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The Rise of English: The Language of Globalization in China and the European Union

Anne Johnson

I. Introduction

It is everywhere. Some 380 million people speak it as their first language and perhaps two-thirds as many again as their second. A billion are learning it, about a third of the world's population are in some sense exposed to it and by 2050, it is predicted, half the world will be more or less proficient in it. It is the language of globalisation—of international business, politics and diplomacy. It is the language of computers and the Internet. You'll see it on posters in Cote d'Ivoire, you'll hear it in pop songs in Tokyo, you'll read it in official documents in Phnom Penh. Deutsche Welle broadcasts in it. Bjork, an Icelander, sings in it. French business schools teach in it. It is the medium of expression in cabinet meetings in Bolivia. Truly, the tongue spoken back in the 1300s only by the 'low people' of England, as Robert of Gloucester put it at the time, has come a long way. It is now the global language.

"A World Empire by Other Means: The Triumph of English,"

The Economist

*A*s academic analyses of globalization increase in number, it is ever more important to examine the drivers behind this phenomenon, the factors that influence it, and the manifestations it produces in everyday life. A pertinent example of all three dynamics, the worldwide advance of the English language is important to study not only in its own right, but also for its potential to deepen our understanding

of globalization and of the possibilities of creating a more equitable, tolerant, and ethically responsible world. Surprisingly, precious little academic and policy attention has been directed to the rise of the English language, especially in regionally specific contexts.¹ But as a proxy site for the very issues I have been studying as an International Studies and Anthropology double major, the subject seemed a perfect fit for my research as a participant in the Globalization in Comparative Perspective program through the Macalester College Institute for Global Citizenship.

Thus, in this year of inquiry about globalization, I have asked: With the goal of cosmopolitanism in mind, should we see the advance of the English language worldwide as a positive or a negative development? In seeking to answer this admittedly absolutist question, I have identified three paradoxes of thought regarding the status of English as a so-called *lingua franca*. Each of these conflicts is interlinked with the others, and all allude to the staggering complexity of the “English phenomenon.” After outlining these three major paradoxes, I present two case studies in order to put the issues described in the first half of the essay into local context. The case studies draw on ethnographic fieldwork I conducted in the fall semester with young-adult English students in Beijing, China; a series of informal interviews with adult English students in Maastricht, the Netherlands, during the spring; and on literature-based research conducted throughout the year. I conclude by suggesting some normative steps for mitigating the negative and augmenting the positive effects of the language’s spread.

II. Three Dichotomies

A. An Instrument for Economic Success or a Creator of New Inequalities?

The first paradox illustrates the widespread disagreement on whether the rise of English should be understood as a powerful economic tool for development and commerce, or as a dangerous mechanism reinforcing (and creating new) inequalities based on English-proficiency. When conducting fieldwork in China and the European Union (EU) over the past year, I’ve usually begun by inquiring about my informant’s reasons for studying English. Yet as my research progressed, I almost felt as if this were an unnecessary question, as each time interviewees from all walks of life responded with a nearly identical

statement: "English is the language of the world; we must learn it to succeed."² Where these respondents differed was in whether they said it with a hopeful smile on their face or with hints of resentment in their eyes.

Knowledge of the English language has indeed acted as a powerful tool for development and advancement throughout the world, and fluency constitutes a huge step forward in many peoples' (and countries') struggles for self-sufficiency and success. As John Short and colleagues explain, "being competitive in global markets requires that one speak English,"³ and all those I interviewed cited economic reasons for their decision to study English. Proficiency in English has become something of a commodity, valuable both because of its utility, described in *The Economist* as a "basic skill of modern life comparable with the ability to drive a car or use a personal computer,"⁴ as well as for its image as "a form of cultural capital."⁵

Increases in global interactions over the past century have stimulated demand for more streamlined and efficient communication across lingual borders. Thus, in the business world, companies seeking to expand multinationally have had to find ways to communicate across such difference in cost-effective ways. Many firms have changed their corporate languages to the common tongue of English in efforts to streamline communication and avoid leaving team members "out of the loop."⁶ Responding to this situation, nearly a billion individuals worldwide are learning the language, most in hopes that their lingual skills will boost their paycheck or land them a better job. States, too, understand that an English-speaking workforce can help their economies integrate and become more competitive on the world market; in increasing numbers, many states are pumping resources into government-funded lingual education programs from kindergarten onwards. India, with its call centers the most clichéd example of developing-world success through English, and other English-speaking states have benefited from their English-savvy workforces, giving them a definite edge in the world market for the provision of services.

The motivations of corporations, states, and individuals outlined above have in common that all wish to increase the audience with which they are able to communicate and do business.⁷ As Michael Skapinker of the *Financial Times* explains, "It is not just that Microsoft, Google and Vodafone conduct their business in English; it is the language in which Chinese speak to Brazilians and Germans to Indonesians."⁸ Having been accepted as the international language, there

has been a “conscious adoption” of English around the world by those striving to participate more fully in international life. “As people chose to learn English in one part of the world,” explain Short et al., “they make the language more attractive to others in another part of the world.”⁹ Because of this, many have eschewed costly translation efforts and multilingualism, turning instead to this “universal” tongue.

A second major reason for the popularity of English among those seeking upward mobility is the language’s association with all things “modern.” Most likely thanks to American pop culture, English has been ascribed an aura of “hipness,” defining an international, glamorous elite culture and an apt accessory for Bauman’s high-status “tourist” class.¹⁰ When asked to explain the frequent use of English in advertisements outside of English-speaking countries, a majority of my informants ranked these fashionable qualities as more important than the wide audience of English. As Naomi Klein explains, today’s corporate advertisements are focused not on promoting the quality of a product, but on communicating an attitude, experience, or lifestyle that is attractive to their target audience.¹¹ Many advertising companies capitalize on lingual imagery, using English when they want to communicate globality, modernism, and progressivism. Clothing giant Esprit is notable here, with its latest tagline, “The World is our Culture,” splashed across advertisements around the world in none other than the English language. Even the website of Russian designer Denis Simachev, lauded for diversifying the Western-dominated fashion world with his expensive line of Russian-nostalgia-inspired clothing, offers his website not in Russian, but exclusively in English. It is hard to know whether it is the larger English-speaking audience or the “glamorous international elite” imagery that Simachev is after.¹²

In this manner, the English language continues its growth, popularized both by the financial incentives of expressing oneself in the “global vernacular” as well as through the “Bourdieuian” lifestyle images attached to it. For many, whether business executives or low-income students, from wealthy or poorer countries, English and the command of it have been constructed as “the language of power and opportunity, free of the limitations that the ambitious attribute to their native languages.”¹³ Very few among those I interviewed were willing to cloud this enthusiasm with concerns about the implications of this global English craze.

