Decolonizing English:

Reimagining English Language Learning and Teaching through

Critical Pedagogies

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Decolonizing English:

Reimagining English Language Learning and Teaching through

Critical Pedagogies

-OR-

The Empire of English and Its Discontents:

The Extension of English to Bhutan, Its Impact on Local Languages and

Identities, and the Possibility of Resistance

-OR-

Imperialist Language and Resistant Voice:

A Tale of a Japanese Living in English

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INTRODUCTION

English for All?: Historic Expansion of the English around the Globe

      If you are reading this thesis, you are one of roughly *one billion five hundred million* people who have learned English around the globe. You might have grown up speaking it at home and thus you speak English as a Native Language (ENL); or you might have learned English as a Second Language (ESL) at a later age upon immigration; or you might have learned English as a Foreign Language (EFL) as a school subject or for business or study abroad; or you might have been additionally in one of those ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) programs and labeled as an English Language Learner (ELL); or perhaps you have been in an English for Multilingual Speakers class. As an international student from Japan, I have experienced all of the above except for ENL, and I have taken the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) to name but a few.

      Let me give you some statistics. English has gained an official or special status in at least seventy-five countries around the world, and the most-widely-taught foreign language in over 100 countries. It is a first language for an estimated 400 million people and a second language for another estimated 430 million people, while an additional 750 million people are estimated to speak it as

a foreign language. In addition, it is estimated that over one *billion* people were learning English in the early 2000s. These statistics suggest that about a quarter of the world's population—1.5 billion people in the early 2000s—was already fluent or competent in English, and this figure is steadily growing (Crystal, 2003). According to British Council, around 700,000 people go to learn English in the UK every year and there are 130,000 students learning English at any one time in British Council teaching centers, which are scattered in 49 countries ("Frequently Asked Questions"). To put it in a perspective, there were an estimated 115 million learners at school level in the early 1970s, and in the wake of the disintegration of communist states, an estimated 100,000 new teachers of English were needed for 30 million learners in Central Eastern Europe alone in the 1990s (Phillipson, 1992, p. 6). The demand for native English speakers as English teachers also grew as the number of learners increased; about 250,000 native English speakers work as English teachers abroad in more than 40,000 schools and language institutes around the world (many of which do not require teaching experience or certification; you have only to be a native speaker of English and perhaps a college graduate). Furthermore, because nearly half of all English teachers abroad will leave their positions and return to their home countries each year, more than 100,000 positions for English teachers abroad open each year (International TEFL Academy, 2012).

The author of *Linguistic Imperialism*, Robert Phillipson comments that, "the spread of English is unique, both in terms of its geographical reach and as

regards the depth of its penetration" (1992, p. 6). Today, English is not only the most widely studied foreign language among all languages in the world, but also has a dominant position in science and technology (medicine, research, computers, software), economy (transnational business, trade, shipping, aviation), politics (international organization, diplomacy), education (education systems, research institutions, higher education), journalism (periodicals, books, news agencies), and media and culture (mass media, entertainment, youth culture, sport). "This non-exhaustive list of the domains in which English has a dominant, though not of course exclusive, place is indicative of the functional load carried by English" (p. 6). According to Troike (1977), "English is the first language in the modern period to have achieved a truly international, or supranational, status" (p. 2).

We may wonder how English has come to gain such popularity. The U.S. linguist Braj Kachru suggested that we think of the spread of English around the world in terms of "three concentric circles" (Figure 1), representing the types of spread, the patterns of acquisition, and the functional allocation (Kachru, 1992).
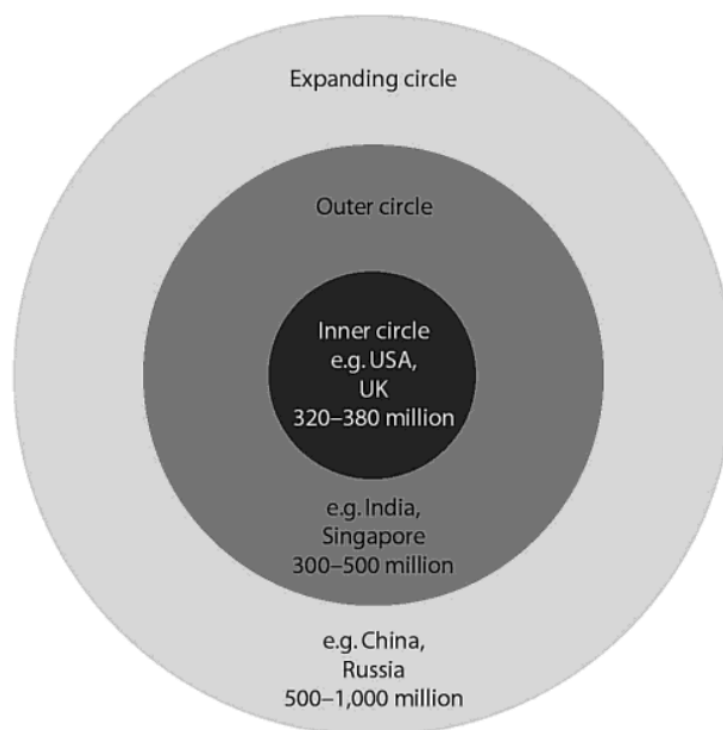
Figure 1. Kachru's model of three circles of English with estimated numbers of speakers in each circle as of 2000 (Crystal, 2003)

The Inner Circle refers to the "traditional cultural and linguistic bases of English" (Kachru, 1992, p. 356) and consists of regions where English is the native tongue, such as the UK and the USA. This is where English language norms are developed, and therefore called "norm-providing." The Outer (or Extended) Circle consists of Asian and African regions where English was introduced through the colonization by Great Britain, such as India and Kenya, and where English is not the native tongue but serves as a lingua franca and often as an official language. In other words, the language plays an important "second language" role in a multilingual setting. This is where local varieties of English

(creoles) are created, and therefore called "norm-developing." The Outer Circle includes over fifty territories. Lastly, the Expanding (or Extending) Circle consists of countries where English plays no historical or governmental role, but where it is widely used as a medium of international communication nonetheless. This includes much of the rest of the world's population, including Europe, East Asia, and Latin America, and as the name suggests, it is steadily increasing. This Circle relies on the standards set by native speakers in the Inner Circle, and thus called "norm-dependent." Crystal (2003) notes that the term "expanding" reflects the situation in the 1980s when this model was originally proposed; an "expanded" circle may better reflect the contemporary status as English is recognized virtually everywhere in the world (p. 60).

What this model does not provide are the various "forces" which have "propelled English forward" in this way (Phillipson, 1992, p. 6). English did not spread around the entire world by chance; rather, English was promoted with clear *intentions* and active involvement of various agencies including the British and U.S. government, as we shall see in more detail in Chapter 2. Another U.S. linguist, Rudolph Troike (1977) summarizes the historic expansion of English since the seventeenth century to the 1970s in the following way:

> From a minor language in 1600, English has in less than four centuries come to be the leading language of international communication in the world today. This remarkable development is ultimately the result of 17th, 18th, and 19th century British successes in conquest, colonization, and trade, but it was enormously accelerated by the emergence of the United States as the major military world power and technological leader in the aftermath of World War II. The process was also greatly abetted by the expenditure of large amounts of government and private foundation funds

in the period 1950-1970, perhaps the most ever spent in history in support of the propagation of a language. (p. 2)

Although the previous quote implies an imperialist ideological dimension of the spread of English, this language has been marketed with a "purportedly neutral, tool-like image" (Phillipson, 1992, p. 10). That is, English acquisition is often equated with acquiring a *tool*, and its process devoid of political connotation. Its economic advantage or necessity has become *commonsensical*. As Phillipson observes, theories on language (acquisition and teaching) have been "isolated from the social sciences for too long" (p. 2), and the connections between the English language and political, economic, and military power are rarely investigated in language pedagogy, which tends to focus on what goes on in the classroom, and related organizational and methodological matters (p. 8). Once English has won a status as an "international language," this explanation is sufficient for many of us to pursue English language learning or teaching. In other words, "the inevitability of the continued expansion of English has been taken for granted" (Troike, 1977, p. 2).

"*Ima-no jidai, eigo kurai dekiru yoni naranai-to*" (One must know English in this age. Literally, "I/You/We/They have to know things like English in this age.") is a common phrase I'd hear in Japan, and a person who's "*eigo ga dekiru*" (fluent in English or literally "can do English") is a synonym for favorable qualities such as "international," "global," "able," "smart," and "competitive." While many assert, advocate, and even insist on the importance of English in today's globalized society, the status of English as an international language and

its rapid expansion—as well as the increasing marginalization of other

languages[1]—in the last half-century go largely unquestioned.

I am one of millions of people around the world today who have (bought

into the "promises" of English and) learned to speak English as their second

language. As a Japanese raised in a monolingual Japanese community, English

had been very foreign to me—the most familiar of all foreign languages, but

foreign nonetheless. I started to study (American "Standard") English in the

seventh grade as a compulsory subject in the curriculum. I was relatively quick to

pick up the language, and since then I have been an ardent English language

learner, having spent my entire six years of junior high and high school with a

single-minded goal of "becoming like a native speaker." Anything that was

written in English, I read. Anything that was spoken in English, I listened to. I

practiced speaking with native speakers who were Assistant Language Teachers at

our school, and I kept a diary in English to practice writing. "You speak English

well" was the single most satisfying compliment that I could win.

