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The long agony of English as a world language. English, Englishes and the communicative use of other languages within the market, within the classroom.

Introduction

This paper wants to examine the present communicative situation in our global world, and consequently the position occupied by the English language as the main means of interaction. I do not intend to make any realistic prediction, but my purpose is only to evaluate the spread of this language as well as the rise of other languages according to both the people's attitude towards foreign languages, due to the migration effect, and the spread of English, due to the market inputs. At the moment, a favourable tendency towards the spread of English is enhanced by globalization (Crystal, 1998; Graddol, 1997; Brutt-Griffler, 2001), while, the spread of other languages is mainly stimulated by the huge migratory flow, viewed as the main process affecting this century (Tosi, 2001; Guus Extra and Durk Gorter eds. 2001; Guus Extra and Kutlay Yağmur eds. 2004). People move from one country to another for many different reasons, but, while moving, they want to keep the realities belonging to their country. So, we have two phenomena: 1. Globalization, which favours the spread of English, and 2. Migration, which favours the spread of other languages, each community focusing on its mother tongue. Strictly attached to it, is the notion of 3. 'culture' and that of 'identity.' Following these three issues, linguists, philosophers and politicians try to solve the central dilemma involving the link between language, culture and identity. In this essay, I would like to stress that the

spread of English does not mean the spread of Standard English any longer, but more often the rise of varieties of English, varieties which reflect also the linguistic, the cultural and the environmental inputs of the country using English as a means of international communication. In order to explain the reasons which contribute to accept the actual use of varieties derived from Standard English, I embrace Stuart Hall's (Stuart Hall, 2006-2007) vision of 'culture'. In Hall's words, in fact, 'culture' acquires a certain flexibility; it is no longer a strict and reductive notion linked to one place only, but it is influenced by the contacts and the relations established among peoples, caused either by globalization and migration, or by the media and its signs. For Hall, culture is not something to simply appreciate or study, but is a "critical site of social action and intervention, where power relations are both established and potentially unsettled"(Procter 2004: 2).

Because of a certain flexibility attached by Hall to the notion of culture, this essay is also based on the philosophical discussions about the differences and similarities existing among people living in different countries as discussed by Lyothard. In this case, my perspective, that follows the theme of migration as a central point, is centred on the importance to accept other people's realities in order to "reinvigorate and strengthen the spirit" of the host country (J. F. Kennedy 1964: 85), as well as "to achieve a constructive and real understanding and not the illusion of "the whole and the one ... let us activate the differences ..." (Lyothard 1999: 82).

The debate on this purpose is very warm and there are two different schools: some scholars agree on the indiscussed spread of English, others do not. So, even though it is difficult to hazard any plausible prevision, I feel I can say that English will certainly dominate the linguistic sphere of the next years, but it will change its grammatical and semantic structure as well as its phonetic and phonological system, turning into several varieties, each time suggested by the environment in which it is used. Moreover, English will be sustained by other languages, enhanced either by socio-political and economic reasons

(Chinese, Hindi/Urdu, Arabic, Russian) or by the migrating people's attitude to maintain their roots.

Publicity, and visual arts in general, might help us to find an answer, since the language of advertisements seems to sense in advance with an extremely acute feeling the changing habits of people influenced by both global market and global behaviour. Publicity can even give us some suggestions. Global market spreads global products; so, in order to commercialize them it is used a language known to the majority of people. As a consequence, English and the local language served this purpose until a few years ago (see Pirelli, local flight companies etc.). Nowadays, different countries are emerging from the commercial point of view, so their products also enter the market. In order to sell them all over the world, it is used the language of the country to which these products belong (see internet publicity in Russian and in Chinese), of course supported by the presence of English (pseudo) borrowings. On the other hand, billboards are becoming international, especially when they want to commercialize a well known product; in this case more than two languages (local and English) are used, and the whole advs. is written in as many languages as possible (see Ferrarelle, etc.).

In conclusion, I feel I can say, that we have to be prepared to face a multilingual and multicultural world. I hope, the future linguistic scenario will be crossed by a multilingual/multicultural atmosphere. English will certainly maintain its predominant position, but we will be more incline to accept and understand not only the many Englishes generated by the different countries in which English is used for international and intranational realities, but other languages, too. Moreover, learning foreign languages will be a good input to fight our mental laziness with a consequent benefit for our brain, for two reasons: to stimulate a wider cognitive growth for children and to slow down the aging process for adults. This positive future situation can be achieved by analyzing the multicultural and multilinguistic area in which we live, without closing our eyes and our minds in front of the many problems our society shows

us every day through the media and through our living experience. School has a huge responsibility, since it has to adequate its curricula to this changing society, and the focus on languages is, in my opinion, the first step to stimulate integration and to reduce prejudices. To know the languages of 'our brothers and sisters' will be the only way to understand them.

“... Children must learn to
Value cultural diversity,
Look at their cultural background from their own and from other people's perspectives;
Understand the behaviour of others to solve problems arising from cultural misunderstandings,
Develop strategies and techniques to handle concrete conflicts arising from different expectations, interests, and values;
Act on the basis of human rights against discrimination directed at minorities;
in the case of Muslim children, learn about Islamic tradition and history, be able to function effectively in a dominantly Christian society, and acquire knowledge about a secular society with freedom of faith” (Guus Extra and Kutlay Yağmur, 2004: 95).

1. a) The role of culture and identity during the analysis of ELF

The problem concerning the evolution of English and its role as *lingua franca*, is inevitably linked to the notion of *culture* and consequently to that of *identity*. These two words have acquired new meanings 'in relation to globalisation,' one of the main means of the spreading of English. Of course, identity and culture have been affected by 'global cultural confrontations'. 'Global cultural confrontations' (D.Morley and K. Robins, 1995: 122), in fact, have broken the coherence and integrity linked to the idea of both identity and culture, since they are now related to the notion of differences as a result of discussion about a series of other debates linked to our post-modern

society: “feminism, ethnicity, sexual orientation, Eurocentrism, the diasporic, the post-colonial and the post-national”(Ferguson, M. and Golding, 1997: xxvi).

