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ENGLISH, A CUCKOO IN THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION NEST OF LANGUAGES?

This article addresses the issue as to whether the advance of English in higher education in continental Europe represents a threat to other languages. In the context of moves by the European Union to create a single European 'education and research area', in which the integration of higher education through the Bologna process plays a key role, international commodification pressures challenge the status of education as a public good. The study looks at a variety of key aspects of this situation, including the role of university evaluation and planning for internationalisation. It analyses both discourses promoting English, and language policy statements from several countries aiming at a balance between English and other languages. It also deals with the issue of diglossic domain loss as a result of the forces propelling English forward and dispossessing other languages. It concludes that fluidity in European language policies and the many obstacles to coordinated Europe-wide policy formation confirm the need for language policies to be formulated explicitly rather than being left to market pressures, national and international.

Keywords language policy; englishisation; language shift; language spread; multilingualism; higher education policy; Bologna process; internationalisation; European Union (EU) and language; Nordic countries

Our human experience of the cuckoo, whether directly in nature or vicariously in Beethoven, is life-affirming, to put it in the way the Danes express this sensation.¹ But the cuckoo is parasitical, and lives in murderous partnership with other ornithological species. This article addresses the question of whether English may be considered a cuckoo in the European higher education nest of languages. English may be threatening the life of other languages, or at least occupying the territories that traditionally have been their preserve. It is not English per se which is the agent involved in such processes. It is of course the users of the language, whether as a first or second language, and the forces they represent. What we need therefore to consider is the implications of any language sharing territory with English in these times of intensive Europeanisation. Is the engagement with English harmonious, inspirational and dialectic, or is it a

Darwinian struggle for survival? Are scholars whose mother tongue is not English, whose origins are in vibrant research and teaching communities that have used, say, Danish or Dutch for centuries, and even traditionally influential languages like French and German, involved in a Faustian pact with a devilish linguistic cuckoo in building up the knowledge society that the European Union proclaims its commitment to?

Modern-day Faustus follow in the steps of the figure immortalised by Marlowe and Goethe in pursuing scientific activities and encountering noble and evil forces that promise to unlock the nature of truth.² The ‘alchemy’ of English was explored 20 years ago, as Kachru (1986), a pioneer in legitimating local variants of English, sought to explain its attractive force in the postcolonial world under that title. Among the contemporary constraints and pressures we encounter during our quest to draw on the magical power of English is the existential matter of personal and institutional survival in a competitive ‘international’ world. Academics struggle to maintain control over local departmental territory, while increasingly an economic rationale requires financial entrepreneurialism for the institution and even the individual scholar. The catchphrase ‘publish or perish’, however valid, is much too neat, if publishing is constrained by choice of language, which subtly influences choice of paradigm, includes some writers and readers and excludes others, and results in different rewards in a scholarly world increasingly dominated by market laws that we are supposed to see as God-given and indisputable. There seems to be less scope in our times for Faustian independence of mind. While Marlowe and Goethe address the complexities of the forces of good and evil, we are confronted by George W. Bush’s false totalitarian dichotomy ‘you are either with us or with the terrorists’. It is likewise simplistic and reductionist to consider language policy as being either ‘for’ or ‘against’ English. English opens some doors and closes others. It can be used for good or bad reasons, with good or bad effects, but in the modern world it cannot be ignored. Even if well over half of humanity, and speakers of most of the world’s languages, are blissfully unable to function in English (we should not be taken in by the rhetoric of English as ‘the world’s’ lingua franca), their fates are influenced by decisions made in that language. This is why its magic needs addressing.

The magic of English and its questionable impact on other languages is well captured by Amos Key, of the Six Nations of the Grand River, Ontario, who tells the story of someone meeting a First Nations advocate of immersion education, a person convinced that this is a significant way of reviving and revitalising a critically endangered language.³ He was asked:

‘Why are you learning your language?’
to which the reply was:

‘So that when I go to my Creator, I can speak to the ancestors, my grandfathers and grandmothers.’

‘But what happens if you have been bad and end up at the other place, confronted by the devil?’

‘No problem at all, because I also know English.’

The Bologna route

We need to place our deliberations in the macro-political context within which universities operate in Europe. The present EU Commission's target, *Europe 2010: A Partnership for European renewal*, has at its heart 'A Europe of freedom', freedom being the leitmotiv of neoliberalism as a political as well as economic project (Harvey, *A Brief History*). The pillars of this project are: the knowledge economy, a European public space and a European Justice Space, and, most relevant for us, a European education and research area. This is a project that has been in preparation for several years. It is a brainchild of the EU and those lobbies that influence it.

This policy for 'A Europe of freedom', announced on the Commission's website before the 2005 referenda on the draft Constitutional Treaty in France and the Netherlands, entails energetically merging European public life, legal systems, and higher education and research, all of which presuppose a large measure of shared cultural norms. The economy is increasingly to be based on intellectual rather than material products, significantly increasing the importance of linguistic competence.

The Commission claims to speak for 'Europe', a concept which itself is polysemic, depending on what is in focus:

- a geographical space, a *toponym* (are countries like Norway and Switzerland being treated as though they belong to the EU?);
- a political union, a *politonym* (the EU itself being a complex new assemblage of states that are becoming less independent but do not – yet – form a federation);
- a cultural entity with shared traits, values and past, an *ethnonym* (a criterion that could serve to exclude Turkey from membership, whether religion is included or not);
- a single economic market with a common currency, an *econonym*, which was the original *raison d'être* of the EU, as a means for integrating economies so that a recurrence of the wars of earlier centuries would be prevented.