But as academics, journalists, and politicians remind us, economic tools that are not equally and universally available can, like the so-

called “digital divide,” also function as new dividing lines in the quest for upward mobility. As Joshua Fishman reminds us, “spreading languages often come to be hated because they can disadvantage many as they provide advantages for some.”¹⁴ In 2001, *Business Week* ran an article titled, “The Great English Divide: In Europe, Speaking the Lingua Franca separates the Haves from the Have-Nots.” The cover illustration portrays two business executives identical in all aspects except that one communicates freely in English, successful and smiling, while the other is depicted without a mouth—speechless.¹⁵ Much of the recent attention to the spread of English deals precisely with this point: that English is not only helpful but is becoming increasingly *necessary* for success in the working world, leaving those who do not speak it behind.¹⁶

This is not only the case in the world’s board rooms and executive conference halls, but also for blue-collar and service workers who are now required to collaborate with and serve people who do not share their lingual roots.¹⁷ When European cable company UPC needed more electricians than were available in the Netherlands to build a \$20 million dollar TV studio in Amsterdam in 1999, they passed over the abundance of electricians available in the rust belt of French-speaking Belgium and northern France. Preferring that everyone at the project speak the same language, UPC “flew in a platoon of electricians from Britain, put them up in hotels during the week, and sent them home every weekend.”¹⁸

Academia has not been spared the spread of the English language monopoly either, and French scholars have adapted the classic scholarly mandate to “publish or perish” to these changes, now quipping “publish *in English* or perish in French.”¹⁹ “There is no reason to think that cultural production and intellectual activity in the non-Anglo world is any less lively, creative, or relevant than what’s going on in English,” notes Naomi Buck, “but every reason to believe that it’s reaching a smaller audience.”²⁰ Already in 1997, 95% of the articles indexed in the Science Citation Index’s Web of Science were written in English, despite the fact that only half were written by authors in English-speaking countries.²¹ Other researchers have noted that publications written in languages other than English have a considerably lower “impact” (measured by frequency of citation) than English-language works, and command lower compensation than works published in English.²²

This kind of system, which rewards English-speakers and, in the words of a Spanish interviewee, “leaves the rest outside,”²³ should undoubtedly be questioned. Certainly, all skills, including lingual ability, should be rewarded. Yet should ability in a language (which is native to some, and to which educational access for the rest is unevenly spread) count for *more* than one’s field-related expertise? Those who reply to this question in the negative accuse English-only systems of violating the equality of opportunity, and many believe that lingual and cultural rights, like other human rights, should not be left to market forces but instead be protected. However, the role of English in bringing prosperity to those who use it cannot be ignored, nor are the market-based incentives for its use easily regulated.

B. A Force of Cultural Imperialism and Homogenization? Or a Tool for Cross-Cultural Communication and Awareness?

A second conflict over the positive and negative consequences of the rise of English worldwide has emerged with regard to culture. While most agree that languages serve as carriers of culture, there is much disagreement over the degree to which English has remained connected to its cultures of origin during its tenure as a global lingua franca. In this section, I will discuss the ways in which the English language is seen as an imperialist and homogenizing force detrimental to the world’s cultural diversity, and then examine evidence to the contrary, which indicates that the English language is separating from its culture of origin and actually facilitating cross-cultural dialogue.

Many have theorized about the ascendancy of English to its extraordinary position among world languages. Richard Pells claims that its simple grammar and international hodgepodge vocabulary make English well suited for advertisers, headline writers, and pop musicians, and is thus a likely candidate for worldwide popularity.²⁴ Many of the Europeans I interviewed said that English was popular because of the “easiness” of learning it (although their Chinese counterparts, whose native language bears few ties to English, would surely beg to differ). Yet as Jean Aitchison of Oxford University pointed out to the writers of *The Economist*, “the success or failure of a language has little to do with its inherent qualities and ‘everything to do with the power of the people who speak it.’”²⁵

As demonstrated in the previous section, English is seen as a language of influence and strength. Britain’s worldwide enlargement

across an empire on which the sun never set played a large role in spreading the language. The United States' more recent status as the world's sole superpower has further reinforced the position of English as a tongue of authority throughout the world. Many say that the soft power of U.S. corporations has outpaced the importance of traditional politics²⁶ and, as indicated above, the use of English in marketing and advertising has further reproduced the equating of English with power. As English continues to grow in popularity, it seems that its image of modernity, power, and internationalism is becoming ever more entrenched, and the financial incentives for speaking it ever more firm. In turn, the popularity and growth of English expands, reinforcing its position at the top of the lingual pecking order.

English may be the mode of communication for the international elite, and thus, also the language of choice for those who aspire to that status, but languages are not merely tools for communication. They are also the carriers of entire worldviews, the "repositories of culture and identity."²⁷ While this means that decreasing lingual diversity can lead to the loss of irreplaceable bodies of knowledge and tradition, it also reinforces the influence of those who hold such power.

Michel Foucault has noted that power in general is integral in the shaping of knowledge, and those who hold power are afforded the authority to mold perceptions of the world as suits their interests. Due to its direct but subtle connection to the ways people understand the world around them, wielding lingual power is a particularly effective means of spreading one's influence. Dozens of states have capitalized on this fact, channeling millions (and even billions!²⁸) of dollars to networks such as the Alliance Française, the Goethe Institute, or the Japan Foundation, mandated to promote and spread the language and culture of their respective countries. The British Council, the U.K.'s organization for culture exportation, betrays duplicitous motives in its attempts to promote both the supposed cultural neutrality of English as well as the obvious benefits of its popularity for the U.K. Publicity material for the "English 2000" project reveals the Council's aim to:

[E]xploit the position of English to further British interests ... The English language is in the full sense international: it is divesting itself of its political and cultural connotations. Speaking English makes people open to Britain's cultural achievements, social values and business aims.²⁹

Yet even Britain must at times fear the spread of the English language, for although it may lay claim to the language's history, it is not British culture that is most promoted in English-language communication.³⁰ In that American media and advertising are among the chief carriers of English-language products to the greater world, many of the messages that English carries with it are those of American culture, or at least dramatized versions of it. Globalization's homogenizing potential has been widely documented and discussed, but as a major carrier of the images of globalization, English threatens not only to make those who speak it more alike, but to mold them in the culturally-specific American image that it carries in its syntax. As Benjamin Barber writes in his "Jihad vs. McWorld" thesis, "common markets demand a common language ... and they produce common behaviors of the kind bred by cosmopolitan city life everywhere."³¹ Yet as this brand of Americanized "cosmopolitanism" drives ahead, it threatens not to celebrate diversity, but to destroy—or at least dilute—the cultures in its path.

Turning to the opposite side of the cultural argument, many hold that just as English functions as an instrument for economic development, it also serves as a tool for communication across cultural barriers. Proponents base this claim on the idea that the English language can be separated from its Anglo-American cultural origins. As Hall, Held and McGrew claim, "the more social life becomes mediated by the global marketing of styles, places and images, by international travel, and by globally networked media images and communications systems, the more identities become detached—disembedded—from specific times, places, histories and traditions, and appear 'free-floating.'"³² As a medium for many of the global communication forces mentioned in this quote, English has, in many ways, ceased to be the property of native speakers and has been appropriated, through its continued globetrotting, by the many constituencies who use it to communicate across lingual borders.

Supporters in this camp tend to have faith that the rise of English is a positive development for culture, connecting people from a variety of backgrounds and allowing speakers to share their culture and ideas with a broader audience. Despite my efforts to design interview questions that would prompt discussion on cultural concerns about the English language, not one among my informants brought up the idea that the English language might be detrimental to world cultures. When I brought up the ideas of cultural imperialism and homogenization myself, few interviewees had considered the potentially harmful

effects of English on their own cultures, and even fewer thought that this was a valid concern. Instead, most argued that English has actually had positive effects on other cultures by facilitating the sharing of ideas and cultures across lingual boundaries. As one young woman from China explained, almost exasperated at my seeming naïveté, “English is an international language that can be used in all cultures and between all cultures. This brings international understanding; it’s the opposite of cultural imperialism!”³³

Proponents of this theory may have a point. English-medium communication on the international plane is increasingly characterized more by interactions between those who speak it as a second language than by communication between native speakers. As a Ukrainian contributor to a BBC forum concerned with the spread of English explained, “It’s not the Brits or the Americans who are to blame. We (non-native English speakers) are the ones who use English as a lingua franca.”³⁴ Power relations may have determined that English would outpace other global languages, but the language can no longer be understood as functioning exclusively to serve the interests of English-speaking states. As far back as the 1940s, when Japan and Germany were negotiating their alliance against the U.S. and Britain, the foreign ministers of these two Axis powers had to find a common language for their talks and decided, ironically, on the language of their adversaries: English.³⁵ Today the use of English between lingual communities has extended even further; by some estimates, 85% of international organizations—themselves a product of transnational interaction—cite English as one of their official languages. From sports fields to conference centers, classrooms to performance halls, English is increasingly being used as a vehicular language, and many maintain that this is only strengthening global cultural awareness and the appreciation of diversity.

