

Glocalization Is Not the Solution to Linguistic Hegemony: A Dynamic View

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Abstract

Linguistic diversity has never been a favorite topic in the channels of national discourse. Due to sick policies, a particular language is always given advantage over the other. Linguistic hegemony is closely related to the notion of globalization, especially in the case of English as a lingua franca. To cope with the hegemony of a single language, educational policies need to be revised to embrace linguistic diversity. The present paper is not an attempt to explain the way to achieve linguistic diversity, but is a tacit look at the channels where linguistic hegemony occurs. To the present writers, textbooks are receptacle of ideas. However, students and teachers are not objects to be acted upon, but agents to resist hegemony. The present paper holds that linguistic hegemony embedded in textbooks is the ultimate product of globalization. To cope with the ideas hidden in the textbooks, the teachers and curriculum developers are recently suggested to (e.g. by thinking globally and acting locally) be in attempt to glocalize textbooks by synchronizing the diverse cultures of knowledge in order to equip students with skills for the modern world. Glocalization in its own sake has brought up some issues which are going to be explained in this paper. A solution to the problem of power and linguisticism will be given in the final part of the present paper. The dynamic view entails new ideas as think and act globally, think and act regionally, and think and act locally.

Key words: glocalization, hegemony, localization, textbooks

Introduction

Modernism and the communication era with the advent of technology have brought about the need for a unified international language as a communication tool. English as a lingua franca was supposed to serve this purpose. For a long time, it was and is still believed that learning English brings us a rosy future. Such an assumption constitutes hegemony (Ochi, 2012). In fact, as to Ochi, taking English for granted as a tool that equates to success constitutes hegemony. While not denying the collective benefits, Tollefson (2000) seriously questions the cultural and personal benefits of linguistic imperialism related to the English language for individuals.

One of the major characteristics of modern society is globalization which depending on the observers' point of view may bring about both a threat and a challenge (Sifakis & Sougari, 2003). Broadly speaking, English language teaching is a tool spreading political dominance and hegemonic power in the world. Thus, that language is as a political tool (Ives, 2004) implies that text and talk play an important role in the exercise of power. In fact, it is discourse that enacts power (van Dijk, 1977). Presumably, the exercise of power from Gramsci's (1971) concept of hegemony is based on consent and persuasion. Moreover, what the paper denounces is the truism that hegemonic globalization "is driven by concentrated values and motives capable of homogenizing the world's diverse cultural traditions for commercial, [educational], and political gain" (Marsella, 2005, p. 5). Learning English brings with itself a certain discourse dictated by the West, which guarantees the supremacy of some countries over others (González Fernández., 2005).

Along the same run, textbooks are produced mainly by Western countries who are in the inner circle of Kachru's model (1985), that is, the English native speakers, because they present to the world of the consumers of their products a better and more standard version of English as compared with the other nonstandard nonnative providers of ELT materials. In a sense, hegemony rises when global power makes efforts to reduce diversity. In this regard, to the current paper, textbooks play a critical role in the exercise of power. Moreover, the present paper is an attempt to depict the epistemology of the given hegemony in the EFL context and finds glocalization of materials, which was proposed as a judicious way to cope with the demands of modernity,

faulty in its own sake. As a reaction to criticisms against globalization which entails hegemony, glocalization was proposed. This paper aims at bringing about the inherent demerits of glocalization itself in that it is practically deficient and implicitly imposing other sources of power and finally, a new way of tackling the linguistic hegemony will be suggested.

On the stance of hegemony

The notion of hegemony should not be depicted in a simple dualistic dichotomy: dominant or dominated (Ochi, 2012). In fact, hegemony, as to Philipson (1992), is "dominant ideas that we take for granted" (p. 72). Without a doubt, "today's world is being structured by hegemonic powers" (Soleimani, 2012, P. 37). These powers, as Edge (2003) claims, are in attempt to set up a relationship with the rest of the world not essentially based on explicit force, but on implicit consent and willingness.