It is unlikely that anyone would claim that Europe can be seen as a *linguonym*, since most of its languages, in the Indo-European and Finno-Ugric families, can be traced back to Asian origins. In addition, the spread of European languages worldwide, particularly Portuguese, Spanish, French and English, can scarcely provide distinctive coherence to a Europe seeking unifying features.

My point in mentioning these multiple meanings is simply to suggest that such fuzzy concepts – 'freedom', 'education' and 'Europe' – easily lend themselves to abuse. They are dangerous because interlocutors can assume the terms are understood in the same way, which is by no means obviously the case. 'Europe' is not a meaningful concept for the young, who have been largely brought up in a local national tradition plus massive exposure to Hollywood. As the low figures for voting in the European Parliament show, identification with the European 'project' of elites and the corporate world is lukewarm.

The internationalisation of higher education that has gone under the label 'the Bologna Process' since the 1999 conference at which initial plans were formed, has now been adopted by forty-five European states. Australia and the USA are observers,

out of self-interest, since foreign students in higher education are big business for them, and Europe is potentially a serious competitor. Another significant player in the Bologna Process is the EU Commission, which has largely set the agenda and funded activities leading to policy and planning documents. These are the foundation for the biannual Ministerial Meetings, which are also attended by representatives of universities.

This European process is a direct result of education being increasingly considered a service that can be traded, under the aegis of the World Trade Organization (WTO), and more specifically, of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). Member states have been legally committed to this 'liberalisation' route since 1995, but it is a still ongoing process, and has been challenged (most visibly in Seattle, Doha). There is a fundamental unresolved tension between education as a human right, and trading in educational services (Devidal; de Siqueira).⁴ The pressures to reduce what are seen as national trading barriers are intense (Knight). Higher education is more vulnerable to international commercialisation than is basic education, though this is also increasingly seen as a market rather than a public service.

The 1999 Bologna objectives declare the intention 'within the framework of our institutional competences and taking full respect of the diversity of cultures, languages, national education systems and of University autonomy', to consolidate a European Higher Education Area at the latest by 2010. The meeting at Bergen, Norway on 19–20 May 2005 focused on the coordination of structural uniformity (a standardised degree structure), quality assurance, the recognition of degrees and study periods, attractiveness and competitiveness.⁵ It also identified priorities for review at the next meeting in London in 2007, as well as goals for 2010. The concluding communiqué contains ritual recognition of the importance of maintaining the European heritage and cultural diversity, university autonomy, and the principle of public responsibility for higher education, but at the same time stresses the role of business in achieving Bologna Process goals and in preparing university graduates for the labour market.

What is striking is that not once in six pages of communiqué is there any reference to languages. There is nothing on bilingual degrees or multilingualism.⁶ The language of all documents and virtually all deliberations was English. This can perhaps be justified for practical reasons at a conference, however what emerges unambiguously is that in the Bologna Process, 'internationalisation' means 'English-medium higher education'.⁷

If you think this is a rather Machiavellian or Mephistophelean interpretation, let us look at how some of the participants in international education see things. Sir Roderick Floud, a former President of Universities UK (2001–03) and currently a Vice-President of the European University Association, was quoted in the Easter 2005 edition of *CAM Cambridge Alumni Magazine* as saying the following:

As a result of the Bologna process, 45 European countries have agreed to implement a Bachelor/Masters degree structure. The concept of the bilingual university is already being widely discussed in eastern Europe; you can now do a medical degree in English in Hungary, for example. And that's a trend that is going to continue.

(Woodward 23)

The journalist who wrote this article from which this quotation comes then continues: ‘The emergence of English as the international language of higher education . . .’. In other words, she immediately interprets ‘bilingual’ as meaning ‘English-medium’. Higher education in Britain is, needless to say, essentially monolingual.

I asked the distinguished Hungarian sociolinguist, Miklós Kontra, for a local view, and he responded (in a personal communication) that:

- The concept of bilingual universities (on which Kontra organised an international conference in 2004) is *not* widely discussed in eastern and central Europe; in fact none presently exist, even though there would be a strong case for them for linguistic minorities in the Carpathian basin.
- The medical degree in English in Hungary pre-dates the fall of the iron curtain. It was aimed at foreign students, mainly from the Third World. However, the quality and low price of the course, relative to western Europe, now attract a broader intake. Membership of the EU may change all this.
- Teaching through English (and German) is pure moneymaking.

Not much sign of the university as a public good here, and the bilingualism referred to simply means that Hungarian teaching staff have been trained to function in English.