While it is debatable whether a language can in fact be stripped of the culture within which it is rooted, current English language teaching methods seem to be reinforcing this goal. Traditional language courses have often emphasized adoption of the culture of the language being acquired, but many of today’s English students are less interested in becoming culturally American and more interested in learning English for international purposes, often career related. As Pang, Zhou, and Fu explain, “It would be absurd for a Chinese businessman to adopt a British cultural attitude to do business with his counterpart from Japan or Germany.”³⁶ Thus, more and more language education providers

are reorienting their courses to the specific needs of their students, popularizing courses in business English, English for taxi drivers, legal English, or phone manners in English.³⁷

Still others point to the ways in which English has been and continues to be influenced by other cultural forms and emanates not only from Anglophone societies but also pops up organically across the globe. Social scientists identify English as a *global language*, defined “not only in terms of its absolute speakers, but also by the fact that versions of it are spoken around the world by native and non-native speaking communities.”³⁸ For every native speaker of English, there are three people who have learned the language, many of whom have never conversed with a native speaker.³⁹ This has given rise to a variety of “world Englishes,” localized and creolized to fit with local culture.⁴⁰

While this may conjure up images of poorly translated fortune cookie messages, the subject here is not the *incorrect* English of those with little experience with the language, but rather *indigenized* and hybridized Englishes. In 2005, *Newsweek* magazine ran an article titled “Not the Queen’s English,” in which it highlighted dozens of examples of this phenomenon, such as the new edition of *Don Quixote* recently translated by Amherst professor Ilan Stavans into “Spanglish,” the hybrid vernacular “Englog” from the Tagalog-speaking areas of the Philippines, and groups of black South Africans, who—shunning Afrikaans—speak English “with a Xhosa accent and a Xhosa attitude.”⁴¹ So-called “China English” also offers examples of hybridized English, wherein culturally Chinese concepts are given voice in the English language, such as in “pay New Year calls” (*bai nian*), or to have “no face” (*mei mian*), meaning to be shamed.⁴²

There are many who look down upon the burgeoning varieties of non-standard English, but as I discuss in the case studies below, it may be the incredible flexibility of this language that has spelled its success in the past. To the concerned, Naomi Buck offers reassurance, “maybe some comfort can be taken in the fact that English has been sashaying, reconnoitering and kowtowing its way around the world for a long time. It knows how to beg, borrow and steal but also how to integrate, share and age—with grace and not.”⁴³ The multicultural roots of the English language run far and deep, but only time will tell whether the English of the future will act as a source for Anglo-American hegemony or function as a more cosmopolitan means of communication between the world’s lingual groups.

C. A Passing Phase, Similar to Lingua Francas of the Past? Or Qualitatively Different and thus more Dangerous?

A third and final conflict in analysis of the rise of English worldwide has to do with the permanence of its ascendancy. As Phillipson has reflected, “English has acquired a narcotic power in many parts of the world, an addiction that has long-term consequences that are far from clear.”⁴⁴ In this section, I discuss the differences of opinion between those who believe that English is “just another lingua franca” and those who worry that its rise under conditions of fast-paced globalization means that it is a more permanent, and potentially more dangerous, phenomenon.

Some scholars see the preeminence of the English language as nothing more than a passing phase. Fishman, a prominent scholar of sociolinguistics and a major proponent of this argument, explains, “historically, languages have risen and fallen with the military, economic, cultural or religious powers that supported them.”⁴⁵ Russian, for example, was propelled to prominence with the rise in power of the Soviet Union. It became the indisputable language of power from Berlin to Beijing until the fall of the ideological system that supported it. Since then, English has taken the reins single-handedly, propped up by the political and economic forces behind it. But there are many reasons to believe that the heyday of the English language will not long outlive the powers that have propelled it to the fore.

One potential reason is that the continuing importance of other languages, large and small, indicates that arguments about the supposed necessity of a single global tongue may be misguided. Already the widespread popularity of English has meant that ability in other languages has become equally, if not more, valuable for employment in specific fields.⁴⁶ Fishman makes a strong argument regarding the rise of regional languages. “For all the enthusiasm and vitriol generated by grand-scale globalization, it is the growth in regional interactions—trade, travel, the spread of religions, interethnic marriages—that touches the widest array of local populations.”⁴⁷ Although English may be the mode of today’s global communication, regional lingua francas like Arabic, Chinese, Spanish, or Swahili are more effective tools for reaching greater, even if less affluent, swathes of people. It is important to remember that English is still only spoken by a minority of the world’s population, and that, “just because a wide array of young people around the world may be able to sing along to a new

Madonna song does not mean that they can hold a rudimentary conversation in English, or even understand what Madonna is saying."⁴⁸ Regional languages are gaining speed as the societies who speak them gain economic inertia and power on the global playing field. Many people agree that it won't be long before they become major competitors to the English language.⁴⁹

A second major reason why lasting English language dominance may be unlikely can be found in the basic human tendency to resist domination. Trends that are perceived as hegemonic can have the indirect effect of producing a backlash, prompting groups to hold on more tightly to their local identities. As the mayor of one town in Brittany put it, "Man is a fragile animal and he needs his close attachments. The more open the world becomes, the more ties there will be to one's roots and one's land."⁵⁰ Fishman explains that languages "serve a strong symbolic function as a clear mark of 'authenticity'"⁵¹ and are inextricably tied to a community's sense of identity. Thus, the encroachment of the English language into TV sets, textbooks, and business contracts has been met with resentment from those who see this change as cultural dilution or as minimizing the strength of their own languages. The fact that English began its international globe-trot largely through empire and conquest, and that its current predominance has been reinforced through the ascendancy of the unitary power of the U.S., does not help the reputation of English and links this lingual issue to a host of other trends of anti-Americanism and anti-Westernization.

In the face of the advances of the English language, many lingual groups are pushing for the protection and reassertion of lingual diversity. As will be discussed later, a host of countries (mostly European) have instituted policies that regulate the usage of non-native tongues (most pointedly English) in advertisements, business deals, and on TV and radio waves.⁵² Smaller language groups, perhaps fearing that they will meet the fate of extinction, as several languages do each week,⁵³ are also pushing for greater protection in actions as diverse as increasing the media forms available in their languages, reintroducing younger generations to the dying tongues of their ancestors, and including minority languages in national symbols such as currencies and anthems. Many have also sought legal support, making more languages "official" at the state level than ever before⁵⁴ and enshrining lingual rights in legal documents, such as the 1992 European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. These kinds of responses to lingual hegemony could, in the long term, slow the onslaught of other

forms of cultural homogenization,⁵⁵ thus providing a check against the lasting dominance of English on the global level.

However, many believe that the problem is not so simple. While its rise may seem similar to the trajectories followed by historical languages of power, the speeding and heightening forces of globalization mean that the “English phenomenon” is producing consequences that have never before been seen. Many of these results are alarming and simply too big to ignore in waiting for the next big language to bump English back to second place.

