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The "Field" of English in the Cartography of Globalization

E. San Juan Jr.

Using Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "field," this essay explores the historical limits and possibilities of English as an international vehicle of communication. The use of globalized English is overdetermined by the facts of colonial sedimentation (Filipino migrant subalterns) and the comprador status of their employers in "newly industrialized" societies such as Taiwan. Hierarchies of class, nation, and race complicate the fate of "English" in a nation-state system where homogenizing and heterogenizing forces interact. Globalizing commodification ultimately defines the situation of "English" as the hegemonic lingua franca even as it opens up the horizon for the emergence of a plurality of "englishes" in a world witnessed by the resurgence of religious fundamentalisms and ethnic particularisms after 11 September 2001.

KEYWORDS: English, globalization, colonialism, speech-acts, hegemony

It is not my thinking that language constitutes differences. There is an access via language to difference in knowledge . . . but language doesn't constitute the ontological differences, not at all. . . . "Idealinguistry," linguistic idealism, . . . consists in thinking that language constitutes differences. From my point of view this is to fuse [mistakenly] knowledge and truth.

—Alain Badiou, *Infinite Thought*

In one of the more controversial books of the last century, *The Accidental Asian* (1998) by Eric Liu, whose father moved from China to Taiwan and eventually to the United States, the accident of being Chinese by descent becomes an asset in forging a more genuine American

identity. This identity is necessarily a product of cross-breeding, a geopolitical mix corresponding to an era of mobile capital, fluid investments, and flexible citizenship. Liu quotes favorably Arjun Appadurai's vision of the U.S. as an ethnoracial "free-zone" populated by myriad diasporic communities with plural loyalties. Ultimately, however, Liu (1998, 128) settles for assimilation into what he calls an "exceptional" nation

because it synthesizes the many cultures it welcomes. Far more than in Bourne's time, America now is indeed a transnationality: an amalgamation, a seedbed for once unthinkable hybrids. It is precisely in an age of globalization that America becomes the most necessary place on earth. That is why we owe it our undivided loyalty.

It is indeed an extraordinary profession of allegiance amid avowals of fidelity to ethnic filiation.

At the same time, Liu is proud (as he memorializes his extended family) of his Chinese cultural heritage expressed in what may be called Americanese idiom and sensibility. His moralizing stance seems a provocative challenge, if not a conundrum: in a time witnessed by the fall of Berlin walls and erosion of borders, Liu calls for a stringent patriotism that anticipates the post-9/11 Manichean fixation of the U.S. Patriot Act on a beleaguered "homeland."

We encounter a crux for diagnosis and hermeneutic suspicion. What are we to make of this symptomatic case of the Asian/Chinese American author claiming to express himself in two discourses but, in fact, only translates one subtext into the official text? Is English the proper language that, in its claim to neutrality and hegemony, can legitimately ventriloquize other languages and their associated experiences? What is the unspoken dialectic between English as a hegemonic language and the process of localizing the cosmopolitan agenda of globalization?

Globalizing Blues

As everyone knows, "globalization" has become the ubiquitous buzzword in the North American academy today as well as in interna-

tional business circles. But how are teachers of English implicated in this suspicious totalizing word? Since practically everyone will have his or her version of this phenomenon, allow me to present my own that will serve as the framework for my comments on the significance of English as a “global” language and its geopolitical resonance. To understand “globalization” better, our ingrained notion of distinctive realms of discourse—culture, politics, ideology, or economics—should be suspended for now since reality is, of course, much more complex and dynamic, eluding the reifying tentacles of our conceptual apparatus.

First, let us have a general definition. The term “globalization” is an euphemism for the almost uncontrolled expansion and domination of the world economy (particularly of the underdeveloped countries of the “periphery”) by a few transnational corporations based in Europe, Japan, and North America. This is a continuation and acceleration of a systemic process known as the worldwide spread of capitalism (Petras and Veltmeyer 2001). Key to this process of control are institutions like the World Trade Organization (WTO), World Bank (WB), and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Some implications of “globalization” (its adjectival form is more contagious) are: (1) the interdependence of economies and nations, (2) the virtual abolition or neutralization of boundaries between nation-states, (3) the liberalization of markets, and (4) the greater permeability of civil society and state, and integration at all levels. Social scientists like Immanuel Wallerstein, Anthony Giddens, David Harvey, Roland Robertson, and others have stressed such features as the role of the world economic system in the modernization of “peripheral” societies, and the nature of modernity as the conversion of the world into a single market for capital, labor, and commodities. There are also radical implications in the reconfiguration of subjectivity or identity, ecology, the “Other” as different, and the heterogeneity of local narratives, and so on.

With the recent breakthroughs in electronic telecommunications and transport, the time/space divide has been reconfigured into postmodernity. We are now resettled into a global village once envisioned by Marshall McLuhan in the 1960s—globalization actualizes “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring

many miles away and vice versa" (Giddens 1990, 64). Not only is the sneeze in Wall Street heard by rubber-workers in Malaysia who are subsequently fired from their jobs, but that and other visceral noises from the executive sessions of the IMF/WB register their impact on the Nike workers in Indonesia or the *maquiladoras* in the borderland between Mexico and the United States.