The attack on universities as a public good is being pursued vigorously by the European Association for International Education (EAIE), to judge by its most recent publication (*Occasional Paper* 17, July 2005). This volume, published in preparation for a seminar at the EAIE’s 17th Annual Conference in Kraków, has for its title: ‘I gotta use words when I talk to you: English and international education’, the first half of which is a line from a poem by T. S. Eliot. In the second half, Eliot’s ‘words’ transform into just one language, ‘English’. This slim volume of positional statements by people committed to ‘international education’ is described as presenting a variety of views. It also acknowledges that the role of English in internationalisation is controversial. But the editor of the volume, Michael Woolf, President of the Foundation for International Education in London⁸ is categorical about where he stands (p. 50). These are his main points, with my own conclusions in italics:

- Internationalisation does not need to entail learning or operating in a foreign language; i.e. *English alone is needed*.
- Privatisation and the law of the market are desirable; i.e. *higher education should no longer be seen as a common good*.
- English can be detached from its cultural origins and studied merely as a tool; i.e. the language is promoted as though it is culturally neutral and detached from the globalising forces that impel the language forward.
- Alternative views are based on ‘worn and tired assumptions’ that contribute to ‘atrophy, irrelevance and stagnation’, i.e. *a different understanding of international education is unwelcome and regarded as obstructive*.

This is clearly an endorsement of education as falling within GATS, and decidedly not subject to human rights law or retained as a national prerogative (Devidal). The US contributor (yes, this ‘European’ association is obliged by its statutes to have at

least 10% non-European membership, and North America is well represented), cites the tired triumphalist tropes of global English:

The citizens of the world have positioned English language as a common bond not just for Anglo nations, but for the entire world, so allow English to be the language in which we can cultivate global literacy... The current linguistic situation in the United States ought to be the model from which the importance of having learned English springs, rather than a defence of English as the emergent power language.

(Christensen 65–6)⁹

Christensen is aware of a global threat to linguistic and cultural diversity, and the desirability of some people learning a foreign language, but her market-sensitive idea of reciprocity in collaborative ventures involving a US sending university and a European receiving university is ‘to strive for academic excellence as defined by the sending institution’ (Christensen 65–6).

Universities are now definitely in closer contact with each other internationally. Whether such collaboration is reciprocal, and whether Anglo-American norms are being marketed or imposed, are empirical questions. They raise the further question that if cuckoos are parasitical, in some kind of symbiosis with other species, with their fledglings as the sole survivors in the nests they occupy, is this species environmentally sustainable? Monocultures are not. Monolingualism may be a definite limitation in the longer term. Monolingual Brits may ultimately lose out to multilingual continentals.

The language of ‘quality’

This is where comparative study of higher education is helpful. Vartiainen (2004) has structured a study of higher education evaluation in England and Finland around the concept *legitimacy*, as a unifying term for the multiple processes and agents involved. Vartiainen succeeds in demonstrating that university autonomy is effectively the norm in Finland, even if higher education is largely funded by the state (Finland is a country with an exceptionally successful economy and school system and a relatively egalitarian social structure). By contrast, in England autonomy is the privilege of elite universities. It is entrenched by coercive evaluation procedures that are intended to rank universities and reward them accordingly, as opposed to seeing evaluation as an ongoing process that can strengthen institutional planning, mission and quality, as in Finland. A valid conclusion from the study is that the ‘international quality’ that all universities are supposed to strive for is not a single gold standard but rather one that can be reached by many routes. Coercive policies counteract this.

The impact of coercive funding can be seen in the British higher education market.¹⁰ There are two universities in Cambridge. As a result of the 2001 Research Assessment Exercise, in 2005–06 Anglia University received £0.68 million for research from the Higher Education Funding Council for England, but the University of Cambridge received £92.4 million. ‘Top’ universities manifestly benefit at the expense of others. They are endowed with greater financial capital which they can convert into intellectual capital and productive research environments, thereby using

and generating linguistic capital in the globally most marketable language, English. Finnish universities are building up multilingual linguistic capital, and would do well to maintain their higher education policies, rather than bowing to 'international' pressure.¹¹

More analysis is needed of whether the shift to an increasing use of English represents a threat or not. There is a need for conceptual and empirical clarification of whether English is a useful *lingua academica* or is functioning as a scholarly *lingua tyrannosaura* (Swales). Recognition of the arrival of the cuckoo English means that we need to know whether Danish/Estonian/French/German and so forth, are being cuckolded? Are they being pushed out of their own territorial nests?

Appreciation of this risk is leading to moves in Scandinavia to strengthen multilingualism and the national language:

- The Swedish Ministry of Education and Culture decreed on 14 June 2005¹² that assessment of the qualifications of applicants for a higher education place would give more credit to those who have done advanced work in mathematics and in foreign/modern languages other than English.
- Also in June 2005 the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research published a major five-year strategy plan aimed at improving the quality of English learning in schools and strengthening the learning of other languages.¹³ It has established a new centre with overall responsibility for achieving this, with full funding and detailed specification of the tasks and stakeholders involved.
- Danish university principals published an analysis of internationalisation in 2004, with many recommendations.¹⁴ There are three main policy thrusts: 1) to retain and attract the best students in competition with foreign universities, a clear nod in the direction of Bologna; 2) to persuade government to provide universities with better conditions for internationalisation, a legitimate complaint that funding is being cut back at a time when more is expected of universities, for instance being able to function in English; and 3) to strike a balance between the role of universities as Danish research and teaching institutions, using Danish for these purposes, and the need to strengthen international collaboration in research and teaching which requires competence in foreign languages, particularly English. Specifically on language policy, universities are encouraged to consider the choice of languages of instruction for specific degrees, of languages in teaching materials, in publications by researchers, and in university publicity and regulations. They are likewise invited to review the need for quality control when English is used by non-native speakers and in in-service training, provision of Danish for foreign students, proficiency requirements for university employees dealing with foreign students, teachers and researchers, the language competence of new students, and teaching and research staff, including access to Danish, and the need to strengthen the foreign language and intercultural competence of all students.

