

## Contesting public monolingualism and diglossia: rethinking political theory and language policy for a multilingual world

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**Abstract** In many language policy and political theory discussions, there is an overt skepticism, and at times outright hostility, towards the ongoing maintenance of private and, especially, public multilingualism, particularly when these include/incorporate the languages of linguistic minorities. For linguistic minority individuals, ongoing multilingualism is seen as delimiting the possibilities of their integration into the national society and the successful acquisition of the dominant (national) language(s). For linguistic minority groups, the maintenance/support of minority languages is viewed as a willful form of communal ghettoization, while any accommodation of public multilingualism—via, for example, bilingual education—is concurrently constructed as both an obstacle to effective communication for these groups in the wider society and a threat to their social mobility. The latter preoccupations with effective communication and social mobility also underlie recent linguistic cosmopolitan arguments in political theory that link globalization, communication and social mobility inextricably with the need for acquiring English as the global lingua franca. In this article, I critique and contest both this ongoing opposition to multilingualism, and the related privileging of English as global lingua franca, drawing primarily on political theory accounts, by way of example. Following from this, I argue that ongoing support for individual and public multilingualism provides not only greater opportunities for linguistic justice but also, counter-intuitively, facilitates wider inclusion and social mobility for linguistic minorities in an increasingly globalized world.

**Keywords** Multilingualism · Linguistic minorities · Social mobility · Communication · Inclusion · Political theory · English · Global lingua franca · Cosmopolitanism

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## Introduction

Debates over citizenship in modern nation-states have often focused on the significance of language to both national identity and state citizenship. These debates have addressed, in particular, two key issues:

1. Whether speaking the national language—that is, the majority or dominant language of the state<sup>1</sup>—is, or should be, a *requirement* of national citizenship and a demonstration of both political and social integration by its members (especially for those who speak other languages as a first language);
2. Whether this requirement should be at the *expense* of, or in *addition* to the maintenance of other languages—minority, or non-dominant languages, in effect—within the state. Or to put it another way, whether public monolingualism in the national language should be enforced upon an often-multilingual population or whether some degree of public as well as private multilingualism<sup>2</sup> can be supported.

Nation-states the world over have been remarkably consistent in their responses to these questions. More often than not, they opt for public monolingualism in an official or “national” language<sup>3</sup>—requiring its use in all public/civic communication. In these contexts, public monolingualism in the national language is simply taken for granted by its citizens. For those remaining states with more than one officially recognized language, the predilection towards an, at most, highly delimited form of public multilingualism nonetheless remains strong. The majority of these latter states do not officially recognize more than two or three languages—certainly, the endorsement of widespread formal multilingualism remains extremely rare.<sup>4</sup> And even where there is an ostensibly multilingual national language(s) policy, the actuality is that one language variety (at most, two or three) still dominates in terms of its widespread use in the public domain.<sup>5</sup>

Following from this, citizenship in modern nation-states is also invariably linked to at least some knowledge of, and facility in, the requisite national language(s) as a key indicator or proxy of one’s wider civic and national commitment (Bauman and

<sup>1</sup> As I proceed to outline, there may be more than one national language in a given state. However, even in these cases, one language (at most, two or three) usually remains dominant.

<sup>2</sup> Here, and throughout this article, I use the term multilingualism to incorporate both bilingualism and multilingualism.

<sup>3</sup> While there is a strong correlation between national and official languages, this correlation does not always hold. For example, English has no official status in the UK and the USA but is demonstrably the dominant national language in both instances. Similarly, a state may recognize a language as official, when it is clearly not the dominant language and may, indeed, not even be (still) widely spoken—Irish in Ireland is an example here.

<sup>4</sup> The 1996 post-Apartheid South African Constitution is one such example. Along with its ongoing official recognition of English and Afrikaans, the new South African Constitution recognized a further nine African languages, and subsequently also South African Sign Language, bringing the total to 12 official languages (Heugh et al. 1995; Language Plan Task Group 1996).

<sup>5</sup> Returning to the South African example, and despite its language policy of official multilingualism, subsequent developments have seen the rapid default/de facto emergence of English language dominance in the public domain, particularly within education (Heugh 2008).

Briggs 2003; May 2008a, 2012; Wright 2000). Those who (still) lack facility in a national language, most often recent migrants, are regularly chastised, and sometimes punished, by states for their “willful” failure to “integrate”. For example, in the United States over the last 15 years we have seen the widespread circumscription and subsequent dismantling of Spanish–English bilingual education programs for Latino students. The basis for this opposition has been a view that the mere recognition, let alone incorporation, of Spanish as an educational language undermines a wider commitment to learning English as the (de facto) national language of the US (Crawford 2000; May 2012, Ch. 6; Schmidt 2000). Meanwhile, across Europe, multiculturalism as public policy is in apparent full retreat, as European states increasingly assert that minority groups integrate or accept dominant social, cultural linguistic and religious mores as the price of ongoing citizenship (Modood 2007). In relation to language, this has been demonstrated explicitly by increasingly harsh language testing regimes, which privilege national languages, and which now constitute the price of citizenship in many European nation-states (Extra et al. 2009).

Not surprisingly perhaps, academic discussions in the fields of language policy, which foreground language status and use, and within political theory, which link language and citizenship, have reinforced this tendency towards public monolingualism or, at best, a delimited public multilingualism at the nation-state level.<sup>6</sup> Similar tropes towards a delimited individual multilingualism are also increasingly apparent in discussions of language and globalization. Here the presumption is that knowledge of English as the current world language is essential, and perhaps even sufficient, for wider social mobility in an increasingly globalized world. In this article, I will explore relevant debates within political theory that take these normative positions, since they are already well trailed in language policy (see, e.g. Ricento 2000, 2006). Such political theory arguments frame their discussion of language within wider concerns over social inclusion, via a shared language, and individual mobility, via the dominant language.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, they invariably end up presenting often-skeptical discussions about multilingual public policy, particularly (but not limited to) educational provision (see Kymlicka and Patten 2003). Along the way, concern is also regularly expressed about whether the promotion of multilingual policies might delimit the rights, (language) choice, and social and economic mobility of individuals, while, more broadly, undermining social and political cohesion. Having critically examined these arguments, I will conclude by offering an alternative position in favor of both individual and public multilingualism—albeit, that the latter is established and regulated within clear parameters. I will argue that such a position provides not only greater opportunities for linguistic justice at the level of the nation-state but also, counter-intuitively, facilitates both greater inclusion and social mobility, particularly for linguistic minorities, in an increasingly globalized world dominated by English.