English is reaching heights never before attained by any language, and it is leaving other tongues behind in the dust. While other languages, such as Chinese and Spanish, tally more native speakers than English, no other language in recorded history has ever been spoken as *widely* as English.⁵⁶ In this frenzy for English, other would-be second-languages are being pushed to the sidelines and my research in both Europe and China indicates that English is seen by many as the be-all, end-all language. Several of my informants indicated their certainty that English is “too strong to lose its power” and declared that learning any language other than English is simply unnecessary in today’s world.⁵⁷ Thomas Friedman may believe that the world is flat and that developing states may employ globalization to approach or even eclipse American dominance (and thus its lingual power as well). But it seems that the higher the English language climbs in status as “the language of globalization,” the more other language groups lose.

Although more exact estimates are impossible to come by, between 50 and 90 percent of the world’s languages are expected to become extinct by the end of the century.⁵⁸ Such statistics are quite disturbing, since, as stated in *The Economist*, “whenever a language dies, a bit of the world’s culture, history and diversity dies with it.”⁵⁹ Yet even when languages are not wholly lost, many have lost the vocabulary to describe certain topics. Listening to English words like “Internet” and “texting” pop up in conversations held in Bengali or Bulgarian may be amusing, but the non-adaptation of new or technical English terminology to other languages can mean the downfall of many indigenous scholarly traditions. As explained toward the beginning of this essay, much of the world’s written academic discourse now occurs in English, and Phillipson cites concern that “scholars working in English are unable to communicate their professional expertise in the mother tongue, and that the [mother] language itself is atrophying in particular areas rather than continuing to develop and adjust.”⁶⁰

Concerns regarding the effects of the English language on other cultures transcend lingual debates and are often conflated with apprehensions about Americanization, Westernization, cultural hegemony, and globalization in general. While cultural change is a natural and expected phenomenon, irreparable changes occurring at the rate of speed that they are today are often hard taken, especially when the culprit is so easily identified. In Fishman's words:

Those who fear their own powerlessness and the demise of their beloved languages of authenticity have reasons to believe that the trouble comes from the opposite end of the language-and-power spectrum. Small communities accuse these linguistic Big Brothers of imperialism, linguicide, genocide and mind control.⁶¹

Many respond to this challenge with calls for protectionism against the destructive English language. Just as calls for international labor regulations and environmental standards have accompanied the growth of transnational goods markets, so, too, it is argued, should efforts be made to reign in hegemonic lingua francas left thus far to the forces of supply and demand.

III. Case Studies

The fact that I
am writing to you
in English
already falsifies
what I
wanted to tell you.

My subject:
how to explain to you
that I don't belong to English
though I belong nowhere else,
if not here
in English.

Dedication, Gustavo Pérez Firmat

With the basic dichotomies of thought about the rise of the English language thus identified, I move forward with two case studies. Below, I will explore the historical background, current situation, and potential problems that English poses in China and in the EU, drawing on my studies and experiences in each location in 2007 and 2008. Each case study builds upon the foundation laid in the first half of the essay, placing trends observed worldwide into local context, and integrating the meaning that English takes on in the identities of Chinese and European citizens.

A. China

When Katherine, a Chinese citizen, was about three years old, her parents brought her along on a business trip to Beijing and took the opportunity to visit the nearby Great Wall. While there, they met an elderly foreign woman who played with Katherine and gave her some candies.

I remember being so surprised by how kind and friendly she was. But later, when we went back to the restaurant, my father took the candies and threw them away. Back then, people thought foreigners were a kind of poison. They were afraid of their ideas, of their lifestyle ... But as I grew up, it was my father who encouraged me to study English. I don't know why his mindset changed so much.⁶²

Now in her twenties and aspiring to pursue a master's degree in English, Katherine has moved from provincial Qing Dao to China's capital city and was among the young adults I interviewed for my ethnographic research in Beijing. Her childhood story, though simple, is a pertinent representation of the fluctuating relationship of China as a whole to the English language.

Below, I unwrap the layers of meaning embedded in the English language in China, beginning with a historicization of its growth as a foreign presence. Following that, I identify the motives behind English-learning in China and then problematize China's present-day craze for English according to the challenges it poses for socialist equality and the maintenance of Chinese culture.

1. Historical Development

Foreign languages, especially English, have held a precarious position in China for centuries, and national leaders have been perpetually torn between their enthusiasm over the utility of English for state development and apprehension about Western "pollution" and cultural imperialism. In the words of Heidi Ross, foreign language education in China can be considered,

a barometer of what China's leaders and population consider appropriate levels of interaction with foreign values and peoples. Support for foreign language training is high when sustained participation in the global community is deemed commensurate with China's political and

economic interests and low when it is perceived as threatening to internal political stability and cultural integrity.⁶³

Early Western contact with China was met with disinterest and arrogance,⁶⁴ but as Britain's influence over China increased during the Opium Wars and the subsequent treaties of Nanjing and Tianjin, the Qing court felt it "unwise to ignore the growing presence of foreigners in China because they identified foreign knowledge with a comprehensive military-political system that threatened China's sovereignty."⁶⁵ Although support for the study of languages grew, "material" and "skill-based" foreign knowledge was considered inferior to the "intellectual" and "spiritual" qualities of China's scholarly traditions.⁶⁶

Support for foreign-language learning vacillated through the anti-foreign Boxer Rebellion, the internationalist modernizations of the Nationalists, and Mao's criticisms of foreign exploitation. Foreign languages enjoyed brief support in Mao's early years ("provided that vigilant efforts be made to eliminate their corrosive influences"⁶⁷), and English in particular was bolstered during the Great Leap Forward following China's break with the Soviet Union. Generally, however, foreign languages suffered under Mao's rule. During the isolationist years of the Cultural Revolution, lingual educators and their institutions were accused of "being all things bad—feudal, bourgeois, revisionist... hothouses for cultivating revisionist sprouts and intellectual aristocrats,"⁶⁸ and English simply ceased to be taught.⁶⁹ Deng Xiaoping's reformist policies of the 1980s meant a major resurgence of English instruction, but the system was plagued with low-quality, minimally trained teachers and a "just slogans" ideological curriculum, wherein students might be well-versed in phrases like "taking the socialist road" but completely incompetent if they wanted to use English to ask for a cup of tea.⁷⁰ Still, Ross notes, this was the first time since 1949 that "secondary school graduates managed to complete their entire school career without having their English-language curriculum changed midstream."⁷¹

Support for the learning of English has increased since then under the auspices that, as former Vice Premier of the State Council Li Lanqing stated, English is "not merely an educational issue per se but an issue associated with the modernization of the country."⁷² This attitude has continued through today, but as evidenced above, attitudes toward the English language have ridden a rollercoaster of public and government opinion in the last few centuries. "At worst, the language

has been perceived as a threat to national integrity. At best, it has been seen as a conduit for strengthening China's position in the world community."⁷³ A proper history of China's relationship to the English language and the outside world could fill volumes, but I leave that task to those with sufficient space to do it justice.

2. *English in China Today: Imperialism or Internationalism?*

Today China's language policy continues to be firmly planted in the outward-looking camp, and it seems unlikely that it will jump the fence again in the near future. In this age of internationalism, previously held worries about cultural pollution and imperialism have lost much of their bite. China's ever-expanding trade ties continue to crisscross the world, largely through an English-language medium. The state's 2001 WTO acceptance has "made the need for English more pragmatically and immediately felt."⁷⁴

Preparations for the 2008 Beijing Olympics provided a source for hope and outward-thinking for many Chinese, and millions of citizens—from official Games staff to taxi drivers to ordinary citizens—got in on the action by brushing up on their English skills, cheered on by the Beijing Olympics Organizing Committee.⁷⁵ In this period of *yingwen re*, or "English Fever," it is said that more people spoke English in China than in the U.S., and demand for English teachers continues to surpass supply. The *China Daily* reports that more than 60,000 foreigners are working as English teachers in China (excluding tens of thousands more in part-time positions),⁷⁶ and while studying in Beijing, I, too, received dozens of job offers at English schools and for private tutoring.