Copenhagen Business School is currently elaborating a policy that relates to all these dimensions. Roskilde University offers degrees in either English or Danish, but has not made provision for any quality check of the language competence of either students or staff.

The Estonians, having reasserted the position of their language after fifty-five years of Soviet occupation, are keen to avoid having globalisation mean that English expands at the expense of Estonian. The *Development Strategy of the Estonian Language 2004–2010*¹⁵ stipulates as higher education objectives:

- to be able to continue to offer Estonian-medium higher education;
- to promote this by supporting all specialities with terminological dictionaries and Estonian-language educational literature;
- to ‘publish major research results also in the Estonian language’;
- to avoid the development of the exclusive use of foreign languages in any field of science; and
- to ensure a high level of proficiency in Estonian among university graduates.

All these examples from northern Europe show that language policy is a significant parameter in higher education planning. Continental European universities have traditionally not seen themselves as being in competition with foreign universities, but marketing themselves internationally is a reality they need to address, hence the need to address the role of English.

The market for foreign students entails fierce competition with the United Kingdom. A survey conducted by the British Council warns that the UK economy is at risk if it fails to invest in international education.¹⁶ The goal in higher education is 8% annual growth across the sector, and doubling the present number of 35,000 research graduates by 2020. These are seen as ‘contributing to the UK’s knowledge economy’.

The British government sees education as a market opportunity. The British Council proclaims that it is ‘the United Kingdom’s international organisation for educational opportunities and cultural relations’. It is registered in England as a charity, a misleading proposition which has to do with taxation, and elides the fact that most of its activities are self-funded through the income generated by English teaching and examining and other educational services.¹⁷ The UK economy benefits directly by £11 billion per annum and indirectly by a further £12 billion from ‘international’ education. Its English-language industry is a vital pillar of the British economy, with over half-a-million people travelling to the UK for language courses, and a massive export of publications and know-how, with the British Council in a key integrative role worldwide.¹⁸

The economics of language has come of age as a field of scholarly specialisation, with François Grin as the leading European exponent (Grin, ‘Economic Considerations’). Building on research in Switzerland and worldwide, Grin was commissioned by a French educational research institution (Grin, ‘L’enseignement des langues étrangères’) to investigate the impact of the current dominance of English in terms of quantifiable privileged market effects, communication savings effects, language learning savings effects (namely, not needing to invest so much in foreign language learning), alternative human capital investment effects (for example, school time being used for other purposes), and legitimacy and rhetorical effects. This research led Grin to conclude that continental countries are transferring to the UK and Ireland at least €10 billion per annum, and more probably about €16 billion to 17 billion a year. The amounts involved completely dwarf the British EU budget rebate of €5 billion annually that has been a source of friction between the UK and its partners.

The finding is likely to be politically explosive, as this covert British financial benefit is at the expense of its partners. It is also incompatible with the EU commitment since the 2002 Barcelona summit to all European children acquiring competence in two foreign languages. It shows that European education is skewed in fundamentally inequitable ways. It indicates that laissez-faire in the international linguistic marketplace gives unfair advantages to native speakers of English not only in cross-cultural interaction but also in the workings of the market. The commodification of English has massive implications.

These advantages can be seen clearly in the expansion of Australian higher education. 'International' students have increased by over 600% over a 12-year period, providing an income for Australian universities of over 2 billion Australian dollars in 2002 (Harman 122).¹⁹ Of the 185,000 international students, one third are 'offshore . . . who study largely within their own countries' (Harman 122). To me there is something fishy (offshore) about expanding higher education at this rate.

I am aware that using idiomatic English (playing with the semantics of cuckoos and cuckolds, and with the connotations of offshore activities being suspect – fishy – whether in banking or education) may be insensitive when I as a native speaker am addressing an audience for most of whom English may be a foreign language. This personal dilemma in a specific context (can I alter the form of my message by less play on words without 'dumbing down'?) is emblematic of English for 'international' communication. Whose norms should apply? John Simpson, chief editor of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, reports that in international activities, his English is 'more difficult to understand than the English of my continental colleagues, simply because this is a functional language for communication between second-language users, and my variety is a functional language for communication between native speakers.'²⁰ Clearly native speakers can be the cause of communication breakdowns, even when interlocutors and their governments have invested heavily in learning the language.²¹

More research in this area is needed of two kinds. Firstly into what some refer to as 'English as a Lingua Franca', for which a spoken language corpus is being assembled in Vienna (Seidlhofer), and specifically of academic English in Tampere.²² Secondly, research into the interaction of English native speaker students with 'international students', since there is evidence that non-English students have difficulty in getting British students to recognise that their ways of being and perceiving are equally relevant. British students are simply interculturally insensitive, and 'always feel that they are on the right side in terms of opinion, and in the way of thinking'.²³ This study pleads for a strengthening of the study of foreign languages in higher education in UK so as to ensure that 'internationalisation' is not merely seen as 'cultural colonising'. The commodification processes of higher educational internationalisation have major cultural and interpersonal effects.