Soleimani's (2012) regards English Language Teaching as "a trojan horse in disguise" (P. 37) in that language teaching cannot be devoid of the cultural values of the target language, and it aims at denigrating the cultural values of the learners. According to this view, the purpose of such cultural oppression is to establish supremacy and maintain a hegemonic control over other cultures. As a result, language, per se, is political; nonetheless, no language is superior to another one. Superiority gets significant when language becomes a tool of ideology in the hand of curriculum developers so that diverse perspectives are not only transacted but also persuaded through the channels of hegemony. Becoming the consumers rather than producers of materials is the ultimate product of the very hegemony. This hegemony is especially embedded in English Foreign Language Context through consent, willingness, and persuasion. More comprehensively, the given hegemony, as to Gramsci (1993, cited in Suarez, 2002), assigns three features to leadership: (1) leadership without force, (2) leadership through legitimization, and (3) leadership through consensual rules. Accordingly, Suarez puts forth that hegemony is ensured when the dominant groups create a consensus by convincing others to accept their language norms. To give an example, textbooks can inherently be political documents (Apple, 2004). Specific group of curriculum designers decide who and what to be represented in textbooks. In a sense, the problem is that what teachers teach is not only grammar and vocabulary but also a hidden curriculum of values (Canagarajah, 1999).

Textbooks as a tool of hegemony

Teachers, as the leader of classroom, are respected as the agency to resist hegemony (Canagarajh, 1999). Thus, they need to be sensitive to differences expressed in textbooks. Shakouri and Bahraminezhadi (2013) hold "textbooks can rarely be employed without adaptation to make them more suitable for particular context in which they are used" (p. 4). To McDonough and Shaw (2003), adaptation entails personalizing (i.e., the increase in the relevance of content in relation to learners' needs and interests), individualizing (i.e., learning styles of both individuals), and localizing (i.e., taking into account the geography of contexts). Madsen and Bowen (1978, cited in McDonough and Shaw, 2003, p.78) have also added modernizing (i.e., out-of-date materials must be up to date).

As a primary source, textbooks are transmitters of ideologies including gender, beliefs, and race. That the English language is a socio-cultural commodity whose critical aim is to ensure the visions of the world as seen in the UK and to maintain them throughout the world (Pennycook, 1994). Accordingly, Neke (2002) declares that considering English as a socio-cultural fact implies that ELT textbooks are implicitly and sometimes explicitly laden with particular visions of the world; henceforth, making decisions to adopt a particular ELT textbook implies the adoption of the particular visions and ideas reflected in the very textbooks.

In a sense, claiming that it is the school that reproduces dominant ideas is that much simplistic that we imply the idea that students and teachers are metaphorically only the consumers of the ideologies. They are empty vessels to be filled with information by expert teachers. Such a mechanistic system of education stick the role of agency on the part of students to the margin. In disfavor with banking system of education that considers students as passive receivers, Canagarajah (1999) puts forth that teachers and students are not objects to be acted upon, but have the agency to resist hegemony.

What Philipson (1992) terms as English Linguistic Imperialism manifests the growing dominance of English in global communication. In effect, the dominance of English is not emanated from issues such as inherent superiority, but its dependencies upon several phenomena that make it dominant. The widespread use of English in education is a plausible fact that paves the way toward linguistic imperialism. Philipson (1992) defines linguistic imperialism by stating that "the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages" (p. 47). In effect, language imperialism exerts hegemonic control (Eakin, 2002). Imperialism, in sum, contributes to dependency on the part of consumers.

In this regard, Pennycook (1994) identifies three dependencies: economic, education, and communication that "all ultimately bound up with First World capitalist exploitation of the Third World" (p. 54). In other words, the periphery countries (i.e., the countries that English is as international language) are dependent on the core countries (e.g., US and UK) for materials, expertise, and aid (Phillipson, 1992). These dependencies, more or less, are the product of globalization.

Hegemony and the ownership of standard English

According to Sifakis and Sougari (2003), although all languages (including dialectal variations) have a cultural, literary, social and communicative value, different languages appear to have different weights, that is, used in an international, national, or local scales. Kachru (1985) proposes a model to describe the spread of English worldwide based on the historical context, status, and functions of English. In his model, the societies where English is the first language are shown within the inner circle, for example, the USA, the UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The postcolonial Anglophonic contexts such as Nigeria and Zambia in Africa, and India and Singapore in Asia are within the outer circle in which English is only one of the languages spoken as an official, co-official, legal, or educational language (ESL). Different variations of English have emerged through these communities known as the "world Englishes" (Maftoon & Esfandiari, 2013, p.44). Areas (e.g., Japan, Korea, Saudi Arabia, and China) in which English is an international and a foreign language are called the expanding circle (Kachru, Kachru, & Nelson, 2006).

The extensive use of English as a global language entails many issues such as its ownership and varieties known as the world Englishes. In a sense, we face with such questions as who are the main owners of English?, who should provide norms in ELT?, which accent or variation is the correct one to be regarded as the criteria for assessment and teaching?, and so forth.

