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The Missing Language Question in Globalisation Debates: A Gramscian Approach to 'Global English'

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Introduction

This paper argues that despite the vast literature on 'globalisation' there has been a notable absence of analysis concerning the political implications of what is called 'global English'[1] within political science, sociology and most of the social sciences outside of sociolinguistics, applied linguistics, education and literary studies. And much of this latter work does not focus adequately on questions of political community, power relations and the 'state'. While recent debates concerning cosmopolitanism within political theory have begun to address language issues more explicitly, they seem to replicate, and not move beyond, the old liberal-communitarian debates of the 1980s. One might expect Marxists and historical materialists debating about the role of the 'nation-state' in global capitalism to provide some help, but here too language is mentioned only tangentially or superficially. Marxist considerations of language rarely lend themselves to current questions raised by language politics in relation to global capitalism.[2] This situation leaves us tacitly no further ahead in understanding the politics of 'global English' than Antonio Gramsci's analysis in 1918 when he criticized the project of Esperanto and Italian language standardization. Fortunately, Gramsci himself moved beyond that analysis, and his writings in prison show a more nuanced analysis of the role of the state and institutions of civil society and provide key concepts to distil a more adequate framework for a contemporary analysis of the politics of global English.

I will begin, then, with Gramsci's 1918 critique of advocates of a single, common language. I then look at the extent to which his analysis is still relevant, first to current proponents of cosmopolitanism and then in relation to the rise of 'global English' in the last half of the 20th century and current nation-state initiatives concerning language. This analysis, I argue, reveals both the shortcomings of Gramsci's 1918 position and the limits of current frameworks for addressing the politics of 'global English' setting the stage for my final section that shows how several main themes within Gramsci's prison writings provide a more adequate framework.

Antonio Gramsci's 1918 Critique of Esperanto and Alessandro Manzoni

In 1917, Cesare Seasaro set off a discussion within *Avanti!* (the Socialist Party newspaper) concerning the use and promotion of Esperanto. Gramsci made several interventions in this debate, the last of which was a significant article in 1918 in *Il Grido del Popolo* entitled, "A Single Language and Esperanto" ['La Lingua Unica e l'Esperanto']. In it, he argued,

> The advocates of a single language are worried [preoccupano] by the fact that while the world contains a number of people who would like to communicate directly with one another, there is an endless number of different languages which restrict the ability to communicate. This is a *cosmopolitan*, not an *international* anxiety [preoccupasione], that of the bourgeois who travels for business or pleasure, of nomads more than of stable productive citizens. They [these advocates of Esperanto] would like artificially to create the *consequences* which as yet lack the necessary *conditions*, and since their activity is merely arbitrary, all they manage to do is waste the time and energy of those who take them seriously.[3]

This last line has certain similarities to his development of the concept of 'passive revolution' in the *Prison Notebooks,*[4] but for my purposes it is his opposition between *cosmopolitanism*, an elite, bourgeois perspective, and *internationalism* that holds insight today, especially given the new wave of cosmopolitanism beginning about the mid-1990s.[5] Gramsci's general sentiment that 'cosmopolitanism' can be critiqued as being fundamentally elitist applies to many of the current champions of the concept especially when we look at language issues, specifically the question of 'global English'.

Before turning to a more in-depth look at that critique, I should emphasize that Gramsci's specific assessment of a 'common language' among people from distant parts of the globe is solely *cosmopolitan* or bourgeois is clearly inadequate to our circumstances often characterized as 'globalisation'. Certainly, over the last fifty years, there has been a dramatic 'spread' of English (to use a questionable metaphor). Now, many who here Gramsci (perhaps questionably) labels 'stable productive citizens' – that is non-bourgeois, working people – require a 'common' international language (English). This would now include people working in call centres in India and elsewhere, tourist industry workers in even the most remote areas of the world, many workers employed by trans-national corporations and immigrants and migrants to English-speaking countries but also other multicultural areas. While it is true that Gramsci perhaps underemphasizes the importance of migrant labourers and their 'need' for an 'international language' in 1918, it is a much harder argument to make today.

Indeed, David Crystal, perhaps the most prolific and influential 'expert' on the English language, defines 'global English' quite specifically as a development of the last half of the twentieth century. The quantitative dimension that Crystal lays out is staggering. He argues that in 1952 about 250 million people in the world spoke English. Over the last 50 years, this number has ballooned to about 1 billion.[6] Thus, about a sixth of the world's population speak English to some degree (this qualification is perhaps under-emphasized in such estimates). Moreover, David Graddol estimates that by 2015

another 2 billion will be learning English, that is half the world's population.[7] But Crystal insists that the phenomenon of 'global English' is not just quantitative but qualitative – the fact that the number of 'non-native' speakers of English is now almost equal to the number of native speakers and is growing much quicker is quite significant to Crystal,[8] and is clearly important when looking at the political implications of 'global English'. He also argues that 'global English' is distinct from 'lingua franca' because it is not restricted to language domains of business interaction or trading, but is evident in all areas of life from entertainment, to health and safety warnings, public signage, advertising and international trade and commerce.

Crystal also notes that it is not just the raw numbers of English speakers which characterizes English as 'global' but the fact that political, economic and social power is concentrated to a great degree in this minority of English speakers.[9] This situation clearly challenges the relevancy of Gramsci's assessment of 'international common language' in 1918. But, I argue, Gramsci's critique of Esperanto still holds crucial insight especially concerning the 'imposition' of a 'common language'. I will argue that Gramsci's point is being raised today within the growing sociolinguistic and literary criticism on 'World Englishes'. However, I also argue that Gramsci's position in 1918 was insufficient even in its own time and that by 1935 he provides a much more adequate framework.

What is original and insightful about Gramsci's 1918 analysis is that he equates the methods of Esperanto with those of Alessandro Manzoni for creating a 'common language' in Italy at the end of the 19th Century. In addition to (or because of) being the author of the Italian classic, *The Betrothed*, Manzoni was appointed to the government commission concerning the standardization of the Italian language in 1868. This commission was set the task of resolving the problem that upon political unification in 1861, Italy lacked a 'standard Italian language' and instead had a written literary language and a host of dialects that were incommunicable from north to south. Historical linguists estimate that somewhere between 2.5 and 12% of the newly created Italian citizenry spoke something that could be called 'Italian'.[10] (One could then argue that the situation of 'English' in the world today has parallels with the situation of 'Italian' in Italy in 1861.)

