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A PERIPHERIST VIEW OF ENGLISH AS A LANGUAGE OF DECOLONIZATION IN POST-COLONIAL INDIA

(Received 21 January 2004; accepted in revised form 2 February 2005)

ABSTRACT. This article presents a 'peripherist' view of English language use in India. I define peripherism as the ideology or view of those groups that have historically been linguistically subalternized or disenfranchised but that have now, due to the market forces of globalization, gained access to linguistic capital. Rather than a tool of linguicism, which it was during British colonialism, English in India today is an agent of decolonization that enables the urban poor to access the global economy. The peripherist ideology disagrees with sociolinguists who think that English endangers local languages and perpetuates inequality. It sees this as Orientalism disguised as liberal sociolinguistics that, in fact, reproduces the inequitable distribution of linguistic capital and fails to acknowledge the tenacity of indigenous cultures in being able to maintain their longevity. The data, from a dual medium school, is used to explore unique literacy practices that lay the foundations of workplace literacy based on culturally contextualized texts and pedagogies.

KEY WORDS: bilingual education, decolonization, globalization, India, pedagogies of the poor, post-colonial theory

ABBREVIATIONS: ELT – English Language Teaching; MCD – Municipal Corporation of Delhi; NCERT – National Council for Educational Research and Training; NNBV – Nagar Nigam Bal Vidyalaya (Municipal Primary School); SKV – Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya (Sarvodaya Girls School)

Introduction

"Madam I drop you in the backside of the building" – taxi driver

India is one of the world's largest functionally multilingual countries with "forty-seven languages used in education as medium, eighty-seven in press, seventy-one in radio, thirteen in cinema and thirteen in state level administration" (Annamalai, 2001: 35). Despite its heavy linguistic load this sociolinguistic elephant, with a population of about 1 billion, does trundle forward, as is evidenced by the fact that though in 1951, soon after the British left India,

Language Policy (2005) 4: 187–206
DOI 10.1007/s10993-005-3523-7
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the literacy rate was 20%, in 2001 it was 65% (Varshney, 2002: 539). Though literacy is not the only indicator of a successful language policy it does show that despite immense linguistic diversity, the school system is able to meet some of the demands of the community.

India is a nation without a national language. The Constitution (1950) does not give national language status to any of the 18 major regional languages. It does state that Hindi and English are co-official languages. A detailed map of India's linguistic terrain is given by Vaish (2004). Here, suffice it to say that despite ecologically ruinous language planning during British colonial times, there is immense linguistic diversity in India due to an obsessive language loyalty that is the culture, or in Bourdieuian terms, the 'habitus', of South Asia. The following language groups exist:

Language family	% of speakers
Indo-Aryan	73.3
Dravidian	22.53
Austro-Asiatic	1.13
Tibeto-Burman	0.97
Semito-Hamitic	0.01

Eighteen languages, most of them from the Indo-Aryan language family, are listed in the VIIIth Schedule of the Indian Constitution and these are represented in the school system. The 67 variants of these 18 languages are excluded (Government of India, 1994–1996: 3). According to the 1991 census there are 96 languages/dialects not among these 18 that also exist but because of the miniscule number of speakers or lack of political clout, are not represented in the school system (Bose, 1998).

This paper reports on a study of the primary section of a school in north-east Delhi. I started collecting data in this school in December 1999 and the process is still ongoing. The students who attend this school are from the underprivileged sections of society and live in slums. The 2001 census of India recorded detailed data on slum populations for the first time defining a slum as "A compact area of at least 300 population or about 60–70 households of poorly built congested tenements and lacking in proper sanitary and drinking water facilities." Of the total population of Delhi, which is about

11 million, approximately 2 million live in slums and half of this 2 million is already literate, though not in English (eCensus of India, 2001).