I was fascinated by the sound and image of English and what this

language had to offer. Nobody forced me to study English as hard as I did.

English was a mandatory subject, but my enthusiasm for the language was not

something that could be mandated. The benefits of studying English as they were

endorsed by my teachers and portrayed by the media, or the simple status that

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[1] According to The Hans Rausing Endangered Languages Project, there are about 6,500 living languages today and *half* of those are under threat of extinction within 50 to 100 years (as cited in Everett, 2008). BBC (2010) reports that every year the world loses around 25 mother tongues, which equates to losing 250 languages over a decade.

English had won in Japanese society, coupled with my love for learning languages, were good enough reasons for me to pursue English study.

Not only did I learn English, but I have frequently found myself in a position to advocate (the importance of) English, sometimes as an English teacher, sometimes as an academic advisor, other times as an intern at a study abroad agency, or simply as a *"sekai-ni habataku idai-naru senpai"* (a great alumna who's internationally active) giving advice to current high school students on how to study English and narrating my own path how I came to the United States.

Certainly, being an English learner—and later, an English teacher—has brought me numerous benefits and opportunities that I probably would not have had otherwise. Being selected to go to Canada on a government-sponsored high school student exchange program was one of them. Being praised and admired by fellow Japanese for the simple act of speaking English may be another one. Having a high score in an English proficiency exam enabled me to obtain a job as an English instructor as a high school graduate before going to college. Knowing English allowed me to travel to many parts of the world and to communicate with local people even without knowing the local language and afforded me opportunities to teach English there. If it were not for English, I would not have come to this prestigious institution in the United States to pursue higher education.

Now that I see what English has allowed me to *do*, where it has enabled me to *go*, with whom it has allowed me to have communication, and to what kind of information it has given me access, there is really no doubt that English has shaped my life in a certain direction, shaped my values, and ultimately shaped who I am. Only after achieving a certain level of fluency, and ceasing to blindly strive to "become like a native speaker," was I able to see the path that I had followed. Learning English has never been a simple path for me; the experience has never been akin to having a "tool" that I can pick up and drop to my convenience as others claimed. Learning English has been very much a transformative endeavor, as learning a language has to do with learning a new culture—a set of values, meanings, and practices—which have become an inseparable, inalienable part of me during the process. It is important to note here that in Japan, English was associated strongly with the United States and its popular culture, or at least that was my experience as I learned the language. Simply put, I had adopted an alien culture that I would later experience as in conflict with my linguistic and cultural identity as a Japanese. Moreover, as an English teacher, I came to question the ethics of English Language Teaching (ELT) and think critically about the responsibility as an educator.

This past summer, I was given an opportunity to travel to Bhutan through Mount Holyoke College's International Internship Program. I spent three months in this small Himalayan country, interning at an educational NGO and developing literacy programs for children and adult women at its community library and

resource centers. This organization is a part of an international NGO, which currently works in three countries in South Asia. The Bhutan office was established in 2008 as an independent organization staffed exclusively by Bhutanese, providing resources in areas such as literacy, women's empowerment, and ICT (Information and Communications Technology). Bhutan has one of the lowest literacy rates in Asia (41% can't read), and this NGO tries to provide empowering educational resources and programs through its community centers established in the capital and several rural villages.

I was thrilled to get this internship—this was going to be a great opportunity to put teaching philosophy into practice and experiment with the critical pedagogy approach. At the same time, I doubted my own position and questioned the ethics of a foreigner going to a so-called "developing" country to teach English. Furthermore, I was unsure of the approach this organization was taking toward ELT—even though it is all Bhutanese-staffed, it is still a foreign-funded NGO with its headquarters in the United States. I worried that they might be taking what Kachru (1985) describes as "evangelical and rather ethnocentric approaches" (as cited in Phillipson, 1992, p. 13)

Throughout the summer I had internal and external conflicts with the host organization. Such conflicts both complicated and enriched my understanding about ELT and the role of NGO in promoting English education. In addition, an exposure to Bhutanese society (including their language policies and politics) afforded me a great learning experience that both inspired and informed

empirically much of this project. Bhutan is a very interesting location to study the impact of the expansion of English for the significant role this language plays in Bhutanese society despite its relatively recent introduction, and the tension that has arisen between the international, national, and local languages in the country.

In Kachru's model that I presented earlier, Bhutan situates itself somewhere between the Outer and Expanding Circles for the unique position English holds in Bhutanese history and current society. Unlike its neighbor India to the south, Bhutan was never colonized by the British; although British India had some influence over Bhutan's border and foreign affairs, Bhutan has always kept sovereignty over its internal issues (Worden, 1993). English was never imposed upon it from the outside. As I will explain in Chapter 3, English gained significance in Bhutanese society only after modern education system was established in the 1960s, when the Bhutanese government "embarked on a far-reaching development strategy" (The World Bank, "Bhutan Overview"). The function of English has quickly expanded in the last half-century until it has come to reign as the country's de facto official language. Such description of the role English plays in today's Bhutanese society matches that of the Outer Circle.

All of my personal experiences described above as a language learner and teacher, combined with my academic formation as a Spanish major (with a concentration on colonization, imperialism, and postcolonial studies) and an education minor (with a special interest in critical pedagogy as well as connections between neoliberalism and education systems) have inspired and

allowed me to develop a critical perspective on the expansion of this globalized language, motivating me to investigate the subject of *encounter of languages* or "friction" between languages as Tsing (2005) might call it. As such, my project is necessarily multidisciplinary and exploratory, drawing from theories and writings from Latin America, Critical Pedagogy, Linguistics, Linguistic Anthropology, Sociology, and more. In fact, I had a hard time confining myself to a specific discipline or a geographical location, partly because this is such a global phenomenon, and as I indicated above, English is *everywhere*. And in experiences of individuals, English touches on every aspect of our lives. My project kept evolving in unexpected ways and I began to consider that this scope of influence is essential to the matter at hand.

This thesis has at least three interrelated agendas, which are all very personal. The first is to reflect, explore, and reconcile the meaning of learning and speaking this global language. This thesis is an attempt to answer—or rather, bring to light and problematize—the questions that I started to form almost four years ago when I started my life in the United States away from my home in Sapporo: How do I make sense of myself, a person who's born and raised as Japanese but speaks this foreign tongue? Why did I choose this path, and what did it entail? How did I change and why? What did I gain in English acquisition, and what did I lose in the transformation which I initially welcomed and enjoyed, but later questioned, doubted, resented, attempted to reconcile, and came to terms with? These questions are explored in Chapter 1, and throughout all other

chapters, by narrating my own process of English learning and by giving voice to the "various voices I have come to possess," to borrow Keith Gilyard's words (1991, p. 11).

My second agenda is to question, unsettle, and problematize the status of English as an international language and denaturalize its "necessity" as given and commonsensical. What does the philosophy of critical pedagogy tell us about the foreign language instruction? How did we get here? What has been the discourse of promoting English learning? How and why have we internalized the value of learning English? What can I tell those around me who, with as much enthusiasm and obsession, have no doubt that they *have* to learn English to get ahead? These questions are explored in Chapter 2, which discusses the history of the expansion of English and theories on linguistic imperialism, as well as in Chapter 3 and 4, which discuss the situation in Bhutan as a case study of a Periphery country.

My third agenda is to question the ethics of ELT and present responsibilities of educators (especially English teachers) both in the Center and Periphery countries. Where do I stand as an English teacher? What relationship am I going to have with English in my career and in my life? How can educators of ESOL teach English in a way that truly empowers students? Are there models to follow? Is there space of freedom in the classroom to raise students' consciousness of their relation to the world and cultivate resistant and creative voices? These questions are explored in Chapter 5, where I present resistance perspectives, as well as my suggestions, questions, and dilemmas.

The aim of this project, however, does not lie in coming up with a solution as much as it does in problematizing and destabilizing the status of English as it is, which I'll call a hegemony of English. In other words, my approach to this thesis reflects the Freirean philosophy of "problem-posing" rather than conventional teaching method of "problem-solving." What I found in the process (both in literature review and empirical evidence) were not coherent answers and explanations but rather confusions and contradictions, and above all, more questions. In fact, I'm leaving this project with more questions than when I started.

Another aim that I should mention here is to put the subject of English expansion and imperialism into a context and bring it to life. In other words, I wished to deal with "sticky materiality of practical encounters" (Tsing, 2005, p. 1). Often when we discuss a global, historical phenomenon like this, individual experiences are ignored and things are theorized from a macro perspective in an abstract way, which, of course, has its own merit. However, borrowing from the words of Judith Butler, there is "a bodily life that could not be theorized away" (1993, p. iv). We cannot theorize English away. I wanted to bring some life experiences to light to make this subject more concrete and tangible—as well as diverse, because there are as many ways for non-native speakers of English to relate to this world language as there are students of this language. Of course, I cannot talk about every experience and that is not what I intend to do; rather, by

incorporating a micro perspective—often with my autoethnographical narrative—I tried to add a depth to my analysis.

Paulo Freire and Critical Pedagogy

The work of the Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire, perhaps best known for his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* published in 1968 in Portuguese and in 1970 in English translation, is considered one of the foundational texts of a philosophy of education as well as a social movement called "critical pedagogy." Another founding theorist Henry Giroux describes critical pedagogy as "educational movement, guided by passion and principle, to help students develop consciousness of freedom, recognize authoritarian tendencies, and connect knowledge to power and the ability to take constructive action" (2010).

