

# ENGLISH: A LANGUAGE FOR THE NEXT MILLENNIUM

Territorial Politics

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International ethnolinguistic estimates suggest that the English language is currently spoken by nearly a quarter of the world's population. Amongst approximately 5,000 existing tongues worldwide, no other language can match this growth. The present paper explores the origins and evolution of this linguistic phenomenon. From the expansion of the British Empire in the nineteenth century, through the rise of the United States to world leadership, to the latest unprecedented technological explosion of the English-speaking North American-led Internet. As the new millennium dawns upon increasingly 'multicultural' and 'multilingual' societies, a paradoxical 'globalisation' of the English language seems to be taking place. Against the background of an heterogeneous European Babel, the significance of one single tongue's supremacy is examined.

## LINGUISTIC COLONIALISM

During the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (1558-1603) the number of English speakers in the world is thought to have been between five and seven million. At the beginning of Queen Elizabeth II's government in 1952, the figure had increased almost fiftyfold: 250 million people were estimated to speak English as a mother tongue, and a further 100 million or so had learned it as a foreign language.(Crystal, 1996, p. 29) The 1980s witnessed the continuation of this trend,

with the amount of English speakers reaching over 300 million. A total which has now been largely exceeded by the global number of people to whom English is a foreign language: well over one billion.<sup>1</sup> The English-speaking countries of Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand can easily account for the size of the English-speaking indigenous population worldwide. However, the spread of English in non-English speaking countries can only be understood by analysing the wider socio-economic, cultural and geo-political developments which have given rise to the global predominance of the English language. In particular the idiosyncrasies characterising two exceptionally influential English-speaking countries: Britain, the prime mover and former 'mother country', and the United States in her present role of English-speaking superpower and world leader. As David Crystal has indicated 'why a language becomes a global language has little to do with the number of people who speak it. It is much more to do with who those speakers are'.(Crystal, 1997, p. 5)

The historical process by which English has become established as the first language in the world has its origins in British territorial expansionism which has been responsible for both the initial spread of this linguistic code within the United Kingdom's confines, and its subsequent diffusion well beyond her borders.

In the first instance, the Germanic invasions of the fifth century witnessed the establishment of the English language in England. This event signalled the beginnings of what was to develop into the rapid arithmetic progression of English language. Prior to the advent of English into the British Isles, Celtic languages had been traditionally spoken across Britain, i.e. Ireland, Scotland and Wales; and continued to be in use long after the dust of conquest had settled. The spread of English language inland gathered pace, however with the 'political incorporation' of these Celtic regions during the Middle Ages. Following their conquest of England in 1066, the

Norman monarchs proceeded to colonise first, Wales, and then Ireland by awarding land to kings in return for subduing the local population.<sup>2</sup> Such territorial assimilation was carried out from what historian Robert Bartlett has referred to as the ‘centre’ of Latin Christendom.

(Barlett, 1993) While their origins and heritage appeared to have varied, these invaders shared a strong common commitment to Christianity as defined by the Pope. The resulting linguistic outcome of this period being a form of acculturation or ‘linguistic colonialism’ in which a number of varieties of English (and other languages such as French and Flemish) were introduced into the occupied territories.

Beyond the British Isles, colonies were first established at the end of the sixteenth century.

During this period territorial conquest was a ‘Europe-wide’ phenomenon mainly motivated by economic expansionism and political rivalries among states.<sup>3</sup> It is against this background that the development of the English language abroad needs to be understood. With the process of offshore colonisation lasting more than 300 years and affecting four continents, it is very difficult to make generalisations about its emerging character. David Graddol has pointed out, however, that many of the colonies where English emerged as a main language shared a distinctive sequence of events impacting in the accelerated expansion of the English language. Firstly, an original settlement by English speakers; secondly, political incorporation; and thirdly, a nationalistic reaction which sometimes, but not always, have led to independence. Within their different contexts, the linguistic implications of such events help understanding the speedy spreading of the English language. In the wake of further territorial occupations the English language continued to expand as successive settlement of English speakers occurred in the Americas, Africa, India and Australia. Each region providing a unique political and social context in which the English language could flourish. As colonies developed and became of greater strategic importance to Britain, the British government took larger responsibility for