This disadvantaged group has only recently gained access to English through government schools. Schools like the Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya (SKV) run by the Delhi Administration and the Nagar Nigam Bal Vidyalayas (NNBVs) run by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi have added English to their curriculum to staunch attrition. It is important for the reader to understand that the SKV is a government school and what are referred to as 'private' schools in the USA are called 'public' schools in India. Traditionally only public schools offered English as medium of instruction, while government schools used the regional standards. Though the government schools are highly subsidized, unlike public schools where the market determines the fee, people were leaving government schools in droves to gain access to English. "In big cities, it's more or less over," the economist Jean Dreze, who helped write the 1999 education report (PROBE, 1999), said of government elementary education. "Within 10–15 years government schools will be almost wiped out." (*International Herald Tribune*, November 18, 2003).

I disagree with Dreze. On the contrary, the data I have looked at suggest that government schools like the SKV are rising to meet the challenge of public schools by adding English to their curricula. I see this as market driven language-in-education planning that is different in goals and outcomes from the imposition of English by British colonialists. This paper is not the forum where these differences can be highlighted. Suffice it to say that English language planning was a tool of what Phillipson (1992) called 'linguicism' or linguistic racism in the hands of Macaulay who in 1835 made English the official language of the British Empire in India (Vaish, 2004). In the twenty-first century when India is fast globalizing and urbanizing, English is a language of decolonization. By offering English as a medium of instruction or as a second or third language at the primary stage, government schools which traditionally offered English only in secondary school under the requirements of the Three Language Formula (TLF), are competing with public schools and empowering the underprivileged. Communities who live in slums will always need highly subsidized government schooling and as these schools institute and execute this new bilingual program, private schools may well get a run for their money from what may now seem like an unlikely competitor.

In India there are currently 150 million children enrolled in primary schools – this does not include those enrolled in private schools. In gross enrolment ratio India has achieved near universal enrolment; however, net enrolment ratios show an average of 80% in most states. The country is urbanizing rapidly and though in 1901 the urban population was 11%, in 1991 it stood at 26%. The following children are included in the category of urban disadvantaged: children living in slums and resettlement colonies, especially those living in unauthorized slums; child workers/laborers; street children; children of prisoners; children of sex-workers; children living in institutions; and children of construction workers and other migrant laborers (PROBE, 1999; Govinda, 2002).

The children enrolled in the SKV are mainly from the first and last categories. Those graduating from these schools can be trained, once they know English, to work in new sectors of the economy that are opening up due to globalization like call centers, beauty related industries and the IT sector which includes medical recordkeeping in India for foreign hospitals. Call centers employ 200,000 Indians at present and McKinsey predicts the ranks will swell to 1 million by 2008 (*Outlook*, October 13, 2003). The banking giant HSBC is moving 4000 jobs involving processing work and telephone enquiries to India, China and Malaysia. This move follows similar moves by British Telecom, Goldman Sachs, Abbey National and Prudential to outsource work to Asian economies to save costs (Straits Times, Saturday October 18, 2003: 7). This Straits Times article commented that "In the past decade, India has emerged as a new hub for call centre operations because of its large number of well-educated, English speaking young people and low labor costs" (p. 7). This economic phenomenon is the globalization that Giddens (2001) defines as "that stretching process, in so far as the modes of connection between different social contexts or regions become networked across the earth's surface as a whole" (p. 245).

At this point it is important to stress that English as medium of instruction in the primary school is a very new phenomenon in India. Annamalai (2004) points out that only 3% of primary schools in the country offer this form of bilingual education where English is the medium of instruction and the mother tongue is taught as a separate language usually for some subjects like social studies. English as a second or third language at various levels in schools is a far more common phenomenon.

Theoretical Foundations of Peripherism: Unpacking the Terminology

Theoretical perspectives regarding English in developing ex-colonial countries are dominated by post-colonial theory and the literary critics who have popularized it. In the case of India, Said (1978, 1993) and his student Gauri Viswanathan (1989) dominate along with Appadurai (1996), Spivak (1985) and Bhabha (1994). So far these views have been applied mainly to the burgeoning group of Indo-Anglian novelists headed by Salman Rushdie. Few sociolinguists in South Asia have used their ideas to influence thinking on issues of language policy and pedagogy. Exceptions are Canagarajah (2000, 2002) whose work has greatly influenced me, especially his definitions of center and periphery, and Kumar (1991). The work of these authors is markedly political and cognizant of post-colonial theory compared to the more neutral work of Kachru (1983, 1986), Khubchandani (1983, 2001), Pattanayak (1981, 1986), Annamalai (2001) and DasGupta (1970, 1990). In countries other than India, Mair's (2003) book showcases issues regarding English language thoroughly, especially from Africa and Sri Lanka.