<sup>6</sup> For comprehensive, critical overviews, see May (2012) and Skutnabb-Kangas (2000).

<sup>7</sup> In most cases, the dominant language of the public realm is also constructed or viewed as the key shared language in that arena.

## Language(s) and political theory

The majority of political theory discussions of language and citizenship in modern nation-states, as well as more recent discussions of language and globalization (including the rise of English as the current world language/global lingua franca), reinforce two key tendencies. The first is what I term “untrammelled public monolingualism” in the national language at the level of the nation-state, the second is a form of diglossia between national languages and English as an international language. In both conceptions, so-called minority or local languages are effectively consigned, at best, to the private/familial domains—reinforcing what Liddicoat (2013) has termed “hierarchies of prestige” which privilege languages by their apparent “reach”, public status, function and/or use. Let me look at each of these positions in turn.

### Untrammelled monolingualism

In his highly influential and polemical critique of multiculturalism, *Culture and Equality*, the prominent political philosopher Barry (2001) asserts unequivocally that minority languages—that is, the first languages (L1s) spoken by linguistic minorities within a given nation-state—must be relinquished as the price of wider national citizenship. This is because, he argues, their ongoing maintenance entrenches the cultural isolationism of minorities, delimits their social mobility, and undermines common understandings of the good life—what Barry terms “the politics of solidarity” (2001, p. 300). Such commonality can only be achieved by the active, concerted, participation of minorities in a shared and purposeful *national* identity, or “civic nationality” (2001, p. 80). It includes, centrally, an obligation to learn the national language(s), even when this disrupts/severs cultural and linguistic continuity. As Barry asserts: “I think that it is an appropriate objective of public policy in a liberal democratic state [that] all immigrants—or at least their descendants—become assimilated to the national identity of the country in which they are settled” (2001, p. 72). He proceeds to qualify this position somewhat, by acknowledging that assimilation has often been a forced choice for many minority group members, given that the retention of their culture or language may result in stigmatization and discrimination. But, so be it:

Linguists and anthropologists may well have professional regrets if as a result a certain language ceases to be spoken or a certain cultural trait disappears. But preferences of these kinds are surely not an adequate basis on which to force people to perpetuate the language or cultural traits against their own judgment as to where the advantage lies. (2001, p. 75)

In sum, “the choice of solidarity with one’s cultural group should not give rise to any sort of relative disadvantage, compared with participation in the mainstream [national] society” (2001, p. 95). The price of not doing so is also made abundantly clear in Barry’s account: minority group members who continue to privilege the maintenance of their cultural and linguistic distinctiveness over cultural adaptation and/or transformation “will tend to cluster in occupations at the lower end of

the hierarchy of money, status and power” (2001, p. 91). If so, they only have themselves to blame for it.

This line of argument—in effect, for an untrammelled public monolingualism—is also endorsed without reservation by other prominent political philosophers. For example, in Kymlicka and Patten’s (2003) important collection on political theory and language rights, Pogge (2003) begins his discussion on the language rights attributable to Latinos in the United States—or, more accurately, in his view, the lack thereof—by asserting unequivocally that English is the predominant language of the US and has been so for much of its (colonial) history.<sup>8</sup> He then proceeds to observe that many Latinos “do not speak English well” (2003, p. 105). Accordingly, in order to best serve the educational interests of Latino children, he specifically endorses an English “immersion”<sup>9</sup> educational approach so as to ensure that Latino students gain the necessary fluency in English to succeed in the wider society. “The choice of English as the universal language of instruction is justified”, he argues, “by reference to the best interests of children with other native languages, for whom speaking good English ... will be an enormous advantage in their future social and professional lives” (2003, p. 120).

But Pogge doesn’t end his arguments there. He also suggests that those parents who opt instead for bilingual education may well be “perpetuating a cultural community irrespective of whether this benefits the children concerned” (2003, p. 116). For him, this amounts to an illiberal “chosen inequality” for those children because it “consigns” them to an educational approach that, in maintaining Spanish (or other languages), willfully delimits their longer-term mobility in US society. This position is made even starker by Pogge’s intimation that such a choice could possibly warrant the same constraints applied to parents as other child protection laws; equating bilingual education, in effect, with child abuse.

Two other political theorists, David Laitin and Rob Reich, argue much the same position in their contribution to Kymlicka and Patten’s (2003) volume. Laitin and Reich assert that “forcing” bilingual education on children will curtail “their opportunities to learn the language of some broader societal culture” (2003, p. 92). Relatedly, they fret that these “individuals have no influence over the language of their parents, yet their parents” language if it is a minority one ... constrains social mobility”. As a result, “those who speak a minority (or dominated) language are more likely to stand *permanently* on the lower-rungs of the socio-economic ladder” (2003; my emphasis). Indeed, Laitin and Reich proceed to observe that if minority individuals are foolish enough to perpetuate the speaking of a minority language,

<sup>8</sup> English clearly has been the dominant language in the US, post-European settlement. However, I have argued elsewhere that the assertion that, ipso facto, no other languages have ever had a meaningful public presence in the US is a willful misreading of history, one that simply ignores the widespread multilingualism of its early population (see May 2005, 2012: Ch. 6).

<sup>9</sup> The use of the term “immersion” is somewhat disingenuous here, as it (deliberately) alludes to the highly successful French immersion programs in Canada, which proponents of English language education invoke for the purposes of comparison. However, unlike French immersion programs, whose principal aim is to achieve bilingualism and biliteracy for students by the end of schooling, Pogge is clearly advocating for an English monolingual program. These are more accurately described as “submersion” programs (see May 2008b).

then they can simply be regarded as “happy slaves”, having no one else to blame but themselves for their subsequent limited social mobility.