The Inner Circle societies are norm-providers. That is, they like to publish text books while the Expanding-Circle societies (EFL) are norm consumers. It is in this aspect that globalization of ELT materials becomes a threat to the ethnic and personal identity of people, hence, regarded as linguistic or discourse imperialism. Overemphasizing the cultural weights and values behind English textbooks and materials endangers the local beliefs of EFL learners. Some Outer-Circle societies (e.g., India and the Philippines) sometimes try to establish local norms (norm-developing countries) and some other ESL countries are regarded as norm-consumers (Maftoon & Esfandiari, 2013). Norm-biased approaches to ELT contribute to observable use- and usage-oriented features of native speakers' competence and performance. As a result, the syllabuses based on native speaker norms are appropriate for teaching and assessment. On the other hand, such approaches view the native speaker as a cultural model for foreign-language learners (Sifakis & Sougari, 2003). As a result, globalization of standard versions of ELT textbooks took place quickly. Language is not a neutral tool, but political. In this regard, Pennycook (1992) maintains "all education is political and all knowledge is interested" (p. 590). More plausibly, "the concept of hegemony provides a philosophical framework within which we can explore the power relations between dominant and minority groups" (Suarez, 2002, p. 513). In fact, the signs of hegemony are clearly observed in the employment of a textbook since the adaptation or adaptation of the book is exerted without any force. In fact, there is no exertion of overt strength in the use of a book because the consumers believe that their subordinate position is at their own choice. Put differently, the dominant group exerts their secure position via the consent of the minority group. More importantly, hegemony, to Suarez (2002), "refers to leadership through securing active consent, rather than mere domination by exercising coercive power" (p. 513). This type of implicit hegemony is more threatening. The larger concept of hegemony, as to Suarez, is the social power relationships between majority and minority languages. Accordingly, Wiley (2000) states "linguistic hegemony is achieved when dominant groups create a consensus by convincing others to accept their language norms and usage as standard" (p. 113). In effect, linguistic hegemony is perceived when linguistic minorities take part in the subjugation of the minority language to the dominant" (Suarez, 2002, p. 514).

However, some scholars (e.g., Kachru et al., 2006) believe that English does not necessarily belong to the native English speakers of the inner circle since there are no established criteria for the priority of English in one area over another. English native speakers have intralingual varieties and non-standard dialects of their own; therefore, the so called native English speakers cannot consistently be regarded as the criteria for correct version of English. This globalization has also resulted in linguistic hegemony and prioritizing one language and the implicit beliefs behind it over others. On the other hand, Bolton (2006) argues that the use of non-standard varieties of English may lead to a lack of intelligibility and comprehensibility. As a result, ELT teachers and textbook writers need criteria for teaching and designing materials out of the most common features of English around the world (Trudgill, 1998; Ur, 2010).

In rethinking the question of Standard English, some scholars (Crystal, 1997; Kachru, 1985; Phillipson, 1992) have started challenging the exocentric norms and asserted that in most cases English is used by EFL and

ESL speakers for the purpose of interacting with non-native English speakers. According to Crystal (1997), English language has spread around the world in such a way that it cannot be regarded as owned by any single nation. In line with Crystal (1997), Phillipson (1992), also, argues that scientific imperialism, media imperialism, educational imperialism, cultural imperialism, and linguistic imperialism are all different types of imperialism being expressed by language. As a result, English as a lingua franca represents the linguistic imperialism and dominance around the world. Linguistic imperialism is also associated with racism, sexism, capitalism, and linguicism.

In order to settle dispute over the problem that globalization has put forth, ELT materials need to be localized, domesticated, and regionalized to the needs of minority communities to take into account their identity, individuality, and values. In its extreme sense, localization of English leads to Nativization or indigenization which is a kind of adaptation taking place when a language is used in a different context and fits to its needs in a way that a distinct variety emerges after some time (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). This was the basis for the advent of glocalization as opposed to the globalization of ELT textbooks by amalgamating both global and local values.