The spread of English as a global language is dealt with by Pennycook (1998, 2001), Phillipson (1992, 1997, 1999), Skutnabb-Kangas (2003) and Brutt-Griffler (2002). This paper does not have the scope to show all the centrist views in the work of these and other such scholars, an idea that is elaborated in Vaish (2004). However, I will engage in a dialogue with Phillipson and Skutnab-Kangas on their ideas that linguistic imperialism and the spread of English are harmful to local languages and cultures.

From India, Kachru (1986) has given credence to the idea that there exists an 'institutionalized second-language variety of English' called Indian English. This idea is confusing because it begs the question: which institute grants the certificate to 'institutionalize' it? This has never been fully substantiated because Indian English, if such a linguistic species actually exists, will be in at least 18 different varieties that are the regional standards of India. The term 'Indian English' misleads readers into thinking that this is one monolithic whole. For instance the epigraph "Madam I drop you in the back side of the building" is an illustration of English spoken by a Hindi speaker. Many such speakers will use 'back side' instead of 'behind' which is not the case with a Tamil or Gujurati speaker. Kachru (1986) in fact goes so far as to say that there exists a 'South Asian variety' of English including countries like

India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal. A more modest but supportable claim is made by Gupta Fraser (1997) who writes that in India and Pakistan there is ''predominantly scholastic transmission of English,'' an idea that will be substantiated when I present an excerpt from an English text book.

The peripherist view, I argue, is a distinctive viewpoint and ideology of those groups who have historically been linguistically subalternized and have only now gained more equitable access to linguistic capital due to the market forces of globalization. Founded on literary criticism but built with blocks of sociolinguistics and related fields, counter-pointed with voices of subalterns, Peripherism is interdisciplinary. 'Subaltern' is a term popularized by Antonio Gramsci (1971) to refer to depressed groups in society that suffer from the hegemony of the ruling class. Ranajit Guha (1982, 1983, 1992) an Indian historian, along with a group of scholars that included Shahid Amin, David Arnold, Partha Chatterjee, David Hardiman and Gyan Pandey, adapted the term to create the field 'Subaltern Studies'. It was used ''as a name for the general attribute of subordination in South Asian society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way'' (Guha, 1982: vii). These scholars did not specifically use the term subaltern to refer to the inequitable distribution of linguistic capital, an issue raised by Bourdieu (1986). All historians who came from a Marxist tradition, the group exerted a great influence on scholarship in India not only in history and political science but also sociology, anthropology and sociolinguistics.

Globalization is crucial to an understanding of Peripherism. In economic terms globalization is the networking of communities across the globe in one unified capitalist market (Wallerstein, 1984). In cultural terms it can be seen as the homogenization or ''McDonaldization'' of the world through transnational corporations (TNCs) at one end and intense ethnic pride leading to Jihad at the other (Barber, 1996). Peripherism supports a more balanced view in which globalization can be channeled into benefiting the developing world (Sen, 2003; Bhagwati, 2004). It also sees the rise of mini nationalisms that threaten to cannibalize the nation state as more influential in today's South Asia (Appadurai, 1996; Huntington, 1996) rather than a leveling through cultural and linguistic homogenization though both these centripetal and centrifugal forces co-exist.

Language Planning for Decolonization: The SKV

The bilingual program of the Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalay (SKV) is an example of how English is being tailored for use by the new consumer of English in the global economy. This is certainly not to claim that this system of teaching English is flawless. In fact detrimental decontexualized literacy practices used with working class children are apparent. However, I do not, at the same time, want to be an apologist: I attempt to locate these pedagogies in a unique socio-cultural environment that valorizes the addition of workplace literacy into the traditional curriculum. The following is a brief description of the city, the program and the school.

