

English as a Global Language: Some Ideological Perspectives

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Overview of presentation
- 1.2 Historical perspective on languages that have functioned globally

2.0 Most widely used languages

- 2.1 Difficulties in ranking languages
 - 2.1.1 Some surveys of languages give information on native speakers only. Others count both native speakers and *secondary* speakers (those who use the language regularly even though it is not their native language).
 - 2.1.2 Some languages have relatively large populations of native speakers but are used almost exclusively in a few countries. Other languages have relatively small populations of native speakers but are used in many different countries as an official or national language (English, of course, has large populations of native speakers and at the same time is used in many different countries as a national language).
- 2.2 Some different rankings
 - 2.2.1 *Summer Institute of Linguistics* ranking (see page 4)
 - 2.2.2 *Language Today* ranking, George Weber (see page 4)

3.0 Multiple Englishes

- 3.1 Native-speaker varieties (reflect such variables as geographical location, socioeconomic status, ethnocultural identity)
 - 3.1.1 American varieties

In New York City what is described as “a Brooklyn accent” reflects socioeconomic status more than geographical location (this accent is generally not used by well-educated people who live in Brooklyn).
 - 3.1.2 British varieties

In London the same is true of “a Cockney accent,” even though historically this accent identified speakers from a particular region.
- 3.2 Non-native varieties (various kinds of *-lishes*)
 - 3.2.1 Non-native pronunciations of English: for example, *Engrish* (Japanese)
 - 3.2.2 Code-switching between English and another language: for example, *Taglish* (Tagalog)
- 3.3 Specialized varieties that facilitate communication
 - 3.3.1 Oral

e.g., professional code used by airplane pilots and air traffic controllers

Although these communications are highly codified, they still can result in misunderstandings that have lethal consequences. After an airplane crash near New York City, the audiotape revealed that the pilot who was a non-native speaker repeatedly attempted to communicate that the plane was low on fuel, but the air traffic controller showed no sign of comprehension and left the plane in a holding pattern until it ran out of fuel and crashed.
 - 3.3.2 Written

e.g., email text that suppresses spelling and punctuation norms

In her written work for school, my granddaughter uses standard spelling and punctuation, but when using email she tends to minimize keystrokes, which results in texts such as the following:

hey poppi
how ya doing? im doing good. im just checking in. im sick at home rite now, not feeling so great. wanna chat--
love Leah

4.0 Standard English(es)

4.1 Traditional definitions of Standard English (conceived as singular)

4.1.1 *A particular dialect of English...of global currency without significant variation, universally accepted as the appropriate educational target in teaching English, which may be spoken with an unrestricted choice of accent* (Strevens 1983:88)

4.1.2 *The variety of a language which has the highest status in a community or nation and which is usually based on the educated speakers of the language; a standard variety is generally*

(a) *used in the news media and in literature*

(b) *described in dictionaries and grammars*

(c) *taught in schools and taught to non-native speakers when they learn the language as a foreign language* (Richards, Platt, and Weber 1985:271)

4.2 Standard Englishes

4.2.1 More than one Standard English in a country such as Nigeria (Hill & Parry identify three major patterns of English use: *in countries such as Japan and Brazil where English functions as the language of international commerce; in multilingual countries such as Nigeria and Zimbabwe where English is the language of education and government; and in countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States where English is the dominant language* (1994:12)

Nigeria

Standard English

(for international communication)

Nigerian Standard English

(for national communication)

Nigerian Regional Englishes

(for regional communication)

(e.g., Hauslish among Hausa speakers)

4.2.2 More than one Standard English even in countries such as the United Kingdom where English is the dominant language: *We may, in due course, all need to be in control of two standard Englishes—the one which gives us our national and local identity, and the other which puts us in touch with the rest of the human race. In effect, we may all need to become bilingual in our own language.* (David Crystal 1988:265)

5.0 Problems in using any natural language as a global language

5.1 Associated with particular cultural values of the native speakers

5.2 Difficult language features

5.2.1 Sound system

e.g., the voiced and voiceless fricatives represented by *-th*

5.2.2 Grammatical system

5.1.2.1 Morphology

e.g., *-s* marking for 3rd person (*-s* also used for plural and possessive)

5.1.2.2 Syntax

e.g., the vast array of two-word verbs such as *put up* and *put down*

5.3 Native speaker attitudes toward non-native use of English

Among native speakers, the use of non-standard language tends to be associated with lower socioeconomic status and less education. This association can be erroneously carried over to highly educated non-native speakers whose language use may reflect non-standard features.

5.4 Domination of other languages

Orhan Pamuk's literary work has been translated into more than 40 languages, but except for two translations an English version was used rather than the original Turkish.

6.0 Pedagogical Implications

6.1. What kinds of Englishes are you to teach in your classrooms here in Turkey? I would like to hear your thoughts on this question during our discussion period.

6.2. Let me initiate our discussion with a few thoughts of my own:

6.2.1 Students should be presented authentic language in a range of different settings, and hence there will necessarily be variation that is congruent with the social context.

6.2.2 Students should be presented a curriculum that is balanced between English used in a native-speaker context and English used in the context of international communication (e.g., Obama's speeches in the U. S. and his speeches in countries such as Turkey).

6.2.2.1 Speech to an American audience

We've been warned about offering people of this nation false hope. There's never been anything false about hope. The hopes of the little girl who goes to public school in Dillon are the same as the dreams of the boy who learns on the streets of LA.