It seems to be taken for granted in China that English, more than any other language, is the mode of communication for the world, the ultimate solution for global integration. While a multitude of other languages are studied throughout the country,⁷⁷ none have caught on with the enthusiasm afforded to English, seen as a channel for much of what China and its citizens want from the outside world: transnational networking, economic success, and cosmopolitan culture. As I will discuss, both my fieldwork in Beijing and (pleasingly, for a novice researcher) the findings of other scholars indicate that China has embraced the power of the English language for the dual purposes of national development and personal success. In the words of Pang, Zhou and Fu:

We may say that for most Chinese people, English is now learnt not for the prestige of knowing a foreign language or appreciating the cultural heritage of Anglo-American societies, but for patriotic and utilitarian reasons, and for national modernization as well as personal advancement and material gain.⁷⁸

3. *A Ladder to Personal Economic Success*

English has been constructed as a tool for development throughout the world; fluency constitutes a huge step forward in many people's personal struggles for self-sufficiency, and this is no less the case in China. English is a required subject for Chinese schoolchildren. Two years of college-level English instruction is required for all those seeking a bachelor's degree.⁷⁹ Certification of English proficiency has become a big business for those involved in the test administering industry, but test-takers claim it is an even bigger business for them.⁸⁰ Described as a "passport to better-paid employment,"⁸¹ the "entrance ticket to the working world,"⁸² "the dominant staple in a progressive education," and "a necessary qualification for many respectable jobs,"⁸³ the multitude of English fluency exams available fill an important niche in a country where "for many people, proficiency in English is synonymous with the promise of well-being."⁸⁴ Even those worksites where employees would have no practical use for the language often list certification in English as a prerequisite for job interview requests.

Due to the requirements of the present-day educational system and the usefulness of English in the work world, mastery of the English language is quickly becoming synonymous with educational and socioeconomic success. The school where I conducted my ethnography made use of this common goal in its advertising and informational material. Lines like "May Northern School open a new chapter of your life" and "Welcome to Northern School, where your dream starts" greet students each time they ascend the cold concrete stairs to the fourth-floor school, reminding them why they have come. Those I spoke to in China were quick to point out that although English does enjoy an image of glamour and trendiness in their home country, its popularity is not drawn from a subjective sense of being "cool" but rather of utility. "Learning English isn't something that you do or don't want to do," explained a student I met at a Beijing restaurant, working her way through college as a waitress. "You just have to do it. If I want to get a good job, I've got to learn English." Many of my interviewees

from the Bei Fang Language School related heart-wrenching stories of the years they had spent working at thankless, low-paying jobs, and the sacrifices they had made to study English in hopes of gaining “more opportunities to compete” in a society of one billion people.

4. *Developing China from the Inside*

Competition with their fellow citizens is not the only thing on the minds of Chinese English students. They are also guided by the patriotic but somewhat anomalous logic that China “needs to keep up with the rest of the world, therefore Chinese people need to learn English.”⁸⁵ Rather than associating the language with the “century of humiliation” China experienced by virtue of British foreign policy, China’s younger generations have placed English under the canopy of the political slogan “*yang wei zhong yong*,” or “making foreign things serve China.” Setting aside the arrogance of the emperors and the ideology of the Maoists, China is realizing, in the words of my Chinese language tutor, that it “can’t be an island anymore; we can’t be the only number one. We have to work *with* other countries in order to succeed, and the language for that is English, the most international language on earth.”

Since the 1980s reforms, many scholars have explored the relationship of foreign interaction and development in China. As Gui Shichun stated back in 1984, “Modernization needs foreign languages and foreign languages need modernization.”⁸⁶ Ross also addresses this issue in her ethnographic work at Shanghai’s Li Xun Language School. “Foreign languages are, in fact, described by school leaders as the ‘primary channel through’ which students make their contributions to China’s modernization efforts.”⁸⁷ The students I interviewed were very clear about their agreement with such statements. The government, too, has jumped on the bandwagon of English fever, especially amidst Olympic activities, and is promoting English as best it can in hopes to make itself more attractive for business investment and tourism. Officials also understand the great asset they have in the younger English-speaking generations. It awards scholarships for many of its best students to study and/or work abroad under the auspices that they will bring back the expertise of the “*waiguo zhuanjia*,” the foreign experts.⁸⁸ The English students of Bei Fang Language School, like many of their peers across the country, place themselves at the forefront of China’s development, as if they personally, armed with English certifications

and self-confidence, will be driving China's transformation into the modern state they dream it can become.

5. Challenges

The widespread enthusiasm for English in China belies the fact that, like elsewhere in the world, the popularity of the language may do as much harm as good. In a recent article in the *New Yorker*, Evan Osno writes about "Crazy English," a language-learning pedagogy that utilizes shouting and body movement to help its pupils feel more comfortable using English. Speaking of the movement's founder but delivering insights applicable to China's English fever as a whole, he states, "Li's cosmology ties the ability to speak English to personal strength, and personal strength to national power. It's a combination that produces intense, sometimes desperate adoration."⁸⁹ Many believe that this "desperate adoration" of the English tongue has had negative effects on China's ability to promote socialist equality as well as on the integrity of indigenous Chinese culture.

As outlined above, English is increasingly becoming a "must learn" subject for those who hope to rise above low-level employment in China. Yet the achievement of true fluency has always had less to do with talent and more to do with the availability of free time for study, the resources required for expensive tutoring, and the costs associated with certification. Educational reforms have meant the re-emergence of elite educational tracks (which include high-level English training) set apart from the classrooms of the masses. As Ross explains, these schools have had difficulties balancing "demands for socialist equality with the requirements of rapid but efficient modernization through certification of expertise."⁹⁰ English has remained a mark of privilege in China and English certification has become just another method of socioeconomic stratification. China may have relaxed its communist ideals in favor of "socialism with Chinese characteristics," but the widening gap between China's rich and poor has been increasingly difficult for the communist government to justify. As more and more pundits have begun to point out, the students' quest to put English to use for the good of their country is now in fact splitting the state into class strata and undermining the validity of China's governmental system.

As a carrier of Anglo-American culture, the spread of English in China has incited concerns that China is losing itself to cultural "pollu-

tion" and a resurgence of Western imperialism. Buruma and Margalit have called modernization a "slippery concept,"⁹¹ but it is made much slipperier in China, where "modernization" is carelessly interchanged with the words "Westernization" and "internationalization." China's desire to develop has in many cases given it a sort of cultural inferiority complex, a major change from the days when the self-titled "Middle" or "Central Country," *Zhongguo*, resisted the influence of "inferior" Western knowledge and refused to receive diplomatic communication in anything but Chinese. China's younger generations have been described as "indiscriminate worshipers of all things Western,"⁹² and I witnessed countless Chinese compare Western ways with those of China, inevitably determining that the attributes of the West were better than their own.

Those I spoke to in Beijing were well aware of this issue, but dismissed it as a matter of economics and development. "We want to grow, so losing some of our culture is a tendency we can't prevent. It's a side effect. Once we get ahead, this won't be a problem." Pang, Zhou and Fu, who are careful to always write "international English" rather than simply "English" in their work, claim that English is increasingly being treated as a tool (rather than a carrier of culture) by Chinese educators. They report on the many universities that have restructured their English bachelor's programs to include specialist courses, such as economics, engineering, or computer technology alongside lingual instruction. Prospective employers have been responding very positively to this initiative, and have affirmed educators' vision of an instrumental English.⁹³

We use English to conduct our business with our counterparts from Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, and Germany, for example. So it's really international English, not that of native speakers from Britain and the US. International English to us is really about effective communication for successful business and that's all.⁹⁴

With the tool of English firmly grasped, the students I interviewed believe in a future when China will interact with other nations as an equal, a China that won't have to worry about losing itself in the process. Many extend these dreams even further, hoping to not only *retain* the "good parts" of their culture, but also to join the ranks of countries who *export* their culture, using the tool of English to "bring China to the world." As China's international self-confidence and power grow,

perhaps international use of Mandarin Chinese will rise to challenge English's lingua franca status. But for now, widespread use and study of English in China is here to stay.