One current doxa is that, with the rapid changes in communication technology (i.e., the informatization of quotidian life), most if not all societies have undergone a revolution of sorts. There are only surfaces, no more depth or interiority (as in the characters of Proust or Dostoevsky). This rupture with modernity spells the dissolution of the wall between culture and economy; not only are economic and cultural spheres interdependent or reciprocally tied together, there is a subtle elision between them such that cultural forms (from films to television, performances, literary discourses of all kinds, pedagogy, conversations, political organizations, etc.) have become commodities, and commodities in turn have become symbols or signs—even, for Baudrillard, simulacra and simulations. In short, although Humanities scholars still give token recognition to goods as narrowly conceived material objects being exchanged, for those with a postmodernist optic, the significant point is the act of exchange and circulation of symbolic goods. In this category, we now include fast foods, t-shirts, advertisements, music, and other items encompassed by what is called TRIPS (trade-related intellectual property rights). In this intercultural export-import of cultural artifacts, we find the central figure of the anthropologist as traveler who finds himself in "concrete mediation" and "historical tension" (Clifford 1992, 101) with the native relocalized or dislocated into the borderland. As we will see, the migrant worker parodies this trope of travel in an ironic and counter-intuitive manner.

Certain urgent questions press us when, in antithesis to a putative economism of mainstream globalization experts, adversaries perform their own reductionist game. They posit a culturalism that reduces everything to discourse, texts, and semiotic play of differential counters, while giving only token or gestural recognition to labor, market, and actual commodities being produced and consumed. This exorbitance of the signifier becomes equivalent to globalization *tout court*. One way

we can grasp the limitation of this view is by translating it into the field of English—the concept of “field” is construed here in Pierre Bourdieu’s sense as a structured space of social positions of groups or individuals in which the positions and interrelations, usually in conflict, are determined by the distribution of various kinds of resources or capital (Thompson 1991)—in which diverse speakers/writers map their own locations and orientations.

In *English as a Global Language* (1997), David Crystal argued persuasively for treating English (whose privileged model is, of course, British English) as already a confirmed global language, an international “lingua franca.” Crystal is neither naïve nor chauvinist; he also warns against the dangers of a global language. Nonetheless, Crystal frankly states that English has become a “world language” owing to the economic and political power of the English-speaking world, in particular their “military power” (ibid., 7). The reference, of course, is to British imperial might in the past and the hegemonic power of the U.S. in the present. Let us recall also Winston Churchill’s cultural empire of the “English-speaking peoples,” otherwise known as “The New English Empire.” Especially after 11 September 2001, the voice of God speaks now not only in the rhetoric of the King James’s Bible, but more unilaterally in the official sound-bytes of White House/Pentagon briefings.

The Numbers Game

In terms of numbers, English speakers today comprise only less than those who consider Chinese as their mother tongue: 372 million versus 1,113 million. And although it is the world’s second most common native tongue, English will soon be overtaken by the South Asian linguistic group whose leading members are Hindi and Urdu (Walraff 2000, 7). This trend will continue, even though today India is regarded as having the fourth largest population of English speakers after the U.S., the United Kingdom, and Nigeria (the Philippines is sometimes cited as the third). This fact supports Crystal’s own contention that it is not demography but political, economic, and military power that determines globality. If China or India emerges in the future as the world’s hegemonic center, then English would lose its global status.

Crystal has eloquently presented the case for the cultural and historic rights of English to be a global language, even though ultimately such rights can only be enforced through political and military means. Might trumps right? Barbara Walraff reports about a Western technology expert who, in a conference in Taipei, witnessed the Chinese participants "grumbling about having to use English to take advantage of the Internet's riches." Indeed, to defend its postmodern ascendancy, English has to engage its rivals in the virtual realm of cyberspace, in the spectral domain of finance capitalism. We are all beholden to the sovereignty of the spectacle, the hypertext, the power of images and representations without any originals.

Before settling accounts and forecasting the future of "world English" or "englishes," let me cite some well-known respondents to its "civilizing" role. "Civilizing" is of course a contentious word, perilously evocative of genocides and holocausts. What has language got to do with colonizing armies or merchants? Language, for some experts, is a neutral instrument that can be used by anyone. This belief echoes Stalin's famous dictum that language is a working tool that can be utilized by different social systems, a secondary signaling system within the Pavlovian theory of reflexes (Radics and Kelemen 1983, 283). We are today far removed from these simplifications.