Manzoni was famous for having re-written his classic, *The Betrothed*, twice, the final version, the classic, based on spoken, bourgeois Florentine. Manzoni was thus heavily influenced by German Romanticism and held the 'living' 'spoken' language in the highest esteem, criticizing the 'classicists' who wanted to base a 'standard Italian' purely on the literary language of the classics such as Dante, Boccaccio and Petrarch. Thus, his work on the Commission was to pursue a strategy of declaring Florentine, especially of the bourgeoisie, the model for national Italian. The state funded dictionaries and grammar books based on this 'standard,' although the main dictionary was famously never finished. The newly established mandatory school system would try to recruit most of its teachers from the Tuscan region, and this dialect would be spread across all of Italy and become the national language.

Gramsci repeated the critique made by Isaiah Graziadei Ascoli that practically, this strategy would not work since what he called the 'linguistic substratum' – the existing dialects – would continue to exert pressure on this 'standard' Italian, and it would change it. Thus, Ascoli's main argument was practical. This 'solution' would not

solve the problem of a lack of a national, common Italian language. History has proved him correct to some extent (although the advent of mandatory military service, extension of the education system and television changed the situation somewhat, many still note the significant differences in the Italian spoken from north to south). Ascoli argued that the cultural diversity, very different social conditions and political asymmetries throughout Italy, of which the diverse dialects were an integral part, could not be dealt with by imposing a language the creation of which had nothing to do with these other differences. What is at issue here is what some current scholars call the role of the 'expressive' or 'symbolic' dimension of language which I will discuss below.

These debates are fascinating today in their similarities with sociolinguistic research on 'World Englishes'. Scholars such as Braj Kachru trace the differences between Sri Lankan English, Singaporean English in a very similar manner, showing how the existing languages have a systematic impact that significantly change the varieties of English spoken in differents part of the globe. Kachru emphasizes the role of cultural identity and historical richness in this process. Noting how identity and distinction is expressed in different variations of English in Asia, Kachru provocatively announces that English is an Asian language.[11] A very different response can be seen in the work of sociolinguists like Barbara Seidlhofer and Jennifer Jenkins who are constructing a "corpus capturing the successful use of English among non-native speakers...."[12] Here, they take very seriously the notion that if language is truly primarily a vehicle for communication (and can be divorced form issues of the 'expressive' dimension, cultural identity and power), then non-native English speakers (the majority) should be able to define the language.[13]

Gramsci makes two important contributions that distinguish his position from Ascoli and Kachru. He emphasizes and expands the political aspects of this analysis, focusing not just on the practicalities of the failures spreading a 'common language' that remains truly 'common' and 'the same' but on the ideological issues of power and prestige in this process. He does this most thoroughly in his prison writings but it is evident in his 1918 article.

This can be seen in his brilliant comparison between Manzoni's solution to that of Esperanto. Manzoni would likely have been rolling over in his grave due to such a comparison, after all, he argued language was a 'living' thing and it was the rich tradition of Florence that he found so compelling, not some artificial conglomerate language like Esperanto. But Gramsci argued that it mattered little to most Italians, especially those whose language was more different from Florentine. For them, this new language that was to be imposed was like an artificial language that lacked connection to these speakers' history and experiences.

But, at this time, Gramsci did not see that the state, per se, could make any progressive or effective move in promoting a 'common language'. He writes, "not even a national language can be created artificially, by order of the state; that the Italian language is being formed by itself and would be formed only in so far as the shared life of the nation gave rise to the numerous and stable contacts between various parts of the nation…."[14] He also describes the process for a truly international language as coming about in the following way. "When the International is formed, it is possible that the increased contacts between peoples, the methodical and regular integration of large masses of workers, will slowly bring about a reciprocal adjustment between the Ayro-

European languages and will probably extend them throughout the world, because of the influence the new civilization will exert."[15] It is this position that, I argue in my conclusion to this paper, Gramsci changes by 1935 and that must be changed if we are to understand our current situation.

However, even in 1918, by highlighting both the practical and the political problems associated with 'imposing' a language that is to function as a common language, Gramsci provides a useful starting point for addressing contemporary visions of cosmopolitanism within political theory. If the assumption is that 'cosmopolitan democracy' at the global or even regional level can operate in a 'common language' like English, then Gramsci's perspective that those speakers will not feel as comfortable and will be at a disadvantage is politically relevant, as Philippe van Parijs has argued.[16] If the assumption is that 'cosmopolitan democracy' will be multilingual, then the politics of translation and the institutional arrangements of how and which languages are to be translated would have to come to the fore, in discussions where it is never even mentioned.[17] These problems become even more pronounced to the extent that visions of 'cosmopolitan democracy' depend on deliberative theories of democracy as opposed to representative democracy, as do those of Jűrgen Habermas, David Held and Daniele Archibugi that I will turn to now.

How Do Cosmopolitans Speak?

This is not the place to discuss the long history of the term cosmopolitanism nor the wide variety of ways it has been mobilized in the 1990s after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of the U.S.S.R., the prominence of 'multiculturalism' and frustrations with the deconstructive, Foucauldian, and feminist questioning of all universals. But it does seem that language plays an interesting role in quite different articulations of contemporary cosmopolitanism. But whether it is Kwame Anthony Appiah more philosophical and ethical advocacy of cosmopolitanism or the more institutionally oriented projects of 'cosmopolitan democracy' of David Held and Daniele Archibugi, cosmopolitans do not adequately address Gramsci's question; if cosmopolitanism is to go beyond being a form of elitism (and be combined with 'democracy' to use Archibugi's fomulation), there needs to be some mechanism, some set of language practices that allow people to communicate, and this will come with a set of politics not to be ignored (and one that will in all probability look not unlike the historical ways in which language has been a hot political topic).