Setting aside, if one can, the obvious racialized paternalism that underpins all these accounts, one can infer that the Anglo-American context within which all three are situated might explain their obvious predilection for untrammelled monolingualism. While Barry does not limit his focus solely to the US, all are primarily concerned with Spanish speakers therein and their prospective (negative) impact on the wider English-language-dominant public context of the US. Indeed, the US, as with English-dominant countries elsewhere, exhibits a clear preference for monolingualism in English, bolstered also by the role and influence of English as the current world language (García 2009; May 2014). Given this, how does European political theory, situated as it is within a much more overtly multilingual context, compare in its analyses of the relationship between language and citizenship? Not that differently, as it happens, although the arguments are framed primarily in relation to globalization and linguistic cosmopolitan identities, rather than national linguistic allegiances per se.

### English as a lingua franca in a globalized world

We live demonstrably in an increasingly globalized world in which English as the current world language plays a pre-eminent role. In a still-central text on globalization, Held, et al., describe this era of globalization thus: “Globalization can be taken to refer to those spatio-temporal processes of change which underpin a transformation in the organization of human affairs by linking together expanding human activity across regions and continents” (1999, p. 15). Given its rise to prominence in the late twentieth century, some globalization theorists limit its genesis to the current era (e.g. Cox 1996). Other globalization theorists, however, acknowledge that its origins emerge from, or out of, previous forms of social and political organization, notably the nationalism of the previous few centuries (Held et al. 1999; Hobsbawm 2008; see above). Blommaert (2010) usefully bridges this apparent dichotomy by distinguishing between what he terms “geopolitical globalization” and “geocultural globalization”. Geopolitical globalization, he argues, has clearly emerged from earlier historical antecedents such as capitalist expansion in the nineteenth century. Geocultural globalization is linked to the more recent features of late capitalism, such as new technologies, business process outsourcing (establishing multinational company call centers in developing countries, for example), and related changes in migration patterns, the division of labor, and wider social and economic inequalities.

Be that as it may, as the sociologist, Calhoun (2003, 2007) argues, both geopolitical and geocultural processes of globalization tend towards a related advocacy of new global forms of identity—that is, a movement away from the “confines” of localized identities to a more broad-based identity. In this view, globalization constitutes both the basis of individual transformation—the ability to adopt hybrid, cosmopolitan forms of identity that transcend both local and national borders—and, more broadly, the next stage of the modernization process. Martha Nussbaum’s (1997) notion of “citizen of the world”, a global form of citizenship

that is no longer rooted in, or confined to, local, ethnic, or national identities, but specifically transcends them, highlights this clearly. Closely allied with this view, is an advocacy of languages of wider communication, and particularly English as the current world language, as the new means of global interchange and the *principal* basis of social mobility. A related argument is that the ongoing use of “local languages”, via language rights or the broader politics of multiculturalism, simply entrenches social, cultural and political isolationism, as well as socioeconomic disadvantage for its speakers (an argument that closely echoes the national discourses of language discussed in the previous section).

I examine briefly here, by way of example, three recent contributions by prominent European political theorists on these questions of language, identity and mobility in a globalized world. The first is that of de Swaan (2001) who, in his book, *Words of the World*, analyzes the relative reach and influence of languages in the world today, along with their implications for governance and communication. In his analysis of this “constellation” of world languages, de Swaan distinguishes and ranks languages on the basis of their “Q value”. For de Swaan, the Q value or “communication value” of a language is measured by combining the “prevalence” of a language (the percentage of speakers of a language within the wider constellation of languages) with its “centrality”, that is the percentage of its *multilingual* speakers among all multilinguals in the constellation (2001, p. 178). Thus, the higher the Q value, the greater the communicative reach, significance, and usefulness of the language concerned. By this, de Swaan identifies 100 or so languages as “central” (national languages, in effect). Twelve are identified as “supercentral” (crossing national contexts): English, Arabic, Mandarin, Spanish, French, German, Hindi, Japanese, Malay, Portuguese, Russian, and Swahili. While only one, English, is “hypercentral”.

Drawing on the European Union (EU) as one of his case studies, de Swaan charts the rise of English, at the specific expense of French and German, as the most commonly spoken lingua franca across Europe, particularly from the time the UK joined the then European Community (EC) in 1973. The influence of English increased still further with the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 and the subsequent opening of Central and Eastern Europe to the west. While German remained a regularly spoken second language in these formerly Soviet controlled areas, English grew exponentially as an additional language, particularly among young Eastern Europeans over the course of the 1990s. By 1998, de Swaan notes that English had become the second language of choice across Europe and the de facto “connecting language of the European Union” (2001, p. 161). These developments are also reflected within the EU itself, with English increasingly dominant as the principal working language of the EU and thus the de facto lingua franca of European administration as well. De Swaan notes that these developments may be in response to the burgeoning costs and complexities of translation associated with the EU’s multilingual language policy, a regular criticism that has been further in evidence over the last decade with the subsequent accession of a number of Central and Eastern European countries to the EU (Phillipson 2003).

Van Parijs (2011), in his book, *Linguistic Justice for Europe and the World*, provides a more recent variant of this broad position. Van Parijs dispenses with the

notion of centrality, evident in de Swaan's earlier formulation of the Q value, to argue that prevalence alone is a sufficient indicator for the incontrovertible dominance of English as the current world language. Again, following from this, Van Parijs outlines an argument in which English is constructed as a global lingua franca for all speakers, especially for those who do not speak it as a first language (L1). He underpins this argument on the principle of *probability-driven* learning, linking language learning and competence (with particular reference to English) to the projected extent of subsequent language use, and the allied notions of *motivation* and *opportunity* (2011, p. 12). As he argues:

... the probability of interaction in a particular language can be regarded as the central determinant of the extent to which average competence in a particular non-native language tends to expand or shrink in a particular population. A greater probability means both a larger expected benefit from any given level of proficiency in the language concerned and a lower cost of acquiring or maintaining it. (2011, p. 13)

The growing perception of the essential need for English in “a high mobility, intense-communication world” (2011, p. 23) thus reinforces probability-driven language learning—a broadly intrinsic characteristic, in effect, to opt to learn and use English as a global lingua franca. Meanwhile, the need, particularly for multilingual speakers, to seek out a language that is most widely known by all participants in any communicative exchange provides an extrinsic pressure to opt for English as well, since English now boasts the most number of additional language learners of any language. Van Parijs terms the latter the “*maxi-min*” language principle. This principle of opting for the language of maximal minimal competence for any given number of speakers—in order, as far as possible, to achieve effective communication with all participants—again necessarily reinforces what he bluntly describes as the “stampede towards English” (2011, p. 21). While Van Parijs acknowledges that there are exceptions to these principles, such as the deliberate privileging of one's own L1 for symbolic reasons, or the need to ensure against communicative breakdown in a language less well known by participants, the desire to communicate at the broadest/widest level trumps these considerations. This includes, for Van Parijs, contexts of demonstrably unequal power which may well (continue to) privilege L1 English speakers. And while these are not necessarily welcome, he concludes that they are nonetheless an unavoidable by-product of the *maxi-min* principle.