Paulo Freire writes in *Pedagogy of Freedom* (1998/1996) that education is "that specifically human act of intervening in the world":

> When I speak of intervention, I refer both to the aspiration for radical changes in society in such areas as economics, human relations, property, the right to employment, to land, to education, and to health, to the reactionary position whose aim is to immobilize history and maintain an unjust socio-economic and cultural order. (p. 99)

Critical pedagogy is an "educative practice from a progressive point of view. By 'progressive' I mean a point of view that favors the autonomy of the students" (p. 21). This "progressive" or radical education theory sets the primary goal of education as "to work towards social change" (Greenfield, 2007, p. 18) and

education is based on critique and *action*. Admitting that all education is inherently political, "schools are recognized as sites of resistance" (p. 22) where teachers and students work together to engage in dialogue, question authority, "expose perceived Truths as . . . human constructions" (p. 20) and develop "civic courage" (p. 22).

This conception of education departs radically from *conservative* or *liberal* education. Conservative (or technical) education is concerned with preserving authority and "maintaining the status quo" (Greenfield, 2007, p. 6). It represents a "foundationalist worldview" that "believes in absolute, transcendent truths" (p. 5). Conservative education is "positivistic" and "technocratic"; that is, the primary purpose of schooling lies in "the acquisition of technical skills (or the kind of thinking that supports the legitimacy and value of those technical skills)" and knowledge that is viewed and presented as "scientific," "objective," and "politically neutral" (p. 6).

Liberal (or hermeneutic) education takes a more relativist approach compared to conservatives, understanding knowledge as human constructions. It is concerned with tolerating difference and celebrating the rights of all people, but fails to sufficiently theorize the unequal power dynamics of society and to develop transformative pedagogical methods. Liberals are "defeatist"; even though they recognize society as "something problematic," they nonetheless view society as "fundamentally unchangeable" and end up maintaining the status quo

by focusing on "helping students develop skills that will help them survive in the unjust system" (Greenfield, 2007, p. 15).

Paulo Freire was born in 1921 to a middle class family in Recife, Brazil. His father was an army officer and his mother was a Catholic spiritualist. He was eight when the effect of the world economic crisis of 1929 was felt in the Northeast of Brazil. Poverty and hunger severely affected his ability to learn and this experience as a child influenced his decision to dedicate his life to improving the lives of the poor. He recounts this experience as follows:

> I wanted very much to study, but I couldn't as our economic condition didn't allow me to. I tried to read or pay attention in the classroom, but I didn't understand anything because of my hunger. I wasn't dumb. It wasn't lack of interest. My social condition didn't allow me to have an education. Experience showed me once again the relationship between social class and knowledge. (as cited in Gadotti, 1994, p. 5)

In addition to the great depression, political instability marked the period between 1930 (The Revolution of 1930) and 1964 (The 1964 Brazilian coup d'état), in which Freire formed and developed his ideas. After working as a Portuguese teacher in secondary schools, Freire was appointed Director of the Department of Education and Culture of the Social Service in the state of Pernambuco in 1946, where he worked primarily among the illiterate poor and started practicing a form of liberation theology. He completed his Ph.D. in 1959 at the University of Recife, and was appointed director of the Department of Cultural Extension of this university two years later. This position gave him an opportunity to apply his radical literacy method. In 1963 he was asked to represent the Ministry of Education in Northeast Development Board and initiated

educational projects in the region, and he was soon to be invited to coordinate the

National Literacy Plan, an effort to overcome illiteracy in Brazil. This plan,

however, was put to a brusque end by the military coup in 1964.

Considered "international subversive" and a "traitor to Christ and the

Brazilian people" (Gadotti, 1994, pp. 34-35), Freire was imprisoned in June 1964,

and exiled to Chile in the same year, where he worked for five years for an

agrarian reform movement and wrote his influential work *Pedagogy of the*

Oppressed (1968) as well as *Education as a Practice of Freedom* (1967). These

books were conceived in the context of "the economic-development process and

the movement to overcome the colonial culture in the 'societies in transition'" (p.

49). Gadotti explains the development of Freire's work during the exile:

> The period in exile was extremely important for Paulo Freire. In Chile he
> found a rich and satisfying political space which was socially and
> educationally dynamic and which allowed him to restudy his method in
> other historical circumstances. . . . Paulo Freire gradually began to
> understand the meaning of the 1964 coup. He thought that a new kind of
> imperialist intervention had begun in Latin America. It was no longer the
> obvious domination of the stubborn landowner . . . There was a planned
> project, part of a new political and economic strategy which intended to
> modernize the economic structure of Brazil and of Latin America and
> make it more appropriate for capitalist interests and a more subtle,
> modern, scientific, technological kind of domination. The technology
> itself which was exported to Brazil under the label of "technical
> assistance" was, and continues to be, a way of sustaining this domination.
> This explains the importance Paulo Freire gave . . . to the idea of the
> "cultural invasion." (p. 38)

Freire left Chile in 1969, and after a brief visit in the US, he started the

second phase of his exile from 1970 in Europe and Africa, starting from Geneva,

Switzerland, followed by former Portuguese colonies in Africa (Guinea-Bissau and Mosambique) until he returned to Brazil in 1980.

Moacir Gadotti, the author of *Reading Paulo Freire: His Life and Work*, describes Freire as "humanistic and militant educator" (p. 49). Freire "had become a politician through being an educator and a Christian. It was impossible for him to be neutral as a Christian, in the same way that it was impossible for him to be neutral as an educator" (p. 64). The relationship between education and politics is one of the fundamental ideas in critical pedagogy, that is, *education is political*.

One of his revolutionary methods is what Freire calls *conscientização* (conscientization)[2], which is "a liberation process on the part of the dominated conscience to get rid of the influence exercised by the dominating consciousness" (Gadotti, 1994, p. 42). This is a dialectic process of *gaining awareness* of the reality—or of "their own situation of being oppressed, which is seen in the political oppression and the economic exploitation which they live under" (p. 56)—and *acting upon* the reality to organize themselves, mobilize, and make change. Learning occurs, according to Freire, in the *interplay* between theory and practice, or reflection and action, but *not* one *or* the other. "[T]his conscientization passes, first and foremost, through the practice, through the transforming action" (p. 85) that we take on the world that we live in. In other words, conscientization

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[2] Freire stopped using the term *conscientização* later because it was frequently misunderstood and misused as a pure taking of conscience of reality without the necessary action or transform it (Gadotti, 1994).

is not "a taking of consciousness" but should be understood as a "conscience of action over" reality (p. 63).

Dialogue is central to Freirean pedagogy and to the process of conscientization of students, and genuine dialogues (not *manipulation*) can happen only in a horizontal relationship, "a relationship in which the freedom of the pupil is allowed to be expressed" (Gadotti, 1994, p. 50). There should be no hierarchy between teacher and student, for students bring their own empirical knowledge of their world to classroom, from which teachers also learn as well as other students:

> Education takes place when there are two learners who occupy somewhat different spaces in an ongoing dialogue. But both participants bring knowledge to the relationship, and one of the objects of the pedagogic process is to explore what each knows and what they can teach each other. (Aronowitz, 1998, p. 8)

Critical pedagogy calls us to "establish an 'intimate' connection between knowledge considered basic to any school curriculum and knowledge that is the fruit of the lived experience of these students as individuals" (Freire, 1998, p. 36). Education through dialogue, therefore, is an act of pure collaboration, not *transferring* of knowledge (disguised as "truth") from teacher to student, for knowledge is a human construction. The purpose of this dialogue-based pedagogy would be "to create the possibilities for the production or construction of knowledge" (p. 30). This is what Freire calls *problematizing* or *problem-posing*

education, for it questions the givenness of knowledge in traditional schooling. Therefore, the difference between a liberating educator who *humanizes* and a domesticating (or authoritarian) teacher who *dehumanizes* is that while the former asks the students "to think and to make a fresh reading of their reality," the latter "presents it [their reality] as something already complete and finished, to which it is enough simply to adapt" (Gadotti, 1994, p. 58). No transformation is experienced under an authoritarian teacher. While the former suggests to the students "that they control the knowledge they have," the latter "proposes merely the passive reception of packaged knowledge" (p. 58). In short, the liberating educator will invite the students to *think*.

Freire's pedagogy is, therefore, also *local*, *interdisciplinary*, and *affective*. Because this dialogic pedagogy takes the lived experiences and "ingenuous knowledge" of students *and* of the community as the starting point, his curriculum is necessarily locally situated and interdisciplinary or even transdisciplinary (Gadotti, 1994, pp. 105-107). Knowledge cannot be compartmentalized and fragmented as seen in school curricula. Also, Freire realizes that learning occurs not only at the cognitive level but also the *affective*; in fact, there is no separation between the two. He believes that education should be *exciting*, that it should involve not only the brain but also the body, the heart, and the life itself (pp. 152-158). Freire describes the interplay between the cognitive and the affective as follows: "I can't believe in a revolution that denies love, that puts the question of

love between brackets. . . . I think it absurd to distance the rigorous act of knowing the world from the passionate ability to know" (pp. 152-53).