The City

With a population of about 11 million Delhi is a vast capital city with four main languages: Hindi, Punjabi, English and Urdu. The road signs are in four scripts: Devanagari, Gurmukhi, Roman and Arabic. The Indian Constitution lists Delhi as a Union Territory which is an area too small to be a full fledged state. The boundaries of Delhi actually include 199 villages and 32 towns, though it is considered one city. It is one of the most developed parts of India with a literacy rate of 81.8% which compares favorably with the national average of 65.4% (eCensus of India, 2001). From a population of about 11 million, around 8 million people speak Hindi. The next most widely spoken language is Punjabi with about 750,000 speakers. Only 3622 people in Delhi listed English as their mother tongue in the 1991 census (Bose, 1998). However, most people who have a secondary school education will be able to understand some English. There is also an Urdu speaking Muslim minority.

The School

The Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya (SKV) is also described in Basu (2003). It is part of a chain of SKVs run by Delhi Administration. The SKV that I have been observing is located in East Vinod Nagar, a disadvantaged neighborhood. Outside the principal's office is a board which says in English "Motto: Not Me but You." Next to it is a larger one that says in Hindi "Thought for the day". The rest of the board is always blank. The principal has a sign on her desk that says in Hindi, "Please use Hindi." These schools charge a fee of Rs. 15 per term (USD 1 is equivalent to Rs. 48). From July 1, 2003, Delhi Administration has allocated Rs. 400 per

child for free text books and school bags. *Kanya* in the name means girl and the SKVs are mainly girls' schools but many of them enroll boys from class 1 till class 3. In each class the children go through 3 tests. The session begins in July (on the first of July every year the children enter a new grade) and they have the first test in September, the second in December and the third in May. In classes 1, 2 and 3 promotion is automatic as long as the student shows 75% attendance. After class 3 the weak students may be held back. The school has a small library and computer room. The secondary school has weekly access to the computer room and when there is 'load shedding' or a power outage in Delhi and the children cannot switch on the computers, they are taught 'theory'.

The Program

This SKV has two sections for each class, one Hindi and the other English medium. Some other SKVs are totally English medium. In the SKV where I have been observing, classes from 1 till 4 are divided into English and Hindi medium sections. Grade 5 uses only English as medium. Until 1999 the whole school was English medium, but the principal felt the children could not cope so she made one section Hindi medium for the weaker students. For the English medium classes, Science, Maths and English are in English and Hindi and Social Studies (SSt) are in Hindi. For the Hindi medium sections, Science and Maths are also in Hindi and the children study English as a second language thrice a week. The teachers of the A and B sections of one class are considered 'partners' and divide the subjects amongst themselves. The home language of most of the children is Hindi. From class 6 to 12 the students have to take a third language which is taught every day for 40 min. This is part of the Three Language Formula (TLF) which is India's language-in-education policy. The SKV offers a choice of Sanskrit, Urdu and Punjabi as third languages.

The Community

The parents of the children in the SKV are involved in occupations like carpentry, rickshaw pulling, selling produce on the streets, domestic work and the best of them have jobs in government offices. Here they could be peons, clerks or security personnel. ST, who is one of the brightest girls in SKV's English medium grade V, is the daughter of a meter reader at the Delhi Jal (Water) Board. Her father, who goes to work on a bicycle, earns about Rs. 4000

per month (80 USD). He removed his son from the SKV high school and put him in a public school because he was not satisfied with the English language teaching. The fathers of the children in this school are likely to have a secondary school level education in Hindi. Many of the mothers have no education at all. The children speak no English at home.

This group of subalterns has gained access to the linguistic capital of English only in the last decade due to the opening of the Indian economy from a socialist to a more free market model. The parents of children like ST expect the language to lead the children out of the income bracket of Rs. 4000 per month to at least Rs. 10,000 per month, which is what a young English knowing person would earn in a call center or as a data entry clerk in a multinational.