Of course, these arguments about the need for a common language are not particularly new. They have long been advocated by theorists of nationalism at the level of the nation-state. Indeed, Van Parijs invokes John Stuart Mill's assertion that a functioning democracy must have a common language. The difference is Van Parijs's additional distinction between an *ethnos* (the basis of nationalism, linked to the imperative of cultural and linguistic homogeneity, discussed above) and a *demos*—“a shared forum, a common space for deliberation and mobilization” (2011, p. 30). The latter need not presuppose the former, he suggests, but is essential for wider democratic discussions and exchanges in a globalized world.



More broadly, Van Parijs's argument is predicated on the fundamental assumption that linguistic diversity is a *cost* which militates against the accomplishment of social, economic and linguistic justice precisely because it delimits the possibilities of effective communication (and thus deliberative democracy) in the first instance—a position that echoes Barry's, discussed above. Relatedly, diversity is also directly equated with notions of linguistic fragmentation and distance (the nomenclature itself reinforcing a negative comparison between diversity and communicative efficacy). Again, in so doing, Van Parijs highlights the apparently obverse relationship of linguistic diversity to democratic justice at the collective level and to wider social and economic mobility at the individual level.

The problem of linguistic diversity as an obstacle to democratic justice and mobility is also clearly demonstrated in the third example, drawn from the work of the Italian political theorist, Archibugi (2005). Archibugi argues that the answer to the “problem” of increasing linguistic diversity is not the multiculturalist recognition of language rights but rather a global cosmopolitanism based on a language of wider communication. This is because, for Archibugi, a democratic politics requires “the willingness of all players to make an effort to understand each other” and thus a “willingness to overcome the barriers of mutual understanding, including linguistic ones” (2005, p. 537). Following from this, he maintains that “linguistic diversity is an *obstacle* to equality and participation” (2005, p. 549; my emphasis). While he uses the metaphor of the artificial language, Esperanto, to illustrate his normative arguments, and perhaps also to create some cover for their implications, it is nonetheless still abundantly clear that the “common language” he has in mind here is also English (Ives 2010). We see this in the case study examples he uses to illustrate his position. The first closely echoes earlier discussion by Barry, Pogge and Laitin and Reich on the relative merits of maintaining Spanish in the US via bilingual education. In this hypothetical scenario—a state school in an increasingly mixed Anglo/Latino<sup>10</sup> neighborhood in California—Archibugi (2005) outlines a situation of increasing tension between the two groups with respect to the school's future direction:

...the Hispanic students do not speak English well and their parents speak it even worse. School parents-students meetings end in pandemonium, with the Anglos complaining that their children are starting to make spelling mistakes and the Hispanics protesting because their children are bullied. At the end of a stormy meeting, an Anglo father, citing Samuel Huntington, invites the Hispanic community to dream in English. In return, an outraged Mexican slaps him in the face. (p. 547)

Meanwhile, Archibugi also assumes in this case that the Anglo parents are middle-class and that most of the Latino parents are “cleaners”, but with aspirations “to enable their children to live in conditions that will avoid perpetuating the [existing] class division based on different ethnic groups” (2005, p. 548). In offering potential solutions going forward, he contrasts a multiculturalist response of parallel English

<sup>10</sup> Archibugi uses the term “Hispanic” in his account. However, I use “Latino”, since this is now more widely accepted as an ethnic identifier among both Latino scholars and communities in the US.

and Spanish instruction within the school for the respective groups—bilingual or dual language education, in effect—with, in his view, a clearly preferable cosmopolitan solution of English language instruction for all. This cosmopolitan solution is predicated on the basis that “American citizens with a good knowledge of English have (1) higher incomes; (2) less risk of being unemployed; (3), less risk of being imprisoned and (4) better hopes for a longer life” (2005, p. 548). As a salve to the Latino population, however, the cosmopolitan proposal also includes compulsory courses in Spanish language and culture for all, while encouraging Latino parents to learn English in night school and Anglo parents “salsa and other Latin American dances” (2005, p. 548).

In another case study example, Archibugi again discusses the European Parliament and its then recognition of 20 (now 24) official languages. The multiculturalist response in this scenario would be to maintain all the official languages, despite the ongoing expansion of the European Union (EU), on the basis of representation and fairness. The favored cosmopolitan response that Archibugi outlines, however, would be to delimit the number of working languages to just English and French. A key basis for the latter is the apparently spiraling costs of translation services and the need for parliamentary debate to be “more authentic and direct” (2005, p. 552).

Unlike their Anglo-American peers, none of these three political theorists sees English as necessarily replacing other languages (although Van Parijs comes closest to accepting that possibility)—they are not advocating English monolingualism. Rather, their conclusions point—either implicitly or explicitly—to diglossia, where bi/multilingual speakers continue to use their other language(s) in local (low status) private contexts, but English for wider (high status) public purposes, including, of course, those central to the processes of globalization (see also Graddol 2007). As de Swaan concludes, for example

... “globalization” proceeds in English. The attendant emergence of diglossia between English and the domestic language precludes for the time being a stable equilibrium, a solid separation of domains between the two languages. People will have to live with both English and their domestic language, and seek a feasible accommodation between the two. (2001, p. 186)

Be that as it may, all three acknowledge that the adoption of English as global or universal lingua franca may well impact negatively on the retention of other languages over time. They also concede that it may entrench the social and economic advantages enjoyed by existing elites—particularly, those who speak English as an L1—providing them, in Archibugi’s words, with an additional “linguistic privilege” (2005, p. 553). However, all also stress that native English speakers, particularly monolingual ones, may not *necessarily* be automatically advantaged in the globalized world, particularly if, in de Swaan’s view, English can be de-anglicized and “prised loose from its native speakers” (2001, p. 192; see also Graddol 2007). Indeed, as L1 speakers of other languages (De Swaan, Dutch; Van Parijs, French; Archibugi, Italian), all writing in English, their own personal histories would appear to suggest as much.