their administration. Stretching across its vast jurisdiction 'English' came to be identified as 'the language of the state'. The colonised territories became subjects of the English monarchy, economically dependent and controlled by the 'mother country'. Linguistically this meant that the use of English became a powerful national symbol. Complete political incorporation of colonised territories beyond the British Isles would not be accomplished until the nineteenth century, when the British government, by assuming the administration of the remaining colonies created *de facto* the 'British Empire'. While there was no universal colonial experience, the common 'linguistic' consequences of such an expansionist process saw the use of the English language literally spreading to the 'four corners of the world'.

One of the most significant linguistic consequences of colonisation has been the appearance of new varieties of the English language worldwide. Some of them remain local languages of relative low social status. Such is the case of English Creole, a variety of English/Portuguese/Spanish tongue developed during the slave trade from Africa to the Caribbean, and which has survived though with very limited use.<sup>4</sup> Others have become standardised and adopted by newly independent states as an official or main language. As colonies expanded becoming more established, a corresponding sense of regional cultural and linguistic identity emerged. This might have been reinforced by contact with local languages, by new kinds of social hierarchies (often positioning pre-colonial people as subordinates) or by different forms of continuing relationship with Britain. The most complex linguistic situation is to be found in those colonies where bilingual communities were created. For instance, in India and West Africa a relative small number of Europeans imposed political and economic control over pre-colonial populations. Here, new hybrid forms of the English language combined with local tongues developed. In the case of West Africa, for example, such process has led to the formation of 'English Pidgin', a simplified makeshift language mostly used in Sierra Leone

between the African and Portuguese for commercial purposes during the slave trade.(Walvin, 1993; Todd, 1984) David Graddol has concluded that, 'when a language is imposed on a community as part of a colonial process, speakers tend to incorporate many linguistic features from their first language when speaking the new, imposed one'.(Graddol, 1996, p. 185)

Incorporation of the English language into the dependent territories occurred within a framework of socio-political, economic and cultural inequalities between the conquerors and the conquered. Any account of the linguistic consequences of colonialism must undoubtedly relate to the existing *status quo* which favoured the English language and those who spoke it. In such context, E. M. Craver (1992) has explained how the language of a conquered people has little effect on that of the conquerors. While the English language spread and developed into new mixed varieties, the impact of local tongues on the former has been largely negligible. In the same way as there was a lack of Celtic influence on Old English, the pre-colonial native American tongues had no significant impact on the dominant English language.

### LINGUISTIC POST-COLONIALISM

The demise of the British Empire was to further the international linguistic expansion of English during the post-colonial era with the institutionalisation of the English language in the newly independent states. From the late eighteenth century onwards, the emergence of different forms of nationalistic political movements have characterised the political life of most British dominions. Reactions to British rule in North America in 1776 were to be followed in quick succession by the rest of the former protectorates. Canada was granted a form of self-government in 1867; dominion status was conferred to Australia in 1901, New Zealand in 1907,

and South Africa in 1910. By 1931 the totality of previously colonised territories became linked to Britain under its monarchy in the 'Commonwealth of Independent States'. The second half of the twentieth century has witnessed the complete emancipation of the former colonies, culminating in 1997 with the return of Honk Kong to the Chinese Government. Whereas these campaigns for political independence were aimed at freeing the subordinate territories from their British colonial masters, paradoxically the 'language' in which such revolutions were fought was English. In many uprisings (e.g. India) the pre-colonial language provided a focus for the assertion of a separatist identity. As a result use of these indigenous tongues has been maintained after the achievement of political independence.