Similarly RN, who works as a driver in Delhi and whose statement is the epigraph of this paper, is sending his children to an SKV so that English can get them a job better than the one he has. His conversations with me (field notes September 5, 2000) revealed that he is very keen that all his five children learn English. The eldest three are in grades 6, 4 and 1, respectively. The twins are too small for school. He has managed to get his two older boys into an SKV though the boy in grade 1 is still in an MCD where English is only taught as a second language. RN left his lucrative family business in 'land dealing' (this phrase in India refers to fraudulent dealings in the buying and selling of land) in Paabi village and moved to a metropolis like Delhi mainly because he wanted access to better education for his children. Also, despite his modest salary of Rs. 5000 per month he has hired a tutor who comes to his house every day, has dinner with his family, and coaches all his children in all the subjects. According to RN his two older boys can read and write English well but they can't speak.

The Teaching and the Text: Data from SKV

In this section, I discuss three key aspects of my data – the teaching of functional workplace literacy, culturally contextualized texts and program outcomes.

Workplace Literacy

N, a young woman in her 30s, is teaching the grade 5 SKV English medium class, Rumplestiltskin (July 14, 1999). She has

been teaching in government schools for the past ten years. First she reads the story out to the children and even though she makes numerous errors the children enjoy it. She reads, "The girl cried with tears in her ears." Since most of the children buy second hand textbooks, their books are heavily marked and the meanings of the words are written in Hindi. N stops reading after every block of sentences and translates into Hindi. The children ask many questions and all the discussions are in Hindi. English is used only while reading from the text. At the end of the reading N makes the children work out the questions in their copy books. First she reads the question and explains it in Hindi. Then she asks the children to find the answer in the story. The children take many guesses and finally the class decides on which sentence in the lesson forms the answer. Then they bracket that sentence. Finally they copy that particular question and answer in their copy books. When all the questions are done, N asks the children to memorize the answers at home as many of these questions will appear in the exam.

N's class is typical of pedagogy in the SKV as most of the classes I have observed favor this method. The literacy event shown in this vignette is an illustration of pedagogies of the poor that develop within the constraints that the teachers, students and parents who are members of the urban disadvantaged work with. One aspect of this pedagogy is that it does not impart communicative competence in the L2. N is an experienced teacher and works well within these constraints. Despite her lack of fluency she is able to engage the children with the fable of Rumplestiltskin as they ask numerous questions. Her technique takes into account the fact that what the teachers in the SKV refer to as the 'direct method', which is teaching in and through English, is incomprehensible. She provides a unique form of scaffolding, based on intensive translation, which a child who comes from a print-poor Hindi speaking home can use to tackle the system and pass the exams. Her scaffolding is reinforced by the fact that the children are using second hand books and their predecessors have marked the book with Hindi translations. The guessing game that goes on in the class to locate one particular sentence that can be used as the answer to a question is a method N has introduced to create participation from a cohort that cannot speak English. No doubt this pedagogy has numerous drawbacks; however, I prefer to look at it as the pedagogy of the poor rather than, simplistically, poor pedagogy.

Culturally Contextualized Texts

In a similar vein the culture of the child is included in the classroom through the use of what Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester (2003) call 'minority texts'. The National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) recommends that "In order to make education a meaningful experience, it has to be related to the Indian context" (NCERT, 2000: 37). Most of the lessons in the English textbook, (like NCERT, 1971b), are based on Indian stories and a few are written as a window to Western culture. There are 17 lessons of which only two, "Rumplestiltskin," and "William Tell" are from the West. All the others, like The Mightiest King in the World and The Copper Coin are based on Indian mythology and folklore. The science text book for class 5 (NCERT, 1989) called "Exploring Environment" has lessons like Deficiency diseases, Communicable diseases, and Community sanitation, that are very relevant for the SKV community as the students are surrounded by disease. The chapter entitled "Accidents Can Be Avoided" shows how a woman wearing a saree and cooking with a kerosene stove on the floor, a common practice in India, can be burned. The social studies book for class 1 (New Plan Social Studies, 1971) has a section entitled "Celebrating Festivals" with the following chapters:

Dussehra	Hindu festival celebrated in north India
Durga pooja	Hindu festival celebrated in east India
Diwali	Hindu festival celebrated in north India
Id-ul-Ftr	Celebrated by Muslim minority
Christmas	Celebrated by Christian minority
Onam	Hindu festival celebrated in south India

Thus the textbook tries to include children from diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds into the national curriculum.

