures taken by the minority community, condoned by the state, to preserve the integrity of the group. The classic example given by cultural liberalists is where the state allows tribes (e.g., in the North American context) to define for themselves tribal membership. In the case of language, territorial or regional unilingualism adopted by a threatened language group, such as the Quebecois in the 1960s or the Flemish in the 1930s (see Sonntag 1991)

¹¹ Patten (2003b), again, avoids this mistake. Indeed, Patten seems to be much more linguistically saavy and informed than his co-liberal theorists. What is a bit surprising is that Patten was one of the editors in the volume in which both Weinstock and Pogge's articles appear and didn't rectify their inaccuracies.

¹² We can see in this formulation of state accommodation hints of the liberal tendency to imbue languages themselves with individual attributes such as rationality, autonomy and agency, particularly characteristic of Weinstock, as noted above.

would be a type of internal restriction. Another example would be a linguistic minority insisting on mother-tongue monolingual instruction in schools under its jurisdiction. As we saw above, Pogge's concern about this type of internal linguistic restriction is that Hispanics in the United States will prevent their children from assimilating to, or even learning, English because of their (illiberal, traditional) ideology of language. Implicit in Pogge's analysis is that the ideology of language as identity is not inherently liberal, as the ideology of language as a neutral medium of communication is.

These procedural liberal arguments against external protections and internal restrictions point to the conundrum facing liberal culturalists. On the one hand, liberal culturalists want to acknowledge and validate the ideology of language as an identity marker. On the other hand, language as an identity marker smacks of a pre-modern, essentializing view of culture, an anathema to liberal culturalists (see Frost 2008). Hence liberal culturalists are far more comfortable with external protections, offered by the liberal state, than internal restrictions imposed by the (potentially illiberal) minority group (Sonntag 2004). Indeed, Shachar (2001: 17-18) defines internal restrictions as those state accommodations "that restrict the ability of individuals within the group to revise or abandon traditional cultural practices." She notes how internal restrictions can be particularly detrimental to the personal autonomy of vulnerable members of the minority group, and focuses on women as an example. In Pogge's case, the vulnerable members are children.¹³ Shachar's (2001: 117, 14) solution is to "utilize[e] external protections to reduce internal restrictions," albeit through "encourag[ing] [minority] group authorities themselves to reduce discriminatory internal restrictions." Hers is a more detailed account of the liberal culturalists' overall project of "thinning," or liberalizing, "thick" identities (Frost 2008).

The most imperative reason for thinning thick identities, according to liberal culturalism (see Kymlicka

¹³ I find it striking how many liberal culturalists (and procedural liberals for that matter) implicitly base their analysis of the problems with internal restrictions on power differentials within minority groups, but seem to be bereft of any analysis of power in their discussion of external protections, other than acknowledging that there are dominant and minority groups competing for state resources. This is may be due to their adherence to the liberal premises of the state as a neutral umpire in this competition. Shachar (2001) attempts to hold the state just as accountable as what she calls *nomoi* groups for travesties of justice, which only partially addresses the problem, I would argue, since, by equating the state with the dominant society, she implicitly takes the dominant society as monolithic.

2007: 95) is to avoid or mitigate centrifugal ethnolinguistic forces from tearing the liberal state apart. One of the most damning critiques of the liberal culturalists' support for external protections and, albeit begrudgingly, limited internal restrictions is that these will lead to the "ghettoization" of multicultural liberal societies. Patten (2003b: 311) worries that if language as a medium for public deliberation and discussion is not prioritized over language as a marker of identity, then "the political community [will be] segmented into several self-contained sub-communities." Similarly Patten (2003a: 380) notes that "one of the main concerns about language diversity emphasized by proponents of the common public language model is that the speakers of some languages will become isolated in linguistic ghettos" if their social mobility (read assimilation to the dominant language) is thwarted. This fear of the disintegrative effects of multiculturalism is growing, argues Modood (2007), creating a backlash.