In 1918, Gramsci criticized head-on the notion of a 'common language' to solve this problem, and focused on the importance of how that language is created. He argued that *if* it is a language imposed from above it will meet practical resistance (it will cease to function as a truly 'common language' whether because 'English' becomes Sri Lankan English which English speakers in Scotland fail to understand, or 'southern Italian' which is deemed not Italian by northern speakers).[18]

And yet, both Jűrgen Habermas'[19] and Daniele Archibugi opt for a 'common language' solution and more importantly, fall prey to Gramsci's critique of Manzoni and Esperanto in terms of a disregard to any concern for how this 'common language' is to be

achieved. It may seem incidental since, I argue here, Habermas and Archibugi could argue that 'global English' is, in Gramsci's terms from his 1918 article, an *international*, non-elitist development rather than a elitist *cosmopolitan* project. But they do not address it and, as we shall see below, there is certainly anecdotal evidence that a substantial 'imposition' of English is being carried out by different states across the globe.

David Held and Archibugi have presented perhaps one of the most influential articulations of a project of 'cosmopolitan democracy' as an explicit project to deal with the trends of globalisation. In one of his now 'classic' discussions of 'cosmopolitan democracy' Held is succinct but forthright about the centrality of English to 'globalisation'. In arguing that the interlinking of trade, finance and the structure of multinational corporations have had an impact on the media and culture, he notes, "English has spread as the dominant language of elite culture – it is the dominant language in business, computing, law, science and politics". But none of the institutional arrangements that he advocates deals with this 'elite' question nor facilitates the ability of non-elites to participate in this 'cosmopolitan democracy' across language 'barriers' by either embracing English as a 'lingua franca' or multilingualism.[20]

Mary Kaldor spends more time describing the role of language in the rise of the modern nation-state precisely to argue that it is a temporary phenomenon whose time is dwindling. She writes, "Early nationalists envisaged the construction and spread of a national language, for ease of communication, alongside local and regional dialects. It was only later when the nation was homogenized under the impact of a national language which was stabilized as a result of administrative support that the notion of the nation-state became tied to a notion of national culture and viewed not as a political artefact but as the natural political unit for a historically established national community."[21] But she does not come back to this historical link to detail how communication is going to occur to permit 'cosmopolitan democracy'.

In 2005, Archibugi finally addressed the issue of the 'language of democracy' head on, in a critique of Will Kymlicka's 'vernacular democracy' or liberal version of multiculturalism. Archibugi argues that globalisation has increased the importance of institutions 'outside' the state, as intergovernmental organisations no longer require communication only among small governmental elites, and there are ever more frequent "attempts to make international organisations more transparent and accountable by public opinion". He argues "A direct relationship is gradually being forged between world public opinion and international organisations, and this has exacerbated the problem of linguistic communication".[22] Likewise non-governmental organisations and the "emerging network of global civil society" have to address this "linguistic problem".

In turning to address how different he cosmopolitan perspective is from multiculturalist arguments for group rights, Archibugi states, "Cosmopolitans are less inclined to consider the advantages and disadvantages of the various groups because they implicitly assume that establishing a common language provides advantages to all communities, and they tend to put aside the fact that some communities get a larger share of them."[23] Offering a deliberative version of democracy, Archibugi then insists that "Where an obstacle to participation exists, it is up to democratic politics to seek to remove it. To ask citizens to make an effort to understand each other is not a neutral act [for deliberative democracy]..., and language is just the most evident side of mutual

understanding."[24] This is clearly an advocacy of the use and fostering of English as a global language for cosmopolitan democracy, even though he uses the metaphor of Esperanto. He does note that in many particular circumstances a different languages function as this needed lingua franca, but he is fully aware that in the context of 'cosmopolitanism' i.e. globalisation, he is advocating English. And he neither contemplates Gramsci's concerns nor the empirical research on 'world Englishes' and the questions of prestige that go with them.

His explicitly normative argument is that a 'common language' is necessary in that it exhibits and fosters the commitment of individuals and communities to working with others and the larger community. As Gramsci notes, this is an attempt to create the *consequences* "which as yet lack the necessary conditions" if it is put in this normative framework. He argues that citizens, including 'global citizens' learning a 'common language' which happens to be English, is part of their democratic participation. He writes that democratic politics relies on "the willingness of all players to make an effort to understand each other" and a "willingness to overcome the barriers of mutual understanding, including linguistic ones".[25] Thus, he explicitly states that "linguistic diversity is an obstacle to equality and participation" and invokes Esperanto as a metaphor, but practically this leads to an acceptance of English as the language that can be learned to overcome the 'linguistic barriers' to an effective democracy and then with left over resources promote other languages.[26]

Gramsci's response from 1918 would be to highlight the detrimental impact *to democratic participation* of entire communities experiencing the use of a 'lingua franca' as an 'imposition' for political reasons. Practically, Gramsci and Ascoli argued that southern Italians would not be likely to participate in the new Italian nation and this could be seen in how the language that was to be imposed on them for this purpose, would soon change and adjust to the 'linguistic pressures' from their 'linguistic substratum' i.e. the dialects. This is, of course, assuming that this common language is 'imposed' from above by the state and not an 'international' (to use Gramsci's distinction) move from below. The crucial point, one that I argue Gramsci came to realize sometime between 1918 and 1935, is how does one determine the difference between these two scenarios? From his 1918 perspective, to the extent that English has become a 'global language' spontaneously, due to the 'productive activities' of English speakers (native and non-native), Gramsci would presumably agree with Archibugi. This is where the role of the state, and Gramsci's re-thinking of it, becomes so important.

Before returning to that, we can see this dynamic developing more broadly in discussions of cosmopolitanism. Craig Calhoun notes, in his careful critique of cosmopolitanism, that among many other inequalities that cosmopolitanism seems unable to address, such vast differences in wealth and education, is discrepancies in the "command of the English language". While Archibugi will admit this but hold out the *ideal* of cosmopolitanism in order to address such inequalities, Calhoun's point is that cosmopolitanism reduces such inequalities to personal attributes or achievements as opposed to social and group characteristics.[27] In trying to find the potential contributions in cosmopolitanism, Calhoun writes:

> Cosmopolitan democracy depends on finding ways to relate diverse solidarities to each other rather than trying to overcome them. This is

> surely a matter of robust public communication in which ordinary people can gain more capacity to shape both the societies within which they live and the global forces that shape the options open to them.[28]

But is that 'robust public communication' to be in one common language or many? And if the former, what language and how is it to come about? And if the latter, how is translation going to be practices, who will pay for it, and how will differing prestige in languages be accounted for?