Freire's pedagogy is not a "method" that "might produce more creative employees for entrepreneurial corporations or lift some poor and working class students from inexorable subordination to individual social mobility" (Aronowitz, 1998, p. 15). The Freirean philosophy of education as I understand comes down to this: that education is part of the process of *humanization* (to become more fully human). The idea of a "humanizing pedagogy" appeared in his first works including the article "Papel da educação na humanização" (The role of education in humanization) published in 1969. Freire recognizes that we humans have two potentials: "ser mais do homem" (to become more fully human)—which is the real and only vocation of humanity—and "ser menos" (to become less human), which is a distortion of this vocation. Here, "ser mais" is synonymous to being more free, aware, engaging and empowered, while "ser menos" means domesticating and transforming a person into a thing, thus *de*humanizing the person. Likewise, education has a potential of serving for either purpose. Freire calls us to problematize the "conservative" or "liberal" type of education and challenges us to reimagine the education that is liberating and humanizing.

This progressive, affective, and humanist perspective is my point of entry to this subject of the encounter of languages.

CHAPTER ONE:

ENGLISH MEETS JAPANESE: A JOURNEY OF LANGUAGE

ACQUISITION

-OR-

HOW I LEARNED TO HUG AND DREAM IN ENGLISH

Just speaking these [Italian] words made me feel sexy and happy.

—Elizabeth Gilbert

I am my language.

—Gloria Anzaldúa

When she speaks English, she pretends she's Hermione Granger. Or Wendy Darling. Meg Ryan in *Kate & Leopold*. Even Avril Lavigne. She transforms herself, not boring 寺地亜美(Terachi Ami). Someone gorgeous. And smart. Someone who speaks English. Fluently. A native English speaker.

That's what English represented to her for a long time: sexy and happy and gorgeous. Smart and intelligent. And cool. Absolutely cool. And not to forget—magical.

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She remembers writing, on the last day of elementary school, that what she looked forward to the most in junior high school was to study English. All she knew then was the alphabet, and she couldn't wait for English to be added to the subjects as she went on to the seventh grade.

In her very first English class she learned how to greet in English. She learned how to read—how each letter came together, being arranged in a particular way to become a word and produce a meaning. She learned how to ask for something ("Coffee, please!") and even how to spell *c o f f e e* and *p l e a s e.* She learned how to introduce herself ("Nice to meet you. My name is Ami."). She learned to capitalize "I" and the first letter of the sentence, as well as to put a period at the end of sentences. Excited to learn, she memorized every sentence that appeared in her English textbook. After two months she was acing her class, having scored 99 in the first exam (she misspelled "please").

Her enthusiasm in English diminished quickly, however. The class was dull, full of note-taking and mundane repetition. Soon it became just another subject to study and be tested upon. The only reason she liked English slightly better than others was because she could easily get a good grade, and yes, it was still slightly more interesting than other subjects. Never in her wildest dreams did she think she would one day become fluent in English—until she met that guy.

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December, 2001. That's when it all changed. It was at the end of her seventh grade, with the release of the first Harry Potter movie in Japan, when she

made the decision—a life-changing one—to *really* learn English. Spellbound, all of sudden English started to sound like the coolest thing in the world. Never knowing it would change her life profoundly, her long journey of second language acquisition began at the moment when the thirteen-year-old girl fell in love with the boy on the screen. It started with a mere desire to understand what he was saying on the screen, and a mere dream of one day having a conversation with him.

"Fanatically" might be the word to describe the way she studied English during the following break in the spring between the seventh and the eighth grades. She was happy that she could spend her entire two weeks studying English without disruptions.

Alone in her room, with an English grammar workbook spread on her desk, she repeated word after word to the CD that accompanied the book. Read the description of a grammar rule, read example sentences, answer practice questions, check the answers, read the description again, read the sentences aloud, check the answers again. Flip the page. Now continue on with a new grammar rule…

The most boring way possible to learn a new language, perhaps, but she was so excited she didn't even notice it. She didn't know any other way to study a language (or anything) anyway. Little by little the logic of the English language was unveiled and revealed itself to her. By the end of the spring break she had

learned all the vocabulary and grammar that was supposed to be covered by the

end of the ninth grade.

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Her dad tells her she should bite her tongue when she says "Thank you."

Bite my tongue? How strange! She thinks to herself. Also for the words like:

"the," "think," and "bath." She can only pronounce them: "za" "sink" and "basu."

She says good "moaning" and she eats "lice" and she "shits" on "za chea." Her

mouth muscles hurt as she practices English pronunciation. F, th, l, r, v, bl, d, g, k,

p, sh, x, q, t, dg.

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How do you do?

How do you do?

Set in the repeat mode, out of her CD comes a fluent voice of a native speaker.

Practice, practice, practice.

How do you do?

How do you do?

How do you do?

***

Before long English became her friend, and soon her most loyal

companion. English never left her alone, nor was she going to betray her.

***

Lunch break. She runs to the staff room. She looks for blond hair.

"Christina? Can we talk?"

Christina looks up, smiling, and greets her. Together they go out to the hallway where they have a chat every day.

"How was your weekend?"

The questions are always the same. What did you do last night? What did you do today? What are you going to do this weekend? What do you like to do?

She enjoys talking with Christina, however limited their topics may be. *Wow, I'm <u>actually</u> talking in English, it's quite something*, she thinks. She likes Christina, her ALT[3] from Massachusetts. Actually, she's not sure. Somewhere in America, of that she is sure. She likes it when Christina comes to her English class, the class is more interesting when she does, but she especially likes talking with Christina during lunchtime like this, just the two of them, every day for ten minutes. Christina is very nice. *Maybe I'll invite her to my house for dinner sometime*.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

The alarm clock went off at 6am. She crawls out of her bed. She's never been an early riser—she likes to sleep in as long as possible—but she's made it

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[3] Assistant Language Teacher assigned through Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme, a Japanese government initiative that bring native speakers of English to schools in all regions of Japan. This program was started in 1987, and grew into one of the world's largest international exchange programs. Its participants grew from 848 people from four countries in 1987 to 4,372 from 40 countries in 2013. Over 55,000 people have participated from 62 different countries since its inception (JET programme, 2010).

her new year's resolution to get up early every morning to study English now that she is in the ninth grade.

It's still dark outside. April mornings are cold in Sapporo. Still sleepy yet excited, she takes the book in her hand and admires its shiny surface. *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, which her dad has recently bought her from Canada. The very first book, the first *real* book that she's going to read in English. She turns the cover with trembling fingers.

.... The first challenge presents itself in the very first phrase in the first page she turns. *"The Boy Who Lived"? What is this "Who" doing? How does this sentence translate to* "ikinokotta otokonoko" [literally, "survived boy"]*?* She flips through the pages of her English-Japanese dictionary to find the entry under W. Twenty-five minutes later she's still left wondering how on earth this title can be translated in this way. Sigh. It's too advanced for her level. Moving on. She struggles through a few sentences and it's time to go to school.

She carries this book everywhere she goes. During breaks between classes she takes it out from her bag quietly and (pretends to) read. "Are you reading in English!?" surprised and admiring voices of her classmates. Well,.... sort of. During lunchtime she goes to see Nicole, her new ALT. She forgets where Nicole was from, but it might have been somewhere in Canada. Or Australia, you know, one of those places.

<div align="center">***</div>

Break, broke, broken.

Buy, bought, bought.

Cut, cut, cut.

Feel, felt, felt.

Fly, flew, flown.

Keep, kept, kept.

Run, ran, run.

See, saw, seen.

Steal, stole, stolen.

Write, wrote, written.

***

"Listen, Ami. When you meet with Michael, he will want to shake hands with you." Her father lectures her. She is nervously sitting in the passenger seat as they drive to meet Michael, an architect from Germany.
"You have to respond with give a firm grip, okay? That's the sign of respect and affirmation. You don't have to squeeze his hand, but not too weak either. That's called 'dead fish' handshake," Her father continues, "And look in his eyes."

She follows his advice and manages to successfully introduce herself to a businessman from Germany. Their handshake was firm and strong.

The three of them head to *Usu-zan* (Mount Usu) and *Toyako* (Lake Toya) to have a tour around volcano towns. Her father becomes a guide for a day to tell them about earthquakes, volcanoes, architecture and city planning. Her, she accompanies him whenever she can practice English.

As they drive through Sapporo City they pass under the gate of Hokkaido Shrine, a huge red arch built over the road. Michael looks up curiously and asks her what it is.

She opens her mouth to explain, but she doesn't know what to say. Its Japanese name is *torii* and she doesn't even know where this word comes from. Bird (*tori*)'s residence (*i*)?

After an awkward silence she just tells him that it's a *torii*. This word hasn't appeared in her textbook yet, so there is no way she knows the word in English. She regrets she didn't bring her dictionary.

Listening to this conversation, her father asks her in Japanese: "What was the word for a '*komon*'?"

"A school gate," she answers. Easy enough.

"What's the word for '*jinja*'?"

"A shrine."

"Ah," he turns to Michael, now in English, "Michael, it's *shrine gate*."

.... What? You can't do that.

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First there's Japanese. Second there's Japanese that is translatable to English—a more explicitly stated version of the original. Third there's an English translation. One-two-three. That's how she translates Japanese into English.

She learns to restructure the original Japanese sentence by identifying the subject, object, and other parts of speech that are usually omitted or simply don't

exist in Japanese. She makes explicit what is implied by the context to find a subject, a verb, and an object in the sentence. She sheds light to the ambiguous, the unstated. She contemplates if it is "a pen" or "some pens" or "the pen" or "your pen" or "several pens" or "this pen" or "these pens." She interprets the context and the speaker's intention. Now the sentence presents itself in a completely different manner: clear, explicit, systematic and structured. *This I can translate into English,* she tells herself.