In the aftermath of the British Empire though, the English language seemed to have become largely assimilated by the newly independent states, becoming *de facto* a statutory language. In North America, for instance, the establishment of a Republic was entirely constructed as an English-speaking collectivity, the constitutional ideal of 'We the People' having been modelled on the socio-cultural and linguistic outlook of the original British settlers. For most of the inhabitants of the previous African and Asian dominions however, English language only amounted to a 'second tongue'. This has been capitalised by political movements seeking autonomy in countries such as India and many of the new African colonies during the closing decades of the twentieth century. In Ghana for example, the government has settled for English as the main language to carry out the affairs of state, education, commerce, the media, and the legal system, with their respective native languages remaining in use at the limited regional and tribal levels. In Nigeria, English is the sole official language due to it being the only medium common to the many and varied ethnolinguistic communities making up the nation. English is the official language of Gambia, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, although few people speak it as a first language, and most people are in any case multilingual. In other

places, English is a 'co-official' tongue with one or more languages. Examples of this include: Gaelic in the Irish Republic; French in Canada and Cameroon; Spanish in Puerto Rico; Swahili in Tanzania; Sesotho in Lesotho; Chichewa in Malawi; Cantonese in Hong Kong; with Malay, Mandarin Chinese, and Tamil in Singapore; with Afrikaans and the nine indigenous languages (Ndebele, Pedi, Northern Sotho, Southern Sotho, Swati, Tsonga, Venda, Xhosa, and Zulu) in South Africa; with two pidgin languages, Tok Pisin (based on English) and Hiri Motu (based on local languages) in Papua-New Guinea. The most complex situation exists in India, where having become an official language alongside Hindi, English has three overlapping roles: a) associate official language -Hindi being the official language-; b) national language like Bengali, Hindi, and Gujarati, because it is the government's language of the four states (i.e. Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, and Tripura); and c) official language of eight Union territories (the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Arunachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Delhi, Lakshadweep, Mizoram, and Pondicherry). (Hartmann, 1996, p. 15)

Heinhard Hartmann has provided an accurate picture of the true extent of this remarkable linguistic legacy. He has advanced a model for classifying the contemporary international distribution of English language. Following Barbara Strang's original 'tripartite' approach, Hartmann's updated version divides the various world regions, where the English tongue is being used, into three categories: a) 'English Native Language' Territories (36 areas) where the majority of inhabitants have English as their first and generally only language; b) 'English as a Second Language' Territories (51 areas) where English is used for specific social or professional purposes, and in some places it has official, educational or other roles; and c), 'English as a Foreign Language' Territories (121 areas) where English is learned as the main foreign language for a variety of occupational, job-related or intellectual reasons. According to this revised 'tripartite' model the number of world territories using the English language is

approximating 228, which equates to all the countries in the globe. No other language can challenge such overwhelming supremacy.

While British territorial expansionism saw the spread of English language well beyond the mother country's shores, the ensuing de-colonisation period has witnessed a more fundamental increase in the language's already formidable reach. The socio-cultural legacy of the British colonial era can indeed be said to have been greatly responsible for this language's international expansion. As the twentieth century comes to an end however, post-colonialism alone cannot not entirely account for the further transformation of English into a global language of universal appeal.

#### NORTH AMERICA'S BEST EXPORT

The post-First World War League of Nations was the first of many modern international US-led alliances to allocate a special prominence to English in its proceedings. English was one of the two official languages (the other was French) within the structure, and all documents were printed in both. When the League was replaced in 1945 by the United Nations, the role of English became even more critical, being present in over fifty different policy areas, specialised agencies, standing committees and expert bodies. In 1995-96, the Union of International Associations' *Yearbook* listed 12,500 international organisations worldwide. A random sample of 500 of these showed that 85 percent (424) made official use of English -far more than any other language. French was the only other language to show up strongly, with 49 percent (245) using it officially. Thirty other languages also attracted occasional official status, but only Arabic, Spanish and German achieved over 10 percent recognition.(Crystal, 1997, pp. 79-80)

The end of the Cold War and the subsequent collapse of Communism saw the consolidation of the United States as the undisputed international leading nation. Her political, cultural and economic expansion was to follow, and with it, the English language's influence continued to grow. As the new millennium approaches, a combination of America's political and economic might coupled with a number of geo-political, socio-cultural and technological developments have transformed English into a global medium of mass communication. Not only are international diplomacy and politics currently conducted in English, the world of business, media, the press, advertising, broadcasting, film, education, and even art forms such as popular music are dominated by the American-led English language. In 1994 data compiled in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* indicated that about a third of the world's newspapers were being published in those countries where the English language has an official status, and it is reasonable to assume that the majority of these would be in English. Similarly, the *Book of Lists 1997* reported that the top five papers in the world were all in English: first came *The New York Times*, followed by *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and the British papers, *The Times* and *The Sunday Times*. Of particular importance are those English-language newspapers intended for a global readership such as the *International Herald-Tribune*, *US Weekly* and *International Guardian*. Likewise, worldwide publication of periodicals and magazines such as *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *The Economist* having international appeal. It would seem that about a quarter of the world's periodicals, literary and technical reviews, scholarly journals, comics, and pornographic material are published in English. (Crystal, 1997, p. 85)