As Stuart Hall says “identities are ... constituted within, not outside representation;” identity is “production”, an on going process. As a consequence, identity is unstable, because it has to confront Others’ realities, in brief the ‘Other’ (Hall and Du Gay (eds.), 1996: 4). In fact, nowadays, identity and culture have to face new realities, those realities forged by a series of phenomena, which spread all over the world involving commerce, finance, tourism, marketing, media and the huge reality of migration, too. Within this content, culture and identity involve the notion of “integration and tolerance of differences” (Larrain, 1994: 165).

According to de Varennes (1996) language is one of the strongest symbols of community and shared culture in human society and signals one's membership in a community. Language is used by immigrants as a resource to convey their cultural and personal identity. He says that, although language is not included in anti-discriminatory legislation, it has often been recognized a very important discriminatory element.

In sum, the dilemma about the relationship between culture and identity is in continuous evolution, since it is contingent to our changing world. In order to understand the role and the position of English as *lingua franca*, and consequently, its evolution into the phenomenon of Englishes, we have to understand the role and the position of identity and culture first. Do people, who use English for a variety of purposes, have to conform to the British or American heritage or can they adapt standard English to their realities? If culture and identity expand their area and include all the possible varieties linked to this notion, for example, the one which comes from personal behaviour as the result of a comparison between our ways of life and the one which is excluded as different, then, also our verbal and non-verbal communication has to conform to an intrinsic reality. Linguistic means has to adapt to the situation involved without reflecting a standard and fixed language. A fixed

language, this is the limit of any tongue when used within a classroom context as a foreign language. In fact, students are suggested to follow a formal, standard system. On the contrary, we know that the peculiarity of language is creativity; a spontaneous creativity enhanced by the environment and the context involved during the speech act (Chomsky, 1968).

So, why should a NNS risk to lose this component only because teachers of English and NS do not want to accept any anthropological changes relative to semantics, morphology, syntax as well as prosody, phonetics and phonology? Creativity stimulates changes, but creativity is itself inspired by the surrounding atmosphere. Then, in order to avoid the threat for NNS to talk like parrots, both NS and teachers of English should give a foreign language – in this case English - the opportunity to expand according to the speakers' realities, their demands and their expectations. Widdowson is really convinced about the definite shape English as *lingua franca* should take: "The functional range of the language is not restricted, but ... enhanced, for it enables its users to express themselves ... without having to conform to norms which respect the socio-cultural identity of other people" (Widdowson, 2004: 361).

Furthermore, when Hall argues that 'race' should be understood not as referring to some genetic essence, but as a "floating signifier," whose meaning is never fixed, stimulates us to intend the use of the English language, when employed by both foreigners and outer circle speakers during either international or intranational speech acts, as a multiform and really creative event. The signifier of both 'English' and 'race' becomes 'floating' and 'floating', also because they should be encouraged by the continuous comparison and confrontation with the 'Other,' with differences (S. Hall, *Race: The Floating Signifier* - videotape lecture -, undated probably 1996; 2006; 2007).

It seems necessary, at this point, to mention Lyotard's theory about the notion of culture and the supreme role of differences. The problem has philosophical roots and springs from socio-linguistic evaluations. Lyotard's position is based on

the value of differences. He claims that “*différends*,” while stimulating the flow of linguistic interaction, point out the role of *sensitivity*, from which derives the actual “*différends*” in our contemporary society. Imagination, creativity and singularity are the three pillars of Lyotard’s philosophy:

Postmodern knowledge is not simply a tool of the authorities; it refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable. Its principle is not the expert’s homology, but the inventor’s paralogy. (Lyotard, 1999: xxv).

When examining Lyotard’s theory we can start from two points: 1) from his refusal of “the very modern project of a universal language” from which “the confusion lies,” and 2) from his statement: “to speak is to fight.” From the first point, we understand that he is against the search for universal foundations and mutual understanding as established by Habermas.¹ Even if the two scholars talk about ‘knowledge’, then they turn the discussion into the question of language games, which Lyotard says “are heteromorphous, subject to heterogeneous sets of pragmatic rules”. In order to achieve linguistic interaction, Lyotard is rather in search of *différend*, which “... occur(s) when we link onto another so-called phrase” (: 65). Therefore, “his theory can rightly be called phraseology,” says Vandenameele (Vandenameele, 2003, Vol. 3:1: 20-35. 21). A *différend* occurs when we link a phrase onto another because, I think, it depends on them to establish the links with the context in order to give real meaning (content) to the speech act.

A *différend* takes the form of a civil war, of what the Greeks called a stasis: the form of a spasm. The authority of the idiom in which cases are established and regulated

¹ Habermas’s universals aim to facilitate those conditions which permit mutual understanding during linguistic interaction. He calls his position *Diskurs*, in other words a dialogue of argumentation, 1973.

is contested. A different idiom and a different tribunal are demanded, which the other party contests and rejects. Language is at war with itself, and the critical watchman posts guard over this war. [...] In the *différend*, something cries out in respect to a name. Something demands to be put into phrases, and suffers from the wrong of this impossibility. ... Humans who believe that they use language as an instrument of communication and decision learn, through the feeling of pain that accompanies the silence of interdiction, that they are conscripted into language (Benjamin, 1998: 357).

Linkages are infinite, they generate linguistic interaction, as Chomsky's kernel sentence has infinite possibilities to generate other meaningful sentences.

The second point - "to speak is to fight." - assumes, following Wittgenstein's perspective, that language is a game; therefore it has rules to follow; rules which nonetheless are never so strict. Linguistic games do not constitute a rigid classification of rules determined by a rigorous calculation; rather they offer alternative possibilities when valuating a linguistic expression according to its effective use. As the move, participants make during a game, shows a kind of invention as well as a plan, so, new phrases, new words, new meanings show creativity; a creativity which determines language evolution. Furthermore, language modifies also because of the contact established by other languages flowing together.