However, the utilitarian view resonates with those who still believe in Saussure's dichotomy between *langue* and *parole*, or Chomsky's (1978) distinction between "competence" and "performance." What is the relation between the two? This is still an ongoing topic of debate and empirical inquiry. We do not need to subscribe to the questionable Whorf/Sapir thesis that language ineluctably shapes reality to understand that the "field" of English for both teachers and learners, with all its virtues and liabilities, cannot be divorced from its genealogy, its history, its being embedded in ongoing social conflicts (as evidenced in bloody fights over language in India and elsewhere). Language cannot be separated from practices, from the unpredictable problems of communication not just among individual speakers but also among communities, peoples, nations. Aside from the usage-orientation of language stressed by Wittgenstein and Austin, we need to make use of the concepts of "speech genres" and "utterance" proposed by Mikhail

Bakhtin and V. Voloshinov. Voloshinov's conception of language as communication is captured in this passage from *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (1986, 86):

Orientation of the word toward the addressee has an extremely high significance. In point of fact, *word is a two-sided act*. It is determined equally by *whose* word it is and *for whom* it is meant. As word, it is precisely *the product of the reciprocal relationship between speaker and listener, addresser and addressee*. Each and every word expresses the "one" in relation to the "other." I give myself verbal shape from another's point of view, ultimately, from the point of view of the community to which I belong. A word is a bridge thrown between myself and another. If one end of the bridge depends on me, then the other depends on my addressee. A word is territory shared by both addresser and addressee, by the speaker and his interlocutor. (Emphasis added)

We will see shortly how this is dramatized in actual scenarios in Taiwan, particularly between Filipina workers and their employers. The sign or word, in short, language is thus a crucial arena of struggle between individuals and groups, the crucible for acquiring legitimacy and insuring hegemony.

A historical background to the supremacy of American English is appropriate here. Just like Latin and Spanish in previous centuries, English was a colonizing language for the British in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean; it was the language of the English settlers in Virginia and New England, as well as the language that presided over the defeat of the Mexicans in the Mexican-American War of 1847–1848, after which 80,000 Spanish-speaking inhabitants of the territory that is now the southwestern part of the U.S. found themselves under the geopolitical sovereignty of English. It is this supremacy over Spanish-speaking bodies that marked the reconstitution of the U.S. as an English-speaking nation: "The linguistic community inherited from the Anglo-Saxon 'mother country' did not pose a problem [for the early settlers]—at least apparently—until Hispanic immigration conferred upon it the significance of class symbol and racial feature" (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991, 104). The act of addressing the conquered Mexicans here is part

of a process of subjugation and disciplinarization, with language as the prime ideological-political machinery for shaping the colonial subject.

Laws in English, rituals of government and business practices conducted in English, interpellated the Mexican as subaltern subject. Resistance was there from the start. Testimonies of the result of this mode of address range from Gandhi's denunciation of English-ification (if I may use this barbarism) as enslavement, to Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o's eloquent attack on the imposition of English as the unconscionable enforcement of the "culture of imperialism" (in Bailey 1990, 88). As a vehicle of beliefs, values, and world-paradigms, English was in effect a weapon in the "civilizing mission" of the British and American imperial powers. To be sure, some of the victims made use of the language skills they learned to survive, resist, and finally free themselves—to the extent that you can be free within the cultural and ideological domain indexed by English.

Instead of presenting an inventory of further grievances, let me cite here the case of the Philippines (where I was born), the only Southeast Asian direct colony of the U.S. for half a century, and still virtually a neocolony.

The Philippine Example

My sources in Taiwan have conveyed to me the continuing relevance of the Philippines to its political economy and sense of its own comparative difference. But I am not sure everyone there appreciates fully the historical predicament of the Filipinos in improving their society. According to Tom McArthur (2002), author of *The Oxford Guide to World English*, the Philippines experienced an almost painless transition from the feudal-dependent to the modern-independent stage of national existence. From the domination of monarchical Catholic Spain from 1521 and subsequently of the "republican, paternalistic and quasi-imperial United States from 1898," English spread rapidly in the Philippines because "it was the new language of government, preferment, and education" with such incentives as "recruitment into the civil service, opportunities to study in—and migrate to—the US; and the use of English for business beyond the islands" (ibid., 344). The impression

given is that it was all sweetness and light. What McArthur skipped in his sanitized capsule history is the violent subjugation of about ten million Filipinos (1.4 million were killed in the U.S. war of pacification from 1899 to 1914) whose revolutionary leaders communicated to the masses in the vernacular while using Spanish as the intellectual and political medium for expressing their republican ideals and democratic principles. The imposition of American English was not a charitable afterthought: the U.S. military administration decreed, in the midst of the military campaigns, that English was a necessary weapon in the subjugation of the natives. In 1900 General Arthur McArthur had observed that the educational system, employing American volunteer teachers of English, was "an adjunct to military operations, calculated to pacify the people and to procure and expedite the restoration of tranquillity throughout the archipelago" (Atkinson 1905, 382).