We will remember that there is something happening in America, that we are not as divided as our politics suggest, that we are one people, that we are one nation—and together we will begin the next great chapter in the American story with three words that will ring from coast to coast, from sea to shining sea: Yes, we can.

6.2.2.2 Speech to a Turkish audience

This is my first trip overseas as President of the United States. I have been to the G-20 Summit in London, the NATO Summit in Strasbourg and Kehl, and the European Union Summit in Prague. Some people have asked me if I chose to continue my travels to Ankara and Istanbul to send a message. My answer is simple: 'Evet'. Turkey is a critical ally. Turkey is an important part of Europe. And Turkey and the United States must stand together – and work together – to overcome the challenges of our time.

This morning I had the privilege of visiting the tomb of the great founder of your Republic. I was deeply impressed by this beautiful memorial to a man who did so much to shape the course of history. But it is also clear that the greatest monument to Ataturk's life is not something that can be cast in stone and marble. His greatest legacy is Turkey's strong and secular democracy, and that is the work that this assembly carries on today.

(see <http://enduringamerica.com/2009/04/06/video-obama-speech-in-turkey/>)

6.2.3 Students should be exposed to English that expresses their own cultural values.

6.2.3.1 In Pakistan the textbook *Primary Stage English* includes lessons such as "Pakistan My Country," "Our Flag," and "Our Great Leader" (Malik 1993). The Punjab Textbook Board is committed to using English to teach Islamic and patriotic values: *The board...takes care through these books to inoculate in the students a love of Islamic values and [an] awareness to guard the ideological frontiers of their home lands* (Punjab Text Book Board 1997).

Such use of English may have particular value in mitigating the kind of polarization between Islamic and Western values that can be found in certain *Madrassas*.

6.2.3.2 In my next presentation I will explore how stories drawn from the oral culture of non-native speakers can be especially valuable in their learning English. Such stories not only facilitate comprehension by drawing on familiar schemata, but also reinforce positive values associated with traditional culture.

Summer Institute of Linguistics Ethnologue Survey (1999)
<http://www2.ignatius.edu/faculty/turner/worldlang.htm>

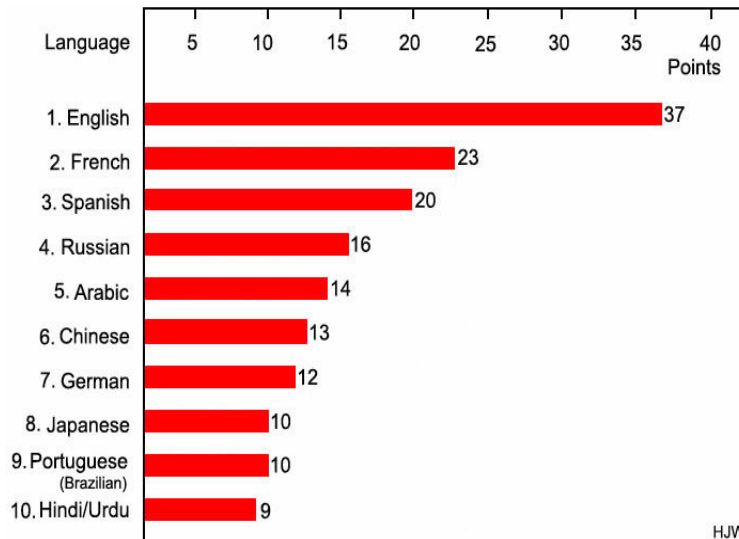
	Language	Native Speaker	Non-native Speaker	Total
1	Mandarin	1,100,000,000	20,000,000	1,120,000,000
2	English	330,000,000	150,000,000*	480,000,000
3	Spanish	300,000,000	20,000,000	320,000,000
4	Russian	160,000,000	125,000,000	285,000,000
5	French	75,000,000	190,000,000	265,000,000
6	Hindi/Urdu	250,000,000		250,000,000
7	Arabic	200,000,000	21,000,000	221,000,000
8	Portuguese	160,000,000	28,000,000	188,000,000
9	Bengali	185,000,000		185,000,000
10	Japanese	125,000,000	8,000,000	133,000,000
11	German	100,000,000	9,000,000	109,000,000

*Estimates for non-native speakers of English can run much higher (e.g., the British Council estimates that there may be as many as 750,000,000, which would be more than double the number of native speakers).

The World's 10 Most Influential Languages

(George Weber, *Language Today*, 1997)

<http://www.andaman.org/BOOK/reprints/weber/rep-weber.htm>



Six weighted criteria used to rank the languages

Each criterion is weighted according to the maximum number of points that can be assigned.

1. Number of primary speakers: max. 4 points
2. Number of secondary speakers: max. 6 points □
3. Number and population of countries using the language: max. 7 points
4. Number of major areas of human activity in which the language is important: max. 8 points □
5. Economic power of countries using the language: max. 8 points □ □
6. Socio-literary prestige of the language: max. 4 points (an additional point if an official UN language)

Twenty major languages were assigned a number of points for each criterion and the points were added together and the top ten ranked accordingly. Results are based on data collected between the early 1980s and mid 1990s. Since that time the number of speakers of *all* the top ten languages have gone up, but relative to each other, their ranking remains the same.—George Weber, 2008