With an average of two-thirds of modern newspapers being devoted to advertising, the dominance of English language in this field has an enormous global impact. By 1972, only three of the world's top publicity agencies were not US-owned (two in Japan and one in Britain).

Not surprisingly, the official language of international advertising bodies such as the European Association of Advertising Agencies is invariably English. English is also the language of the film industry, 85 percent of the world's entertainment market is controlled by the United States, with Hollywood films dominating box offices in most countries. Despite the growth of motion pictures worldwide, English-language movies still dominate the medium, as Tinseltown's industry increasingly comes to rely on a small number of annual releases aimed at huge audiences such as *Jurassic Park* and *Titanic*. It is unusual to find a blockbuster movie produced in a language other than English, even in the category of 'foreign movies' the two most recent international box office successes (i.e. *Four Weddings and A Funeral*, and *The Full Monty*) were made in English. According to the *British Film Industry's Film and Television Handbook 1996*, 80 percent of all feature films given a theatrical release were in English. While the Oscar system has traditionally been English-language oriented, there is a strong English-language presence in most other film festivals too. Half of the 'Best Film' awards ever given at the Cannes Film Festival, for example, have been awarded to English-language productions. (Crystal, 1997, p. 91)

The pop music world has also felt the international power of the English language. The 1990 edition of *The Penguin Encyclopaedia of Popular Music* which includes 557 pop groups indicates that 549 (99 percent) of them work entirely or predominantly in English. Of the 1,219 solo vocalists, 1,156 (95 percent) sing in English. The mother tongue of the artists is apparently irrelevant. The entire international career of ABBA, the Swedish group with over twenty hit records in the 1970s and 1980s having been recorded and performed in English.

Perhaps the most direct evidence of the English US-led world supremacy has been its almost automatic transformation into the Internet's *lingua franca*. From the outset an English-

speaking North American invention, the World Wide Web has become a universal tool for accessing knowledge and exchanging information. A truly 'multi-lingual' Internet remains impracticable, for servers and clients must be able to intelligently communicate with each other, whatever the data source. Most browsers are still unable to handle multilingual data presentation including writing systems such as Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Thai and Hindi. If the pitfalls of a technological Babel are to be avoided, English language remains the only viable alternative. Here, the unparalleled domination of the US-led international software market personified by US giant Microsoft seems to indicate the establishment of a growing trend. Significantly Microsoft refused to translate its *Windows 95* software package into Icelandic, alleging a 'limited market' for such service.<sup>5</sup> While the director of the Icelandic Language Institute, Ari Pall Kristinsson, accused Microsoft of 'destroying' Iceland's linguistic heritage, the fact remains that every school child in his country learns English. Microsoft has seen no point in translating *Windows 95* into Icelandic when the standard English version can be sold instead. (Walsh, 1998, p.15) The inevitable globalisation of the English language is further acknowledged in the popular media, with a recent *New York Times* article by Michael Specter titled: 'World, Wide, Web: 3 English Words', in which he argues that, 'if you want to take full advantage of the Internet there is only one way to do it: learn English, which has more than ever become America's greatest and most efficient export'. (Specter, 1996)

### LANGUAGE AND MIGRATION

While the powerful influence of the United States has transformed the already international English into a global language, the projected shape of world migration will effectively guarantee the continuation of such a trend in the foreseeable future. Under the headlines, 'Close the Gap