While this is a small point in Calhoun's overall critique (which is aimed not at rejecting cosmopolitanism per se, but bringing it more in line with the 'communitarian' side of the debate), it is a crucial one that seems to me to strike at the heart of the project of cosmopolitan democracy especially to the extent that that 'democracy' is a deliberative one. Here we seem to have a replication of the dynamic of the liberal-communtarian debates in the early 1990s, where various details within the 'middle ground' were being carved out when issues of 'globalisation' and 'multiculturalism' transformed the debate.

Habermas and the Public Sphere: In what language does 'deliberative democracy' deliberate?

Elsewhere, I have addressed the problems of Habermas' 'communicative action' from a Gramscian perspective and his quiet advocacy of the use of English in the European public sphere,[29] so here I want to focus on Nancy Fraser's resent assessment since she explicitly addresses what I call 'the language question' in discussions of 'transnational public spheres' or 'global civil society' – all related to 'cosmopolitanism' even if not explicitly connected to that term. In her most recent attempt to rescue, correct and transform Jűrgen Habermas' theory of the 'public sphere'. She argues that the notion of the 'public sphere' including 'transnational public spheres' and an "emerging 'global public sphere'" requires notions of 'normative legitimacy' and 'political efficacy' and "should correlate with a sovereign power".[30] She criticizes Habermas for assuming a 'Westphalian' frame which included a national *demos*, a national economy, and a national communicative infrastructure. She writes, "Tacitly presupposing a single shared linguistic medium of public communication, Habermas effectively assumed that the public debate was conducted in a national language".[31]

And yet her criticisms are aimed not at rejecting Habermas' critical theory of the public sphere, but to repoliticize it so it is more effective in our 'transnational' post-Westphalian context. But her response to this criticism that Habermas assumed national standardized languages in which public debate is (was?) to take place does not address this question of language. In other words, she has no answer to her own potentially devastating critique concerning language. She writes,

> Insofar as public spheres are monolingual, how can they constitute an inclusive communications community of all those affected? Conversely, insofar as public spheres correspond to linguistic communities that straddle political boundaries and do not correspond to any citizenry, how can they mobilize public opinion as a political force? Likewise, insofar as

> transnational political communities, such as the European Union, are transnational and multilinguistic, how can they constitute public spheres that can encompass the entire *demos*? Finally, insofar as transnational publics conduct their communications in English, which favors global elites and Anglophone post-colonials at the expense of others, how can the opinion they generate be viewed as legitimate?[32]

In effect, I think Fraser has provided a succinct critique of all theories of deliberative democracy that do not take into account the power dynamics inherent in language use, nor the intricacies of state activity in wielding power and resources, structuring equality and legitimacy.

To address these issues, Fraser would have had to take a much more detailed look at the relationship between language, including how it is conceptualized, and political community. I am not saying the Fraser could not have risen to her own challenge, but to do so would probably require some theory of translation, to address whether and how multi-lingual public spheres could (and do) operate, and a more focused notion of the role of the state in structuring such public spheres in order to determine what a 'transnational' public sphere is lacking.

One of the most promising avenue of research along these lines that draws on the history of political theory to highlight the current issues of language politics beyond the nation-state, is that of Peter Kraus. Inserting his analysis in wider debates, Kraus argues that "cultural diversity in Europe is, first and foremost, linguistic diversity" and that the fact that the EU does not have a coherent language policy means that it is not addressing the "logic of recognition" or the "expressive dimension of language". This, he argues, will exacerbate negative tensions within the EU.[33] Kraus adopts a fairly standard distinction between two dimensions within language, the instrumental dimension and the expressive dimension. He looks to Charles Taylor's work, especially on Herder and von Humboldt to explain this second dimension, and then argued that the European Union's incoherent approach to language policy will be insufficient to address the political needs of this expressive dimension of language. This, Kraus argues, requires a "normatively sound balance" between these two dimensions of language.[34]

While much of this analysis follows my own argument, it is flawed in two important ways. First, this metaphor of "balance" and description of these two "dimensions" of language do not allow the crucial political analysis of their inter-relation, to the extent that I would warn against describing these two different approaches to the politics of language as 'dimensions' of a single approach to language. What this, in effect, means is that the actual politics of language is reduced to Charles Taylor's notion of 'recognition' as opposed to the appropriate material institutions and circumstances that allow political struggles within language not to be framed as to unfairly benefit those speakers of the dominant language(s).[35] Secondly, by adopting the "line of reasoning running from Herder and Humboldt to Taylor" focusing on "recognition" and "authenticity," Kraus, wittingly or not, adopts a form of nationalism that is not only problematic in under estimating the diversity of language use within 'standardized' languages, it leaves any discussion of our current 'global English' situation stuck in the liberal-communitarian debates of the 1980s.

Other Approaches to the Politics of 'Global English'

None of the approaches to the 'global' language issues that I have addressed, including Gramsci's, provide a clear indication of the role of various states in all these processes. It is worth noting that much of the literature specifically on 'global English' is more explicit in downplaying any role that state activity has empirically played in spreading English.

Many scholars, including Crystal, seem to explain away, or de-emphasize, 'state activity' in relation to the spread of English. An extreme case is Abram De Swaan who argues that English is now *the* 'hypercentral' language because of "the mostly unintended outcome of expectations held and decisions made accordingly by hundreds of millions of people across the globe".[36] Crystal notes the historical role of the British Empire and the economic and military strength of the US in creating the context for 'global English' but he too emphasizes the more 'spontaneous' and arbitrariness of factors that came together to set the conditions for the massive growth of English users from the 1950s onwards. The sociolinguist, Janina Brutt-Griffler makes an even broader argument that "political terminology" such as "imposition", "dominance", "subordination", and "hegemony" are metaphors that are not "particularly apt from a linguistic standpoint" and that political scientists should leave debates about 'world English' to the field of applied linguistics.[37]

The media, not surprisingly, seems to follow these assumptions that the 'spread of English' is a-political and does not involve 'state activity' per se. Christof Demont-Heinrich has recently conducted a detailed discourse analysis of five US newspapers illustrating how English is constructed as a "unstoppable juggernaut" most often associated with assumptions that this was generally 'progress', showed the cultural and social superiority of the US and England and was some sort of populist outcome. [38]

And yet, when one looks for an alternative framework of analysis, it is difficult to find perspectives that focus on state activity and language policy connected to globalisation. It is certainly there in the historical literature on nationalism and the rise of the modern nation-state. Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* is cited widely and often due to one of its key arguments connecting the modern notion of the nation with the rise of vernacular languages, language standardization and 'print capitalism'. Scholars such as Eric Hobsbawm, and many others have noted this connection,[39] but this connection between language and nation (albeit problematic, always more of a 'model' than a reality) is not adequately confronted in discussions of the demise of the nation-state, the new 'transnational' or 'cosmopolitan' era in which we supposedly live.