THE GLOBAL LEVEL

In this section of the paper, I want to focus on the global parallels to the liberal discussions of external protections and internal restrictions and state neutrality that were summarized in the preceding section of this paper. For my purposes here, the global level is one in which English is the dominant language and "linguistic minorities" are non-English-speaking communities.

A preliminary take would note that there is no global parallel to the state. In the liberal theories discussed above it is the state that accommodates linguistic minorities. In Kymlicka's version, it is the liberal state that has an obligation to protect societal cultures. Or in Carens' terms, it is the state which is to be "evenhanded." There is no analogue at the global level. Who or what is there to do the accommodating, to exercise evenhandedness? At first blush, then, there is no mechanism for external protections of non-English-speaking communities. For procedural liberals like Weinstock, such an absence of external protections is preferable. Individuals, communities, and even nations should be able to freely exercise linguistic choice, choosing English if they so wish. In this view, the global English community is a quintessential case of a liberal *laissez-faire* language regime formed from innumerable individual autonomous choices about language.

Yet we should not so readily dismiss the existence of external protections at the global level. As Kymlicka (2007) implies, the Westphalian system of sovereign nation-states has, at least to a certain degree, built-in ex-

ternal protection: states cannot impose on other states. In other words, the system itself prevents a dominant state from encroaching on the sovereignty/integrity, linguistic and otherwise, of another state. Indeed, the Westphalian system emerged in reaction to attempts of European states to dictate the religion of neighboring states. Even colonialism, a clear violation of protecting groups from encroachment (cultural, political, economic, etc.) by a dominant nation, was not an aberration of the Westphalian system since the colonized areas were not "states." Upon decolonization, newly independent states in the Third World could and did seek the external protections inherent in the international state system. No longer was the religious education or the language of instruction of the post-colonial state in the hands of missionaries or Macaulays.

In the post-colonial era, these Westphalian-type external protections were promoted by the emerging international community under the auspices of the United Nations. According to Kymlicka (2007: 38 n.), UNESCO "interpreted its mandate of protecting cultural diversity to mean protecting the national cultures of developing countries against the threat of Western (i.e. American) cultural hegemony, in part by strengthening the capacity of post-colonial states to build up their own national systems of schools, media, and cultural institutions." In the early 1950s, UNESCO issued an influential report calling for mother-tongue education, to replace the colonial languages of instruction of the past.

There was, then, at least a modicum of external protections, however weak. As Kymlicka claims (2007: 39 n.), the "UNESCO policies had little success in reducing the global hegemony of American culture." Indeed, according to Phillipson (1992), linguistic (neo-) imperialism flourished in the liberal environment of the post-colonial era. Whereas Phillipson clearly lays the blame on the liberal (and capitalist) system, Kymlicka subtly shifts the focus, and blame, to the liberal culturalists' fretted flipside of external protections: internal restrictions.

Kymlicka (2007: 39 n.) points out that UNESCO treated nation-states "as unitary entities within which cultural assimilation was assumed to be desirable." In other words, there were no protections for minorities within these post-colonial states which had embarked upon aggressive nation-building projects. A Westphalian system, based on the integrity and sovereignty of nation-states, empowers nation-states to rely on internal restrictions. It is a system premised on non-interference in the internal affairs of member states (as

the Chinese are wont to point out in recent weeks).

But, as we saw above, liberal culturalists are very uncomfortable with internal restrictions, while procedural liberals outright reject them even at (or perhaps because of) the expense of cultural maintenance. Liberal culturalists struggle for a balance between the need for internal restrictions to ensure cultural integrity and the seemingly illiberal nature of internal restrictions. Kymlicka (2007: 92) worries about internal restrictions producing “islands of local tyranny within a broader democratic state” and agrees that democratic states cannot permit minority rights to go this far. Translated to a global level, this would mean that the democratic international community cannot allow member states to exercise internal, local tyranny in the name of national integrity. In terms of language issues, Chinese suppression of Tibetan or Turkish suppression of Kurdish would be the type of cases that Kymlicka would worry about. Some would argue that the English-Only movement in the United States is pushing for illiberal internal restrictions.