Wittgenstein's view of language "as being separated from itself" is very near to Lyotard's statement: "to speak is to fight." They both, in my opinion, centre on the role of ambiguity during communication. The metaphor of the maze, used by Wittgenstein to describe the movements and the evolution of the language, is very appropriate. Language is no longer a unified, complete system, rather it is "a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, and of houses with additions from various periods:" (Wittgenstein, 1968: 49) a maze which always modifies according to creativity and language contact.

To conclude, as culture and identity move quickly not to remain standardised when following the evolution of both the time and the space in which ordinary people interact and relate to each other in order to survive in a global world, also English has to turn into a variety of Englishes which reflect the context in which they are effectively used. To be able to understand these varieties is difficult and complicated, since the gap with their 'mother tongue' is often wide. But, as our world changes drastically and quickly, so language has to adapt to communicative necessities, and English as *lingua franca* cannot avoid this rule; Englishes are the inevitable consequence of the main feature belonging to language: the development of an intricate and endless maze.

1.b) ELF, migration and Human Rights Documents

It seems as if we have never time enough to think about our future: everything moves in a blink of an eye and communication is taking many different shapes. Communication reaches anyone anywhere in real time; technology provides us with very sophisticated instruments which help people to get in touch with the whole world very fast, and the language used as *lingua franca* – English -, with its concise grammatical system – seems to help this process, although the spread of a language cannot be totally attributed to intrinsic linguistic qualities. In fact, the English used for immediate communication appears a simple language from the syntactic point of view, the only real problem is pronunciation, but the spread of Englishes seems to have overcome this side. In brief, English has been reduced, during the centuries, to a very “essential” language (Graddol, 1997: 6).

The syntactical-grammatical structure has been evolving leaving out cases, declensions, affixes, suffixes, and now it shows only a few rules and a simple structure especially when developing informal functions; on the other hand its semantic aspect has been enriching and enlarging by taking words from many languages, so to give access to a detailed, precise and fast communication. The only ‘black side’ is its pronunciation; but also from this aspect English has been manipulated adapting to the speaker’s pronunciation, which inevitably reflects his/her local system. In fact, the many people who need English as an international language have developed varieties, which necessarily reflect their mother tongue in both the oral and written skills. In doing so, they reflect the very nature of the English language: “...the desire to try out new sentences, new terms, new forms of syntax, that is, Anglo-Saxon liberty” (Benjamin, 1998: 63).

The debate about ‘incorrectness’ is an old question and appeared in *The Rudiments of English Grammar* in 1761. Here Joseph Priestley remarked with Ben Jonson “that the custom of

speaking is the original and the only standard of any language” (Priestley, 1761: 24).

Again in 1795 Lindley Murray wrote a grammar whose very long title emphasizes the flexible nature of English: *English Grammar, adapted to the different classes of learners; With Appendix, containing Rules and Observations for Promoting Perspicuity in Speaking and Writing*. To come back to our age, it is essential to quote David Crystal, one of the most influential contemporary writer: “In the 1990s I thought we were entering an era where a more flexible attitude to language was becoming routine. I could sense it in the way the new National Curriculum was reintroducing formal language study into schools, but with an emphasis on explanation rather than prescription. Grammar was back, but now kids were being asked to explain grammatical variations, not to blindly condemn them” (Crystal, 2007: 142).

In our global world, the controversy between the ones who do not mind to diverge greatly from the English spoken in Britain or North America, and the others, who seem to care more, involves both the didactic of English as a foreign language, and English viewed as an international means of communication. As a consequence, the question opens a wide debate between linguists and teachers of English (Kibbee, 1993; Kachru, 1996; Fishman, 1972, Ferguson, 1991; Canagarajah, 1999). From the classroom point of view, we all know that it is extremely difficult, once the mother tongue system has achieved a mature level, to impede interferences between the two languages. It is hard to lose the mother tongue accent when talking in a foreign language, so, in order to stimulate the knowledge of English and not to discourage the learner, a flexible attitude by the teacher will be fruitful.

But, apart the simple and flexible grammatical structure, which some authors (Smith, 1976; Pakir, 1999; Gopinathan, 1998) consider as the main cause for the spreading of English, the reasons enhancing the expansion of this language are mainly linked to economic, cultural, political, and social realities (Paulston, 1992; Quirk, 1985; Myers-Scotton, 1993). These

reasons have, in fact, determined the social structure of both the 19th and 20th century.

The 21st century has added another input – the spread of more foreign languages -, since it is experiencing a huge migratory flow, and consequently ethical issues relating to human rights: linguistic, cultural and religious. Nowadays, immigrants are more inclined to retain their roots, because they are aware that, in order to join the new social and cultural system, they are no longer supposed to forget about their origin. In this, they are helped by international projects both political and educational. In fact, The Human Rights Documents have established rules and amendments that try to protect all people who decide to organize their life outside their mother country. One of the main linguistic points on the human rights agenda argues that a child has the right to be educated maintaining her/his mother tongue.

If we analyze the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the European Convention on Human Rights, the Fundamental Freedom, or the Universal Declaration of Human Rights up to the specific document included in the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights, we realize that they all focus on the linguistic issue linked to education.

The first document, while starting from human dignity and consequently, from the right to life, to liberty, to asylum and to the deference to private and family life, goes on to analyse ‘freedom of expression’ and ‘right to education’.

Article 22 – chapter III - emphasises clearly that the Union “shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity”. The second document – ECHR -, also based on human values, faces in article 2 the problem linked to the right to education, then in article 9 the freedom of thought, conscience and religion, while in article 10 the freedom of expression. The third document – FF - article 1, while pointing out the general welfare of each individual: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”, proceeds to emphasize in article 13 “the right to freedom of movement and residence”; then, article 15 faces the right to a nationality, while articles 26 and 27 promote

education through the means of "... tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups." Even though the fourth document - Declaration of Human Rights - does not specifically talk about linguistic development, it is obvious that in order to achieve real benefits people have to develop more than one language. Is it? I don't see the point of this whole section on human rights as to how it relates/influences etc the spread of English as a lingua franca.

The Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights – focuses primarily on the linguistic issue. After making several considerations in the Preliminaries - "considering that universalism must be based on a conception of linguistic and cultural diversity ... considering that, in order to ensure peaceful coexistence between language communities, a series of overall principles must be found so as to guarantee the promotion and respect of all languages and their social use in public and in private; ...considering that various factors of an extralinguistic nature ... give rise to problems which lead to the extension, marginalization and degeneration of numerous languages ..." -, it concludes that it is necessary in order to achieve "linguistic peace throughout the world" ..."to correct linguistic imbalances" by ensuring "the respect and full development of all languages." The concepts expressed in all the articles included in the Preliminary Title consider the situation of immigration as a focal point. So, it starts from "the principle that linguistic rights are individual and collective at one and the same time" to go on by considering that in order to maintain democracy it is necessary to offer respect and satisfactory conditions of life to the "nomad peoples within their historical areas of migration" as well as to value "as a language group any group of persons sharing the same language which is established in the territorial space of another language community but which does not possess historical antecedents equivalent to those of that community." Article 4 develops this notion more deeply by enforcing the role of acculturation and assimilation without sacrificing the mother tongue roots. Along with this principle, articles 11, 12, 13, and 14 stress the concept of multilingualism

provided that “everyone has the right to carry out all activities in the public sphere ... in the language specific to the territory where s/he resides” but also “has the right to use his/her language in the personal and family sphere ... to be polyglot and to know and use the language most conducive to his/her personal development”. The last article of Section II - 30 - elevates all languages at university level and says that “The language and culture of all language communities must be the subject of study and research at university level.” Section IV, dedicated to the cultural issues, again focuses on the right to use and maintain all languages during cultural approaches: “All language communities are entitled to access to intercultural programmes through the dissemination of adequate information, and to support for activities such as teaching the language to foreigners, translation, dubbing ...”. Section VI concludes with an important article - 50 -, which gives status to “advertising, signs, external signposting, and all other elements that make up the image of the country.” In conclusion, linguistic diversity offers the chance to develop multilingualism, so to favour all languages and all communities living all around the world.

The creation of a World Commission on Linguistic Rights aims to preserve and maintain alive as many languages as possible.

“...linguistic rights should be considered basic human rights” (Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson, 2000: 1).

As a result of this analysis, it seems natural that not only one single language has the right to assert its authority, but all languages and cultures should be promoted. The deontic is not the ‘reality’, so, of course, the problem of intelligibility in our global society cannot be solved by teaching and learning all living languages; it is still necessary to turn to a common language for international communication, and English has acquired this role. But, in order to put the above considerations to good use, we should acquire a more plastic attitude towards other languages as well as to all the varieties coming from

Standard English. As a consequence, in the light of the frequent relationship established among peoples because of political and economic situations, also multilingualism and multiculturalism seem just as necessary and natural as they are useful.

Also from the educational and pedagogical point of view I feel the urge to stimulate the introduction in the school curriculum other than English, French, Spanish or German even other foreign languages.

The Italian School system seems very sensible to foreign languages, so it is changing drastically. In September 2010 the Ministry of Education has opened a selection for people who have a degree in Chinese and Arabic in order to introduce these two languages in the Italian system of education, since children from that background are regularly attending our schools and their number is increasing drastically. Also the head of an Italian High School in Vicenza has recently said that it is important for students to know languages like Arabic and Chinese, in fact, most of the students come from those countries.

In conclusion, many school curricula all over Italy are joining this multilingual program spreading it at all levels. Even the magazine *Donna Moderna* (settembre 2006), which is not a very authoritative source, emphasizes this phenomenon, hoping to touch all social classes (Tosi 2001; René Appel 1984).

Then, another good reason for learning languages like Arabic, Chinese, Hindi/Hurdu, Russian, etc. comes from the actual economic situation. The 21st century is expanding its market to various countries: Asia, India, Russia, Eastern countries, and of course the Americas; thus, focusing the economic attractiveness on other major languages. We all know the growth of Indian computer companies and the many Italian young people working there. We are also experimenting the phenomenon of new and consolidated managers investing their money in east countries in order to open small or large industries or firms. The shift in economic relations will have a relevant effect on the popularity and use of different tongues. Furthermore, apart migrant workers, people move for many

other reasons: education, business, tourism, and any time they move they take with them their language and their culture.

In brief, after this analysis about the present world situation, I think that the role of English as a world language is less secure than might appear. In the near future the scenario might change. We do not know how it will develop, but we can predict that the English language will still maintain its role as *lingua franca* for many years, not necessarily as the British or American version, but as a world standard adapting to many international situations. If we establish a link between macro-economic factors and language popularity, new foreign languages - Chinese, Russian, Hindi/Urdu, Arabic -, will certainly emerge as potential market means, thus favouring this or that economic, political or demographic development. Nowadays, for example, in China jobs interviews are carried on by international companies in Chinese Mandarin first and then in English. Their foreign managers are required to speak both Chinese Mandarin and English.

“In China, the era when overseas executives could rely on translators is ending. The Chinese government now requires top executives at securities firms to pass written and oral exams in Mandarin, the national tongue, and Chinese managers expect meetings to be conducted in their own language. ... Knowing the language makes you seem more intelligent, more involved than the foreigner who just sits there and smiles” (International Herald Tribune, Friday, August 24, 2007).

Authoritative Italian papers, too, stress the necessity to favour the learning of other foreign language:

“Vivere e fare business con le altre culture, senza paura. ... uomini e donne del personale, dello sviluppo, della formazione e del marketing discuteranno di interculturalità, di Islam, di Cina, ... Ci saranno casi di aziende che operano nei mercati arabi e cinesi.” (Il Sole-24 Ore 10 gennaio 2007).