There are thus many aspects of quality in the internationalisation of higher education that urgently need addressing in the rush to expand or change higher education. The Asian factor is central: 'demand' from China happens to match up with demographic changes in western Europe (lower 'supply' of local students), but what happens when the Chinese no longer choose or need to migrate to western universities? The Bologna road is bumpy and uncharted. Following it hastily through a greater use of English in higher education has led to warnings: from Leuven,

Belgium: ‘a language policy, which departs from the conviction that the introduction of English-medium instruction will be unproblematic, will most probably not lead to the hoped for internationalisation of the university’ (Sercu 553); Maastricht, the Netherlands: ‘merely offering programmes through a foreign language without setting performance targets in the use of content-related language puts the quality and the reputation of both the programme and the institution at risk’ (Wilkinson 10). Cuckoos tend to be heard and not seen (by humans). The high visibility of English should not delude us into thinking we know what it represents.

Domain loss or dispossession?

Whether it is legitimate to conclude that the invading English cuckoo is leading to domain loss is an open question. What is occurring in higher education and research publication parallels developments in commerce (English as the corporate language of large businesses, at least at management level), in the media and in many lifestyle patterns (Hollywood and McDonaldisation), and in EU affairs (Phillipson, *English-only Europe?*), but the forms of cohabitation between English and other languages are relatively under-explored. Pilot studies, commissioned by the Nordic Council of Ministers, have been undertaken on whether domain loss is taking place in the Nordic languages, but these have been produced to a tight schedule (summarised in Höglin, with a rather flawed English résumé). The report expressed concern that Nordic languages are under pressure in the natural sciences and technology in particular, and a case was made for more proactive policies. The national studies basically document trends, and it is false to conclude from a finding that publishing most research in, say, Physics in English means that the scholars in question are unable to present the same ideas in their mother tongue. Much more focused and comprehensive studies are needed to chart the extent of any domain loss. These are already being undertaken in Norway.²⁴

It is equally important to refine the conceptual framework. Domain loss is a seemingly innocuous term, but deceptive. Like the language-policy term ‘language spread’, it seems to imply a natural, agent-less process. Clearly there are agents involved in domains being lost or gained, and in any diglossic division of academic labour. The process of domain loss can be seen as linguistic capital accumulation by dispossession (Harvey, *The New Imperialism* ch. 4). As in the commercial world in its global pursuit of markets and profit, some combination of internal motivation and external pressure contributes to this trend. The beneficiaries are users of English.

There are many factors contributing to the increased use of English in Europe, which can be classified as structural (the interlocking of English with the global economy, finance, and the military-industrial complex; British and American promotion of English; investment in the teaching of English in education systems) and ideological (imagery of English created through the media, popular and elite culture, connotations of success, necessity, and so on).²⁵ Many of these involve supply and demand factors, push and pull forces (Harvey’s internal motivation and external pressures) with multiple agents in processes of glocalisation. There is great diversity in how such processes work through, due to different cosmologies in national linguistic cultures, and varying university and research world policies.

At the supranational level of EU institutions, there is a disturbing lack of mobility when it comes to addressing the de facto hierarchy of languages. Language policy is considered ‘explosive’ by French members of the European Parliament.²⁶ The German Head of Mission at the European Commission considers it ‘the most emotional issue in the EU’.²⁷ Such factors combine to strengthen market forces and the power of English, as do the working practices of the Commission.

Naidoo and Jamieson (44) identify three major trends globally in higher education: the attack on the public university as a public good; the combined effect of GATS decreeing that education is a commodity and corporations converting this claim into reality; and eLearning as a facilitator of these processes. Together these are ‘resulting in the gradual commodification of higher education’, such that currently there are 2,000 corporate universities worldwide, including 200 ‘for-profit higher education corporations in Poland; 600 in Malaysia; and 625 in the USA’ (Naidoo and Jamieson 44). These trends all strengthen the ‘internationalisation’ process that is symbiotic, and largely synonymous with, the advance of English.

Scandinavia is not immune to these pressures in the brave new higher education world. Among the suggestive trends and changes in Denmark are payment for Masters degree courses and/or modules, payment for Open University courses, and the introduction of fees for non-EU students. The draft internationalisation strategic plan of Copenhagen Business School of June 2005 took the commodification process to its logical conclusion by suggesting the introduction of fees for all:

The market for fee-paying degree students is a growing one. The CBS must capture a share of this in order to build a profile as a truly international university . . . [with] a market-based price on our programs . . . The next – and far more difficult – step would be to introduce tuition fees for EU students and (in order to avoid discrimination) Danish students.²⁸

In other words, because of internationalisation the principle of free higher education (with generous, non-repayable student grants that represent virtually a living wage) is to be sacrificed. This will occur by salami tactics, with thin slices being progressively carved off until the product has been consumed.

While this is taking place we are dependent on the media in our ‘information society’ to report on what is happening. Unfortunately media coverage of language policy issues, particularly international ones, is often lamentably incorrect. There was a revealing example of this in the *Guardian Weekly*, ‘Learning English’ supplement (for which I generally have great respect); on 19 August 2005, the headline of one short item, ‘Finland’s postgrads shun mother tongue’, introduced the following text:

Half of the masters courses offered by Finnish universities during the next academic year will be taught in English, according to education ministry planners. Originally developed for foreign students, these courses are now popular with local students.