Towards globalization or glocalization

In a nutshell, globalization, a buzzword word for more than a decade, is considered as a form of imperialism. Though hegemony and imperialism are closely related, the basic difference between hegemony and imperialism is that hegemony manipulates the relations with no superior body, but imperialism sets its superiority with a senior political body (Yilmaz, 2010). Put differently, imperialism, is defined as enlarging the dominance of one nation over the other by way of open political and economical instruments (Yilmaz, 2010). Though globalization has a positive impact on economy, education, culture, and media; its imperialistic impact in the form of Americanization or Wesernaization "spread English language primacy over non-English speaking nations"(Tien and Talley, 2012, p. 125). Rothenberg (2003) defines globalization as "the acceleration and intensification of interaction and integration among the people, companies, and governments of different nation" (p.3). Yang and Qiu (2010) also considers it as "a powerful transformative force" (p. 21) that speed up the "cross-border mobility of people, capital and knowledge" (p. 21).

Glocalization, in contrast, can be seen when elements of global culture such as movies, consumption patterns, education and etc. are reinterpreted by local cultures (Backaus, 2003).Tiplady (2003) defines glocalization as the way in which ideas and structures that circulate globally are adapted and changed by local realities. In fact, glocalization, in contrast with globalization is a more dynamic and bilateral relationship, especially as they are brought into contact on education and the Web. Along the same run, it is highly suggested that educators find local responses to globalization, and investigates the possibility of describing these responses as manifestation of globalization (Roldan, 2010).

Beyond Glocalization

In lieu of globalization in ELT which was attacked for its great potential to be a threat to the local cultures and identities, globalization is proposed as a solution. ELT practitioners are predicted to have control over the local market, the EFL and ESL countries, by acting locally while thinking globally to present a transformed version of English matching the needs of specific contexts. For a while, this view was supported as many other brand new ideas when they come up for the first time. However, there are several counter claims against glocalization itself. Practical aspects and consequences of glocalization is a serious issue that cannot be approached plainly by prompting ELT practitioners into avoiding, integrating, or adopting its predetermined standards in their teaching.

First of all, we must consider the fact that the issue of glocalization is a coarse grained one in that it seems to be no more than a marketing concept to sell a product to a group of people and its implications for non-managerial areas, such as education and ELT, requires more profound investigations. Strong revolutionary views towards globalization and hegemony must not make us take the advantages of globalization for granted. In today's world, little of the local remains untouched by the global and in fact, much of what we often believe is local is global as simply put by Pitzer (2003). It is increasingly difficult to find anything in the world untouched by globalization" and pure localization is a far-fetched if not impossible notion. The penetration of global into the local is inevitable and nearly impossible to control in today's world. Language and international communication is the medium and tool to promote the penetration of many global ideas in a variety of fields. It is the critical role of language that makes it necessary to examine all aspects of a new trend, such as glocalization, before adopting it.

Through glocalization, a global product such as native speaker norms and standards in ELT is transformed into another shape and its qualities change in accord with specific regional needs namely to satisfy their needs better. According to Sifakis and Sougari (2003), this is a simplistic view as many factors such as

learners' age, level, personal and affective characteristics and most importantly, their needs and purposes must be considered before any action to take place. There is a great chance that careful needs analysis will show urgent need for the native norms rather than the modified version of that for some learners and opposite for others depending on their purpose of learning English.

The process of glocalization does not entail a mixture of two qualities; instead, it may seriously affect the original quality of both the global product and the local one at the same time. On the other hand, glocalization is divergence from global standards towards what? The local standards or the glocal standards? Still, local standards are standards and subject to the same hegemonic problem as all kinds of standards do. Meanwhile, to date, there are no fixed glocal norms because glocal norms are set by agents, dealers, and mediators who aren't equivocal about all local notions. The resulting glocalized norms are subject to constant disagreement within each local area. Consequently, this chaos may lead to another, even stronger, type of imperialism imposed on the ELT teachers and students. Lack of unified glocalized norms will remain a major gap in ELT. No predetermined list of ideas has ever been prepared for an English teacher in a national scale to show how to think globally while acting locally. This leads to the integration of ELT teachers' personal impressions and views of what local and global views are. Different versions of English within one nation or region will be provided especially in EFL situations. In this process, learners' personal views and their needs are overlooked which is an even more implicit form of hegemony. The problem gets worse when these so called glocalized views become a practice and followed by a group of people to the extent that they diverge vastly from the real native English and turn into a pidgin or creole. The most obvious disadvantage goes for the learners as they become unable to act globally and catch up with others at the international level and in its prolonged chronic form unintelligible for other speakers of English. Most students in this system, study English for a long time using glocalized textbooks but fail to act in an authentic English-using context.