Under the light of this almost clear situation, as David Crystal said, during his plenary lecture at the International Conference on Global English (14-16 February 2008, Verona) “predicting the linguistic future is always a dangerous activity.” But, if we rely on cultural reasons and on the shift economic relations, perhaps we might develop new suggestions. Within this scenario, I feel I can hazard previsions not only on the emergence of some ‘important’ languages that might establish their position as international languages, but even on a myriad of other languages, which will be used effectively in multilingual, interethnic contexts. This because the world, due principally to the phenomenon of migration, is going to be aware that ‘difference’ does not have a negative connotation any more (Lyotard). We hope that a multilingual world will take into consideration the fact that differences add quality to life. In short, more languages and cultures one knows the best is for a wide and successful communication among peoples, not strictly from the linguistic point of view, but more widely from the anthropological side (Fought, 2006; Trechter and Bucholtz, 2001; Rampton, 1995; Mesthrie, 2000).

Multilingualism/multiculturalism can stimulate and improve this process; so, in order to provide general cognitive support to minority groups within the host country, their languages should be introduced in the school curricula, improving bilingualism (Romaine, 1989; Hamers and Blanc, 1989; Homel, Palij, Aaronson, 1987; Sidney, 1983).

Once more, I want to assert that foreign language learning is important for a better general cognitive growth of children as well as of adults, so to enrich personality and slow down our brain aging process (Lenneberg, E and Lenneberg E., 1975; Aitchson, 1976; Ullman, 2006, 2008; Kamps, 2010, Genesee, 2000). We know that stimuli become weak and rare for old people; neurons get scarce in number and the brain loses its full activity. Differently, synapses go on growing and multiplying once the brain receives enough stimuli; in so doing a certain balance is assured (Borden and Harris 1984; Restak, 1988; Lamb, Sydney M., 2005, 2003; Glezerman, Tatyana &

Victoria Balkoski, 1999; Lamb, Sydney M., 2003). It has been proved that an adequate aid is offered by the learning of foreign languages, because the learning process is also helped by the knowledge of the cultural aspect attached to the tongue. In addition, didactic supports, facilities available to foreign language teachers, video, audio and internet courses as well as satellite TV channels, stimulate this development greatly, by favouring the spread of all the languages people want to get in touch to (Canagaraj A. Suresh, 1999; Shor I., 1992).

Graddol (1997) says that the Internet will soon be able to provide cultural as well as commercial needs, so the result will be the use of more languages on the Web.

In sum, a greater presence of languages is to be expected and assured for various reasons; one of these is certainly the global audio-visual market: the representation/ri-presentation as studied by Stuart Hall (Stuart Hall, 1997). David Crystal, our authoritative linguist, grown up in a multilingual setting, encourages the idea of knowing more than one language as an advantage for a better development of the whole personality:

“I believe in the fundamental value of multilingualism, as an amazing world source which presents us with different perspectives and insights, and thus enables us to reach a more profound understanding of the nature of the human mind and spirit. In my ideal world, every one would be at least bi-lingual” (Crystal, 2003: xiii).

Nowadays the whole linguistic atmosphere is changing; people seem to appreciate the many languages and cultures offered by the easy contacts established for a variety of communicative means; people seem more sensible to accept new cultures. Of course it is not so simple, and there are protectivist ideologies, e. g. nationalism and localism that try to contrast the good attitude of some people towards other cultures and other languages.

Meaningful examples come from the cinema market and the media in general. They stimulate multilingualism and multiculturalism by producing advertisements and films showing multilingual and multicultural context, where the protagonists talk shifting from one language into another. The last film by an Italian producer shows a situation where characters alternate Italian with Arabic. “Le Troiane,” on the stage in Naples, also develops dialogues in many different languages. As a consequence, many questions arise and the debate is still widely open; English like Latin, like French, or a global, always renewed English with all its varieties – Englishes -, which, meanwhile, does not exclude the use of other languages?

1.c) Standard English, ELF, Englishes

This long preamble has been necessary before examining in details the present situation of the English language - the role of English within the whole world as well as its evolution. But in order to achieve the point, I think, I have to distinguish four main different situations: 1) one, in which English acts as a formal means of communication; 2) two, when it is used at informal levels during occasional situations within a specific environment; 3) three, when, being the language of commerce and finance, it shifts into the field of English for specific purposes, and 4) four, when it involves the written code within the field of literature by authors belonging to outer circle realities. Some of these points play in favour of the spreading of Standard English, while others seem to hamper its expansion.

Referring to the first situation – English acts as a formal means of communication -, we know that English is used as an almost spontaneous linguistic means wherever and whenever there are speakers from many different countries. As a consequence, it is the language of international conferences, scientific meetings, essays, journals and research publications. Within these fields, there might be no problems, since the main

aim of both speakers and writers is to talk as well as to write in a correct language, very formal, and therefore, resembling as much as possible the United Kingdom or the American standard. A little more complicated, always within this area, is the aspect related to the oral language, which undergoes the influence of the phonological and phonetic features linked to and derived from the speaker's mother tongue system. Nevertheless, any speaker shows the effort to imitate the standard English pronunciation, or even the RP accent, and most of the time this aim achieves satisfactory and adequate results. Of course, if international conferences involve fields other than linguistics - medicine, technology, business etc. -, these may gather speakers who use English as a mere tool for international communication and aim only at efficient communication - to be understood - rather than at a 'correct' pronunciation. So, while International Linguistic Conferences enhances the spread of Standard English, the others provide a good resource for varieties of English, even though, we cannot deny that anyone would like to achieve an adequate pronunciation.