English was politicized from the beginning. The official sanction for the deployment of English as part of military logistics was given by the first civil governor of the colony, William Howard Taft: "English is the language of free government; it is the language through which Filipinos can read the history of the hammering out by our ancestors of the heritage of liberty which they have conferred upon us" (in Bresnahan 1979, 65). Instead of the church as the governmental agent, the mode of U.S. domination (supplementing overt coercion) used the educational apparatus and the bureaucracy as the means of instilling in the colonial subject what Bourdieu calls *habitus*, that is, "systems of durable dispositions" that generate "practices and representations which can be objectively 'regulated' and 'regular' without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goal without presupposing the conscious orientation towards ends and the express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them" (Thompson 1984, 53). Physical violence was thus replaced by symbolic violence, with popular consent given by recognition (more precisely, misrecognition) without knowledge. Anglo-Saxon "Manifest Destiny" addressed the colonized subalterns in English, its tutelage for another century advanced through teachers of the language who replaced the Spanish friars as the local administrators, moral authorities, and policemen in remote towns and villages.

We cannot fully appreciate the incalculable role that English teaching (as pedagogical and ideological strategy of governance) performed in Americanizing the "natives" if we do not grasp the durable and tenacious resistance of the majority of Filipinos to the repressive violence of U.S. imperialism from 1899 to the inauguration of the Philippine Commonwealth in 1935 (San Juan 1998). Teachers of English accompanied American soldiers shooting Filipino guerillas in villages throughout the archipelago. In a sense, English was a civilizing machine fresh from its genocidal adventures against the aboriginal Indians and subsequently revitalized by the lynching mindset of white racial supremacists at the end of the Reconstruction. The historian Renato Constantino (1978, 218–19) summed up this aspect of U.S. occupation in the first three decades of the century which produced an Americanized elite of local bureaucrats and compradors armed with the prestige and efficacy of American English:

Spanish colonialism Westernized the Filipino principally through religion. American colonialism superimposed its own brand of Westernization initially through the imposition of English and the American school system which opened the way for other Westernizing agencies.

The result was the utilization of education as a weapon of pacification and for the transmission of colonial ideals that transformed the people into naively willing victims of American control. The use of English as a medium of instruction has been the principal cause of backwardness among the products of the system. Far from being a medium of communication and instruction, for the overwhelming majority it constitutes a barrier to all but rote learning. . . .

Moreover, the neglected native languages have suffered from underdevelopment and this in turn has retarded the intellectual life of the people. But of course, this situation has not prevented Americanization; rather, it has made the Filipino mind most receptive to the more banal aspects of American culture as transmitted through films, TV and popular reading matter. Such "cultural" fare in turn transmits those consumer tastes and attitudes that U.S. corporations find it most profitable to implant.

The habitus of the Filipino speaker of English persists, reinforced by institutional sanctions both economic and political. The capacity to speak an English “of sorts” seems to be a “mixed blessing,” as some allege, because it affords Filipinos “maneuverability in international economics, diplomacy and scholarship” (Bresnahan 1979, 70). I doubt if it is a blessing at all since the majority of Filipinos do not really have adequate competence in transacting business in English, or engaging intellectually in that language, despite the saturation of the whole country with American cultural products and mass-mediated commodities.

The situation today is transitional if not muddled and uncertain. Despite the parity accorded to Filipino as one of the official languages, and the implementation of a bilingual education (now reversed by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in the pursuit of globalizing society by recolonizing citizens under the aegis of the IMF/WB/WTO), English remains the language of opportunity and aspiration. Not so much because it “offers access to a world literary tradition and protects against insularity,” as McArthur (2002, 348) alleges, but because English endows Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) headed for Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Europe, and the Middle East with an edge, a selling point, over their competitors from Indonesia, Thailand, Korea, and so on. These migrant contract laborers were hailed by former President Corazon Aquino as “the new heroes” (*mga bagong bayani*) because their enormous remittances enable the government to pay its foreign debt. In this moment of globalization even Filipino English, with its peculiar variation from the standard norm, despite its hybridized and indigenized character, becomes commodified and begins to engage in precarious games of power and identity politics. It is here that English becomes instrumentalized without losing its own normative singularity. The field of English is once more traversed by historical forces with both repressive and emancipatory potential, depending on the conjuncture of the social formations where the language is lived, acted out, or embodied by flesh-and-blood speakers and writers.

Give and Take, More or Less

As said earlier, to understand fully the field of language, we need to move beyond the formalistic linguistics of Chomsky, beyond the binary

dualism of competence/performance, to a view of language as speech-acts or utterances. True, language is a system of equivalences—signs bear constant meanings or referents such as those archived in dictionaries: I mean what I say when I say “serious,” not “sensuous.” But over and above these conventional patterns normalized by rules agreed to by everyone, we have the import of the words and their use-values, which is altogether another matter. We do not just exchange words as counters of equivalent value because the exchange occurs between addresser and addressee who occupy different places in the social hierarchy, with their own cultures—collective histories, memories, and perspectives of the future. The Italian philosopher Ferruccio Rossi-Landi (1983, 113) elaborates on the analogy between linguistic exchange and the market:

For a situation of exchange to come about, we must have commodities as bearers, first and foremost, of use-values. Without use-values, there would be no exchange-values. Thus we immediately have a system of differences: the differences between the individual use-values and their respective exchange-values. The use-values, furthermore, are themselves founded on differences: the needs and the ways to satisfy such needs, to which use-values refer, are all eminently different, as are the working processes from which use-values result and the properties that they bear. When use-values come to constitute a system, it is therefore a system of differences; but for this very reason, it is also a system of equivalences.