Another aspect of these texts is that they supply standard English, and through science text books scholastic English, to students. The following excerpt shows the Indian Dick and Jane and the way this family is represented in the basal reader:

This is a picture of Kutchu and his family. Kutchu and Kamala have two sons and a daughter. Gangaram and Ravi are their sons. Their daughter is Sita. Gangaram is twelve years old. Ravi is nine. Sita is just four years old. They live in a small house in Hareli. Kutchu's old mother lives with them. Her name is Gowri Bai.

> Kutchu is a farmer. Everyday he gets up early in the morning. Then he wakes up his children. They wash their faces and brush their teeth. Kamala goes to the village well and brings water for her home. Then they have their breakfast. After breakfast Gangaram and Ravi go to school. Kutchu goes to the fields...
>
> They all go to bed early. Sometimes old Gowri Bai tells the children a story at bed-time. She loves the children. The children love her very much too. And they like her stories (from NCERT, 1971a: 43–44).

Kutchu's family and their simple adventures are very familiar to the children as he is used as a counterpoint in many English textbooks. Also, the children in the SKV are likely to have relatives who live in the villages whom they visit depending on the resources of the family. It is also important to note that the standard English supplied in these texts is the only English to which underprivileged children are exposed. They do not hear enough English around them to learn from the environment. Thus Gupta Fraser (1997) rightly comments that amongst the countries that use English, India falls under the category of users of 'scholastic English.' This English is used by the students of the SKV and their teachers mainly for reading and writing, not speaking. Another point to note is that these text books are written for second and third language learners and the vocabulary and syntax are controlled.

It is not my contention that Indian textbooks for government schools are not in need of improvement. Both PROBE (1999) and Govinda (2002) recommend that despite the revisions made by NCERT in textbooks after the 1986 National Policy on Education, much more should be done. For instance students are still burdened by texts with a middle class, urban, upper caste bias. The language used is dense and 'scientistic' with emphasis on imparting information not knowledge. At the same time both these sources commend the texts produced by the Eklavya committee in the state of Madhya Pradesh which valorize local knowledge of rural and tribal communities without pedantic moralizing. Again, the point I am trying to make through the presentation of these multiple perspectives is that while being cognizant of the improvements required for basic education in India, I want to highlight its existing strengths.

Program Outcomes

In an unstructured focus group with a group of girls I found these are definitely English knowing bilinguals but not English speaking bilinguals (September 7, 2000). Most of them were from grade 6

and one was from grade 9. More than half of them had been through the English medium stream in the SKV.

I asked them about their English use and learned that they access the English language and its cultures through Hindi. Some watch a few English programs like Friends and Cartoon Network on TV dubbed in Hindi. A few have watched movies like Anaconda and Titanic dubbed in Hindi. One of them tells me that they think English is important but Hindi is more important because it is their "maatri bhasha" or mother tongue and also the national language. One of them says that she has comics at home like Mickey Mouse and 'Champak' which she exchanges with her friends. Both these comics are in Hindi.

At a different juncture in this conversation I asked the girl in class 9 who had been in the English medium stream for 9 years to tell me a story in English. We decided that she would narrate the story of "Kya Kehna" which is a Bollywood movie that was all the rage in Delhi at that time. With a lot of prompting from me and some from the other girls in the group she came up with two short sentences:

"There was a girl. The boy...bad."

After this there was a break-down and we had to go back to Hindi. Some of these girls had very high marks in their class 5 final exams. One got 91/100 and another 85/100. The students told me that they practically never write compositions in English on unknown topics. Their teachers give them model essays which they memorize. Subsequently they get one of the same topics in the exam. They tell me that this is an excellent school and they are very proud of their teachers.

On the face of it, this focus group shows that in terms of outcomes the bilingual program of the SKV does not provide communicative competence in English. Even a student from grade 9 who has been studying English for nine years cannot describe, in English, a popular Bollywood movie that she has seen. She can only come up with "There was a girl" and "The boy...bad." These outcomes can simplistically be correlated with inadequately trained teachers who lack fluency, pedagogies emphasizing translation and memorization, and inappropriate allocation of time to language in the classroom. What is not so obvious is that in the domains in which these children use English speaking is not required but translating, memorizing and decoding are. The implication of valorizing

these biliteracies is not to assert that this is good enough for subalterns but to show that some necessary and sufficient foundations for workplace literacy are being laid at the primary school. No doubt this does not bode well for American call centers. However, the success of such centers, and the speed at which they are growing throughout the country, is at least partial testimony to the fact that such cohorts can be trained. This is the edge that India has compared to other Asian economies.