The second situation - occasional use within a specific environment -, is very complicated, because it implies a total different context. This context involves the use of English in order to satisfy communicative necessities within a country in which there are different languages spoken by the same population divided into various ethnic groups, each speaking their own tongue, but, meanwhile, sharing almost the same political and economic system (India, Pakistan, some African places, etc.). In this case English is the main communicative means outside the familiar environment, introduced to develop formal circumstances. Thus, English becomes the second language employed to cover social and educational situations for the inhabitants of a multilingual, but mostly monocultural country. As a consequence, English needs some changes in order to cover specific social and linguistic details. The variety adopted has no more the strong aim to imitate Standard English; its main purpose is to be efficient within that particular

framework. This points enhances the spread of English varieties - Englishes.

The third situation, which embraces the field of 'languages for special purposes,' includes specific terminology, and often a particular grammatical use of tenses (e.g. the use of the simple present in the language of sport, the use of 'shall' for Law documents, etc.) as well as of the structure of the sentence (word formation in the language for Law, formulas in the language of commerce, etc.). It is strictly linked to the first situation, since it emerges during conferences with a specific aim. Here it is required a specific code which covers different areas at international levels: technical, tourism, medicine, sport, law, commerce and finance, etc. The English used within these corpora is almost standardized in order to be sure to reach any intent (Gibbons, 1994; Gotti and Dossena, 2001; Owen and Dynes, 1993; Gledhill, 2000; Vassileva, 2001; ESP Across Cultures, 2008-09-10). Here, too, it is essential to distinguish between the written and the oral skill, but usually all these standard varieties match with a codified linguistic use. But codified are just certain jargon words; grammar and pronunciation are not. This point, while enhancing the spread of English, is also linked to other languages coming from emerging market requirements (Smakman et al., 2009; Martin, 2006).

The fourth condition – foreign people writing in English -, is becoming popular, and we have very good examples, in the field of literature, of novels, romances, short stories, etc. written by people who speak English either as a foreign or as a second language, or even as a mother tongue in a bilingual context. In this last situation, English has been acquired outside the familiar environment in which the original language of the emigrant family is used spontaneously. Within these corpora, we have to consider one main very relevant point: the semantic level. Semantics, in fact, is the segment which, together with pronunciation, is mostly influenced by either the external context, if the writer lives in an outer circle country, or the familiar use if s/he belongs to a foreign family. Sometimes, even the grammatical structure is affected, but semantics shows clear

signs of interference, because description and content refer to a contextualized atmosphere. There are many excellent examples in this field, and some of these writers have even achieved the Nobel Prize: Wole Soyinka from Nigeria, Nadine Gordimer from South Africa, Derek Walcott from the Caribbean Island, etc. If we want to consider writers like the Australian Patrick White, the Irish Seamus Heaney, the American Toni Morrison, as writers within the Englishes area, we give status to these varieties.

Thanks again to Stuart Hall, who gave a vital impulse to the Birmingham Department with the Cultural Studies Center, we now can appreciate what only a few years ago belonged to the low literary expression. A good example is Zora Neale Hurston, who is one of the most appreciated writer of the African American literature; a genre that has been known because now people accept different kinds of writings, different styles, different topics, different cultures, but above all varieties of the standard language. *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is the most dominant of her works, and has influenced many generations of writers. Some of the characters in the novel are multicultural and the whole atmosphere reflects the surrounding environment – Haiti.

The cultural side of this country finds a good space during the whole novel: “it was the time for sitting on porches beside the road.” ...: (1) “You mean, you mad ’cause she didn’t stop and tell us all her business.” (3) “Jane had robbed him of his illusion of irresistible maleness that all men cherish, which was terrible.” (79) “For what can excuse a man in the eyes of other men for lack of strength?” (80).

The style of the writing, too, is pregnant of particular grammatical-syntactical use of the language, typical of the Afro-American English variety. It is easy to give instances in this area, because Zora Neale Hurston writes following the pattern belonging to her characters; so, just to point out some sentences taken at random, we can examine a few example: “She ain’t even worth talkin’ after,” ...”Don’t keer what it was” 3 “You’ see Mrs. Mayor Starks, Janie. I god, Ah can’t see what uh woman uh yo’ stability would want tuh be treasurin’ all dat

gum-grease from folks dat don't even own de house dey sleep in" 54 (Hurston, 1937).

Another incisive author is John Fante, whose books are known also as films. Even though the author was born in the United States, his Italian family has influenced the semantic and structural level of his writing style, which is also soaked with Italian culture.

"I rose to leave. She stopped me. Something bothered her. 'You and Joyce. Do you sleep American style? ... Sleep Italian style' ... He is my *paisano*. ... 'Salt in the bed. I put it there myself. ... Superstition. Ignorance. I'm your Papa. Don't call me ignorance'" (John Fante, 1952: 33, 35, 38).

These two authors influence the spread of Englishes, and force us to be more incline to accept varieties, since both Fante and Hurston have been recognized as very good writers.

In brief, this point, while giving a negative input to the spread of *Standard English*, stimulates the advance of *Varieties*.

Nowadays, English has acquired a high rank, because of its colonial traditions, and because of international business. In other words it provides social as well as economic welfare. English education is seen as a means to economic power for both the single individual and his/her nation. In the past, it was French that had acquired great prestige also for colonial reasons and Ahamadou Kouroama, a Mandigo writer, gives us a touching example. He said that he could not study Malinké at school, because in the Ivory Coast, during the years of colonialism, the use of the mother tongue was forbidden. Now, on account of the lack of formal learning in his language, his writing tries to balance between the fetishistic spirituality of his Malinké culture and the catholic and rationalist credo of French. As a result, he feels uncomfortable and unsatisfied, because it is impossible to fill the gap between the Malinké content and the French linguistic expressions.

The strong tendency to encourage the spread of English or French, either because of colonialism or because of the future economic growth of a country, or because of socio-political reasons, has emphasized a negative view of non-western

literature. But, if we go back to Lyotard, Hall and Benjamin, already mentioned, we understand the reverse side of the coin much better; in other words, we perceive a feeling of betrayal aroused in those authors who have been forced to abandon their mother tongue in order to learn and write in a language which was considered more prestigious.