Marxist Debates on the State and Globalisation

Within Marxist and historical materialist approaches this *could* be explained by a more wide spread tacit acceptance of Perry Anderson's contentions that language structures change relatively slowly over time compared to other social institutions such as economies, religions and political structures; that language is different from other social structures since "words" are free to produce and can be manipulated at will, and that speech is "axiomatically *individual*".[40] I have criticized these assumptions at length elsewhere,[41] and here just want to flag that there are various explanations for why

language politics and standardisation can be recognized as central to nation-state formation but absent in debates concerning the demise or transformation of the nation-state due to globalisation.

It is relatively difficult to trace an absence, but to take one example, if we look at the collection of essays entitled, *Historical Materialism and Globalization* aimed at taking stock of the diverse perspectives offered within the tradition of historical materialism for addressing questions of globalisation. Only one of its fourteen chapters addresses language at all. M. Scott Solomon and Mark Ruperts' contribution uses the example of the UNITE campaign to organise an independent union in a clothing factory in Quebec. Even though the company itself, Peerless, was not an international corporation, its workforce was from around the world and spoke many different languages. The campaign was successful partially because trade unionists and activists from Bangladesh, Guatemala, Vietnam, Sri Lanka and the Philippines were involved.[42] This admission of the realities of global capitalism and what it takes to resist it, does not however, get us too far in asking how do the instrumental notions of language as a medium of communication relate to the expressive or symbolic dimensions of language as a medium of solidarity and political belonging or ideology and class or political consciousness.

But scholars such as Kees van der Pijl seem to show a much deeper understanding of language much more in line with a Marxist historical materialist approach than that of Perry Anderson. Thus, in his discussion of class formation, he notes that as a means of communication it is replete with structures of authority, a terrain of struggle and that different languages and systems of meaning "codify implicit structures of authority and orders of stratification, prefiguring class relations".[43] But while he is attentive to the linguistic dimension, for example, of the interwar period where the dream of British supremacy could be transmuted onto 'English-speaking peoples',[44] in analyzing the actual formation of 'transnational' classes, the role of 'global English' and tensions it now faces is unclear.

This seems to me the most promising literature for various reasons, one is that its use of Gramsci means that it is asking similar questions for similar purposes as I am here. However, we still need to consider a growing dimension of the more liberal, mainstream approaches precisely because the language issues at the heart of their arguments are finally being brought out for explicit debate and discussion.

Nation-State Activity Fostering the Use of English

Despite the academic literature dealing with 'globalisation' and the 'state' not addressing it, and the more specific literature on 'global English' downplaying any role that the 'state' has in fostering the continued massive growth in number of English users, there is at least anecdotal evidence that the most powerful nation-states are still very active in this process.

On 18th of May, 2006, the US Senate designated English as the 'national language' of the United States, over 200 years after the founding of the US, at a moment when English is trumpeted as "the world's language". Why, at this moment in history, did the US Senate find this declaration to be necessary?[45] It is clearly a process that

started in the US in the 1980s, where since 1984, 24 US states have proclaimed English as their official language. Prior to 1984 only 3 had. As most of the coverage of this event noted, it is part and parcel of the immigration debate occurring in the US. But it should not be seen as purely a domestic issue, or a US issue.

A powerful state using its resources to 'force' people, or at least 'encourage' them, to learn English is far from unique to the US. In this country, in December 2006, Tony Blair stated, "It is a matter both of social cohesion and of justice that we should set the use of English as a condition of citizenship" and he proposed that permanent residents in the UK be subject to an English test. In September, 2007, Hazel Blears, (the communities secretary), announced a shift away from funding for translation and towards more English teaching to boost what is called 'social integration and cohesion' and to confront what we are told is an unprecedented 'wave' of immigration.[46] The citizenship test introduced in 2005 requires that applicants either demonstrate a working knowledge of English or complete a lengthy language and citizenship course.[47] This seems to me to highlight the role of the state in trying to enforce the use of English in its construction of citizenship, and 'cohesion' or 'social integration' while at the same time trying to control migration for economic purposes. While it is beyond the scope of this paper, this whole shift in discourse from 'multiculturalism' to 'social cohesion' and 'social integration' of immigrant communities could be easily read in light of Gramsci's notion of 'passive revolution'.

Of course, perhaps even more substantial than anglophone nation-states using their power to foster the 'spread' of English, non-anglophone nations especially China, but also throughout Europe and Asia have been increasing the role of English learning in their national education curricula.[48]

From Gramsci's position in 1918, these policies would be deemed both practically un-successful unless accompanied by a truly non-elitist, *internationalism,* and politically problematic. Most of the current academic literature surveyed here just lets such developments go unnoticed. Moreover, questions about the impact of 'English' being defined by 'non-native' speakers is also not brought to the fore. What is being ignored here is Gramsci's general point that he made in his last Prison Notebook:

> Every time the question of language surfaces, in one way or another, it means that a series of other problems are coming to the fore: ... the need to establish more intimate and secure relationships between the governing groups and the national-popular mass, in other words to recognize cultural hegemony. (Q29§3).

Gramsci's Later Approach to Language Politics

By 1935, when Gramsci comes back to many of these themes in the 29th Notebook, a lot has changed. I will not go into how this is related to his experiences with the Factory Councils through his time in Russia and his imprisonment, let alone all that should be said about the earlier Notebooks. Suffice it to say, that he had written a lot

about ‘spontaneity’ – including spontaneous philosophy as ‘common sense’. In those contexts, he noted that ‘philosophy in general’ does not exist, that spontaneity is the loss of conscious leadership, etc… he has also investigated the concept of ‘immanence’ in Kant not to mention criticized the Fascist Education Act of 1923 in part because it eliminated the teaching of grammar.