But what if linguistic internal restrictions are used at the national (or sub-national in federal states) level to ward off English? Liberal culturalists, as well as some procedural liberals such as Patten (2005), tend to support at least in some form Quebec’s Bill 101. And many liberals would find France’s *loi Toubon* tolerable, if somewhat hypocritical (see Sonntag 2003, Chap. 3). Both Quebec and France have viable global societal cultures. What about cases where the language and culture have very limited global standing? An interesting recent case comes from India, where the state government of Karnataka dusted off a decade-old law to enforce Kannada as the medium of instruction in all state schools, decommissioning English-medium schools in the process. In the ensuing controversy, many took Patten’s (and Pogge’s) line of argument: social mobility in an increasingly globalized economy (and Karnataka’s capital is Bangalore, the Silicon Valley of India) trumps cultural-linguistic maintenance through internal restrictions. Indeed, it was those who had most to gain from social mobility, the dalits and lower castes, who were clamoring for English (as Weinstock might have predicted).

Let us consider Shachar’s solution of “utilizing external protections to reduce internal restrictions.” If indeed, in this age of globalization, the Westphalian system of state sovereignty is eroding, then internal restrictions are no longer as viable an option. Kymlicka (2007) argues that the international community, includ-

ing intergovernmental organizations such as UNESCO, is shifting away from privileging the nation-state. Presumably, then, in lieu of condoning internal restrictions, intergovernmental organizations could increase external protections for viable global societal cultures to survive the onslaught of English. Most international efforts to prevent language death and increase awareness of the costs of language loss, however, do not necessarily focus on protection from English (see Fishman 97/98). Furthermore, as Kymlicka (2007) himself notes in celebrating these efforts, it is unclear how much substance there is behind the rhetoric.¹⁴ The European Union, at the forefront of linguistic external protections, is struggling to effectively resist the invidiousness of English, with some questioning whether the effort is worth it (*Economist* 2007). Hamel (2003) points out that a prominent view in Mercosur, the South American regional intergovernmental organization, is that English should be embraced as *the* foreign language in school curricula of member states. Hence the liberal culturalist model of state accommodation of linguistic diversity through external protections and (limited) internal restrictions looks increasingly unviable at the global level where English dominates.

Indeed, it may be that the procedural liberals have more currency at this global level than the liberal culturalists. At best, the European Union, and other international organizations, can attempt to be linguistically evenhanded or neutral by having, in Patten’s (2003a: 372) terms, a “prorated” official multilingualism policy, which takes into account “the number of people demanding services in each recognized language.” In the ensuing competition facilitated by the “fair background conditions” provided by liberal neutrality (Patten 2003b: 370), English wins. As we saw in the previous section of the paper, Patten also claims that social mobility and democratic participation should trump such official multilingualism in favor of a common public language. We also saw above how many argue, in the case of India and elsewhere (e.g., South Africa), that access to English is critical for, and demanded by, those aspiring to upward social mobility in a globalized economy.

Even the democratic participation trump may favor English. Cosmopolitan democrats, such as David Held (1995), have argued that overcoming the democratic deficit inherent in globalization is the imperative political project of the day. Cosmopolitan democrats

¹⁴ See Duchene and Heller (2007) and Pennycook (2004) for interesting and insightful analyses of the rhetoric around language endangerment and language loss.

welcome the emergence of a global transnational civil society to offset powerful global economic actors. The cosmopolitan project is to create democratic institutions at the global level “which enable the voice of individuals to be heard in global affairs” (Archibugi 2003: 8). Daniele Archibugi is one of the few, if not the only, cosmopolitan democrat to seriously address the language question inherent in global democratic deliberation (Ives 2008).¹⁵ Although Archibugi suggests Esperanto as a cosmopolitan-type solution to this language question, Ives (2008) maintains that Archibugi (2005) “invokes Esperanto as a metaphor, but practically this leads to an acceptance of English as the language that can be learned to overcome the ‘linguistic barriers’ to an effective democracy.”