## The problems with English as global lingua franca

The arguments thus far discussed appear, at first blush, compelling—or, at the very least, “common sense”, in light of the ongoing ascendancy of national languages at the level of the nation-state and, increasingly of English as a global lingua franca. But not all is as straightforward, or defensible, as it seems. I have discussed elsewhere at length the limitations of public monolingualism in relation to the nation-state (May 2012) and will not rehearse these arguments at length again here. Instead, let me focus on the potential problematics inherent in the political theory arguments which advocate for English as a global lingua franca. There are four key issues at hand.

### The question of privilege

Writing on the limits of cosmopolitanism more broadly, Calhoun (2007) observes that its advocates largely ignore the class-based, privileged, nature of so-called cosmopolitans—the “frequent flyers” of the contemporary world. As Calhoun acerbically observes, advocacy of cosmopolitan identities “obscures the issues of inequality that make [such] identities accessible mainly to elites and make being a comfortable citizen of the world contingent on having the right passports, credit cards, and cultural credentials” (2007: 286). By framing cosmopolitanism appeals to humanity in individualistic terms, he continues, “they are apt to privilege those with the most capacity to get what they want by individual action” (2007: 295). A similar weakness bedevils the idea of English as global lingua franca since it assumes that English is a neutral, beneficial, and freely chosen language, (equally) available to all. Only a wholly synchronic, or ahistorical, view of English could ever reach this conclusion. As Pennycook (1994) argues, the voluntarist view of English language acquisition fails to address the wider economic, political and ideological forces that shape and constrain such a choice at both the individual and the collective levels. Indeed, those who advocate the “benefits” of English largely fail to address the relationship between English and wider inequitable distributions and flows of wealth, resources, culture and knowledge—especially, in an increasingly globalized world. One obvious example of this can be found in the strong evidence that suggests that the adoption of English as an official language by nation-states has little influence on subsequent economic development. The poorest countries in Africa are for the most part those that have chosen English (or French) as an official language. Meanwhile, the majority of the Asian “tiger economies” have opted instead for a local language, albeit usually in conjunction with English. In short, there is no necessary correlation between the adoption of English and greater economic wellbeing (Macedo et al. 2003; Pennycook 1994). As Pennycook (1994; see also 1998) concludes, other factors, particularly the relative powerlessness and disadvantage experienced by such states within the wider nation-state system, exert far greater long-term influence.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Similar critiques can be found in Canagarajah (2000), Holborow (1999) and Tollefson (1995, 2000).

## From language to language varieties

And this brings us to the question of language context and multiple language varieties. In many of the debates about the “value” of English in the globalized world, there is an implicit, sometimes explicit, assumption that we know what this language English actually is. And yet, as we well know, there are many different varieties of English, used for widely varied purposes, not to mention the significant differences often between first, second and foreign language speakers of English. This complicates considerably the idea that English is a universal *lingua franca*, as its proponents would have it, and that its acquisition will always result in upward social mobility. Indeed, this basic assumption, most evident in Van Parijs work, reflects a fundamental naiveté about the relationship between language varieties and access to power and opportunity. As Van Parijs asserts: “[English] enables not only the rich and the powerful, but also the poor and the powerless to communicate, debate, network, cooperate, lobby and demonstrate effectively across borders” (2011, p. 31). On whose terms, one might ask, and to what ends (and with what reach/effect, given that many cannot reach across borders in the first instance)? Contra these naïve and unsupported assertions, inequalities continue clearly to impact on those who actually speak particular localized varieties of English, such as Indian English, Malay English etc.—not only within these multilingual contexts themselves, on the basis of status and social class for example,<sup>12</sup> but also between these contexts globally (Blommaert 2010; Kachru 2004).

In short, while those who learn these “world Englishes” on a probability-driven basis (à la Van Parijs) might thus invest in them great hope for enhanced purchase and mobility, they are still most often judged pejoratively in relation to (more) prestigious English language varieties spoken by native speakers elsewhere. After all, the English acquired by urban Africans may offer them considerable purchase and prestige for their middle class identities in African towns, but the same English may well be treated quite differently if they moved to London, identifying them as stigmatized, migrants, and from the lower class. Blommaert (2006, 2010) describes the latter as context-specific, “low-mobility” forms of English (2010, p. 195). Context (and use) in relation to language varieties is thus everything. As Blommaert concludes:

What is globalized is not an abstract Language, but specific speech forms, genres, styles, forms of literacy practice. And the way in which such globalized varieties enter into local environments is by a reordering [of] the locally available repertoires and the relative hierarchical relations between ingredients in the hierarchy. (2006, p. 561)

The ongoing differential status still ascribed to these language varieties thus significantly undermines the cosmopolitan presumption of the likes of de Swaan, Archibugi and Van Parijs that multilingual speakers who speak English may be the new power brokers in a globalized world. Indeed, diglossia simply entrenches, rather than subverts, existing language hierarchies (see also below).

<sup>12</sup> See also my discussion in the following section on language and mobility.

## Interrogating language and mobility

The previous section also highlights the need to cast a much more skeptical eye over the claims that knowledge of and/or acquisition of English equals immediate social mobility. For example, in many postcolonial countries, small English-speaking elites have continued the same policies as their former colonizers in order to ensure that (limited) access to English language education acts as a crucial distributor of social prestige and wealth (Heugh 2008; Ives 2010). Take India, for example. Pattanayak (1969, 1985, 1990) and Dasgupta (1993) describe exactly this pattern in relation to India, where English remained the preserve of a small high caste elite until at least the 1990s. The impact of globalization has changed this somewhat since the 1990s, particularly with the increasing use by multinational companies of business process outsourcing (BPO) and information technology outsourcing (IPO) requiring English language expertise (Graddol 2007). Examples here include call centers and publishing, both of which India has benefited directly from in the last decade. However, these developments also highlight the significant differentials and inequalities in pay and conditions for workers in India and other comparable contexts when compared with “source” countries—indeed, these conditions are the principal *raison d’être* for the outsourcing in the first place. Meanwhile, the necessary English language expertise is still closely related to existing social class and related educational hierarchies in India, as elsewhere (Morgan and Ramanathan 2009; Sonntag 2009).