In addition, the main purpose behind glocalization in ELT is to overcome the ecological and power relation issues, while, practitioners and proponents of glocalization may bring to the field some versions of bias towards a local culture. The point is, neither the global norms nor the local culture will be preserved this way. A new artificial version of beliefs and values will be presented which is in most cases produced by inexperienced agents and based on no theoretical frameworks. "the interaction of the global and the local produces unique phenomena that are not reducible to either the global or the local" (Pitzer, 2003, p.208).

Besides, producing glocal ELT textbooks tend to be costly, time and energy consuming as compared with global mass-production of ELT materials which in return keeps the local demand down for it. Also, glocal forms of anything are replete with distinctive and culture-specific content that may not have global equivalents to understand. Furthermore, the idiosyncratic feature of glocalized materials may make them offensive for other cultures. From the financial and marketing point of view, since international demand for glocalized materials is low and restricted to a specific region and local markets, the pressure to sell more of these textbooks will lead to a kind of mass advertisement and unnecessary variation of the same material which is a kind of hegemony on its own.

The Dynamic view of glocalization

Glocalization itself is vague and can be a new form of imperialism. It can be an old remedy for new problems. We are living in a dynamic world with many interacting variables and solutions such as think globally and act locally are no longer valid as they bring uncertainties and rather than one outcome, they lead to several unpredictable results. Chaotic and complex systems do not allow for the simplistic and linear solutions to complex problems such as language learning and teaching. As mentioned before, the discontinuity of today's situation as the era of technology and communication, EFL/ESL students as the consumers of glocalization have various interacting and dynamic characteristics and needs which are prone to constant time and place variation. Such characteristics can be beliefs, tastes, views, age, context, geographical distributions etc. Customers and consumers of ELT textbooks, i.e., ELT teachers and students, syllabus designers, administrators etc., are not supposed to be regarded as constant and passive. Glocalization implicitly grants a passive role to the customers of ELT materials and overlooks the dynamic nature of the field itself as well as all the components involved.

Instead of promoting "think globally, act locally" which brings with itself controversy, managers and ELT teachers must think and act globally, think and act regionally, and think and act locally. They must be aware of global standards and native speaker norms to be able to catch up with the world. Innovations can take place at global, regional, and local levels rather than just the local level. Some of these innovations can be acted globally instead of locally. ELT textbooks can go by native and global norms but there will be no pressure to show these rules as the ultimate goal. Cultural awareness and culturally informed courses with awareness on the global and local and regional level will provide the students with a range of choices rather than eliminating some at the expense of others. The dynamic view entails thinking and acting locally and regionally when

needed. Critical thinking will be fostered among students and teachers rather than the glocalized textbooks. In the dynamic view, we don't change the quality of the native English according to local norms but we place room for local and regional and even personal idiosyncracies. For instance, we don't teach English with Indian accent to preserve local identity; we teach English with native speaking textbooks but do not set their accent as the ultimate prioritized goal of our course. We let our students respect all views at all levels, global, regional, and local. Bias either at the local, regional, or global level brings hegemony.

Concluding Remarks

Unlike the life cycle of glocalized materials, this dynamic post globalization view has daily practicality. Due to the everyday changes in the world and all its components, glocalized textbooks will soon become outdated while the dynamic view is a new paradigm in our way of thinking which is flexible enough to evolve by passing the time. Still there will be disagreements about how much to emphasize global, regional, or local values as it may lead to further hegemony if not controlled. To sum up, the main concern of the dynamic view of globalization will be how to allow for bias-free decisions regarding the amount of emphasis on global, regional, and local norms.

Teachers, as transformative intellectuals (Giroux, 2003), can act as social reformers in the class in order to achieve social reconstruction. In fact, what a teacher teaches is not restricted to grammar and vocabulary, "but also a hidden curriculum of values, ideologies, and thinking...there are powerful socio-cultural forces that influence learning in a subtly pervasive manner" (Canagarajah, 1999, p. 14). EFL teachers are to be aware of the potential cultural and linguistic threats of English imperialism in a way that such reflective awareness enables them to have a critical perspective about the globalization and adapt their global thoughts to the local needs and beliefs; this is what Pennycook (1996) calls the critical pedagogy. Tien and Talley (2012) assert educators still do not know that students are not yet ready to be global citizen. Yang (2001) also states that localization will help people get aware of their own culture roots in order to consolidate their place in the world. In fact, to prepare students to think globally and act locally, educators need to reevaluate the strategies in order to help students cope with the future demands in order to become globally compatible citizens (Tien & Talley, 2012).

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