This is the key to mastering English. This is what distinguishes her from her classmates. They cannot decipher their Japanese like she can. She decodes her own language.

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English—international—cultural understanding—communication—being understood—people around the world—opportunities—career—contribute to the world—help people—. Hmm.

"Dad, what should I say if they ask me why I want to study English?" She shows her dad the paper with a complex mind map with a big "English" in the middle.

"So this is what I thought. I think English equips me for communication with many people in the world," she starts to explain her theory to him, "I will be able to communicate with so many more people than I could with Japanese, and…"

"You don't need those reasons," her dad cuts in.

"Ami, you have been studying English just because you like English. You enjoy the sound of English, just like you enjoy music. Isn't it right?"

He was right. She was *in love* with the language.

"Just tell them that. Show your enthusiasm and they will understand. Good luck with your interview tomorrow."

Luck is indeed what she needs. She is so nervous because she will have to speak in English during the interview, which is going to determine where she will be spending the next three years. She really wants to go to this high school because they have the best English program among all public schools in Sapporo. She crosses fingers.

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Conform. That's what she did throughout junior high school. She had been a very good soldier, complying with strict school rules, doing well on tests and gathering her teachers' praises. She even served in the student government for two years to exemplify a "good student."

One lesson was repeatedly imprinted into her mind implicitly and explicitly throughout public schooling: no matter what there was always one "right" way of doing it, to which she should conform—otherwise there would be consequences. This included such things as holding chopsticks in the correct manner, addressing a person of opposite sex properly, providing the right answers in exams by perfect memorization, listening without interrupting in the right posture, and choosing the right course of life.

She always listened. Silently, diligently. To the teachers repeat what the textbooks said. That way she would not run into trouble. She gained assurance, satisfaction and protection, even a sense of control, until the yearning grew. The undeniable yearning to be herself and express herself.

She looked inside only to find emptiness spreading in her mind like a black hole. All she had was a series of "right" things she had accumulated in the past fifteen years. She didn't know how to "think" but in a conventional way; she didn't have anything to say even if asked "her own" opinions. She was thinking, feeling, and behaving, like everyone else, as she was told to do. *Just like a robot*, she thought. *I'm becoming a robot.* She was tired of playing the role of a good student, tired of living in that way as someone who didn't look like herself anymore.

She felt ashamed.

And she yearned for change.

<div align="center">***</div>

She went abroad for the first time in her life when she was fifteen. To the country where she had always dreamed of going. After much negotiation her father finally had given his permission on the condition that he would accompany her. Having been admitted to a public high school through the recommendation system had certainly helped.

In March of 2004, when all her classmates were taking the entrance examination that would determine their destinies, she left Japan and took one step forward into a broader world.

On the plane she was all excitement, imagining the totally unknown world that she was about to discover. Or perhaps she was expecting a totally magical world.

The plane landed on the Heathrow Airport safely and her father and she took the subway—or "Tube" as locals called it—to get to the hotel. As she was dragging her heavy suitcase up the stairs at Russell Square station, the magic happened indeed.

"May I help you?" She heard someone call from behind.

Before she could answer that question, a tall, young blond man took her suitcase off her hand and carried it upstairs for her before she could say a word. Her heart leapt. She hurried up the stairs and shouted to his back, "Thank you very much!!" as he quickly walked away to the outside of the station and into the city.

"What just happened?" Her father, who was already outside waiting, asked her. Speechless, she could only smile to him.

The next morning they set off for sightseeing around the city. Hanging the camera from her neck, she walked skipping down the stone-paved, winding streets. Buckingham Palace. Big Ben. The London Eye. And of course, King's Cross Station. *Dreams do come true,* she thought.

The majestic architecture and landscape of London truly enchanted her. What also caught her eyes were the people sitting on the sides of the streets or stations, begging. "Hungry. Please help me," said their signs. Their empty gazes followed her as she looked down and walked past them to catch up with her father's pace.

They were waiting at the traffic light on the third day when a friendly-looking elderly man approached and talked to them.

"Hi, welcome to England. Where are you from? Japan?" A big smile on his face. "How old are you, girl? Fifteen? Oh, I have a granddaughter about your age. You're such a pretty girl. First time to go abroad? How do you like London? Let me take your picture, can I?"

"Sure," she was so happy that she got a chance to have a chat in English.

"Nice," he continued, "Now with your father, too… Nice photos… I will send these pictures to you, please write down your address here," he took a notebook out of his bag. "Don't forget to write down the postal code, okay?"

And so her father wrote their address down on the man's notebook. The old man turned to them and said,

"Will you lend me a hand? I mean, I don't have enough money to send these pictures… Just a little money is fine. Please."

"No, sorry, really. We have no money," her father said flatly.

"Sorry—" she managed to say only that word and they quickly left there.

The city looked dark and cold under the gloomy sky. She walked quietly with heavy steps. The magic that had surrounded the city seemed to have vanished.

It was three months after coming back to Japan that an envelope arrived from London. A piece of paper was roughly glued on the face, with a familiar handwriting of her father's. Curious, she opened the envelope and found three pictures of her father and herself.

Her gaze was fixed on the pictures for a while. She looked inside the envelope but there was no note. The man's address was written nowhere. Only a seal was affixed on the back of the envelope: "The sender didn't pay enough Airmail postage on this item, so we had to divert it to an alternative service—sorry if there was a delay."

<p align="center">***</p>

"Mr. and Mrs. Dursley, of number four, Privet Drive, were proud to say   that they were perfectly normal, thank you very much." She had perfectly memorized this first sentence; she listened to the audio book every day on her way to and from school. "Mr. and Mrs. Dursley, of number four, Privet Drive, …"

One weekend she transcribed an entire movie just for the fun of it. She wanted to know what exactly the actresses were saying. DVD was convenient because she could play it with English subtitles. Pause, rewind, play, write, pause, rewind, play, write, pause, write, look up in the dictionary.

In her room she becomes an actress, the script in her hand.

Uttering English words was not enough; being able to communicate in this language was not enough. She had to sound natural; she had to speak like a native speaker. She wanted to become close, closer, and even closer to English. She wanted to become English.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

Classes in high school were as dull as in junior high, school rules stricter than ever. Even English classes that she most looked forward to turned out to be unchallenging and boring. One of the most important aspects of language acquisition, she learned, was not asking many questions. Don't ask why things are spelled in certain ways; don't ask why we need an "a" instead of "the" or whether a noun should be singular or plural; don't ask why it's "tell" the truth and not "say" the truth—because *it's just how it is*. It's how they, the native speakers of English, speak. But the most important question was whether a certain expression or a grammar structure was going to be in the next exam, and ultimately, in the Center Test[4]. They were not learning English; they were learning how to take the Center Test, which would determine the course of their lives. Each idiom, each sentence structure, and each translation pattern that they learned meant an additional "point" that they would earn in this test.

Another thing that she learned was that English was merely a tool, or a *pot* in which one could put things. Building a beautiful pot did not suffice; what she would *put in* the container mattered the most. "It's important to master *how* to use

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[4] National Center Test for University Admissions.

this tool, and think what you want to *do* with this tool," her English teachers would tell the class, "the question is what you want to use this tool for."

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It didn't take her long to decide which club to belong in high school. English club, of course, which later evolved into a debate club. Her teacher, Mr. Kimura, was unlike any other teacher she had ever had. She was taught that debate was an important part of the culture, and the art, of the English language.

This after school gathering was where she was challenged to *think* for the first time. Starting with "school uniforms"—the advantages and disadvantages of having one—they tackled the death penalty, educational reform, animal testing, and more.

She was not challenged just to think, but think *in English*. "Do not translate," Mr. Kimura would say. "If you are translating you will never be fluent in English. You have to *think in English*." In order to gain fluency in a language, one has to learn to name, perceive, feel, process, and express in the language.

This was where she was challenged also to *speak* for the first time, and not just to speak, but discuss. Respond. Think out loud. Make an argument. Share opinions. Explore different views. Engage, with myself, with others, with the world.

Surrounded by other English geeks like herself and guided by the great teacher, English debate club became to her a refuge from classrooms that suppressed and silenced her.

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Her second experience abroad was Toronto, Canada, where her sister worked at the time and arranged a three-week trip for her. During winter break in her first year she spent Christmas and New Year's with a local host family. Colorful Christmas decorations lit up her heart greatly.

She was reading *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* alone in the dining room when a new student arrived to stay with the same family.

"Ami, this is Alex from Mexico," her host mother introduced the new student.

"Hi Ami, nice to meet you," the Mexican girl approached her with a big smile to shake her hands.

No, Alex didn't approach to shake her hands. She stepped back but Alex came closer and closer and finally hugged and kissed her on the cheek. She kissed her on the cheek! She must have looked horrified because Alex and Lisa, her host mother, burst out laughing at her reaction.

<center>***</center>

Ami. A-m-i, Ami. She likes how this name sounds in English. Some people cannot pronounce it, in fact nobody has pronounced it right, but that's okay. Many people call her Amy. Lisa, her host mother, calls her Emma. But that's okay. She likes how people call her by her first name. Even her teachers at English language school call her by her first name, as do her classmates. That's a new sensation. A totally new sensation.

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"Why do we learn English?" One day, her English teacher posed the question to her class. Some ideas came up: to score better at the Center Test; going to a prestigious university; career advancement; study abroad; greater and better opportunities; better salaries; a sign of being well-educated; career opportunities for women; self-fulfillment, etc. She particularly liked the expression: "broaden one's horizon." It was Yumi's idea—she was a *kikoku*[5] so she knew many expressions—and this expression was immediately registered in her mind. *Broaden my horizon. English can broaden my horizon.*

Mr. Kimura once said in his class that learning a second language is like acquiring a second eye; only with two eyes one can gain a stereoscopic perspective that allows a better and more whole view of the world.