He brings all of this to bear in the 29th Notebook where he develops two central concepts; spontaneous or immanent grammar and normative grammar. He does this in order to argue, contrary to his 1918 position, that,

> … it is rational to collaborate practically and willingly to welcome everything that may serve to create a common national language, the non-existence of which creates friction particularly in the popular masses among whom local particularisms and phenomena of a narrow and provincial psychology are more tenacious than is believed.[49]

Note the active position of creating a ‘national language’ which is direct contrast from his earlier position. He is still critical of Manzoni and the *way* in which a national language was imposed and was still being imposed in Italy and he was equally scathing in his distain for ‘fanatical advocates’ of Esperanto. Also note that he infers that a ‘common national language’ still does not exist in Italy in 1935, a *truly popular* common language, that is.

In comparison with his 1918 article, he understood much more clearly how the state and institutions of civil society played active roles in directing the course of language change. In Sect. 3, still drawing heavily from his professor of linguistics, Matteo Bartoli, but this time, with much greater resonance with his many well known arguments in the Notebooks about the importance of education, journalism and intellectuals, theatre and literature, as well as the ‘national popular collective will’, in a word, civil society – he sketches out the institutions that are the foci from which linguistic innovations radiate; 1) the school, 2) the newspapers 3) artistic and popular writers, 4) theatre and films, radio etc…. As I noted above, some of these issues are raised within discussions of ‘global English’ and ‘cosmopolitan democracy’ but they are not organised into a specific framework that allows us to investigate the power relationships involved.

Here it would be an obvious misunderstanding to think that Gramsci concurred with his 1918 point that language change occurs secondarily to these changes in the contacts among productive peoples but he explicitly calls on not only the understanding of this change, as he does in 1918, but the explicit ‘intervention’ to actively encourage specific types of linguistic change which I have elsewhere investigated as the brining together of different languages (and what he calls their ‘spontaneous grammars’, the productive, non-parthenogenetic growth of a common language[50] as opposed to the imposition of a common language based on a single imposed standard, what Gramsci called a normative grammar.

Spontaneous and Normative Grammar

Gramsci's development of the two concepts, normative grammar and spontaneous or immanent grammar enable him to theorize the interaction between what I have noted are often separated as distinct dimensions of language, the instrumental (or communicative) and the expressive or symbolic. This is the key dynamic which enables Gramsci's framework for an analysis of the political implications of 'global English'. It does not reveal a single reaction, for or against 'global English' but rather enables a framework for analysing the role of institutions of both the state and civil society, and their tight inter-relations, as well as showing the power dynamics in language standardization and usage that permit the communication which the theories of 'cosmopolitanism' are premised on (and which obscure the power imbalances that may make their projects consistently inoperable).

After rejecting Benedetto Croce's narrow definition of 'grammar',Gramsci asks "How many forms of grammar can there be?" He answers that there are two basic forms, those that are 'spontaneous' or 'immanent' (what he also calls 'historical grammar') and operate more or less unconsciously, "by which one speaks 'according to grammar' without knowing it".[51] And there is 'normative grammar' which is the conscious normative structure of rules that dictate how a language should be used. This is often, but not always, written, and one of the primary resources for teaching language. Gramsci expands this traditional notion of 'normative grammar' by defining it as being made up of "reciprocal monitoring, reciprocal teaching and reciprocal 'censorship' expressed in such questions as 'What did you say?', 'What do you mean?', 'Make yourself clearer,' etc. and in mimicry and teasing. This whole complex of actions and reactions come together to create a grammatical conformism, to establish 'norms' or judgments of correctness and incorrectness". Note here how these questions all revolve around communication, i.e. language use fulfilling its function as being a medium for two or more people to understand each other. Yes, this is the very form of the 'normative' imposition. And the question of who it is that gets to ask these questions, that gets to decide if communication has taken place, is the question of who has power and the extent of that power. This is not a process that can be divided into two separable dimensions, one for basic communication and another for symbolic or expressive purposes.

It almost seems as if Gramsci sets up a dichotomy between 'free' and 'spontaneous' grammar that is separate from power relations and those 'normative' grammars that are the vehicle for coercion and dominant ideologies and cultures being imposed on subaltern or oppressed classes. This would fit his critique of Manzoni and Esperanto and may lead to a simplistic rejection of 'global English' in all circumstances. However, Gramsci understands 'spontaneous' and 'normative' grammars to be in a dialectical relationship. Thus, he argues, "One could sketch a picture of the 'normative grammar' that operates spontaneously in every given society, in that this society tends to become unified both territorially and culturally, in other words it has a governing class whose function is recognized and followed."[52] The supposed 'spontaneity' or unconsciousness of a grammar does not free it from unequal power relations nor make it a 'natural' expression of one's being as opposed to the artificial, imposition of a 'normative' grammar that originates from the ruling class.

Quite to the contrary, in various contexts Gramsci regards 'spontaneity' as being the result not of 'free choice' but of the fragmentary, incoherent and ultimately subjugated nature of subaltern conditions. "In the 'most spontaneous' movement it is simply the case that the element of 'conscious leadership' cannot be checked, have left no reliable document. It may be said that spontaneity is therefore characteristic of the 'history of the subaltern classes', and indeed of their most marginal and peripheral elements; these have not achieved any consciousness of the class 'for itself'".[53] 'Spontaneity' for Gramsci, is not a positive characteristic associated with the ability or capacity to choose for oneself or do what one wishes or decides is best for them. Rather, it is connected with the fragmentary and episodic character of the history of subaltern social groups.[54] Gramsci's advocacy for a 'normative grammar' for Italy is clearly related to his point that "In acquiring one's conception of the world one always belongs to a particular grouping which is that of all the social elements which share the same mode of thinking and acting... When one's conception of the world is not critical and coherent but disjointed and episodic, one belongs simultaneously to a multiplicity of mass human groups." [55]