The headline draws a completely false conclusion, since the proportion of Finnish students actually following the courses referred to is 2 – 3%.²⁹ In any case, wishing to do a degree in English does not in itself signify rejection of the mother tongue, and

the national policies of Denmark, Sweden and Estonia reported on earlier are intended to counteract this risk. Some Finnish universities already have explicit policies to promote multilingualism (for example, Jyväskylä) and have funds for such purposes (for example, Helsinki). Establishing Masters programmes therefore does not necessarily mean linguistic dispossession for the individual, the institution, or the country. What is essential is that higher education institutions formulate and implement policies to create balanced forms of multilingualism. English is likely to figure prominently in such policies. This suggests that Departments of English need to rethink their role and the content of their degrees – but that is a different topic.

Fluidity in language policy in Europe

Many factors contribute to the fluidity of contemporary language policies in Europe. They include:

- an unresolved tension between linguistic nationalism (monolingualism), EU institutional multilingualism, and English becoming dominant in the EU;
- competing agendas at the European, state (national), and sub-state levels;
- increasing grassroots and elite bi- and multilingualism, except in the UK and among the older generation in demographically large EU countries,
- a largely uncritical adoption of ‘englishisation’, the *lingua economica/ americana*; and
- a rhetoric of language rights, some national and supranational implementation, and advocacy of linguistic diversity.

Awareness of what is at stake is not always very high. The banner headline behind EU leaders at the photo opportunity concluding the Copenhagen summit in 1992, ‘One Europe’ in English only, led the Spanish Foreign Secretary, Ana Palacio, to write in *El País* on 16 December 2002:

The motto ‘One Europe’, solely in English, requires a reflection. Even though Copenhagen did not face the question of languages, this is one of the pending subjects that sooner rather than later must be debated for the very survival and viability of this project of Europe with a world vocation. Within it, Spanish, one of the official UN languages, spoken by more than 400 million people in more than 20 countries, must take on the place it is entitled to.

But who is to decide what that place is, if the issue is explosive and emotional – meaning that there are big national interests at stake? Here is the advice of the USA ambassador to Denmark, Mr Elton, in 1997: ‘The most serious problem for the European Union that it has so many languages, this preventing real integration and development of the Union.’ The Director of the British Council in Germany chimed in with ‘English should be the sole official language of the European Union’ (cited on 26 February 2002, in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*), revealing total ignorance of what language policy principles underlie the EU’s activities. How then did Romano Prodi, when President of the Commission, and guardian of EU multilingualism, react when an interviewer from *Newsweek* (31 May 2004) asked him about ‘A unified Europe in

which English, as it turns out, is the universal language?’ Prodi replied: ‘It will be broken English, but it will be English.’ Is this what the EU’s mantra, ‘Unity in diversity’, comes down to?

Others are convinced that Europe’s multilingual diversity is a bulwark against English as a *lingua europea*: ‘English, in fact, *is not* and will not be the “language of Europe”’ (Balibar 177). Many continental intellectuals, George Steiner, Umberto Eco and Zygmunt Bauman, believe, like Étienne Balibar, that translation is the ‘idiom of Europe’. This presupposes proficiency in several languages, which has traditionally been the norm in some walks of life, especially in the demographically small countries, but even in the large ones in much of academia.

The Nordic governments appear to be keen to maintain the multilingual principle. A draft ‘Declaration of the Language Rights of Nordic residents’ was circulated in a public consultation process in 2005, prior to intergovernmental approval by Ministers of Culture and Education. The language rights of each resident (and not only citizens) are of four types: to learn the language of society as a whole (Danish, Swedish, and so forth); comprehension of other Scandinavian languages; the right of access to languages of international utility, such as English, Spanish and French; and the right to maintain and develop their mother tongues. A fairly elaborate document was drawn up setting goals for each category and for various types of multilingualism and plurilingualism.³⁰ The document endorses the idea of elites in many sectors of society developing ‘parallel competence’ in the national language and in English (an intuitively appealing idea, but a somewhat fuzzy and probably unrealistic target). It also rather optimistically aims at the Nordic region serving as a model of successful language learning for other parts of the world. This is a presumptuous, ethnocentric idea, granted that levels of proficiency in the region in foreign languages other than English are modest, that the younger generation of Nordic citizens is seldom keen to operate in other Scandinavian languages, and that the mother tongues of immigrants are mostly neglected.

This is one reason why the EU Commission’s *Promoting language learning and Linguistic Diversity: An Action Plan 2004 – 2006*, published on 24 July 2003, is important.³¹ The Plan seeks to promote a ‘language-friendly environment’ and to diversify the range of languages for learning: it recommends the learning of ‘smaller’ languages as well as ‘larger’ ones, regional, minority and migrant languages as well as those with ‘national’ status, and the languages of major trading partners throughout the world. The document attacks the hegemony of English as the most widely learned foreign language, and warns about the risks of domain loss: ‘learning one lingua franca alone is not enough . . . English alone is not enough . . . in non-anglophone countries recent trends to provide teaching in English may have unforeseen consequences on the vitality of the national language’.