Between Rich and Poor', *The Guardian* reminds us of the growing gulf in wealth among nations and the global disparities between developed and developing countries. (*The Guardian*, 16th July 1996) Reflecting on the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) latest report on 'Human Development', it appears that if present trends continue, economic disparities between industrial and developing nations 'will move from inequitable to inhuman'. The report ranks the countries of the world according to a human development index -measuring life expectancy, education and real income- rather than GNP (Gross National Product). Among developed nations, Canada, the United States, Japan, the Netherlands and Norway obtain top scores, with Britain in 16th place behind Finland, Spain and Australia. At the other end of the spectrum, Barbados, Bahamas, and South Korea hold the highest rankings among developing countries. Economic growth seems to have failed a quarter of the world's peoples, leading effectively to 'global polarisation', with 89 states being worse off now than they were fifteen years ago. Over the same period, fifteen countries, mainly in Asia, have experienced a dramatic surge in economic growth, for instance, Malaysia has grown by 3.5 percent, and China and Korea by 8.2 percent a year. (UNPD, 1996) The findings of the UNDP Report on Human Development clearly point to the widening of the already existing gap between developed and developing nations. With the wealth of the world's 358 billionaires exceeding the combined annual incomes of countries which are home to nearly half of the world's population.

These growing inequalities in wealth between the North and the South, the West and the East, the rich and the poor, have two main 'linguistic' consequences: first, they will impel increasing numbers of people with advanced or limited knowledge of English to move to the affluent English-speaking Western societies in search of better living standards. Secondly, the growing imbalance between rich and poor nations will increase the power of the former to culturally and linguistically influence the latter. The combined effect of such developments amounts to a

deepening of the established pattern of English-speaking Western dominance over the Third World regions, with the English language relentlessly securing its grip over the global linguistic market.

### THE EUROPEAN BABEL PARADOX

While the seemingly unstoppable expansionism of this one language runs its course, the world is increasingly becoming a large ‘multilingual’ and ‘multicultural’ community. Against the paradoxical background of ‘globalisation’ of the English language, contemporary societies are comprised of a myriad of linguistic ethnic groups with their particular culture, religion and custom. Within this context, hegemony of the English language poses a direct challenge to the survival of indigenous tongues. While politicisation of the latter in the face of cultural erosion is not uncommon, the reality of English’s might often proves overwhelming. The construction of language policy in Europe offers an interesting insight into this contemporary socio-linguistic dilemma. Inherently ‘multilingual’ and ‘multicultural’ in its outlook, Europe seems to thrive in her own inner diversity. This is indeed a collectivity that aims at being ‘broad as well as deep’.(*The Economist*, 2nd-8th January 1999, p. 16) The actual workings of such a large and complex structure however, call for an unified linguistic code to process the phenomenal volume of information it generates. In theory, the tongues of all member states are represented. In practice, English is the language most widely used.

Within Europe, language policy design and its relationship with English greatly varies from country to country, taking on different meanings according to the historic circumstances, demographic composition and socio-political idiosyncrasies of the member states. Britain and

most of her former colonies have largely developed bilingual models in which the English language plays a prominent role. Here, 'bilingualism' is understood as proficiency in English and knowledge of another mother tongue. In contrast, among members of the European Union there has been a marked emphasis on 'multi-lingualism'. Multi-lingual policies being conceived as the consecutive learning of a number of languages neither of which might be English. An illustration of this type of policy is provided by the Luxembourg system in which the entire citizenry becomes 'trilingual'. Luxemburger, German and French are learned both through schooling and the larger socio-economic environment.(Khoo, 1994, p. 5) Other examples include the various language programmes set up by the Commission of the European Communities, the Council of Europe and the Council for Cultural Co-operation such as 'Erasmus', 'Lingua', 'Eurydice', 'Arion', 'Petra', and 'Mercator'. The fact that many of these schemes lead to periods of study or training in different member states brings in its wake an ever growing need for higher levels of multi-lingual proficiency among Europeans. As integration gradually evolves within Europe, the linguistic implications for a highly diversified population are being reflected in ever more official interference to promote multilingualism.