What is instructive to bear in mind here is that the dialectic of equivalence and difference needs to be articulated with the similarity of individuals as abstract human beings irrespective of place and time, and their difference as citizen subjects identified with specific histories and locations, belonging to different collectivities and cultures. Linguistic exchange in English, or any language for that matter, embodies this complex dialectic of equivalence and difference. To prove this point, read Amy Tan's (1990) story, “The Language of Discretion,” which demonstrates that Chinese communicates through the interplay of use-values and exchange-values, body language, and a whole array of signs/signifying acts that Charles Sanders Peirce first explored in his inaugural studies in semiotics.

Everyone here involved in the teaching of English appreciates the importance of accent, vocality, and syntax as matters that reflect different positions of speakers and listeners in the social hierarchy. Voloshinov and Bourdieu, among others, have emphasized the social stratification of speech, the contextualized use of language as a central medium in the reproduction of asymmetrically structured social formations. In effect, the enabling condition of meaningful speech-acts or practices is found in the sociohistorical forms of life in which the interlocutors are situated. I want to illustrate this last point with some examples taken from a case study of Filipina domestic workers and their complicated imbrication in the dynamic, if tortuous, unfolding of globalization in the concrete social formation of Taiwan.

The sociologist Pei-Chia Lan of National Taiwan University has analyzed in detail the transnational encounters between Filipina domestics and Taiwanese employers as a counterpointing of two resources, two kinds of symbolic capitals. This is summed up in a Filipina worker's response to the perception of the inequality of status: "They [Taiwanese employers] have more money but I speak better English" (Lan 2003, 133). What is the meaning of this utterance presented to the investigator?

We need to frame the position of the interlocutors within the geopolitical map of recent developments. Since the 1970s, while the Philippine economy severely declined and stagnated, Taiwan rose to become one of the prosperous Newly Industrializing Countries: in 2001, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Taiwan was US\$363.4 billion and GDP per head was US\$16,300, while GDP of the Philippines totaled only US\$78.4 billion and GDP per head was US\$979 (The Economist Group 2000, 100–4). The disparity is sharply epitomized by this and other statistics. With a population that would reach eighty million, today, more than half of whom are impoverished, the Philippine government under the Marcos dictatorship in the 1970s started an official policy of exporting "warm bodies"—overseas contract workers—to relieve unemployment and social unrest. Taiwan became the fourth major destination for about ten million OFWs after Saudi Arabia, Hong Kong, and Japan. On the average, Filipino workers in Taiwan receive the monthly wage of \$15,840 (New Taiwanese dollar; about US\$460); this minimum wage equals three times what a secretary would get in

the Philippines, two times that of a school teacher. No wonder thousands of college-educated Filipinas equipped with varying degrees of English proficiency find themselves with no choice—if they are supporting an extended family—but to submit to a form of “modern slavery” (Anderson 2000) concealed behind contracts and wages.

With the ascendancy of the U.S. as an Asian power in the Pacific Rim after the Second World War, and the Taiwanese government’s dependency on U.S. military and diplomatic support since 1949, American English as the global lingua franca has become indispensable for Taiwan’s survival—as it has been for the Philippines for a much longer period. In fact, English has become required human capital with the growth of the export-oriented economy, the influx of multinational capital, and the increased traffic of students and businessmen between Taiwan and the U.S., not to mention that between Taiwan and English-speaking metropolises such as Hong Kong, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, and Manila, Philippines. This is due to the unchallenged hegemony of U.S. finance capital in Asia and elsewhere, in collaboration with Japan.

Taiwan is wealthy and able to import labor from outside. Not only are the Taiwanese middle class and elite taking advantage of cheap Filipino labor as such; they are also motivated to invest money to expose their children to a source of linguistic capital—Filipina maids who speak a version of American English. Lan (2003, 139) observes:

As English has become a vital tool for the Taiwanese middle class to pursue upward mobility in the global economy, hiring a well-educated English-speaking Filipina maid is a double-edged sword—it may validate their recently achieved status, but also may challenge their employer’s authority.

The challenge is more psychological than real, at best a sign that the measure of status is variable and relative.

The field of English thus becomes the theater of conflict, of class and ethnic struggle between collectivities personified by the individuals in the relationship. The uneven development of the capitalist world-system has made Filipinos inferior nationals compared to Taiwanese

citizens in general. Lan (*ibid.*, 153) explained the complicity of global English with the class/status dynamics of a specific locale: "In Taiwan, English has never been a dominant language, a condition that increases the relative value of this linguistic capital and enlarges the gray area for symbolic struggle around English in transnational domestic employment."