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She hosted three visiting students in her first and second years in high school: Tom from Dedham, Massachusetts; Brayden from Tampa, Florida; Austin from Red Deer, Alberta. It was fun to have them in her family—the students brought joy to her family, and in fact, brought her family closer.

Her mother, a caregiver by nature, happily took care of the three boys and always prepared them gorgeous breakfasts. Her father took them around in the city and around Hokkaido. Her family album was gradually filled with pictures that they took together in those trips. They talked and laughed together a lot.

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[5] *Kikokushijo* or children of Japanese expatriates who have lived abroad for part of their lives and returned to Japan.

She was a good hostess, too, taking care of them at school and teaching them Japanese while the boys taught her English. Language, culture, food, travel, dream, college, jobs, school, language—they never ran out of topics to discuss. She imagined what life would be like in those different places in North America. Her longing for study abroad started to grow stronger and stronger.

Imagine the excitement she felt when she got a letter of acceptance from Hokkaido Government to participate in their ten-week student exchange program in Alberta, Canada.

Ten weeks! Attending a local high school! And I don't even have to pay! She was in heaven. Her dream was coming true. Her family was proud of her, particularly her dad. She was proud of herself.

Just before Austin left from Japan, her father took the family for a four-hour drive to a hot spring up in the mountains in Tokachi. The scenery of autumn in Hokkaido was splendid. Austin seemed to enjoy the hot spring, too. That night after coming back from the trip they gathered around *nabe* together, eating from the same pot just like a real family.

This became one of the last memories of her father.

She left for Canada exactly five days after her father's funeral. Her grandparents were furious, but her mother simply told her to do as she wished, that her dad would be happy for her opportunity.

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This is too painful. I have to leave the story for some time. And this is so boring. Nobody is interested in her life. But I have to give her voice. I'm compelled to tell her story even if she doesn't care, even if she can't read it.

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Okay, I'm back.

Those ten weeks in Canada were nothing like she had ever experienced in her life. *Everything's different*, she thought. Everything around her was new. No school uniform. No school rules. She found Canadian people were very honest to themselves (and towards other people, too). She was amazed because she was often paralyzed by thinking too much what other people thought of her, and acting only not to offend others and make peace with everyone. She thought, for the first time, "who she was." She was independent for the first time, making choices for herself, even for ten weeks. She learned to be a little more honest to herself.

She learned many things in Canada. Her English improved, for one thing. But she learned much more: to express her needs, to be independent, to be reliable, to have fun. She learned what was considered "right" in one culture may not be "right" in others. She attained the courage to say, "Hi, what's your name?" And last but not least—she learned how to hug.

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"Ami! *Hisashiburi* (Long time no see)!" Molly came running to her at a recess. Molly was an exchange student from Australia.

"Molly! How are you?" She gave Molly a hug.

"Good! Wow, Ami, your hug has improved," Molly told her with a serious face.

"No, it hasn't," she laughed.

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In her last year at high school she devoted herself to study even more than before. In World History she studied advanced grammar rules. In Biology she practiced composition. She dropped math because she wasn't interested. In Japanese Literature she flipped through flash cards to memorize new vocabulary.

The English debate club was very active, too. In her senior year, the very first All Japan High School English Debate Tournament was held in Gifu. Her school did not qualify to participate, however, for Hokkaido had yet to establish a regional tournament. But this didn't discourage them from practicing. "Japan should make English its second official language" was the proposition, which suggested that Japanese be the first official language and English the second. Her teammates and she discussed this proposition every day after school to prepare for an in-club debate tournament.

"English is an international language, you know," Haruka started the conversation, taking the affirmative position, "and Japan should catch up with the rest of the world, the international standard."

"Also," Maki continued, "if all official documents have to be written in English and everyone in governmental offices has to know English, more Japanese people will try to learn English and become proficient in English."

"And we can also suggest," Saori joined the discussion, "that once English becomes our official language, the government should support and increase hours of English class in school. Maybe they can hire more native speakers from abroad to teach English at all schools in Japan."

"Would *everyone* become proficient in English if it becomes an official language?" Mr. Kimura jumped in our conversation. "Many people mistakenly jump to the conclusion that all Japanese people will master English *just* by making English an official language.[6] Is that really so?"

"Probably not," she responded, "making English our official language won't make Japanese people fluent in the language nor does it guarantee that the government will invest in better teachers. What we need in order to increase the level of our English is an educational reform, not making it an official language…"

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While everyone else was studying for the Center Test, she was still studying English and only English. She took three national and international

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[6] Less than 1 percent of the population of Japan are non-Japanese citizens, among which English speakers represent a miniscule percentage while Korean, Chinese, and Brazilian (Japanese-Brazilian) combined represent about a half of foreign residents. There is no practical need for making English an official language in Japan (following the definition of an official language, to which the population will have a right and the official organizations will hold a responsibility to respond to, Korean, Chinese, or Portuguese would be better official languages than English). However, this debate (of whether we should make English our official language) is often brought up as a way to better disseminate English in Japanese society. See Hatta (2003).

English exams: TOEIC[7], TOEFL[8], and Eiken[9]. Soon after graduation she passed the Grade 1 of Eiken.

Having Eiken Grade 1 afforded her jobs that she could not have otherwise obtained as a high school graduate. She worked as a part-time instructor at a *juku*[10] as well as other special college-preparatory schools.

Her colleagues at the *juku*—including those who were studying at Hokkaido University, the most prestigious university in the region—admired and alienated her at the same time just for the fact that she could speak English. They called her "*Eigo-ga dekiru Terachi-san*" (Ms. Terachi who speaks English) or "*America-ni iku Terachi-san*" (Ms. Terachi who's going to the US)—and eventually, they simply called her: "*Eigo-no Terachi-san*" (Ms. Terachi of English).

<div align="center">***</div>

She got along well, perhaps better, with international students. Ricardo was one of them; he was from Mexico, studying at Hokkaido University. One day, as they were enjoying a chat at Doutor Coffee in Sapporo Station, their conversation went to topics around cultural differences, especially about expression of feelings.

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[7] The Test of English for International Communication.
[8] The Test of English as a Foreign Language.
[9] "Eiken" or Test in Practical English Proficiency is Japan's most widely recognized English language assessment. There are seven levels from Grade 5 to 1, with the Grade 1 the highest.
[10] Private schools that offer lessons conducted after regular school hours.

As he poured some milk to his coffee, he started abruptly: "I say 'I want milk' when I want milk." He continued: "Japanese say 'I'm thinking of a cow' when they want milk.[11] How am I supposed to know what they really mean?"

And it suddenly hit her; she was *speaking* in English but still trying to *communicate* in the Japanese way. The difference of the two languages never came so clear to her as that moment—one *states* the meanings while the other *hints at* or even *disguises* the meanings. She still tended to restrain herself from expressing her opinion or preference to make peace with everyone. He wanted her to tell him directly what she felt, while she considered it *his* job to "read" her intention.

He was just making fun of her for always concealing her feelings, she knew, but she also sensed his frustration toward his Japanese friends and colleagues, with whom he found it difficult to communicate.

But I can change, she thought. Wishing to communicate in the English way, she developed a habit of first asking herself "what am I really trying to say? What do I want?" when she spoke in English. It's like rewiring your brain. She trained herself to say, "I want milk" instead of "I'm thinking of a cow."

<div align="center">***</div>

1,472 words. This is too long for a college application essay but she cannot revise anymore. She's been working on this for weeks and she's happy

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[11] My friend was using this phrase metaphorically to illustrate how the way Japanese people talk is ambiguous and indirect. Japanese don't really say "I'm thinking of a cow" when they want to drink milk.

with what she has. She curses the word limit and reads her essay from the top for the hundredth time.

1,029 words. *This is the best I can do at the moment*, she says. *This is me. This essay resembles me so much. I'll give them what I have. They have to either take it or leave it.*

She's never written anything like this. She didn't know she could write in English before. In fact, she didn't know she could write *at all*.

But I can write. An electrifying feeling of delight runs through her body.

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It wasn't that she was never interested in going to Japanese universities at all. She had ordered pamphlets from some colleges, too. But looking at those pamphlets and imagining what the student life would be like didn't bring much excitement to her. How much could she improve her English if she stayed in Japan? She wanted to perfect her English.

"Ami, if you really want to study, you shouldn't stay in Japan. Go to a university abroad," she heard the voice of her dad in her head. He had never studied abroad in his life; in fact, he hadn't even visited a foreign country until he was in his 40s. He had such a powerful experience abroad, first in Europe and then in Canada, that he came home *completely* transformed—he was even inspired to leave the company he had worked for more than twenty-five years and started his own business to pursue "his own lifestyle" even if it meant a significant cutback in income. Not only her father; her two sisters also came back

completely changed from Canada, one from study abroad and the other from working holidays. Any of these she was too young to understand at the time, but she just remembered the phrase her dad repeated over and over again to her: *nihon-o denasai* (Go beyond Japan).

She imagined herself studying abroad. She imagined the unimaginable. *I want to go abroad*, her soul cried. *I want to see what lies beyond*.