Clearly the English cuckoo has been spotted in Brussels. It figures in a process of policy formation choreographed by the Commission’s Language Policy Unit (since renamed the ‘Multilingualism Policy Unit’) of the Directorate-General for Education and Culture. Representatives of all member states were involved in formulating the content of the Action Plan. They are not obliged to follow the recommendations, but they are expected to report back to Brussels every three months on implementation. There are the beginnings of more openness, now that the minutes of some meetings are made accessible on the website. It is also a significant innovation that a Commissioner, Jan Figel, now has direct responsibility for language policy.

Whether the Action Plan will remove or tame the English cuckoo is debatable. The pace of educational change is notoriously slow. The entire budget of the EU, of which only a minuscule proportion is assigned to cultural, educational and language matters, is little more than 1% of the gross national income of the member states. The EU's efforts may be useful in identifying relevant contours, scenarios and threats, but results will depend more on market pressures and national traditions and practices. There is at least a dialogue between the member states and the Commission, which has the right to fund activities that supplement what happens in each state.

This dialogue has barely got going. Thus when the Dutch Language Union,³² de Nederlandse Taalunie (which brings the Netherlands, the Flemish Belgian community and Surinam together), proclaims that that it is essential to guarantee that the Dutch language can remain a 'full-scale . . . language . . . The first and foremost challenge . . . is to see that Dutch can remain a language of instruction in higher education', they also note that 'national language policy cannot do all the work – the framework is European – we need to convince governments and the European institutions of the necessity of a real European language policy'.³³ There is as yet not much sign that this has been achieved.

This is because there are many obstacles to supranational, Europe-wide language policy formation. The main obstacles are as follows:

- A poor infrastructure *nationally* (except possibly in Finland and Catalonia, perhaps in Sweden after legislation) *and supranationally*, including a weak infrastructure in research.
- International coordination among *national language bodies* is in its infancy.
- *Language policy is politically untouchable* at intergovernmental level, and remained untouched by the Convention on the Future of Europe and in the draft Constitutional Treaty, despite the efforts of a number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from several countries.
- The EU *translation and interpretation services* are impressive in many respects, but subject to an economic rationale, and see themselves as a service function rather than policy-making (Phillipson, *English-only Europe?* ch. 4); they are also detached from international research.
- The *language of EU written texts* is increasingly under attack (Koskinen; Lundquist and Gabrielsen; Tosi), even if the translation industry and translation technology are of increasing importance (Cronin).
- The *rhetoric of EU multilingualism and linguistic equality* is seen as a charade by some political scientists (de Swaan) and sociolinguists (Chaudenson), and is experienced as such by many in their dealings with the EU. The EU does not live up to its own ideals of multilingualism, linguistic equality or equity, neither in its dealings with the public (for example, its website) nor in the way the many issues it deals with are handled.³⁴

More theory-driven research is needed into how these many language policy issues are being worked through in the current phase of a linguistic neoimperialism (Phillipson, 'Language Policy'). This involves the maintenance of inequalities between speakers of English and other languages, within a framework of exploitative dominance, through penetration, fragmentation, marginalisation and supremacism

ideologies in discourse. We need to explore these phenomena in the information society of corporate globalisation and multiple networks and to analyse how power is inequitably created through linguistic hierarchies. To do this, we need to identify agents, their agendas and discourses, to debunk myths of ‘choice’ and of English as a ‘neutral’ language (Kayman). In education and English teaching we need to break with Anglocentricity in the way the forms and hegemonic symbols of the language are internalised and transmitted. We need to ensure that English is not disconnected from the power hierarchies through which the language functions, serving some interests better than others in an unequal world.

Universities and governments must therefore act. Cuckoos must be kept in check by the vitality of the species on which they are parasitical. *Universities* must remain a public good and resist commodification and coercive policies. *All education* must be excluded from GATS, while other forms of internationalisation are encouraged. Many languages must continue to serve as *lingua economica*. English as a *lingua academica* must be in balance with strong local language ecologies, which presupposes strong national language policies. The *education system* must evolve strategies for students and staff to become effectively trilingual (at least) in a diverse range of languages.

There are 127 species of cuckoo worldwide, of which 42 exist in Europe. This matches pretty well with the diversity of the English language worldwide, and in Europe – except that new species of English are evolving rapidly. We need to learn to live with them, and promote biological and linguistic diversity. Only in this way can we live up to the Dalai Lama’s ideal that all language communities have the right to preserve their linguistic and cultural heritage. We also need to remember with Shakespeare’s Henry VIII that, although ‘tis a kind of good deed to say well/ . . . yet words are no deeds.’ We need vigorous action. What this means for multilingual universities is learning to live with cuckoos without being cuckolded.

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Notes

- 1 Danish *livsbekræftende*, analogous to the German *lebensbejahend* (a positive endorsement of life), the closest English equivalent possibly being ‘life-giving’.
- 2 Faust opted for magic rather than continuing in a positivistic analysis of the natural world and the law, which were for ‘petty wits’, the study of law fitting ‘a mercenary drudge, Who aims at nothing but external trash, Too servile and illiberal for me’ (Christopher Marlowe, *The Tragical History of Dr Faustus*, Act I, Scene i, lines 106, 34–6). The play dates from c.1588.
- 3 Narrated at the Think Tank on First Nation Immersion Education for Critically Endangered Languages, St Thomas University, Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada, 3–6 Oct. 2005.