Hugo Baetens Beardsmore has pointed out that European integration is in no way comparable to developments in younger nations where linguistic diversity, be it through immigration or based on indigenous heterogeneity, can be overcome by consensus or interventionist promotion of a common language (i.e. English).(Beardsmore, 1994, p.1) Linguistic communities in Europe are for the most part closely tied in with feelings of regional or national identity, and few would even envisage sacrificing their linguistic or cultural heritage on the altar of European unity. Europe's integration in no way, thus implies a movement towards the imposition of one *lingua franca*. The Catalanian and Basque bilingual policies, which cater for speakers of minority languages within a multi-lingual nation, illustrate this trend. While fostering

bilingualism in the national Spanish language, these educational programmes are mainly aimed at nurturing the indigenous languages of the Catalanian and Basque regions.

The philosophy behind this European is based on the idea of 'community'. The 'multi-lingual' approach is meant to contribute to a better understanding and awareness of the divergent EU members's cultures and to go well beyond a mastery of their different respective languages.

Europe aims at being a 'community', and a community requires partnership and not domination, least of all linguistic domination. The concept of a 'dominant language' does not, in theory, fit European language policy. A predominant language may arguably suppress not only other languages, but it may also impede the development of other cultures to a point of threatening their very existence. It is not through a leading language, but through the diversification of foreign language provision that European language policy seems to be constructed.

Ironically, this seemingly equitable multi-lingual 'social integrationist' model is subject to the same linguistic hierarchical constraints characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon 'assimilationist' approach. While the latter appears heavily skewed towards English,<sup>6</sup> the former displays a similar 'order of preference' between usage of supposedly similarly relevant tongues. In the Luxembourg case, for instance, oral communication seems to be carried out primarily in Luxemburger, whereas for written communication German is by far the most widely used language. (Beardsmore, 1994, p.5) In short, there is no such a thing as true equality among languages, with the reality of 'multilingualism' displaying marked 'assimilationist' tendencies. In the current debate on bilingual education, the status, perceived usefulness and pertinence of one language in relation to others is of paramount importance. Particularly when considering the impact that the global supremacy of English may have on 'lesser' ethnic minority tongues.

Notwithstanding the European 'multi-cultural' ideal, English has become *de facto* the first foreign language to be used all over Europe. It is already extensively used as a second language in Scandinavia and the Netherlands, while in southern and eastern Europe remains the main foreign language.<sup>7</sup> English is already widely deployed as an 'interlingua' in the complex meetings of the various European Union's bodies whenever expert translation is not available.<sup>8</sup> In spite of, or because of, the huge language services required by the institutions of the European Union (employing over 2,000 translators), (Hartmann, 1996, p.2) English continues to gain ground as the major working language, a trend which is likely to accelerate with a projected increase in the EU's membership. As Reinhard Hartmann has indicated, English increasingly dominates 'intra-European communication' in academic, commercial, bureaucratic, political and also social settings.(Hartmann, 1996, p. 2) Tom McArthur has gone as far as to refer to the 'Europeanness of English'.(McArthur, 1996, pp. 3-15) Bilingualism -with English- is indeed becoming a fact of life for the European citizen, as habitual use of English within the Union is found to be either essential or potentially necessary. It would be reasonable to suggest that in order to partake in Europe, and as such benefiting politically, economically and socially, it is desirable to master the English language. A glimpse at the 1992 official European Union policy statement regarding Language Services provides a case in point:

'Enlargement will bring additional languages to the [European Union], thus enriching its cultural diversity. But more languages will also complicate its work. In the [Union] of 12 members there are 9 official languages in normal use: in a [Union] of 20 members there could be as many as 15 languages; with 30 members there could be as many as 25 languages. For reasons of principle, legal acts and important documents should continue to be translated into the official languages of all member states. To ensure effective communication in meetings,

pragmatic solutions will have to be found by each of the institutions'.(European Commission, 24th June 1992)

On 1st January 1999 Europe took its boldest step towards integration when 11 states scrapped centuries of history to adopt the Euro as their common currency.(*The Guardian*, 1st January 1999, p. 1) As monetary union becomes a reality we may ask how long will 'linguistic' uniformity take to materialise.

#### ENGLISH: A LANGUAGE FOR THE NEXT MILLENNIUM

Hegemony of the English language as the widest spoken tongue in the world is undisputed. A breakdown of the major world languages easily places English (with 1,400 million speakers) at the top of the list far ahead of its nearest rival: Chinese (with 1,000 million speakers). (Edwards, 1995, p. 32) The ubiquitous presence of English in every sphere of society's life equally attests to its powerful cultural dominance.