CHAPTER TWO:

ENGLISH AND IMPERIALISM: MODERNITY AND COLONIALITY OF

POWER IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

-OR-

WAIT A MINUTE, WHAT IS REALLY GOING ON?

> You taught me language, and my profit on't / Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you / For learning me your language!
> —The Tempest; Act 1, Scene ii.

Language: An Instrument of Empire

A relationship between language and empire, or a correlation between the expansion of a language and that of an empire, has long been argued by many scholars even before the emergence of modern world powers in the fifteenth century. An imposition of the language of an empire upon its subjects for the purpose of political and cultural domination is arguably a fundamental strategy in colonization projects.

For example, an Italian humanist Lorenzo Valla wrote in 1471 in the preface to *Elegantiae linguae Latinae* ("Elegances of the Latin Language"), the first textbook of Latin grammar, that "dondequiera que domine el latin, alli está el

Imperio Romano" (as cited in Percival, 1994, p. 66). Valla established a correlation between the language (Latin) and the political power (Roman Empire) and proposed that "the goal of rebuilding an empire could be achieved by letters, not arms" (Mignolo, 1992, p. 308).

Two decades later, in the same year as Christopher Columbus set off to a new continent, Spanish humanist and grammarian Antonio de Nebrija presented the first grammar of the Spanish language—the first grammar of any vernacular language in Europe—to Queen Isabella. Analyzing the role of language in the Egyptian, Greek, and Roman Empires, Nebrija stated that "siempre la lengua fue compañera del imperio" (1946/1492, p. 5); language and empire began, grew, florished, and later fell together. Language is what made the state prosper, and it prospered together with the state. Nebrija articulated the importance of language in the expansion and successful unification of the Spanish Empire in order to convert "barbarians" into Christians and subjects of the state, as well as the need for the language of the Queen (i.e., Castilian) to be codified and standardized into a grammar and taught to all people in order to rule and colonize the minds of its new subjects. While the degree of success of this project is debatable, the connection Nebrija establishes between the language and empire is still relevant.

When the French embarked on *mission civilisatrice*, part of the "civilization" they intended to bring was their language (Phillipson, 1992, pp. 44-45). Studying the activities of the French missionaries who went to Africa in the nineteenth century, Phillipson observes that "[p]romotion of religion, language,

and national economic and political interests have often gone hand in hand" (p. 32).

The English language played a role in the British colonization projects of American, African, and Asian countries. The language had been often intentionally used as a tool to colonize the minds of its learners in the British empire. In 1835, Thomas Babington Macaulay, the then Governor-General of British India and the president of a Committee of Public Instruction in Bengal, enacted the English Education Act, which introduced a "thoroughly English educational system" that would create "a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, opinion, in morals and in intellect" (as cited in Anderson, 2006, p. 91). In the following year, Macaulay wrote that:

> No Hindu who has received an English education ever remains sincerely attached to his religion. It is my firm belief [so they always were] that if our plans of education are followed up, there will not be a single idolater among the respectable classes in Bengal thirty years hence. (as cited in Anderson, 2006, p. 93)

Anderson argues that Macaulay's implementation of Western curriculum with English as the language of instruction was "consciously formulated and pursued" to turn "idolaters":

> not so much into Christians, as into people culturally English, despite their irremediable colour and blood. A sort of mental miscegenation is intended, . . . [which indicates that] imperialism made enormous progress in daintiness. In any event, it can be safely said that from this point on, all over the expanding empire, if at different speeds, Macaulayism was pursued. (p. 91)

Such a process of "Anglicization" produced thousands of men all over the world, who "[i]n mind and manners . . . [were] as English . . . as any Englishman." Unfortunately, such a man "completely estranged himself from the society of his own people and became socially and morally a pariah among them" (p. 92).

Needless to say, the English language had expanded as the British empire increased its power and influence over the world, as captured in Kachru's model of Three Circles of English. In other words, "the [English] language has accompanied the slave trade and imperialism round the world" (Phillipson, 1992, p. 5). The British empire's successes in conquest, colonization, and trade are accountable at least in part for the historic expansion of English.

English continued to spread even after the fall of the British empire. In fact, as Troike (1977) observes, English was propagated more than ever *after* the fall of the empire and especially after World War II. The expansion of English was "enormously accelerated" by the emergence of the United States as "the major military world power and technological leader" (p. 2). Governmental expenditure and private funds in the period between 1950-70 were "perhaps the most ever spent in history in support of the propagation of a language" (p. 2).

An important question is what "forces" have "propelled English forward" in such a ferocious way (Phillipson, 1992, p. 6). Clearly, English did not spread around the entire world by chance; rather, English was promoted with clear intentions and active involvement of various agencies including the British government on the one hand, and was *eagerly adopted* in the global linguistic

marketplace on the other. In this chapter, I will examine how the language has been propagated and what role language pedagogy has played in that process; how English has sustained an imperialist structure; and how this language has shaped the subjectivities (imagination) of the peoples in the Periphery communities.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

"What's happening inside your brain?" People would ask her. "How do you speak English so fluently? In which language do you think?" The questions were repeated so many times that one day she ran an experiment titled "Inside My Brain." To "think" is such an abstract activity that many do it unconsciously, but she was going to observe it deliberately. And after much observation she came up with three conclusions.

First, Japanese was the language of the unconscious, and English was that of the conscious. Unconscious, reactive, passive thinking was almost always done in Japanese. "I'm hungry" and "I need to change the light bulb" were of this kind. On the other hand, she thought in English when she had to respond to an input in English or she had to write in English. (And of course, right now as I write this my thought process is entirely conducted in English—unless it's not.) She wondered, then, if she did the majority of "thinking" in the narrow sense of the word in English. Japanese was closest to feeling and senses, and English was closest to logic and analysis.

Second, she noticed that she was going back and forth between languages. Her diary was always a mezcla de lenguas, a mixture of English and Japanese and other random languages she'd learned.

The third conclusion was that there were constant "translations" inside her head. Which language came first, she couldn't tell anymore. Incessant exchange between languages, perpetual need for dictionaries. Where did words originate, where did *thoughts* originate? She wondered if her English she spoke was "translation" of her Japanese. She wondered, even if she was thinking and speaking in Japanese, whether she was still operating within the logic of English. Is her thought shaped in a certain way because of English, or is the way she "thinks" in English conditioned by her Japanese brain? Was it English—the language itself—that allowed her to think analytically? Or was it her teacher, who encouraged her to think, that allowed her to develop such thinking?

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From the British Empire to an Empire of English

In *Linguistic Imperialism* (1992), Robert Phillipson analyzes the expansion of English historically, and establishes that Britain (and later the US) have actively promoted the English language in order to create, sustain, or assert its dominance over the world after the fall of the British empire. Their "active promotion" included activities such as: dispatch of English teachers; offers of various educational aids; propagation of the importance of English; creation of

ELT (English Language Teaching) markets and industry; and development of

pedagogy and language theories. Their political and economic forces behind the

active promotion of the language are evident in the comments and historical

documents identified in Phillipson's work. For example, the Chairman of the

British Council, one of the major agencies dedicated to the promotion of English,

made the following statement in the annual report of 1983-84:

> Of course we do not have the power we once had to impose our will but
> Britain's influence endures, out of all proportion to her economic and
> military resources. This is partly because the English language is the
> lingua franca of science, technology, and commerce; the demand for it is
> insatiable and we respond either through the education systems of 'host'
> countries or, when the market can stand it, on a commercial basis. Our
> language is our greatest asset, greater than North Sea Oil, and the supply is
> inexhaustible; . . . I am glad to say that those who guide the fortunes of
> this country share my conviction in the need to invest in, and exploit to the
> full, this invisible, God-given asset. (as cited in Phillipson, 1992, p. 144)

The message has been reiterated by the British Council constantly in order to

make aware the profitability of investment in English and the influence exerted by

the language. A similar quotation can be found in the annual report of 1987-88,

just a few years later:

> Britain's real black gold is not North Sea oil but the English language. It
>
> has long been at the root of our culture and now is fast becoming the
>
> global language of business and information. The challenge facing us is to
>
> exploit it to the full. (as cited in Phillipson, 1992, pp. 48-49)

English was made into a "world commodity"; it was capitalized, marketed,

and industrialized to grow into a "lucrative," "billion-pound business" since the

1950s (Phillipson, 1992, p. 4). According to this scholar, English has been

marketed "as the language of development, modernity, and scientific and technological advance" (p. 11), and such "discourse accompanying and legitimating the export of English to the rest of the world has been so persuasive that English has been *equated with progress and prosperity* [emphasis added]" (p. 8).

With a successful promotion of the language, a huge demand was created for English and for teachers of the language, as stated in the annual report of 1989-90: "The worldwide demand for high-quality English teaching is expanding fast" (as cited in Phillipson, p. 9). More and more English teachers were sent out in the world, and more foreign aids and technical assistance were distributed to expand English teaching. Eventually, English's status as an international language (or rather, *the* international language) was consolidated and its status as the dominant language in the international community was legitimated. In essence, it could be said that "the British empire has given way to the empire of English" (p. 1).

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One time she asked Mika, one of a few students on campus from Japan, how to properly say "Hi" and "Nice to meet you" in Japanese. After spending a semester in the US and a summer in Canada, she had been so immersed in English-speaking environments she couldn't remember what to say and what to do when she met another Japanese. Mika, on the other hand, had gone back to

Japan during the summer so it seemed quite appropriate to address the question to
her.