Domestic work for most Filipinas bears the stigma of downward mobility and lack of personal freedom. They of course realize that as a group they function as a status marker for Taiwanese employers whose habitus (condescending verbal rhetoric, distant body language) based on wealth and ethnic belonging arises from the deferential behavior of their hired servants. These employers (educated businessmen, professionals, intelligentsia) legitimize their social status as liberal-minded citizens of a democratic polity who treat their workers with respect; on the other hand, those employers without linguistic skills to "place demands on" their foreign help fail to exercise their proper authority so that the maids appear to interact as "guests" who, in turn, isolated and marginalized by government regulations, contrive individualistic strategies to cope with their situation. For example, they disavow their role of "maids" in relation to other nationals (i.e., Indonesians, Thais) and local unschooled workers who do not speak English.

Filipina domestics maneuver to insulate themselves from the constraints of authority with the belief that their language performance gives them cultural superiority, given the libidinal investment of value in American English and its power to command recognition. Such behavior may be a matter of self-deception, but it has anchorage in the objective value given to English in Taiwan and in the Philippines. In so doing, the domestics may perhaps be able to negotiate for favorable terms in their contract. To this extent, they feel empowered even though subsumed in the unequal relation between employer and employee, made worse by the fact that the Taiwanese government guarantees that the Filipina has no recourse to an impartial body for adjudication and redress of grievances. Hence, the Filipina domestic is a modern slave whose entire selfhood has been commodified; if she breaks the contract, or runs away, she is imprisoned and penalized. In the final analysis, however much this mode of symbolic resistance may compensate for the Filipina's subordination, the "field" of English is still

overdetermined by the economic and national disparity between these two peoples, two nation-states.

In the transnational context of overseas contractual labor analyzed here, the orthodox standard of Anglo-American English asserts itself in an arbitrary way. We know for a fact that because of infinite variations no criterion of standardness can apply to spoken English. But, of course, that is a defensive stance of those empowered by citizenship and money. While some Taiwanese with less linguistic capital expect Filipina maids to do house chores and at the same time tutor their children, the educated middle-class parents refuse to expose their children to "bad," "substandard" or "unrefined" English accent. The value of the domestic's linguistic capital is thus limited and not quite legitimate, even though intelligible. Ironically, this resource has earned Filipinas an extra workload as well as the negative association of not being maidlike, a deviant from the stereotype and, therefore, threatening. That may explain the drastic decline of Filipina domestic workers in Taiwan from 83 percent in 1998 to 17 percent in 2002 (Lan 2003, 155); they have been replaced by Indonesians who are forced to learn Mandarin Chinese or Holo-Taiwanese. There is then a limit to the possibilities of negotiating identity and class locations within the sphere of linguistic exchange, even though the field of English continues to function as the site of symbolic micropolitics and the means of enacting symbolic domination and resistance in daily practices of communication and work transactions.

Hoping for Translation

What lessons can we gather at this juncture? Utterances and speech-acts in English performed in Taiwan, or in any specific place of encounter between unequal social groups, will necessarily reveal the nature of globalization and its contradictions. This is perhaps a trivial observation by now. What makes it cautionary, if not salutary, is the fact that we cannot accede to a concept of world, international or global English based on the largest number of users, however utopian this might seem, without a passage through those historical episodes and sequences of cultural and political struggles instanced earlier.

The current “war on terrorism” led by the unchallenged military might of one nation-state, the U.S., seems to mock the vision of a unified peaceful planet enjoying the beatific rewards of what Jürgen Habermas calls “communicative rationality.” We are in fact still in the middle of raging “culture wars”—the wars of Identities and Differences, if one might indulge in scholastic euphemism—conducted not just in English but in various languages, dialects, idioms, and channels. The transnationalization of the world economy on the basis of an unequal international division of labor and of rewards, the sharpening polarity between the few rich metropolitan nation-states of the North and the numerous impoverished peoples of the South, are sequences of events that unleash tremors undermining any confidence that the prophecy of a global language free from errors in grammar, syntax and pronunciation will soon come to pass.

The narrative of English as a universal literary medium may promise a hopeful turn in the journey from the Tower of Babel. When postcolonial theorists at the turn of the century announced the decentering of the Eurocentric canon, they also celebrated the advent of “englishes” in which numerous postcolonial texts will be written. Of course, the authors of *The Empire Writes Back* also welcomed the cultivation of indigenous writing. But their concern was the counterdiscursive maneuvers, not homologous practices, the abrogative and appropriative tasks of Commonwealth writers who were engaged in the “rereading and the rewriting of the European historical and fictional record.” With the concept of a standard English exploded, Ashcroft and his colleagues (1989, 1996) contend that postcolonial literature “undermines any project for literary studies in english which is postulated on a single culture masquerading as the originating centre.”