“Its (self-identification of a culture) dismemberment, in a situation of colonial, imperialist or servile dependency, signifies the destruction of its cultural identity” (Benjamin, 1998: 321).

1. d) different names to English as Lingua Franca and the quarrel between NS and NNS English

Under the four main areas, previously examined, there are a myriad of other aspects, each one referring to a particular kind of English, which acquires the peculiarities of the situation in which it acts. As a consequence, in order to identify the English used in the outer circle, but also in the inner circle (Kachru, 1985) with all its varieties, linguists, on the basis of the different content and context in which the language is employed, and also on the basis of the strategies implied and, consequently, the linguistic innovations occurred to the standard language for its international or intranational use, have coined a large variety of terms: ELF, EIL, IE, EWL, WSSE, WSE, Global English and so on (McKay, 2001; Bamghose, 1998; Pakir, 1999; Jenkins, 1998).

Linguists are also divided into two branches, which again imply different situations and consequently different names. Some of them tend to privilege the native speaker standard language, refusing to indulge on the polymorphous linguistic nature, typical of the English system; others seem more incline to recognize a process of innovation in order to promote social identity for those using English as non-native speakers.

Görlach says that there is a wide separation between standard English and its varieties. When he refers to this

phenomenon he uses terms like 'deviant', 'corruption', or 'pollution' (Görlach, 2002). Derwent May in an article appeared in *The Times* also uses terms like 'corruption' and 'pollution', and he says that varieties "are like pools of language disease" (May, 2000: 4).

Trudgill, another big name, points out that only native speakers of English are the real owners of the language; so that, they have the power to control their tongue wherever it spreads. It is their duty to save this language from 'contamination.' Trudgill, who has written a lot about language contact, seems to ignore this phenomenon when referred to the English language and its outer circle varieties; in this case language contact does not produce any linguistic *accommodation* (Trudgill, 2005).

Quirk turns his discussion to the pedagogical level by saying that if he were a foreign student of English trained in this language for international communication, he would probably feel upset not to be exposed to a standard language which really could solve his communicative problems (Quirk, 1990).

Some other linguists seem more inclined to accept the outer circle varieties, because their main point is on the communicative use of the language, which in order to be really effective must reflect the sociological and the emotional reality of its speakers. In brief, Brumfit (2001), De Swaan (2001), Widdowson (2004), Lowenberg (2002) and others, by facing the problem from the language teaching perspective are more prompt to coordinate the tongue in a way which facilitates communication among NNS, because it conforms to norms relative to the people who use the language. Brumfit, in particular, says that languages are inevitably shaped by their use. Lowenberg adds that even English proficiency tests "will have to be more cognizant of this change" (Lowenberg, 2002: 435). Furthermore, De Swaan emphasizes that we should enhance specific varieties for each group of people by promoting Indian variety of English, Chinese variety and European variety, too (De Swaan, 2001: 192). He then concludes that NS are less in number than NNS.

I want to stress that when we refer to English as an international phenomenon, we have to distinguish two main categories: one if English is used in intranational context, and two if it is used for international specific purposes. During these two versions it loses some of its cultural roots. Furthermore, in the first case (intranational context), it adapts to local necessities by developing, through a process of innovation, a series of 'accommodations' which promote social identity for those using English as NNS. Here the problem linked to identity and culture emerges again and represents a huge gap, because NNS do not want to conform to other people's identity; identity, in this case, raises problems. The notion of culture merges into that of identity, since culture becomes a central word used as "a response to the new political and social developments, to *Democracy*" (Williams, 1966: 16).

English, as an international phenomenon, becomes the source of a world language by giving way to many varieties, one different by the other: one among many. If identity does not represent an obstacle (MacKenzie,² Quirk, Trudgill, Carter and Cook 1998), Standard English can be used by many people in all different circumstances, but if identity is attached to people, it becomes a problem (Jenkins 2007, Brutt-Griffler, 2001, etc.). Then English should reflect the cultural features implied within the context used; so it has to undergo a process of innovation. Even among those who seem to accept and recognize the value of English varieties, their point sometimes shows a certain perplexity, and they shift from one position to the other. Brutt-Griffler (2001) for instance, while recognizing varieties and their transculturation: "English as a national language is only the source of world language, not the world language itself", then in other occasions says that "the native speaker community is held to affect the non-native without itself being affected" (179). This unbalance emphasizes how huge this problem is. So, linguists, in order to achieve a plausible point, indicate different and

² 'Language teaching and the uses of the so-called English as Lingua Franca', paper delivered at the sixth ESSE conference in Strasbourg in 2002.

various reasons focusing mainly on the number of people using English (Canagarajah, 1999; Thomas, 1999; Seidlhofer, 1999). But, even on this side they never reach satisfactory results, because they do not agree on how to number the effective speakers. It seems that British speakers are a minority, while varieties speakers are a majority: “If English continues to spread, it is clear that the majority of users in the coming decades will be bilinguals who use the language, alongside one or more others, largely for purposes of wider communication” (MacKay, 2002: 45). While affirming this, then, they change their perspective by saying that NNS use English only within specific contexts for specific purposes, thus restricting its use: “native speakers of English are in a minority for language maintenance ... at least in so far as non-native speakers use the language for a wide range of public and personal needs” (Brumfit, 2001: 216).

In the second case previously examined – international use for specific purposes -, the problem of identity, in my opinion, might not exist, but the language, by following specific purposes, already conforms to a specific code through the use of a particular vernacular. So, even in this case it has to adapt its content to its context. In brief, detached by its original cultural roots English, as *lingua franca*,

“... is based on the social and cultural practices of a particular group of people who are brought together for specific purposes. Because the cultural basis of such specialized discourse communities is not directly connected with any particular primary culture, or cultures, but rather transcends geographical, social, and ethnic borders, these discourse communities are examples of an international community *par excellence*” (McKay, 2002: 99).