Within the former British Empire, post-colonial independence movements have tended to politically deploy their linguistic heritage in order to avoid total cultural engulfment. The newly emerging nationalism in Ireland, Scotland and Wales, fearing for the survival of Celtic tongues, has similarly lobbied for their maintenance. While pre-colonial languages generally provided a focus for the assertion of a separatist identity, English featured predominantly in such uprisings. Ultimately retaining a 'official' status after independence had been achieved. The efforts of 'Celtic nationalists', on the other hand, have successfully seen their vernacular languages taught in schools. Only to be learned by people otherwise fluent in English.

The European Union with its two-pronged language policy approach of ‘theoretically’ advocating multilingualism but ‘in reality’ making wide use of English epitomises a most contemporary paradox. One by which increasingly diverse ‘multilingual’ and ‘multicultural’ societies seem to succumb to the globalisation of the English language. Europe’s ‘practical’ response to such dilemma maybe symptomatic of the way ahead.

In the nineteenth century, English had already become the language of a sizeable empire and it was beginning to be influenced by its international context. The twentieth century has further witnessed the rise of English to a wider global dimension, with the universal appeal of the US-led Internet having sealed this process. As the twenty first century looms closer, English is certainly well poised to become ‘the’ language for the next Millennium. With the attention of the international community firmly fixed on the Greenwich Dome for the New Era’s celebrations, the first words the world will hear are surely to be muttered in English.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Finding out about the number of foreigners using English is rather complicated, because there is wide variation among available estimates. With the exception of a few statistics from examination boards and international organisations, there are hardly any official figures.

<sup>2</sup> The situation in Scotland was slightly different. For further insight see W. L. Lorimer. 1988: The New Testament in Scots. Harmondsworth: Penguin, and J. D. McClure. 1988: Why Scots Matters: The Scots Language is a Priceless National Possession. Edinburgh: Saltire Society.

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<sup>3</sup> For an in-depth study of this period see A.C. Baugh & T. Cable. 1978: History of the English Language, 3rd edn. London: Routledge & Paul Kegan, and D. Burnley. 1992: The History of English Language: A Source Book. London: Longman.

<sup>4</sup> For a deeper insight into English Creole development see R. G. Le Page & A. Tabouret-Keller. 1985: Acts of Identity: Creole-based Approaches to Language and Ethnicity. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, and the original accounts of Ligon. 1647: A True Exact History of the Island of Barbados. London: Moseley.

<sup>5</sup> It must be noted that Microsoft has translated its *Windows 95* program into at least 30 different languages, included Slovenian and Catalanian. While a combination of commercial and technical reasons may lie behind Microsoft' selective process, more research is needed into the criteria used to ascertain the worthiness of one language over another.

<sup>6</sup> Within the Anglo-Saxon bilingual model, English is not always used as the target language. While in Commonwealth countries English is considered an official language, it may not have a preferential status in relation to the other existing official tongues. For instance, in Malaysia, Malay enjoys a prominent role to the detriment of English. In Singapore, however, the later remains unchallenged.

<sup>7</sup> The high level of bilingualism between English and the national language in Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden is the consequence of the successful long-term teaching of English to most of their people, who have generally been willing to co-operate. This justifies the view, which is still controversial, and sometimes troubling in those countries, that English is no longer really foreign, but a strong second language that is steadily becoming nativised. The recent advent and popularity, especially among the young, of multi-channel English-language satellite television only serves to consolidate and accelerate this process.

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<sup>8</sup> The English language has become a medium of communication at EU meetings where a large number of nations participate each having the right to use its own language. When the totality of member states are presenting a situation, well over a hundred pairs of languages may require translation services. In such cases, it becomes impossible to find expert translators for all language pairs (simultaneous translations from and into a language), or to provide maximum coverage on all occasions. A 'relay' system has been developed by which English is used as 'interlingua' (or intermediary language). For example, if there is no Finish/Greek translator available, one person would translate a speech from Finnish into English, and another would translate the result from English into Greek.

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