I have not formally conducted a longitudinal study to find out what kind of employment sectors absorb children graduating from this new bilingual program. However, an interview with Shobhana Gulati (56) (field notes July 6, 2003), who has been teaching in government schools for about 30 years and in an SKV for the past 15, revealed that the graduating class from her SKV is made up of bright confident young women. "They even look different," Mrs Gulati comments, compared to the girls graduating from the Hindi medium stream. Some of them can definitely be trained to work in call centers or other such jobs. However, the problem is lack of guidance. She says, "When the girls graduate from class 12 they want to make something of their lives but they don't have proper guidance from their parents, or from the school." Mrs Gulati adds that including a vocational guidance course into this bilingual program would enhance its value.

Peripherism: An Alternative View on the Spread of English

Phillipson's (1992) idea that the spread of English is 'linguicism' or linguistic racism has been critiqued by Spolsky (2004) as conspiracy theory and by Conrad (1996) as lacking in empiricism. My issue with Phillipson is somewhat different. I see his idea of the hegemonic spread of English language as Orientalist when seen from a peripherist lens because it assumes a 'childlike' character for developing countries. Said's (1978) assertion that part of the ideology of Orientalism was the belief in the childlike nature of the natives in the colonies is implicit in Phillipson's standpoint as he assumes the hegemonic spread of English without any forms of resistance.

Phillipson asserts that since the production and dissemination of English language textbooks is controlled by Western corporations, the third world is disenfranchised. However, the spread of English in contemporary India has indigenous agency and voice. In the Indian context, the ownership of text production, dissemination and financing is in the hands of local organizations like the

NCERT. Though the books are of poor physical quality the content is culturally contextualized to the SKV community as is shown in the discussion of English textbooks used for various subjects. ELT can be a powerful tool for the dissemination of an ideology as, for instance, it is in the hands of the Summer Institute of Linguistics. This is subverted in India due to the power and influence, in some cases the monopoly, of local organizations and by the fact that there are practically no expatriate English teachers. Besides NCERT, other local organizations like the Central Institutes of English and Foreign Languages (CIEFL) also influence the government in making decisions on language teaching in the schools.

Skutnabb-Kangas rightly comments, "When dominant languages, like English, are learned subtractively, at the cost of the mother tongues, they become killer languages" (2003: 49). This relatively unremarkable idea is lost in the more polemical one of English as killer language threatening the world's diversity (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1997, 1999), which does not respect the tenacity of local cultures to perpetuate themselves despite tremendous odds, reinforcing the Orientalist connotation that they are 'childlike'.

The cultural and linguistic traditions in South Asia have a longevity despite, or because of, the onslaught of invaders and colonizers. Alexander (2001: 93), in a book on the comparative pedagogy of five nations including India, makes a similar point when he writes, "national systems of education, however radical the efforts of reformers, display not just a mixture of change and continuity, but also considerable longevity at their deeper levels of values." Appadurai (1996) reinforces this view when he separates 'culture' from 'culturalism' and defines the latter as "identity politics mobilized at the level of the nation-state." Culturalism and its nexus with language and religion is the hallmark of India's ethnoscape and to assume that this can be eroded is the arrogance of the West. Not only is culturalism deeply rooted in India but it also binds and politically mobilizes Indian diasporic communities which participate actively in the economic and cultural capital flows of globalization. This complex idea is simply articulated by the student who says in Hindi that English is important but Hindi is more important because it is our 'matri bhasha' and the national language. The term 'matri bhasha' is Sanskrit for mother tongue and, unknown to the primary school student, loaded with connotations of religious, cultural and linguistic capital, in fact 'habitus', that

this student is proud of. In fact, as I mentioned in the introduction, Hindi is not the national language.