A similar scenario is evident in Africa where, despite English being an official or co-official language in as many as 15 postcolonial African states, the actual percentage of English speakers in each of these states never exceeds 20 percent (Ngugi 1993; Heugh 2008). Indeed, Alexandre (1972) has gone as far as to suggest that in postcolonial Africa social class can be distinguished more clearly on linguistic than economic lines. While this observation willfully understates the coterminous nature of linguistic and social class stratification—in Africa, as elsewhere—it does usefully underscore how these class/linguistic distinctions can extend to the *types* of English language varieties (often agglomerated, as we have seen, in cosmopolitan arguments for access to English) also used in these contexts.

This returns us to Blommaert’s (2010) notion of “low-mobility” forms of English, discussed earlier, versus more high-mobility forms. In short, it is *existing* elites who benefit most from English—or, more accurately, those prestigious varieties of English to which they have preferential access (high status, high mobility varieties with normative accents and standardized orthographies). For the majority of other linguistic minority speakers, the wider structural disadvantages they consistently face, not least poverty, racism and discrimination, along with the predominantly lower-mobility forms of English to which they have access, limit, even foreclose, any beneficial effects (Blommaert et al. 2006). Acquiring English is thus more often a palliative than a cure, masking rather than redressing deeper structural inequalities. As Peter Ives concludes of this:

Learning English, or any dominant language, is not inherently detrimental in the abstract, but the context in which it occurs often means that it helps to

reinforce psychological, social and cultural fragmentation. Thus a “global language” like English can never fulfill the role cosmopolitanism sets for it, that of helping those marginalized and oppressed by “globalization” to be heard. (2010, p. 530)

We see a similar problem in the obverse argumentation that the maintenance of so-called minority languages entrenches ghettoization, as evident in the earlier political theory arguments about the ongoing use of Spanish in the USA. The underlying (monolingual) presumption around language and mobility in all these accounts—including the so-called cosmopolitan analysis of Archibugi—is that the maintenance of Spanish entrenches ghettoization. But this is problematic for two reasons. First, there is the question of context. If Spanish is demonstrably a language of social prestige and mobility in other contexts (as in Spain and Latin America), why cannot it also be in the USA? And then there is the inconvenient fact of demographics. African Americans have been speaking English for 200 years in the USA and yet many still find themselves relegated to urban ghettos (Macedo 1994). As above, racism and discrimination are often far more salient factors here than language use (including the pejorative construction of African American Vernacular English, or Ebonics, as a mere dialect). Likewise, English is almost as inoperative with respect to Latino social mobility in the USA as it is with respect to black social mobility. Twenty five per cent of Latinos currently live at or below the poverty line, a rate that is *at least twice as high* as the proportion of Latinos who are not English-speaking (García 1995; San Miguel and Valencia 1998). Again, this points to a far more complicated, and contested, picture about the relationship (such as it is) between language and social mobility. It also undermines a key trope of these political theory accounts in support of the ascendancy of English—that we can and should only view English in relation to its communicative functions. De Schutter (2007), in his discussion of language policy and political philosophy, usefully summarizes this position in Table 1, below.

The normative goals outlined here implicitly reflect an inherently monolingual ideology, with linguistic homogeneity the ultimate goal. However, in so doing, they also all assume that language is largely independent of identity. Following from this, if language is viewed as merely an arbitrary communicative tool, as in cosmopolitan political theory accounts, then linguistic diversity also comes to be viewed as an impediment to easy communication. We saw this clearly, for example, in Van Parijs and Archibugi’s construction of the “problem” of linguistic diversity. But this is simply not the case, since it is clear that *all* language(s) embody and accomplish both identity and instrumental functions for those who speak them (Joseph 2004; May 2012: Ch. 4). Where particular languages—especially majority/minority languages—differ is in the *degree* to which they can accomplish each of these functions, and this in turn is dependent on the social and political (not linguistic) constraints in which they operate (Carens 2000; May 2003). On this basis, the limited instrumentality of particular minority languages at any given time *need not always remain so*. Indeed, if the minority position of a language is the specific product of wider historical and contemporary social and political relationships, changing these wider relationships positively with respect to a minority language

**Table 1** Instrumental Language Ideology; Adapted from de Schutter (2007, p. 11)

	Instrumental language ideology
Underlying view of linguistic membership (linguistic ontology)	Language as external to who I am (language is a tool or convention for the individual)
Normative conclusion (language policy)	Regulate language(s) in such a way that non-identity goals are realized: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. communication, democratic deliberation</li> <li>2. efficiency</li> <li>3. equality of opportunity</li> <li>4. mobility</li> <li>5. social cohesion or solidarity</li> </ol>
Outcome	Language homogenization

should bring about both enhanced instrumentality for the language in question, and increased mobility for its speakers. This is particularly so when that language is recognized in the public or civic realm.

### Developing a case for public multilingualism

And this brings me to the alternative case for public multilingualism. Advocating for public multilingualism, particularly when this encompasses the languages of linguistic minorities, problematizes both the untrammelled monolingualism of the nation-state model as well as the delimited (English-dominated) diglossia associated with linguistic cosmopolitanism. In order to outline this alternative case, I draw on the work of Will Kymlicka, one of the few political theorists to countenance the possibility of extending a multiculturalist analysis of rights to the question of language, as well as the work of the sociolinguist, Heinz Kloss.

In a key argument that he develops in his book, *The Politics of the Vernacular*, Kymlicka explicitly argues for the importance of the link between language and culture as a basis for language rights claims (2001, pp. 23–27, 242–253). He also highlights the process by which nation-states invariably establish the language(s) of the dominant group as an official language. The latter, in his view, actively disadvantages linguistic minorities by ignoring and/or stigmatizing their language varieties, as well as confining/consigning them to the private realm. Meanwhile, linguistic minorities' access to, and opportunities to engage effectively within, the public or civic realm, where the official language dominates, is also necessarily delimited. Both undermine, for him, the notion of liberal justice.