When examining English, even the Standard English some speakers have as their main linguistic reference, in order to solve the problem of identity, on which scholars seem not to

find any convincing solution, we have to turn again to Stuart Hall's suggestion. English is no longer attached either to its cultural roots or to its country. It does not reflect the British atmosphere, but it has acquired cosmopolitan features in every linguistic detail, too. But, this is true only if we do not insist to collocate 'culture' under the traditional framework. If on the other hand, we realize that global events have changed our experience as well as our expectations, we appreciate Stuart Hall's proposal about the unstable and flexible meaning linked to culture. This does not indicate that we want to destroy or corrupt the strong blood ties established between people and their mother country, but it means that we have to relate our behaviour to the many different peoples we usually meet every day. We have to realize that we are not the centre of the world with one language, one culture and one religion; even though English will be the main communicative point of reference, we have to accept and even adopt and understand the many varieties generated from different situations and different countries. This process gives NNS the possibility to use English according to their own identity and their own culture. It might seem a contradiction: we have to lose our culture and identity by accepting linguistic 'contamination,' 'corruption' in order to give others the chance to maintain their own identity through cultural features when talking in English. But, this is not so, because, as said earlier, we have to give 'culture' and 'identity' a multi-faceted interpretation. Our own way of life, our culture, our identity need to be related to the new political and social development of our global world, in the hope that a true democracy among peoples will be the leading structure of our global society, of our future really global life.

Under the light of the frequent relationship established among peoples, also because of political and economic situations, multilingualism and multiculturalism seem as

necessary as they are useful.³ Therefore, within this structure, foreign language teaching approach occupies an important role, since it has to consider if English interacts either as a foreign language - EFL - or as a second language – ESL; in other words as a language for international or intranational communication. Each of them, of course, implies a different methodology and a different pedagogical approach..

To sum up, there are many problems to be solved in order to decide about the legalization of varieties as well as ‘contaminations’ occurring in the linguistic system of a tongue, which has to solve so many different communicative situations within so many different contexts and environments. First of all we have to verify if English is spoken to achieve communication between NS and NNS; second, if it is used among a NNS context; then, if it implies only NS; then if it includes the land of origin of NNS, as well as the nature of the speech act or the written context; then the necessary code for that specific content, and etc. etc. Once established the quality and the quantity of the English used – a very difficult task indeed –, we might hazard to give access to the legitimization of the Englishes, coming from various and different conditions.

Conclusion

In sum, there are many problems either from the pedagogical and didactic point of view or the sociological side.

³ The problems related to foreign language development started a long time ago with the *Treaty of Rome* in 1958, where all national languages of the EU member states gained equal status.

Multilingualism has showed many advantages not only from the linguistic point of view, but above all from the general cognitive growth. The Foyer project developed for the Italian community in Belgium is an example. Cfr. Cummins, 1976; Cfr. Thomas, 1992; cfr. Swain et al., 1990; see also Moroccan children and Arabic in Spanish schools: Lopez Garcia and M. Molina Extra and Gorter eds.

As announced by Quirk, teachers of English are still divided on the quality of the language they have to teach in order to satisfy the learners' expectations. Also the choice of the teachers for each class is a huge question: more native speakers or foreign teachers? So, the question is: "Is it wise to accept a local variety of English or is it better to remain firm to the Standard English pattern?" It is hard to give a correct answer now, and I turn the question to you and your experience, because I believe that it is necessary a close collaboration among people working and searching in the field of language teaching. What I can do now is only to discuss the problem deeply, to examine pragmatically which English is spoken more, and above all which kind of English solves better than others communicative purposes. Have we to 'fight for English', just to follow the title of David Crystal's book (Crystal, 2007), or have we to accept and 'regularize' the Englishes spoken all around the world? Which of these Englishes is more satisfactory? Which of these Englishes has more speakers? Will they surpass the long influence of Standard English? Will English fade down to give space to the new Englishes as well as to some other emerging international languages? Will English remain 'uninjured' only among native speakers, or even there, will it undergo a process of innovation? Will we move "towards an English family of languages?" (Crystal, *Folia Anglistica* No. 2, 1998).

The answer to these questions, even though it might seem a linguist's prerogative, comes from actual situations linked to the market; situations which drive common people to adopt one register or one language more than another. Thus, publicity, managers, media, visual communication, students, migrants, and literature, that literature considered marginal, secondary, even low until a few years ago, might give a valuable answer.

Advertisement, being one of the most popular communicative means, feels the results of linguistic change in advance. As a consequence, a careful examination of its language, especially the one used on billboards can help to suggest an answer to this problem. In fact, while in the past local

commercials used the language of their country to suggest domestic products, nowadays, due to international commerce, advertisements are multilingual, and English, which until a few years ago used to dominate the international domain, nowadays is joined by other languages. Even spelling, one of the strongest linguistic features for the English language, sometimes is modified in order to match pronunciation and refer to the product more directly. Publicity can be considered the mirror of our changing society with all its linguistic results.

The economic market with its emerging new countries can give us an answer, too, since managers, according to the mechanism of importation and exportation, decide the language required during both transactions and interviews. Then, they influence the foreign language learners, who ask for specific courses in the languages more requested for international communication. As a consequence, the ELT market, because of the learners' requests, has the power to direct not only linguistic choice but also the methodology applied to the teaching of English in order to satisfy the learners' expectations. In brief, apart the number of actual speakers, or how much English is used, or the linguists' previsions, it is up to the learners' prospect to decide which language or which variety or which specific code serve their purpose better.

“The situation may change but at the moment English is the high language and it tends to flow into everything else, downward, like water. ...I think English will change too, and we may call it English, but it's not the English of today. In 200 years from now, we'll use forms of languages which may only resemble what we use now” (Graddol and Meinhof (eds.) 1999: 5,9).

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