B. Europe

In Europe the story is a little different, yet the debate over the widespread use of English references many of the same issues faced by China and discussed in the first half of the study. Although the English language as used in Europe lacks the symbolic connotations it carries in China as an envoy of modernity, globalization, and Westernization, its rise is equally relevant, tying in elements of European history and contemporary EU integration. Following the structure of the first case study, I will first sketch out the historical context of English as a language indigenous to Europe, and then examine its present status. In particular, I will discuss the challenges the EU faces as it unites, aided by the practicalities of English but stumbling under its responsibility to protect Europe's cultural and lingual diversity as well.

1. Historical Development

Unlike in China where English has been seen as a largely foreign and outside presence, the English language has had a far longer and more pervasive history in Europe. Born out of lingual intermixing between the Anglo-Saxon tongues of the British Isles and early invasions of speakers of Scandinavian and Norman vernaculars, English began its habit of borrowing from other languages early in life. Evolving from Old English, the language of the epic poem *Beowulf*, to the Middle English of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, English grew into its recognizably current form, Modern English, by the time Shakespeare's genius helped to stabilize the language as "self confident and mature"⁹⁵ in the 16th century. Prior to that era, English had been a "low language" of the common folk; Anglo-Norman was used in more formal settings such as among royalty, the urban elite and in government until 1509, when English was recognized as the official language of England.⁹⁶

Samuel Johnson compiled the first significant English dictionary in 1755, but by then British expansionism worldwide had helped to contribute countless new words to the lexicon. English took on innumerable new vocabularies. From the Dutch word "apartheid" to Tagalog's "yo-yo," from the directly translated Chinese verb "brainwash," to

German's "zeitgeist,"⁹⁷ English continued to grow into an extremely adaptable language of impressive flexibility.

To this day, English dictionaries sell new editions each year full of new words, continually adapting to the new contexts and uses the language finds itself in. Meanwhile, the governments of France and Spain, among others, have set up institutions with the express purpose of protecting the lingual integrity of their national languages, most particularly from the encroachment of English words like "software," "shopping," and "email."⁹⁸ Latin and Ancient Greek, too, "were fixed languages with rigid rules that failed to adapt naturally,"⁹⁹ but soon met their deaths when they proved unable—or unwilling—to adapt to changes in the world they attempted to describe. Samuel Johnson himself warned against this kind of protectionism, declaring:

May the lexicographer be derided who shall imagine that his dictionary can embalm his language...With this hope, however, academies have been instituted to guard the avenues of their languages...but their vigilance and activity have hitherto been vain...to enchain syllables, and to lash the wind, are equally the undertakings of pride.¹⁰⁰

While members of the Academie Française "defend the sanctity of the French language" with their silver-and-gold-embroidered uniforms and swords,¹⁰¹ English expands as robustly as ever across Europe and beyond, strengthened rather than polluted by its elasticity and openness to new influences.

2. English in Europe Today: United or Divided in Diversity?

Today English enjoys great popularity in Europe. According to the 2004 Eurobarometer survey, 75 percent of Europeans agree that English is the most useful language to learn and 69 percent believe that everyone in the EU should speak English.¹⁰² English overwhelms even the largest of Europe's other languages, topping the charts both in terms of total speakers as well as being the most commonly studied foreign language.¹⁰³ This trend has made especially firm inroads among members of Europe's younger generations who, mostly too young to remember the violent histories of their homelands, are now using English to criss-cross the continent following the jobs and educational opportunities now available to them in an increasingly integrated EU.¹⁰⁴

Young people in Europe have also grown up surrounded by advertisements, media, and pop culture, which glamorize English, and are chasing after the language in greater numbers than ever before. Recently, a Dutch woman explained to me that her daughters had chosen to study “sexy,” “trendy” English over French because the latter was “too stuffy” and “for old people.”¹⁰⁵ The business world, too, is capitalizing on the magnetism of English and the connotations that come with it. Even in France itself, where pride and protection of the national language are as strong as the scent of its cheese, English’s image of modernity and interconnectedness is too much for advertisers to pass up, and the majority of telecommunication and transportation firms have found their way around the tough language regulations in order to use English in their product names and program titles.

Enthusiasm for English as a language of modernity, global interconnectedness, and practical communication is as strong in Europe as anywhere, but its growing popularity has also raised much debate on the repercussions the language may have on the unification efforts of the European Union. On one hand, many of my interviewees suggest that they see English as the language of Europe and as helping to realize the EU’s original vision of an integrated European labor market and united socio-political sphere. Examples abound in daily European life. “Euroshopper,” an inexpensive line of generic grocery items available in fifteen countries across Europe, lists ingredients and preparation instructions in two languages, one local to the country of sale and the other English. “Sign and Sight,” a popular Internet news source, aims to “foster trans-European debates and the creation of a European public space” and translates non-English articles into English under the slogan, “Let’s talk European.” The language has even helped to diffuse tensions between rivalrous European states, as when Rhone Poulenc of France and Hoechst of Germany merged to form Aventis in 1999 and selected English—“the closest thing to linguistic neutral territory”—as their corporate language.¹⁰⁶

Yet on the other hand, consent to allow the tongue that Swales has dubbed a “lingual Tyrannosaurus Rex”¹⁰⁷ to rampage freely across the “Old Continent” may be a very dangerous move for EU leadership. From the EU’s inception, Europeans have been wary of moves that would pull them away from their respective national identities. EU officials have tread lightly to appear equitable toward, and supportive of, the diverse European citizenry’s role in political, economic, and social life in the EU.¹⁰⁸ As Phillipson explains, however, the rising

popularity of English has presented EU leadership with a particularly difficult challenge:

The hierarchy of languages of colonial times has been maintained with English as the key medium for prestigious purposes, and proficiency in English correlating with socio-economic privilege. This has serious adverse effects on civil society and democratic participation in the political process.¹⁰⁹

Although the attitudes of European people toward language seem relatively casual¹¹⁰ (especially when compared with the fervent, crusade-like enthusiasm for English in China), European political leadership cannot afford a lackadaisical position on language policy, and it may risk the stability of the Union if Europe's version of "English fever" goes untreated. Two main areas of EU concern are the role of English in deepening Europe's inequalities and in exacerbating the so-called "democratic deficit."

3. *Inequality and the "Great English Divide"*

The aforementioned *Business Week* article identifies the inequalities of the "Great English Divide" as the main dilemma of Europe's English worries.