Kymlicka's position on language rights is situated within his broader framework of group differentiated rights for minorities (see Kymlicka 1989, 1995, 2001, 2007). Given that this work is widely known, I will only briefly summarize it here. Kymlicka argues from within liberal political theory for the ongoing importance of individual citizenship rights while, at the same time, developing an understanding of the importance of wider cultural (and linguistic) membership to such rights, the

latter embodied in his notion of “group-differentiated” rights. Group differentiated rights are not necessarily collective in the sense that they (always) privilege the group over the individual, a key limitation of communitarian accounts of identity, for example.<sup>13</sup> They can in fact be accorded to individual members of a group, or to the group as a whole, or to a federal state/province within which the group forms a majority. For example, the group-differentiated right of Francophones in Canada to use French in federal courts is an *individual* right that may be exercised at any time. The right of Francophones to have their children educated in French-medium schools, outside of Québec, is an individual right also but one that is subject to the proviso in international law “where numbers warrant” (de Varennes 1996; see also below). Alternatively, the right of the Québécois to preserve and promote their distinct culture in the province of Québec highlights how a minority group in a federal system may exercise group-differentiated rights in a territory where they form the majority. In short, there is no simple relationship between group-differentiated rights accorded on the basis of cultural and/or linguistic membership and their subsequent application. As Kymlicka concludes, “most such rights are not about the primacy of communities over individuals. Rather, they are based on the idea that justice between groups requires that the members of different groups be accorded different rights” (1995, p. 47).

A second argument that Kymlicka employs is to highlight that minority rights’ claims are principally concerned with wanting a measure of “external protection” from larger groups. External protections relate to inter-group relations where a minority group seeks to protect its distinct identity (including a linguistic one) by limiting the impact of the decisions of the larger society. External protections are thus intended to ensure that individual members are able to maintain a distinctive way of life *if they so choose* and are not prevented from doing so by the decisions of members outside of their community (see Kymlicka 1995, p. 204. n. 11). As Kymlicka argues: “Granting special representation rights, land claims, *or language rights* to a minority ... can be seen as putting the various groups on a more equal footing, by reducing the extent to which the smaller group is vulnerable to the larger” (1995, pp. 36–37; my emphasis). Given this, it is possible to argue that the maintenance of a minority language constitutes a legitimate external protection (May 2000, 2011a, 2012). As Kymlicka concludes, “leaving one’s culture [and, one might add, language], while possible, is best seen as renouncing something to which one is reasonably entitled” (1995, p. 90).

In addressing how such rights might be potentially applied, Kymlicka distinguishes between two key minority groups—national minorities and ethnic minorities.<sup>14</sup> *National minorities* have always been associated historically with a particular territory, but have been subject to colonization, conquest, or confederation and, consequently, now have only minority status within a particular nation-state. These groups include, for example, the Welsh in Britain, Catalans and Basques in Spain, Bretons in France, Québécois in Canada, and some Latino groups

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, Carter and Stokes (1998), Ellison (1997) and Mouffe (1993).

<sup>14</sup> Kymlicka also discusses/distinguishes a third group—“new social movements”—but this is not relevant to my discussion here.



(e.g. Puerto Ricans) in the USA, to name but a few. They also include indigenous peoples, who are emerging in international law as a distinct subset of national minorities more broadly (May 2013; May and Aikman 2003). *Ethnic minorities* have migrated from their country of origin to a new host nation-state, or in the case of refugees have been the subject of forced relocation.

Following from this, Kymlicka argues that in addition to the civil rights available to all individuals, two forms of group-specific rights should be recognized in liberal democracies for national and ethnic minorities, respectively: self-government rights and polyethnic rights. *Self-government rights* acknowledge that the nation-state is not the sole preserve of the majority (national) group and that legitimate national minorities have the right to equivalent inclusion and representation in the civic realm. Where national minorities have been recognized within existing nation-states, multinational and/or multilingual federalism has been the most common process of political accommodation that has been adopted. An obvious example here is the already-discussed degree of autonomy given to French-speaking Québec as part of a federal (and predominantly Anglophone) Canada. The establishment of 17 regional “autonomías”, including Catalonia and the Basque Country, in the post-Franco multinational Spanish state is another clear example. Self-government rights then, typically involve the devolution of political power to members of a national minority who are usually, but not always, located in a particular historical territory. The key in providing for such rights is their *permanent* status. They are not seen as a temporary measure or remedy that may one day be revoked.

*Polyethnic rights* also challenge the hegemonic construction of the nation-state but for a different clientele and to different ends. Polyethnic rights are intended to help ethnic minority groups to continue to express their cultural, linguistic and/or religious heritage, principally in the private domain, without it hampering their success within the economic and political institutions of the dominant national society. Like self-government rights, polyethnic rights are thus also seen as permanent, since they seek to protect rather than eliminate cultural and linguistic differences. However, their principal purpose is to promote integration *into* the larger society (and to contribute to and modify that society as a result) rather than to foster self-governing status among such groups.

Kymlicka’s analysis thus provides the basis for an advocacy of public multilingualism within nation-states, although he does not elaborate on how this might be operationalized. For that, we need to turn to the early sociolinguistic work of Kloss (1971, 1977) and, in particular, his important distinction between “tolerance-oriented” and “promotion-oriented” language rights. *Tolerance-oriented* language rights allow minority language speakers to continue speaking a language in the private domain. This is, as we have seen, all that has generally been allowed them in modern nation-states. *Promotion-oriented* rights, in contrast, regulate the extent to which minority language rights are recognized within the *public* domain, or civic realm of the nation-state, including its key public institutions such as schools. Promotion-oriented language rights can thus include, for example, state-funded education in a minority language.

Combining both frameworks, I have argued at length elsewhere (May 2003, 2011a, 2012, 2013) that national minorities, including indigenous peoples, *must* be

granted promotion-oriented language rights, allowing their languages an ongoing public presence in the territories in which they have always lived. This requires, in turn, *active* state intervention and support on behalf of the minority language—a principle that has been supported by developments in international law over the last 40 or so years where there *is* an increasing recognition of the language rights of national minorities (De Varennes 1996; Henrard 2000, 2010).