With the new paradigm of international English studies, we will see the parity of all forms of English, a utopian idea akin to the “linguistic communism” implied by Saussure’s and other linguist’s doctrine that a common language is a treasure equally shared by all, that everyone is at heart competent to form grammatically meaningful sentences despite minor flaws in our actual performances. We know that this illusion of equivalence—if there are still such naïve or utopian speculators in

values—hides the near incommensurability of the use-values that endow the exchange with human purpose and social worth.

We cited before Gandhi, Ngugi, and Constantino's arguments that English historically served as an efficient agent of colonial subjugation. Usage of the colonizer's tongue inevitably led to imprisonment within the conceptual paradigms of the conqueror (with some exceptions), and that attempts to abrogate or adapt it only reinforced bondage. It has in fact produced the despotic comprador and oligarchic elite in many nominally independent countries that remain virtual neocolonies (for example, the Philippines), a subservience mediated this time through WTO/WB/IMF. The key concepts of abrogation and appropriation beloved by postcolonial critics are deployed to justify the prudential tactic of usurping the dominant language, together with its discursive forms and modes of representation (in theater, film, political organization, everyday practices, and the like), in order to adapt them to express liberatory experiences and emancipatory ideals. Among the practitioners of this postcolonial mode are Chinua Achebe and Salman Rushdie. This resort to a counterdiscourse can be illustrated, for example, by the writings of José Rizal, the Filipino national hero, who cleverly used Spanish to criticize the colonizer's cruelty and injustice, but it is not the only strategy that the colonized peoples have devised to defeat their enemies.

In any case, I cite here Achebe's project of trying to appropriate the imperial language to intervene in the dominant public sphere and interpolate an "articulatory style" that captures more authentically the subaltern's situation and experience. Achebe is not naïve; he is fully cognizant of language's complicity in the savage repression of his compatriots. Achebe's (in Crystal 1997, 136) principle of expropriation is echoed by many Filipino writers in English and their counterparts in the Third World:

The price a world language must be prepared to pay is submission to many different kinds of use. The African writer should aim to use English in a way that brings out his message best without altering the language to the extent that its value as a medium of international exchange will be lost. He should aim at fashioning out an English which is at once universal and able to carry his peculiar

experience. . . . I feel that English will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings.

In the same vein, the African-American scholar Henry Louis Gates Jr. (1990, 44) believes that learning the master's tongue is for many black artists "an act of empowerment." Behind this pragmatic outlook is the view that language can be conceived as an instrument; or else it is the scene of manifold struggles in which usage dictates the form and content of language. We need not reject this view outright, or endorse it completely without evaluating the concrete conditions of our intervention in changing our lives and environments.

As noted earlier, Bakhtin/Voloshinov, Wittgenstein, speech-act theorists, Louis Helmslev, and Bourdieu have all proposed the conception of language as a contradictory space of the struggle of multiple forces at any given historic conjuncture. Words are multiaccental depending on the users and their locations vis-à-vis one another. This leads to certain possibilities of converting or translating the dominant patterns of language-use for subversive and emancipatory ends. However, as we have seen in the case of Filipina maids using English in Taiwanese households, such possibilities are defined and limited by variables such as the position of the collective to which the speaker/writer belongs, the alignment of these groups and the power imbalance among them, the linguistic and cultural capital each group can mobilize in the struggle, who controls state power and ideological apparatuses, and so on. In short, the space for counterdiscourse and appropriation is not an infinite horizon open to endless ambivalence, hybridity, or play. Agency has no meaning apart from the structures and institutions that both enable and limit the power of individuals and collective historical protagonists of the cultural and social field (San Juan 2001).

The Conversation Begins

Notwithstanding the inertia of the status quo, globalization harbors limits and possibilities for change. What these changes will be, particularly

in relation to English as a world language, cannot be fully discerned and appraised without continuing concrete analysis and empirical investigation. Any inquiry into the fate of English as a global language cannot escape the contradictory tensions between the local and the global (Jay 2001). What is actually happening today, as attested to by the flourishing of "world literature written in English" or *englishes*, is, on one hand, the continued expansion of teaching/learning English because of its association with economic prosperity, progress in science and technology (electronic communication), material development and modernization, this last including postmodern forms of American mass popular culture.

On the other side, as Richard W. Bailey (1990) reports, there are developments countering the evolution of English as a global language, contemporary trends such as demographics (already mentioned earlier), nationalism and its politics of language, multilingualism (particularly in the U.S., but also in Britain, Canada, and Australia), and, finally, the attitudes of those acquiring English as a new language, which, for Bailey, is a category more important than aptitude, age, or teaching method. In countries like India or Nigeria, as well as in the Philippines, the nationalist arguments against English as a literary and expressive means of communication, and in favor of the local or national languages, have grown in strength and influence since the formal independence of these countries. Both the forces of linguistic nationality and political nationality, not to mention assorted religious fundamentalisms everywhere, have to be weighed in the balance as they contend with the thrust of transnational corporations (aided by WB/IMF/WTO) waving its banner of international or world English replete with the vocabulary of loans, military aid, and capital investments. This "free" flow is a far cry from the universalism of traditional aesthetics that Ihab Hassan (1999, 66), one academic discontented with consumerist globalization, invokes: "literature is the site where the local and the global, the concrete and the universal imaginatively transact the enigma of the human." This begs so many questions that we cannot even attend to its banality and bathos.