The idea that the spread of English can damage local cultures and linguistic ecology is a centrist view of globalization. Huntington (1996) shows convincingly that the new world order is going to be redrawn on the basis of civilizations rather than nations and in this new order Western civilization is only one of the players. He writes:

> In the 2020 s, a hundred years after that peak, the West will probably control about 24 percent of the world's territory (down from a peak of 49 percent), 10 percent of the total world population (down from 48 percent) and perhaps 15–20 percent of the socially mobilized population, about 30 percent of the world's economic product (down from a peak of probably 70 percent), perhaps 25 percent of manufacturing output (down from a peak of 84 percent), and less then 10 percent of global military manpower (down from 45 percent) (Huntington, 1996: 91).

This has important implications for those who, like Phillipson (1992), think the spread of English can cause not only cultural domination, but also military/economic imperialism or that the current military/economic domination of the West is forcing the spread of English. On the contrary "the fading of the West and the rise of other power centers is promoting the global processes of indigenization and the resurgence of non-Western cultures" (Huntington, 1996: 91).

An alternative view of globalization is put forward by Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen (2003) and Bhagwati (2004). Both these Indian economists assert that opposing globalization is not in the best interest of the third world and that the real issue is the equitable distribution of globalization's benefits. Opposing globalization unconditionally, according to Sen, "is not only counterproductive in itself; given the global interactions throughout history, it can also cause non-Western societies to shoot themselves in the foot – even in their precious cultural foot" (2004: 17). Extending this idea to sociolinguistics, I find that views of those like Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas merely lead to linguistic protectionism. In other words a sociolinguistics that opposes the spread of English does nothing more than reproduce the status quo and results in an academic gate-keeping that serves to keep the third world from sharing existing cultural capital and aggressively marketing its own highly competitive intellectual products.

The literacy events that I have highlighted in this paper show that English language teaching in subaltern communities reinforces skills of translation, decoding, copying etc. which are the necessary

and sufficient conditions with which this cohort can be trained. The reader must keep in mind that this does not include the bilingual English *speaking* elite, which lives mainly outside India, forms less than 1–2% of India's total population of 1 billion, might suffer language loss and does not concern us. These highly mobile, diasporic, professional Indians give outsiders the impression that most Indians speak the way they do, which is incorrect. The way English is taught to the masses, it does not displace or replace indigenous languages; it only adds a domain to the multilingual/multiliterate repertoire of subalterns, a workplace literacy domain, that can help them break the constraints of class and caste.

This stable sociolinguistic situation where English is a functional workplace language and the mother tongue shoulders the burden of identity, culture and religion without implications for language loss and shift is typical of India. The metaphysical domains associated with language are sustained by the mother tongue, associate mother tongue or by code mixing between dual mother tongues. I make this point not as a 'nativist' but as an insider/outsider who can return the gaze and can see that though the Orientalist texts Said (1978) sampled were written more than a hundred years ago, some of their perspectives, in a different form, exist even today.

Conclusion

The stories in this paper and their discussions are indicative of "the micro-social analysis that has to be carried out in different periphery communities to redress a historiography in English studies (undertaken mainly by center-based scholars) that has not been adequately sensitive to the everyday strategies of linguistic negotiation of the local people" (Canagarajah, 2000: 123). This paper has attempted such an analysis. It has presented a peripherist view of the spread of English and ELT in India where English is a tool of decolonization in the hands of subaltern communities and can help them access the global economy. Despite the constraints of the pedagogies of the poor English is supplied to its subaltern consumers in ways that is addressing the demands of these communities. The bilingual program of the SKV is able to provide workplace literacy and many of the necessary and sufficient conditions on the foundations of which this labor force can be trained. Because of the involvement of powerful local organizations, a non-aligned ELT task force of indigenous teachers and the tenacious longevity

of Indian religion and culture, English enriches without endangering. This idea is a counter discourse to 'liberal' sociolinguistics which only results in maintaining the hegemony of native English speakers or tries to neutralize the exploitative language policy of colonizers. Peripherism presents a little narrative about a specific biliteracy situation that is legitimate in its own local context of boundedness.

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