For the ever-growing masses of English-speakers, basic communication is now a breeze. The Babel of old hardly interferes, and instead adds richness and texture to life in Europe. But for those on the other side of the Great Divide, Europe's unification—its opportunities and pitfalls alike—is still shrouded in mystery.¹¹¹

Without a doubt, the playing field in Europe is tipped in favor of those who speak English. Salaries of non-English-speaking workers can lag as much as 25%–35% behind their English-speaking counterparts.¹¹² Workers are put in a particularly precarious position when their employers merge across state—and lingual—lines: "Those who don't speak [English] risk becoming foreigners in their own [firms]—if they're lucky enough to hold onto their jobs."¹¹³

Simply being "qualified" in certain fields can be next to impossible without English proficiency, as I learned from one interviewee, a computer engineer from the Czech Republic. In response to my questions about his motivation to study English, he nonchalantly replied, "I am

a computer engineer." To work with computers, he went on to explain, one simply *must* know English. "No one would use the Czech language to say 'motherboard' or 'processor.' Computers and the Internet are all configured with English. It's impossible without it."¹¹⁴ Another interviewee, a Spanish student working towards her Ph.D. in historical West Asian anthropology, indicated that she has been forced to put her doctoral work on hold because the majority of literature available on her thesis topic is in English. At the time of our interview, she had moved to the Netherlands to study English but was anxious to finish and return to Spain because of the financial strain of extending her time as an unemployed student.¹¹⁵

In short, speaking English pays.¹¹⁶ Predominantly English-speaking countries are said to account for around 40 percent of the world's GDP.¹¹⁷ In Europe, English-rich states, such as Sweden, western Germany, and the Netherlands, are more affluent than the Southern and Eastern European states where English proficiency is rarer, and the former are still getting richer.¹¹⁸ Precisely for that reason English proficiency is on the rise throughout Europe. As one Italian CEO put it, those who do not speak it are "running a marathon in house shoes."¹¹⁹

4. *English and the Democratic Deficit*

A second main criticism of English language use in the EU has centered on the issue of the *democratic deficit*, a problem that has resurfaced in many spheres of EU action. This term refers to the tendency of EU politics to be unnecessarily distant from its constituents, usually due to multiple layers of bureaucracy and a lack of transparency in political deliberations, but also exacerbated by language problems. Universal usage of a common language like English in EU institutions would certainly simplify the work carried out in this governmental unit with 23 official languages. However, support for such a policy, it is argued, would put non-English speakers at a disadvantage for civic participation and would further reinforce the privileged role of Britain and other English-rich states in EU politics.

The EU has responded to this charge, putting up a good front with fervent advocacy of multilingualism in its optimistic brochures on EU language policy, but officials do not seem to know how to usefully respond to the situation as it stands. The EU itself has no common policy on languages and member states are uninterested in delegating that right to the supranational government although their policies often

come into conflict on the European stage. Even though the EU ascribes a central role to language learning and provides a host of language education programs to support its goal that every EU citizen speak their own language plus two others, students across Europe continue to favor English above all other tongues. Functioning EU multilingualism comes down to attempts by its institutions to use all 23 of the official languages in EU documentation. Serviced by “the largest and most complex translation and interpretation services in the world,”¹²⁰ the EU spends over one billion Euros each year on the language services of its institutions.¹²¹ Still, only a handful of “working languages” are employed by EU staff to conduct day-to-day business, and more and more young officials are opting for English in their daily work. The European Central Bank has declared English as its official language, “despite the fact that the UK has not joined the EMU, the bank is located in Frankfurt, and only 10% of the bank’s staff are British.”¹²² However, when Commissioner Neil Kinnock put forth a proposal in 2001 that would have cut the amount of translation required for working documents in the much more politicized European Commission, his plan was widely—and tenaciously—denounced. One reporter criticized, “It’s a terrible idea...it’s a perfidious British plot in order to transform the EU into a sort of English speaking area.”¹²³

In Europe, fears about a single-language EU and the possibility of English supremacy on the continental are widespread. They are a major part of the debate on the feasibility of Europeanization in general. EU legislation clearly states that the right to use one’s own language in both private and public life is inalienable.¹²⁴ Yet in Europe and elsewhere the situation still stands, as phrased in 1999 by the Ombudsman for Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Gret Haller, that, “no one pays attention to what you say unless you speak English.”¹²⁵ If left unmanaged, the economic and political havoc wreaked by English-language hegemony could provoke a backlash of nationalism in Europe, destroying the hard-earned benefits of European unification. While one certainly shouldn’t *have* to speak English to succeed as a European, any proposed solution will force EU policymakers to gamble between the twin prizes of EU market success and integration, and the legislative security of European diversity.

IV. Conclusion

In seeking an answer to my original research question about whether the international prominence of the English language should be seen as a good or bad thing, I found myself grasping at straws. Many issues in this age of globalization do not allow for black and white answers determining what is good or bad, right or wrong. This phenomenon is no different. The jury is still out on this lingua franca. It cannot be reduced to a single theory or argument, but the lessons that can be drawn from an examination of globalized English are many.

The growth of the English language worldwide is something of a self-propelling machine. As Short et al. have phrased it, “while the forces of cultural globalization strengthen the importance of English competency, growing global English competency accelerates the rate of cultural globalization by facilitating the movement of ideas and information.”¹²⁶ More importantly, the preeminence of the English language has been established through economic and political power. This means that for all their good intentions, invented languages like Esperanto, which are not tied to any one power-base, are unlikely to gain much momentum. It also means that in an age of ever-shifting changes, described by Zygmunt Bauman as *liquid modernity*, current power structures and the languages they now privilege are unlikely to remain solid for long. This certainly does not mean that the worldwide rise of English has not produced some major challenges for the world to mitigate. Although Westernization is by no means fundamentally necessary for the modernization of the developing world,¹²⁷ the situation still stands that when such countries seek global interconnectedness for their development, Western (or specifically American) cultural ideals often come along as side effects (often through languages like English). As evidenced in the case studies, fears of growing inequality and cultural degradation (the causes of which extend far beyond language politics) are of relevance in China, the EU, and around the world. Attempts to address these issues speak to the basic conflict between the freedom of markets and protectionist measures.

I tend to believe that a balance between markets and regulation should be sought after in all things, including lingual concerns. While the rigid rules regarding lingual change in many European countries seem to be doing more harm than good, I would advocate an increase in the kind of regulations that prevent discrimination, which favors English at the expense of other languages in publishing and other

fields. I also believe that while it is futile to resist the rise of lingua francas altogether, multilingualism has not lost its importance, and remains key in the development of true cross-cultural awareness and cosmopolitanism.¹²⁸ Thus, more should be done to promote an increase in, and earlier start to, lingual education in societies with sufficient funding.

Most importantly, however, more attention should be given to this subject, both in academia and in public life. As was evident through my interviews in both locations, those who study English tend to either ignore or disregard the potential downsides of global English preeminence (likely in efforts to rationalize their study of it), and there is a dearth of scholarly work available on the subject. The more we do to stay aware of the potential effects of the English language, the more we will be able to stay abreast of the best ways to maximize its benefits and minimize its costs. Exactly how the continued global usage of English will leave its mark on the world is a question that cannot be answered today, but as an important illustration of cultural globalization, it is a question that must be asked. ●

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23. Ethnographic Interview, 16 May 2008.
24. Richard Pells, “American Culture Goes Global, or Does It?,” *The Chronicle Review* (12 April 2002): b7, p. 4; *The Economist*, “World Empire.”
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32. Stuart Hall, David Held, and Tony McGrew, *Modernity and Its Futures* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), p. 303.
33. Ethnographic Interview, 19 November 2007.
34. "Is the English Language Conquering Europe?," *BBC Talking Point* (23 August 2001). Accessed online at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/talking_point/1490463.stm.
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36. Pang, Zhou, and Fu, p. 212.
37. Pang, Zhou, and Fu, p. 204; Carla Power, "Not the Queen's English," *Newsweek* (7 March 2005).
38. Short et al., p. 3.
39. Fishman, p. 38; *The Economist*, "World Empire."
40. Jeffrey Allen Gil, "English in China: The Impact of the Global Language on China's Language Situation." Ph.D. dissertation. School of International Business and Asian Studies, Griffith Business School Griffith Univ., 2005. Accessed online on 18 May 2008 at <http://www4.gu.edu.au:8080/adt-root/uploads/approved/adt-GU20060105.113942/public/>, p. 118; and Fishman, p. 38.
41. Power.
42. Power; Allen Gil, p. 119.
43. Buck.
44. Phillipson, "Europe," p. 16.
45. Fishman, p. 27.
46. Pang, Zhou, and Fu, p. 211.
47. Fishman, p. 29.
48. Fishman, p. 28.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
51. *Ibid.*, p.32
52. Power; *The Economist*, "World Empire."
53. *The Economist*, "World Empire."
54. Fishman, p. 32.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
56. *The Economist*, "World Empire."
57. Ethnographic Interview, 13 November 2007.
58. *Economist* "World Empire"; Fishman, p. 38.
59. *Economist* "World Empire."
60. Phillipson, "Europe," p. 81.
61. Fishman, p. 36.
62. Ethnographic Interview, 25 November 2007.
63. Heidi A. Ross, *China Learns English* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 42.