Here Gramsci is not referring to what we today might call 'diversity', cultural or social, but rather the situation of subaltern groups with "two conceptions of the world, one affirmed in words and the other displayed by effective action..."[56] which entrenches their subordination since the linguistic conception of the world "is not its own but is borrowed from another group" which is why philosophy becomes divorced from politics[57] allowing 'traditional' intellectuals to present themselves as above politics[58] and why hold "the widespread prejudice that philosophy is a strange and difficult thing just because it is the specific intellectual activity of a particular category of specialists.[59]

I have argued elsewhere that this is a central dynamic of 'hegemony' explaining how 'consent' is constructed in such a manner that does not define it as the opposite of, or the lack of, coercion, but rather the relation or structuring of coercion and consent.[60] Gramsci's development of a dialectical relationship between 'spontaneous grammars' and 'normative grammars' explains why both the imposition of a language, and its concomitant worldview, works to further entrench inequalities and oppression. Language is not neutral, it is not merely a tool to move ideas from one head to another, but rather is connected to a understanding of the world and the role of speakers within it. Thus, it is futile to hope, as the proponents of 'global English' do, that a hegemony of Florentine in Italy, or the spread of British or American English in the world, could actually act as a vehicle to include subaltern social groups in power structures and democratic processes. In many cases, the very circumstances that provide the incentives for people to 'freely' choose to learn English (economic prospects, political influence, cultural prestige) are the conditions for fragmented, disjointed and episodic 'common sense' where the imposed language, values and concepts will not adequately describe, organize or help them control their daily lives. Learning English may be technically a 'free choice' but it can in fact just further entrench cultural, psychological, economic and political imperialism.

That people may 'freely choose' to devote time and resources to learn English, and not other languages, in a manner that privileges the 'standard' English of so-called native speakers, is a step away from the creation of critical consciousness. Gramsci argues that "The starting-point of critical elaboration in the consciousness of what one really is, and is 'knowing thy-self' as a product of the historical process to date which has

deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory. Now is necessary to make initially such an inventory".[61] The 'imposition' or supposed 'choice' to learn any dominant language is detrimental to subaltern groups to the extent that it further submerges this starting point of critical consciousness making any such inventory that much more difficult. Thus, it is not the learning of English that is so problematic per se, but rather the very circumstances that lead people to make this so-called choice and the psychological, social and cultural fragmentation that it fosters.

Towards a Conclusion

This paper has not presented a Gramscian analysis of 'global English' or language politics in the age of global capitalism. As a preliminary move in any such project, it has tried to make the case for a need to return once again to Gramsci's writings in order to address current issues. In the realisation that an exhaustive literature review on the politics of global English could be mammoth and not necessarily fruitful, I have tried to insert the types of questions Gramsci raises and the development of his own arguments into those debates that seem most pertinent to a political analysis of 'global English'. Where my previous work has focused on Gramsci's writings on language primarily as an interpretive tool for understanding Gramsci and analysing his positions relative to other political theorists, this work is an attempt to lay the groundwork for using Gramsci's approach for a more in-depth analysis of our current *questione della lingua.*

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[1] By 'global English' I mean the use of English across the globe (although very unevenly in terms of geography, economic class and social groupings). Especially important in the concept is the use of English in many aspects of life by speakers for whom it is not a first language (see David Crystal, *English as a Global Language*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997 among others). For these reasons, I prefer 'global English' to 'English as an international language' or 'English as a lingua franca'. 'Global English' also carries resonances of issues often discussed under the label 'globalisation' more than 'World English', however, the significant literature on World Englishes is important here.

[2] E.g. David McNally, *Bodies of Meaning* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000), see my review,"Three Interventions on Cultural Difference, Language, Theory and Progressive Politics: A Review Essay," *Studies in Political Economy* (Summer) 2002, pp. 107-129; Jean-Jacques Lecercle, *A Marxist Philosophy of Language*, trans. Gregory Elliott (Leiden: Brill, 2006), see my review forthcoming in *Capital & Class.* One notable exception is Marnie Holborow, *The Politics of English* (London: Sage, 1999).

[3] Antonio Gramsci, "La Lingua Unica e l'Esperanto" in *La Città Futtura, 1917-1918*, Sergio Caprioglio, ed. (Turin: Einaudi, 1982), pp.671-4. Translation used, Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Cultural Writings*, David Forgacs and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, eds., William Boelhower, trans. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), p.27, hereafter, SCW.

[4] See Peter Ives, *Language and Hegemony in Gramsci* (London: Pluto, 2004) pp.102-6. However, Gramsci's conception of 'passive revolution' as developed in the notebooks is part of a more adequate framework that pays greater attention to the role of the state and the use of power within language, as will be argued below. Thus, while I am greatly indebted to the work of Franco Lo Piparo, part of the argument here is to emphasize the change and development of Gramsci's thinking especially considering the role of the state and power dynamics. For a more explicit discussion see my "Cosmopolitan Anxieties and the Role of the State in Linguistic Hegemony" presented at the 3rd International Gramsci Society Conference, Ghilarza, Sardinia, 5 May, 2007; http://www.gramscitalia.it/html/ives.pdf.

[5] Gramsci's distinction is different than that articulated by Daniele Archibugi, where international democracy denotes two *levels* of representation and cosmopolitan democracy denotes a simultaneous "dual function" for citizens to be engaged. Daniele Archibugi, "Cosmopolitics" *New Left Review* 13, p.31. (Jan.-Feb.) 2002. Gramsci here is not following the original definition of 'international' coined by Jeremy