In a globalized world, then, in which upward social mobility and democratic participation should be accessible to all, English predominates. With no global “state” to offer external protections and nation-states’ ability to impose internal restrictions eroding, linguistic diversity, at least in the public space of economic and political globalization, cannot (and some would argue, should not) be maintained. Furthermore, to further add to the seeming inevitability of global English, English as a language is changing, many argue, and shedding its exclusive association with and ownership by Anglophone nations. It is becoming, many claim, a neutral language for purposes of international or global communication.

There is a growing linguistics and sociolinguistics literature that discusses and documents this globalization of English. The journal, *World Englishes*, is exemplary in this field of literature. One of the editors of the journal, Braj Kachru, is renowned in the field for analyzing the fragmentation and indigenization of English worldwide, hence the existence of languages such as Indian English, Singaporean English, Nigerian English, etc. today. Recent research conducted in Europe (see House 2003; Seidlhofer and Jenkins 2003) suggests that the English used for communication purposes among non-native speakers has significant linguistic and communicative features distinct from the English spoken by native speakers.¹⁶ The implications of this research, suggest the authors, is that English as a lingua franca is a language of communication, different from the English

¹⁵ I want to thank Peter Ives for introducing me to Archibugi’s work on cosmopolitan democracy. My treatment of cosmopolitanism here and my subsequent discussion of a Gramscian approach draw heavily from Peter Ives.

¹⁶ For even more recent research and discussion of this topic among sociolinguists, see volume 26 of the *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* for 2006.

language as a marker of identity for Anglophones (or, for that matter, Indian English for Indians). As such, House (2003) argues, English as a lingua franca is not a threat to linguistic diversity. It may be possible to push the envelope here and argue that Anglophone monolingual communities risk exclusion in a global community where the common public language is this new global English (see Ives 2008; Sonntag 2008). There’s a certain irony in that just as English is becoming for many a neutral global medium of communication, many Americans (at least those supportive of the English-Only movement) are “re-imagining” English as *the* marker of American identity (Nunberg 1992).

A GRAMSCIAN APPROACH

If indeed it is the case that global English is premised on the (procedural) liberal principles and values of neutrality, democratic participation and social mobility, we need not assume that this is inevitable, natural or a further stage in a progressive teleology. We can instead analyze this as linguistic hegemony, that is, a general, indeed global, acceptance of a certain language ideology of which the most prominent characteristic is the conception of language as a means of communication (see Ives 2006; also Coulombe 1993: 143). As with any hegemony, it is not total and uncontested. An ideology of language as a marker of identity may be seized upon by both more conservative and more progressive alternatives (see Kymlicka 2007), resulting not in a “war of movement” but in a “war of position,” to use Gramscian terms.¹⁷ In other words, global English is likely to be contested but not rejected, and English can be willingly appropriated for this global role while continuing to advantage both Anglophones (Grin 2005) and an Anglophile global elite (Phillipson 2003).

A Gramscian approach will help us deconstruct what is accepted as inevitable, natural and progressive. According to Peter Ives (2006) a Gramscian approach demonstrates how the “communicative function of

¹⁷ Kymlicka’s (2007) advocacy for the internationalization of liberal multiculturalism would be an example of a more progressive, albeit still liberal, alternative. On the conservative side, as I have attempted to demonstrate elsewhere in analyzing American attitudes toward business process outsourcing in India (Sonntag 2008), an ideology of language as a national identity marker can shift the focus from the economic consequences of globalization to nationalism and xenophobia. (This seems to me not unlike Barack Obama’s perceptive but politically damaging comment that Americans, bitter over the economic consequences of globalization, turn to guns and religion, and anti-immigrant sentiment.) Both the progressive and conservative examples fall within a broad liberal framework, indicating their positioning within hegemony.

language is tied to the cultural choices and power dynamics amongst users of that language.” The users of English are no longer native-speakers, but, as we saw above, increasingly users in what Kachru refers to as the outer and expanding circles of English. For example, the cultural choices and power dynamics of speakers of Indian English vary from the cultural choices and power dynamics of Indian speakers of global English in call center interactions with American native speakers of English (see Sonntag 2008).