- 4 Devidal provides a very detailed analysis from the perspective of international human rights law of the implications of education falling within GATS, with many references to resistance, and a strong plea for all education to be excluded. De Siqueira offers a thorough historical analysis of the GATS process with a special focus on education.
- 5 See <www.bologna-bergen2005.no>.
- 6 This contrasts with the EU schemes, LINGUA and ERASMUS/SOCRATES, and many other EU actions to support linguistic diversity.
- 7 Other contributors to the Helsinki conference have drawn similar conclusions, for instance Ragnhild Ljosland 'Norway's Misunderstanding of the Bologna Process: When Internationalisation becomes Anglicisation', a study that draws on interviews with policy makers.
- 8 This is a body all of whose clients seem to be US universities. See <www.fie.org.uk>.
- 9 She may be unaware that 'the United States is one of the most linguistically and culturally diverse countries in the world' (McCarty 74) and that illiteracy rates are high in the USA, as indeed they are generally in the western world. In the British Isles, recognition of the diversity of local languages is advancing apace (Kirk and Ó Baoill). In neither the USA nor the UK is the supremacy of English in doubt.
- 10 Reported in *CAM Cambridge Alumni Magazine* Easter 2005: 9.
- 11 The glossy magazine produced quarterly by the University of Helsinki for public relations purposes has articles in English, French and German. It reports that the most popular foreign destination for Finnish students is Germany. The University has a long history of functioning fully in both Swedish and Finnish.
- 12 See <www.regeringen.se>.
- 13 See *Språk åpner dører! Strategi for styrkning av fremmedspråk i grunnopplæringen 2005 – 2009*. <www.publikasjoner.dep.no>.
- 14 See Rektorkollegiet. The website (<www.rektorkollegiet.dk>) also exists in part in English.
- 15 The document, published by the Ministry of Education and Research and the Estonian Language Council, was endorsed by the Estonian Government on 5 August 2004. The policy situates the development needs of the Estonian language in the context of other languages, including foreign languages and the development needs of the Estonian state (p. 43).
- 16 See <www.britishcouncil.org/mediacentre/apr04/vision_2020_press_notice.doc>. In addition the major language teaching industry attracts over 500,000 learners attending courses per annum.
- 17 On the origins of the British Council and its policies until the 1980s, see Phillipson (*Linguistic Imperialism*, ch. 6).
- 18 Cf. Phillipson (*Linguistic Imperialism*) and Graddol, a study currently being updated. It is also intriguing that Lord (Neil) Kinnock moved in 2004 from being deputy President of the EU Commission, with responsibility for maintaining multi-lingualism (but where English is advancing; Phillipson, *English-Only Europe?*), to the post of Chair of the British Council.
- 19 *The Guardian Weekly* of 23 Sept. 2005 (Hal Crawford, in the 'Learning English' supplement) cites a 2005 report by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade: education earned Australia almost 6 billion Australian dollars in 2004. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) reports that

- Australia increased its share of the international education market from 8.5% in 1998 to 10% in 2003, whereas the USA and UK lost ground.
- 20 Comment on experience in <www.eurfedling.org>.
- 21 See the example of a BBC journalist interviewing the Danish Foreign Minister in Phillipson (*English-only Europe?* 167–8).
- 22 See <www.uta.fi/laitokset/kielet/engf>.
- 23 'International Students in UK Universities and colleges: Broadening Horizons.' 2004. <www.ukcosa.org.uk>, cited by Hilary Footitt in the *Newsletter of the Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies*, University of Southampton 8 February 2005 <www.llas.ac.uk>.
- 24 Norsk institutt for studier av forskning og utdanning (the Norwegian Institute for Studies of Research and Education, NIFU) has conducted two surveys, one on scholarly publications (Schwach), another on the use of English and bilingualism in teaching at five university departments (Brandt and Schwach).
- 25 See Table 1 of Phillipson (*English-only Europe?* 64), summarising global trends impacting on European language policy.
- 26 Pierre Lequiller, Président, réunion ouverte à l'ensemble des membres français du Parlement Européen, le 11 juin 2003, pour débattre le *Rapport sur la diversité linguistique au sein de l'Union européenne*, préparé par Michel Herbillon, auprès de la Délégation pour l'Union Européenne.
- 27 'Es gibt in der EU kein emotionaleres Thema als Sprachen.' Wilhelm Schönfelder, Head of Mission for Germany at the EU, cited in *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 1 Apr. 2005.
- 28 Bringing in fees at local universities was a measure introduced as part of the neoliberal agenda in the US in the 1970s, see Harvey (*A Brief History* 45).
- 29 Information provided by the Vice-Rector of the University of Helsinki at the conference referred to in note 1.
- 30 This pair of concepts is being marketed by the Council of Europe in its many instruments to strengthen language learning and language policy formation. They distinguish between *plurilingualism* as individual competence in more than one language, generally at varying levels, and wish *multilingualism* to refer to societies characterised by more than one language.
- 31 See <europa.eu.int/comm/language/policies/lang/policy/index>.
- 32 See <taalunieversum.org>.
- 33 Speech by Johan van Voorde to the Stockholm meeting, 2003, of the European Federation of National Language Institutes (EFNIL) at their website <www.eurfedling.org>.
- 34 The EU seems unlikely to implement the proposals for a European Agency for Linguistic Diversity and Language Learning (see the 2005 feasibility study conducted by Yellow Window Management Consultants for the Commission), which make a case for language policy being given a higher profile.

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