For ethnic minority groups the situation is a little different. Promotion-oriented rights cannot be granted as of right, as for national minorities, but they can be granted nonetheless on the basis of the previously mentioned principle in international law, “where numbers warrant”. That is, in order to avoid language discrimination, it is important that where there is a sufficient number of other language speakers, these speakers should be allowed to use that language as part of the exercise of their individual rights as citizens. Or to put it another way, they should have the *opportunity* to use their first language in the public realm if they so choose—an opportunity which amounts, in effect, to Kymlicka’s understanding of an “external protection”. Again, there is growing agreement within international law that significant ethnic minorities within a nation-state have a *reasonable* expectation to some form of state support (Carens 2000). In other words, while it would be unreasonable for nation-states to be required to fund language and education services for all minorities, it is increasingly accepted that, where a language is spoken by a significant number within the nation-state, it would also be unreasonable not to provide some level of state services and activity in that language. Utilizing the principle of “where numbers warrant” also allows one to draw reasonable limits with respect to which languages might be so recognized—in short, greater ethnolinguistic *democracy* is not necessarily the same as ethnolinguistic *equality* (May 2012).

## Conclusions

The case for greater public multilingualism, based on the combined work of Kymlicka and Kloss, thus provides a viable alternative to the untrammelled monolingualism so often associated with the nation-state model. But in highlighting the cultural situatedness and importance of language and identity, along with the power relations underpinning interactions between linguistic majorities and minorities, it also provides us with a riposte to linguistic cosmopolitan accounts, with their reductive accounts of language as a (mere) means of communication. In particular, reconceptualizing language and identity as inextricably interlinked, and inevitably situated within a wider nexus of power relations, allows one to critique the *renunciation* of linguistic identities that is seemingly required in the unidirectional construction of both national and globalized identities. In effect, these constructions, as discussed throughout this article, always seems to require that one move *from* the local *to* the *national* and, by extension, then *from* the national *to* the global. This unidirectionalism, and a related pathologizing of “local” languages, is demonstrably apparent in the work of Barry, Pogge, and Laitin and Reich, and their defense of the linguistically homogenous nation state. But, as I have

argued, it is also implicit in the ostensibly more open accounts of linguistic cosmopolitanism, as reflected in the contributions of de Swaan, Van Parijs and Archibugi. While the latter at least countenance private multilingualism, their advocacy of English as a world lingua franca does little to mitigate the ongoing linguistic hierarchies that underpin nation-state organization and globalization.

Only the case for greater public multilingualism can do that. After all, multilingual speakers are constantly negotiating language choices, making decisions about what language varieties to use with whom and in what context(s). They also shift easily between various language identities. Why then, when it comes to the public realm, do they suddenly have to renounce one linguistic identity for another—or trade in a supposedly “narrower” language identity for a supposedly “broader” one within an apparently immutable wider hierarchical relationship or constellation of languages? Linguistic identities—and social and cultural identities more broadly—need not be constructed as irredeemably oppositional. On this view, maintaining one’s multilingual linguistic repertoire rather than simply “trading up” to a more dominant language actually avoids “freezing” the development of particular languages in the roles they have historically occupied, or perhaps still currently occupy. Equally importantly, it questions and discards the requirement of a singular and/or replacement approach to the issue of other linguistic identities which has been for too long the pernicious basis of nationalism and, increasingly as we have seen, some discourses of globalization and cosmopolitanism.

This broad reconceptualization also problematizes fundamentally the apparently easy “answer” of diglossia, since diglossia neither reflects accurately the fluidity of multilingual repertoires on the ground (transglossia might be a better term; see García 2009) nor addresses the fundamental status imbalances between local and so-called languages of wider communication in such contexts when they are constructed solely in terms of utility value. Indeed, the notion of a “stable diglossia” that underpins these arguments for English as a global lingua franca is itself woefully naïve. It implies a degree of mutuality and reciprocity, along with a certain demarcation and boundedness between the majority and minority languages involved, when neither of these apply. As we know from early language planning efforts (see May 2011b; Ricento 2000), situations of so-called stable diglossia are precisely *not* complementary in these respects.<sup>15</sup> Rather, the normative ascendancy of dominant languages—and, particularly, English—specifically *militates* against the ongoing use, and even *existence* over time, of minority or local languages.

Instead, what we need is an understanding of languages in these contexts which explicitly values both the local *and* the global and, crucially, *on equal, multidirectional, or recursive, terms*. In his excellent edited volume, *Reclaiming the Local in Language Policy and Practice*, Canagarajah (2005) highlights the

<sup>15</sup> In the 1960s, early proponents of language policy advocated stable diglossia as the solution to the language problems of newly emergent postcolonial states. Much like the linguistic cosmopolitan accounts discussed in this article, the presumption was that majority languages (usually, ex-colonial languages, and most often English and French) would be promoted as public languages of wider communication while “local languages”—minority languages, in effect—would be limited to private, familial language domains. See May (2011b), and Ricento (2000, 2006) for further discussion of the limitations of this approach.

importance of maintaining these crucial interconnections between the local and the global. But Canagarajah does more than that—he also argues that we need specifically to *reclaim* the local in light of the wider discourses of modernity, postmodernity and globalization that construct progress as *only* possible in and through (more) dominant languages. As he asserts:

Celebrating local knowledge should not lead to ghettoizing minority communities, or [force] them into an ostrich-like intellectual existence. A clear grounding in our location gives us the confidence to engage with knowledge from other locations as we deconstruct and reconstruct them for our own purposes.... In a sense, such an epistemological practice would lead us beyond the global and local dichotomy. (2005, p. 15)

By this, we can perhaps unmask and repudiate the fundamental dichotomy underpinning all assertions of national linguistic homogeneity, along with broader arguments for linguistic cosmopolitanism. Both construct minority or local languages as important for identity purposes, but not much else, and dominant (national, global) languages as solely instrumental (and thus identity- and value-free) linguistic vehicles of wider social and economic mobility. Neither is the case, as I hope to have shown. Indeed, in dispensing with this dichotomy, we might also finally recognize that *all* languages actually provide us with both, if only we would allow them to. That is what the case for greater public multilingualism asks us all to consider far more seriously than we have until now.

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