Obviously, then, a Gramscian analysis calls for detailed, situated, historical and political analyses—significantly different from the ahistorical, apolitical analyses of (procedural) liberals as noted by May (2003). Such an analysis, I believe, would expose what many sociolinguists see as the more troubling aspects of the global spread of English, such as loss of linguistic diversity, non-mother-tongue instruction in primary schools, and linguistic domination. Here, in the conclusion of this paper, I want to sketch out briefly the beginnings of a Gramscian approach to what seems to be so problematic—a dilemma/conundrum—for many sociolinguists: that so many people, especially parents for their children, *choose* English, e.g., as medium of instruction, over their mother tongue. Sociolinguists may tend to wonder about, even doubt, the authenticity of these preferences and the autonomy of the individual in making this choice. Somehow, in choosing/preferring English, it seems they are making misinformed choices, deluded by a false consciousness of economic access and upward social mobility. When voicing such doubts, sociolinguists are often accused of being paternalistic, for example in recommending that the state structure linguistic institutions (such as schools) in a way that procedural liberals would contend limits, or obstructs, individual choice (and hence individual autonomy and freedom).

Sociolinguists are susceptible to such criticism, particularly from liberal political theorists, unless they can convincingly demonstrate that the choice/preference for English is not autonomous, but rather is heteronomous (see Tomlinson 1991: 94ff). As we saw at the outset of this paper, liberal culturalists at least situate autonomy in a cultural context, but their framework does not extrapolate well to an analysis of global English. A Gramscian analysis of global English as hegemonic attunes us to “conceptualize what it is in particular historical situations which prevents the realization of the moral, rational, free, and autonomous choices people are potentially capable of making” (Bocock 1986: 64). Or, in Ives’

(2008: 24) interpretation of Gramsci, global English is “the result not of ‘free choice’ but of the fragmentary, incoherent and ultimately subjugated nature of subaltern conditions.” Stephen May’s (2003) observation that it is not only or even predominantly linguistic barriers that thwart the social mobility of linguistic minorities is an example of how subaltern struggles are fragmented and subjugated. To present subalterns with linguistic assimilation as the means to empowerment, as liberals do, strengthens hegemony. Under hegemony, choices are restricted not through coercion but through consent.

The choices individuals make under conditions of linguistic hegemony appear to lead to linguistic homogeneity and loss of linguistic diversity. This is true at the global level as well as at the national level (as we saw above). But if homogenization is seen as the result of autonomous choices rather than relations of power and subjugation under particular historical conditions, then even those who might be troubled by the loss of diversity will see it as inevitable and morally unobjectionable (Tomlinson 1991: 98). By extension, even if they are troubled by globalization, they will see it as inevitable and, at best, see the only alternative as one of softening its impact on the disadvantaged. Thomas Clayton (2005) suggests that such alternatives are accommodative of hegemony. They invoke what Partha Chatterjee (1986) would call “non-derivative” discourses.

Putting these complex notions of hegemony together suggests that there is an added context in which individuals or groups make linguistic choices that is missing from both the procedural liberal analysis (in which the context is free and rational) and the liberal cultural analysis (in which the context is societal cultures). It is a context of power relations, not always only hierarchical and total but often fragmented and partial. Hence, as I have argued elsewhere (2003), it is the local politics of global English that might be most pertinent to issues of governance and democratic participation for linguistic minorities.

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