Bentham, but highlighting the democratic issue of the connections among the vast majority of society as opposed to just the minority of the elites.
[6] David Crystal, *English as a Global Language* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp..5, 25, for more details see chapter 2.
[7] David Graddol, *English Next* (London: British Council, 2006), p.14.
[8] Crystal, pp.53-63.
[9] Crystal, p.7.
[10] See my *Language and Hegemony in Gramsci*, pp.36-7.
[11] See Braj Kachru, *Asian Englishes: Beyond the Canon* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004).
[12] Barbara Seidlhofer and Jennifer Jenkins, "English as a Lingua Franca and the Politics of Property," in C. Mair, ed., *The Politics of English as a World Language* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), pp.139-54, here p. 141.
[13] Interestingly enough, this idea is potentially a grave danger to the English teaching language industry since it would remove the advantage of England, the US and other English-speaking countries in providing these services, and perhaps even turn them into a disadvantage. David Graddol's *English Next*, commissioned by the British Council, is a clarion call concerning this issue.
[14] Gramsci, "A Single Language..." p.28.
[15] Gramsci, "A Single Language..." p.30.
[16] Philippe van Parijs, "Europe's Linguistic Challenge" *European Journal of Sociology* 45, 1, (2004), pp.113-45. Van Parijs' argues that it is possible to overcome such injustices in face of the vast advantages and necessity of a single 'common language'. I have criticized his analysis in "'Global English': Linguistic Imperialism or Practical Lingua Franca?" *Studies in Language and Capitalism* 1 (2006), pp.121-41.
[17] It is beyond the scope of this paper, but to the extent that translation is an issue, Gramsci's discussion of it could be useful. It also would then involve his discussion of the functions of intellectuals. See my, *Gramsci's Politics of Language,* chapter 3, and my co-edited volume with Rocco Lacorte, *Gramsci, Language and Translation* (Lexington Press, forthcoming 2008).
[18] As I will note below, Gramsci was <u>not</u> opposed to a 'common language' on the contrary, by 1935, he was a strong advocate of a <u>truly</u> common Italian, but he emphasized the process by which that language was to be formed, learned and used.
[19] See below.
[20] David Held, "Democracy and Globalization" in *Re-imagining Political Community: Studies in Cosmopolitan Democracy*, Daniele Archibugi, David Held, and Martin Kőhler, eds. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998),pp.11-27, p.18.
[21] Mary Kaldor, "European Institutions, Nation-States and Nationalism" in Daniele Archibugi & David Held, eds., *Cosmopolitan Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), pp.68-9.
[22] Daniele Archibugi, "The Language of Democracy: Vernacular or Espernto? A Comparison between the Multiculturalist and Cosmopolitan Perspectives," *Political Studies* 53, (2005), pp.537-55, p.541.
[23] Archibugi, "The Language of Democracy", p.543. Van Parijs addresses this by attempting to even out the costs for this 'collective' good of the common language.
[24] Archibugi, "The Language of Democracy," p.546.
[25] Archibugi, "The Language of Democracy", p.537.
[26] Archibugi, "The Language of Democracy", pp.549, 553.
[27] Craig Calhoun, "Social Solidarity as a Problem for Cosmopolitan Democracy" in Seyla Benhabib, Ian Shapiro and Danilo Petranović, eds., *Identities, Affiliations, and Allegiances* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp.385-303; here p.301.
[28] Craig Calhoun, "The Class Consciousness of Frequent Travelers" *South Atlantic Quarterly* 101: 4 (Fall 2002), p.893.
[29] See Chapter 4 of my *Gramsci's Politics of Language* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), esp. pp. 162-70; and "Language, Representation and Suprastate Democracy: The Case of the European Union," in David Laycock, ed., *Representation and Political Theory* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), pp.23-47.
[30] Nancy Fraser, "Transnationalizing the Public Sphere" in Seyla Benhabib, Ian Shapiro and Danilo Petranović, eds., *Identities, Affiliations, and Allegiances* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp.45-66, here p.45.
[31] Fraser, p.48.
[32] Fraser, p.59.

[33] Peter A. Kraus, "Intercultural Recognition and Linguistic Diversity in Europe," in *The Language Question in Europe and Diverse Societies,* Dario Castiglione and Chris Longman, eds. (Portland, Oregon: Hart Publ., 2007), pp.61-80, 61.
[34] Kraus, "Intercultural Recognition and Linguistic Diversity in Europe," p.68 and 75.
[35] For an excellent critique of Taylor's notion of recognition see Himani Bannerji, *The Dark Side of the Nation* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 2000).
[36] De Swaan, 2001: 141-2.
[37] Brutt-Griffler, 10.
[38] Christof Demont-Heinrich, "The Ideological Construction of the Juggernaut of English", *Studies in Language and Capitalism* 2, (2007), pp.119-44.
[39] E.g. Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution, 1789-1848* (London: Vintage, 1996), p.135-7.
[40] Perry Anderson, *In the Tracks of Historical Materialism* (London: Verso, 1983), p.44. It should be noted that these contentions were made in his polemic against structuralism and post-structuralism and thus, were perhaps hasty when thinking more broadly.
[41] Peter Ives, *Gramsci's Politics of Language: Engaging the Bakhtin Circle and the Frankfurt School* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), pp.6, 34, 177.
[42] M. Scott Solomon and Mark Rupert, "Historical Materialism, Ideology, and the Politics of Globalizing Capitalism," in Mark Rupert and Hazel Smith, eds., *Historical Materialism and Globalization* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp.284-300, p. 296-7.
[43] Kees van der Pijl, *Transnational Classes and International Relations* (London: Routledge, 1998), p.33.
[44] van der Pijl, p.73.
[45] The Senate debated amendments, but ultimately rejected them, which declared English as the 'official language' of the United States.
[46] As an editorial in *The Independent* (11 Sept., 2007, p.28) noted, we now have a contradictory situation where non-EU immigrants are forced to sit English exams not required of immigrants from the EU, regardless of the individuals' language abilities.
[47] See Anne Phillips, *Multiculturalism Without Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), p.6.
[48] Most of the research on this topic comes from education studies that is based on both national specialization and aspects of pedagogical technique and I have yet to find the type of broad based summaries or comparison (both transnational and historical) that would allow a more thorough understanding of these trends. This absence in itself seems to indicate a notable lacuna that the plethora of literature on 'globalisation' is avoiding a key linguistic dimension. Although, it is perhaps not an excuse for my overly anecdotal presentation here.
[49] Q29§2, SCW, 182.
[50] See my *Gramsci's Politics of Language*, pp.54-55 and 93-95.
[51] Q29§2, SCW 180.
[52] Q29§2, SCW 181.
[53] Q3§48, SPN p.196
[54] Q25§2, SPN p.54.
[55] Q11§12, SPN p.324.
[56] Q11§12, SPN p.326.
[57] Q11§12, SPN p.327.
[58] Q12§1, SPN pp.7-8.
[59] Q11§12, SPN p.323.
[60] Ives, *Gramsci's Politics of Language,* pp. 38-52.
[61] Q11§12, SPN p.324. The last sentence was inexplicably left out of the English translation.