As for multilingualism, the reaction called "English Only Movement" may serve as a revealing symptom of the multiplicity of linguistic practices, utterances, speech-acts, in the U.S.—the heteroglossia of a

multicultural democracy in the making (for the pros and cons of the debate, see Fischer et al. 1997). I regret to add that at present this prospect is being stifled by the retooled version of "Manifest Destiny" known as the U.S. Patriot Act in the name of an unquestioned "national security," of the defense of a putatively beleaguered homeland. There is of course in the U.S. a deeply ingrained nativist opposition to bilingual and multicultural competence. We do not need to cede the terrain of "globalization" to English, Mary Louise Pratt (1995, 62) urges her colleagues. Her message is timely and urgent:

To monolingual anglophones it may look like everyone in the world is learning English, but the more accurate statement, visible from where we stand, is that the world is becoming increasingly multilingual. Many people learn a kind of instrumental English as an international *lingua franca*. But anglophones place themselves at a great disadvantage if they rely solely on this medium to conduct their relations with the rest of the planet.

And so, in addition to learning world English, we should prepare for multilingualism as the best equipment for living in an age of untrammelled globalization.

Language, more precisely discourses or signifying practices, not literature in high canonical specimens, deserves priority for us. While globalization may unite distant spaces, it also produces multiple concrete places that differ from one another. Homogeneity begets the heterogeneous, to put it aphoristically. Just to give a sample of what accounts for the popularity of English as a second or alternative language of choice. Edward Said (1993, 305) captures the ambiguous nature of the field of English in this description of his visit to one of the universities of a Persian Gulf state in 1958:

The reason for the large numbers of students taking English was given frankly by a somewhat disaffected instructor: many of the students proposed to end up working for airlines, or banks, in which English was the world-wide *lingua franca*. This all but terminally consigned English to the level of a technical language stripped of ex-

pressive and aesthetic characteristics and denuded of any critical or self-conscious dimension. You learned English to use computers, respond to orders, transmit telexes, decipher manifests, and so forth. That was all. The other thing I discovered, to my alarm, was that English such as it was existed in what seemed to be a seething cauldron of Islamic revivalism.

Said's anecdote conveys a realistic picture and a balanced assessment; it also confirms our thesis that globalization is essentially a contradictory and sometimes contingent process. Globalization—consumerism on a world scale—midwived by corporate conglomerates based in the North is not a predetermined fate for all peoples. We have alluded to all kinds of resistance, including the *Filipina domestic helper's tactic of self-assertion*. Nor can we yield to the easy proposition that the "deconstruction of the 'autonomized' global institutions of late modernity" can be achieved through sheer "cultural will" (Tomlinson 1991, 178), for the narrative of counterhegemonic resistance mounted by various localities encompasses elements beyond culture, language, or art—in fact, they embrace civilizations founded on distinctive worldviews, universalizing constructions of reality, cosmological beliefs (Abu-Lughod 1997).

I conclude with a prophecy that contradicts the earlier thesis of language as a political and ideological weapon. What provides hope is one effect of globalization already confirmed by the proliferation of englishes: the delinking of languages and territories, and the prospect of productive transactions between cultures and language fields. Walter Mignolo (1998) argued that the English in postpartition India no longer bears the same memory as the national English in Britain, nor does the English spoken in the U.K. by Third World immigrants carry "the same cultural and ideological weight as the King's English." This uncoupling of languages and nations, languages and national memories, languages and national literature, "is creating the conditions for and enacting the relocation of languages and the fracture of cultures," making it problematic for concepts of cultures and civilizations to serve as homogeneous fields for people with common interests, goals, memories, and beliefs. Mignolo (1998, 45–46) made this inference:

If English is becoming the universal language of scholarship, English is not carrying with it the conceptual weight and value of Western scholarship. My contention is that something similar to what happens in literature is happening in cultures of scholarship: a border gnoseology is emerging at the intersection of Western epistemology and non-Western knowledge, characterized as 'wisdom' by the former.

This is a good sign for initiating projects of translation and solidarity of action across nation-states:

What we are facing here is no longer spaces in between or hybridity, in the convivial images of contact zones, but the forces of 'barbarian' theorizing and rationality. . . . 'Border gnoseology' (rather than epistemology) in all its complexity (geocultural, sexual, racial, national, diasporic, exilic, etc.) is a new way of thinking that emerges from the sensibilities and conditions of everyday life created by colonial legacies and economic globalization."

Using English in his scholarly discourse, Mignolo wants to transcend the barbaric legacy of the "civilizing mission" by a border gnosis which, it seems, will have to invent a new language, a more extensive lingua franca, out of the ruins and inheritances of the past.

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