64. Bob Adamson, "Barbarian as a Foreign Language: English in China's Schools," *World Englishes* 21, no. 2 (2002): 232; and Rob Gifford, *China Road* (New York: Random House, 2007), p. 10.
65. Teng and Fairbank, quoted in Ross, p. 22.
66. Adamson, p. 235.
67. Fu, quoted in Ross, p. 22.
68. Ross, p. 56.
69. Adamson, p. 238.
70. Ross, p. 60.
71. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
72. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
73. Adamson, p. 231.
74. Pang, Zhou, and Fu, p. 212.
75. Power.
76. Zhe Zhu, "Teaching English Still Top Job for Foreign Experts," *China Daily* (7 November 2005). Accessed online on 6 Mar. 2008 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2005-11/07/content_491858.htm.
77. Coincidentally, the university at which I studied while in China, Beijing Foreign Studies University, is one of the foremost language schools in the country and offers more than 30 language majors to students, as well as a number of related degrees, such as Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language and International Business Management. It was a prime location to witness the study of other foreign languages in China, yet English was still visibly and audibly the most widely used language on campus (after Chinese).
78. Pang, Zhou, and Fu, p. 203; Evan Osno, "Crazy English: The National Scramble to Learn a New Language Before the Olympics," *The New Yorker* (28 April 2008). Accessed online on 3 May 2008 at 78. Pang, Zhou, and Fu, p. 203; Evan Osno, "Crazy English: The National Scramble to Learn a New Language Before the Olympics," *The New Yorker* (28 April 2008). Accessed online on 3 May 2008 at http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2008/04/28/080428fa_fact_osnos?currentPage=all.
79. Pang, Zhou, and Fu, p. 202; Ethnographic Interview, 13 November 2007.
80. China's test administration agencies are not the only ones cashing in on "English Fever." U.K. Prime Minister Gordon Brown has said that Chinese enthusiasm for the English language is "a huge opportunity for Britain," which, according to *The Economist*, already boasts a \$2 billion worldwide English-teaching industry.
81. Pang, Zhou, and Fu, p. 203.
82. Ethnographic Interview, 25 November 2007.
83. Guo and Huang, p. 218.
84. *Ibid.*
85. Ethnographic Interview, 13 November 2007.
86. Shichun Gui, "Applied Linguistics Research in China—A Perspective." 1984 *Waig-uoyu* no. 4: 3.
87. Ross, p. 5.

88. Ethnographic Interview, 19 November 2007.
89. Evan Osno, *New Yorker*.
90. Ross, p. 7.
91. Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit, *Occidentalism* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004), p. 2.
92. Paul Nesbitt-Larking and Alfred L. Chan, "Chinese Youth and Civil Society: The Emergence of Critical Citizenship," *Civil Society in China*, edited by Timothy Brook and B. Michael Frolic (Armonk N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), p. 151.
93. Pang, Zhou, and Fu, pp. 204, 207, 211.
94. *Ibid.*, p. 211.
95. Boris Ford, *The Age of Shakespeare* (Penguin Books, 1955).
96. Its successor, French, continued to hold its status as the international language of diplomacy until being recently overtaken by English, due largely to the rising political clout of the U.S. in the early 20th century.
97. Kryss Katsiavriades and Talaat Qureshi, "The English Language: Words Borrowed from Other Languages," *KryssTal* (2006). Accessed online on 29 June 2008 at <http://www.kryssstal.com/borrow.html>.
98. Power; *The Economist*, "World Empire."
99. *Economist* "World Empire."
100. *The Economist*, "World Empire."
101. Power; *Economist* "World Empire."
102. European Union, Directorate General for Press and Communication, *Many Tongues, One Family: Languages in the European Union* (Brussels: European Commission, 2004).
103. Even in France, home to vigilant lingual protectionism, English is gaining ground as a basic subject of French education. In 1998, Minister of Education Claude Allegre declared that, "English should no longer be considered a foreign language...In future it will be as basic [in France] as reading, writing and arithmetic." (*The Economist*, "World Empire.")
104. *BBC Talking Point* (August 2001); European Union, "Many Tongues;" European Union, Directorate-General for Education and Culture, *Education and Culture in Europe 22* (European Commission, 2004), p. 14.
105. This particular informant could hardly contain her incredulous laughter when I explained the alluring, sophisticated image that French enjoys in the eyes of many Americans, and couldn't understand why a young person from the U.S. would ever want to study abroad in Paris.
106. Baker et al
107. J.M. Swales, "English as 'Tyrannosaurus Rex,'" *World Englishes* 16, no. 3 (1997): 373-382.
108. The EU's ability to respect the various identities of its citizens will continue to be a significant issue in light of continuing EU enlargement and management of immigration. Acceptance of the continent's diversity is held dear by Europeans in certain contexts, but for many it is still a sore spot, as evidenced especially by EU-Turkey relations.
109. Phillipson, "Europe," p. 7.

110. The Europeans I spoke with tended to reference language learning as something of a pastime—an easy thing one might pick up in order to go on vacation, or to attend classes as a hobby or with a date. This attitude has likely arisen precisely because of Europe's lingual diversity and gives hope that multilingualism may not be so unfeasible after all.
111. Baker et al.
112. Ibid.
113. Ibid.
114. Ethnographic Interview, 16 May 2008.
115. Ethnographic Interview, 17 May 2008.
116. Although outside the scope of this paper, it should be noted that English proficiency is also strongly correlated with class within the populations of former British colonies.
117. Krishan Khanna, "Social Infrastructure of INDIA: Education & Training," *India Watch—Wake Up Call for India* (5 May 2008). Accessed online at http://www.wakeupcall.org/administration_in_india/social-infrastructure-of-education.doc; Richard W. Rahn, "Language and Wealth," *The Washington Times* (7 July 2006). Accessed online on 2 May 2008 at <http://www.discovery.org/a/3639>; and Fishman, p. 26.
118. Baker et al.
119. Ibid
120. Phillipson, "Europe," p. 8.
121. "Frequently Asked Questions About the Translation DG," Directorate General for Translation, European Union (25 June 2008). Accessed online at http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/translation/navigation/faq/faq_facts_en.htm.
122. Fishman, p. 27.
123. *BBC Talking Point* (August 2001).
124. European Union, "Many Tongues," p. 8; European Union. Council of Europe. *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*. 1 Mar. 1998. <http://conventions.coe.int/treaty/Commun/QueVoulezVous.asp?NT=148&CL=ENG>; European Union. *Charter of the Fundamental Rights of the European Union*. 18 Dec.2000. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text_en.pdf, articles 21, 22, 41.
125. Phillipson, "Europe," p. 1.
126. Short et al., p. 3.
127. Deepak Lal, "Does Modernization Require Westernization?," *The Independent Review* 5 (2000): 5–24.
128. European Union, "Education and Culture," p. 11.

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