"You know, the other night I met a group of exchange students from Japan
and said '*Oai-dekite-ureshi-desu.*' Does this sound weird? Do we say this in
Japanese?"

"I know, when I went back to Japan I wasn't sure how to greet my friends; I said
'Hi' and there was an awkward silence… And no, we never say that. That's a
textbook translation of 'Nice to meet you.' Your symptom seems more severe than
mine, Ami."

The Japanese language seemed to be slipping out of her. Increasingly she
was relying on English-Japanese dictionaries in search of Japanese words (not to
say, though, that she stopped using a Japanese-English dictionary. Why is it that
whenever she tries to come up with an English word a Japanese phrase pops up in
her mind, and every time she tries to remember a Japanese word she cannot but
think in English?). She felt the deterioration of her Japanese most acutely when
she talked with her mother on Skype. Explaining what she was studying was the
biggest challenge. "Just a second," she would say, "let me look up in the
dictionary…"

How would she translate "borderland identities," "subversive,"
"hegemony," "queer interventions," and "imperialist discourse"? How about
"gender performativity," "deconstruction," and "coloniality of power"? (And by
the way, dictionaries always proved useless in those moments. Either they didn't

have the entry she was looking for, or the "translation" made no sense whatsoever when they did.) Little by little she gave up telling her mother about her classes and her college life.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

It should be called an *empire* of English because there remains an "imperialist structure" in the ELT industry. ELT should be recognized as an international activity with political, economic, military, and cultural implications and ramifications (Phillipson, 1992, p. 8). Phillipson analyzes the ideological implications and consequences of ELT and argues that the ELT enterprise—combined with foreign educational aid and technical assistance—are perpetuating "global North-South inequalities" and exploitation by producing, reproducing, and sustaining an asymmetric relationship between the Center and Periphery countries. Here, the "Center" refers to Kachru's Inner Circle, where English is spoken as the native tongue and where the rules or norms of English are developed, and which roughly corresponds with the global North. The "Periphery" refers to the Outer and Expanding Circles, which roughly corresponds with the global South and which include much of the rest of the world where English plays an important role in the society in varying degrees even though English is not the native tongue. The English-speaking Center does not only "makes the rules" of English by which the Periphery countries are required to abide, but also sustain their dominance—material *and* intellectual—by keeping less developed communities in a periphery status.

In the ELT industry specifically, an "imperialist pattern" is observed in the way the Center always provides teachers and the Periphery provides learners. The Center defines, and has the power to impose, linguistic and pedagogic standards in ELT. That is, most methods, techniques, procedures, contents, and theories followed in ELT are produced in the Center institutions and consumed by the Periphery teachers and students (Phillipson, 1992). ELT, therefore, is "neo-colonialist" (p. 71), contributing in education systems to the reproduction and distribution of political, economic and cultural power.

This supremacy of English—and the dominance enabled *by* English—as well as consequential marginalization of other languages and of the Periphery countries is a form of imperialism called *linguistic imperialism*. Linguistic imperialism is tentatively defined by Phillipson (1992) as "the dominance of English . . . asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages" (p. 47). It is an example of *linguicism* that operates within an imperialist structure as a whole, and establishes (American or British "Standard") English as the dominant language and as the norm while devaluing other languages (or other varieties of English). Such an institutionalization of English in the international society parallels the process of standardization of English in the U.S. society, which involves a construction through mystification, claiming of authority, generation of misinformation, trivializing of non-mainstream language,

promises and threats, and marginalization of non-conformers (Lippi-Green, 1997).

One symptom of the dominance of English can be seen in linguistic borrowing or "loan words"—although these terms are "misleading" because "speakers of a language who borrow words from another have no intention of returning anything" (Phillipson, 1992, p. 7). This "purely unidirectional" transaction—a universalization (or globalization) of English words and marginalization of other languages—can be observed, for example, in the appropriation of the English words "gay" and "queer" in Spanish-speaking countries. Carefully comparing the trajectories the English word "queer" and an equivalent word in Portuguese "michê," Epps (2008) states that "'Queer', procedente de un contexto anglófono, se generaliza, se globaliza, mientras que 'michê', procedente de un contexto lusófono y, más concretamente, brasileño, permanece particular" (Coming from an Anglophone context, the word "queer" generalizes and globalizes itself; coming from a Lusophone context, or more specifically Brazilian, the word "michê" remains particular) (p. 911). This poses an "amenaza lingüística" (linguistic threat), and could be considered as constitutive of linguistic and cultural imperialism.

The consequence of the dominance of English is not limited to the realm of linguistics by any means. Because language is the primary means for communicating ideas,

> an increased linguistic penetration of the Periphery is essential for
> completing the move away from crude means, the sticks of colonial times,
> and even the more discreet means of the neo-colonialist phase of
> asymmetrical bargaining, to neo-neo-colonialist control by means of ideas.
> (Phillipson, 1992, p. 53)

Language being the medium of communication in all fields, English performs the role of a "shared code" that allows ideas to be exported, imported, and incorporated. English, therefore, is a "precondition" for all other types of imperialism: cultural, social, scientific, economic, political, and more. In this sense, Phillipson argues that English is the key medium for processes of structural and ideological incorporation into the norms of the Center, the process of which could be called "Americanization" or "Westernization" of the world (pp. 58-59).

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"Thank you" troubled her. It sounds so innocent and yet it's not so simple. It was one of the expressions she struggled to get accustomed to saying when she started to live in the United States. "Thank you" to a compliment; to somebody who held door for her; or in any other situation where an English-speaker would smile and gracefully say, "thank you." Not that an equivalent expression does not exist in Japanese; it certainly does. However, as a Japanese she was supposed to deny a compliment ("Oh no! It's not true!"), or, in other situations, *apologize* for the inconvenience and trouble that she had caused to the other person (such as holding the door for her) rather than expressing gratitude. "*Sumimasen*" (I'm

sorry) would be an appropriate thing to say in those moments, rather than "*arigato*" (thank you). Gratitude meant acceptance, and she could not—should not—accept such generous behavior as a given.

In fact, even "you're welcome" troubled her. It was because this expression, too, meant acceptance of the gratitude expressed by the other person, which in turn meant recognizing that her action was worthy of gratitude. No, no, no. She was not supposed to accept gratitude; she should deny it because she hadn't done anything worthy of it.[12]

She kept denying and apologizing for the first couple of months, then she mumbled for another month or two, after which she *finally* started to feel comfortable and confident about saying "thank you" and "you're welcome" (with a smile). She experienced an epic feeling of accomplishment and of liberation (*I just sounded like a native speaker!*), yet she could not help but feel a subtle sense of guilt. Guilt? For whom? For the person who held the door for her? For the fellow Japanese? For herself? She didn't know, but she felt as if she was becoming an (arrogant) American.

Then she wondered; *would I ever become fluent in English and if I did, would I become less Japanese? In trying to learn the new language, have I*

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[12] After writing this passage I was introduced to a book written by an anthropologist David Graeber. In his book *Debt: The First 5,000 Years* (2011), Graeber briefly discusses the American custom of *constantly* saying "please," "thank you," and "you're welcome" in relation to the concept of debt. "We often assume that the habit is universal," but it is in fact "middle-class etiquette [that] insists that we are all equals" and furthermore, "a relatively recent innovation" that emerged during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with the commercial revolution (pp. 122-124).

already lost a part of my identity as a Japanese? How much could I still claim to be a Japanese and how American had I become?? Questions kept coming up into her mind. *Where do I draw the line, and where do I find a balance between the two?*

<center>***</center>

Such a process of incorporation—or Westernization—happens at levels both national and individual. Glas (2008) critically analyzes the dominant discourse in favor of learning English in Chile and demonstrates that such discourse implicitly supports the nation's successful integration to the international economy as the only means of its economic development on the one hand, and urges the population to "consume" more products and services in order to improve their English on the other. This discourse, she concludes, in essence spreads "capitalist values" such as economic success and an individualistic mentality.

It is true that ELT has been aided for "specific purposes" and goals not too different from Macaulay's. According to Iredale (1986), some British donors thought that: "[n]aturally, when people learn English, for whatever purpose and by whatever method, they acquire something of the flavour of our culture, our institutions, our ways of thinking and communicating" (as cited in Phillipson, p. 11). In essence, "language and ideology are often so intertwined" that it is impossible to learn (standardized) English without simultaneously adopting the values of the people who claim to it as their own, or being *transformed* in the

process in some ways (Greenfield, 2007, p. 149). In other words, language

acquisition goes hand in hand with "ideological conditioning" (p. 151).

If learning is an ideological conditioning, teaching is indoctrination.

English teachers (especially those sent from the Center countries to the Periphery

countries) act not merely as "teachers" of the language but also possibly as agents

of linguistic and cultural imperialism, disseminating Western cultures, norms,

behaviors, values, way of thinking, and so on (Phillipson, 1992). Similarly,

Pennycook (1990) argues that language teaching that refuses to explore the

cultural and political aspects of language learning has more to do with

assimilating learners than empowering them. In sum, language is never a "neutral

vehicle of communication" but rather a "site of struggle among competing

discourses" (Greenfield, 2007, pp. 153-54).

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"Now why did you insert this new idea in this paragraph?" Having

finished reading her draft of a comparison essay, "Diversity in Japan," Professor

Brown looked up from the paper and looked at her (which she didn't like at all;

she felt her body shrink a little).

"Why are you suddenly changing the subject? It doesn't seem to fit in your essay.

And you always seem to do it when you write."

She looked back at the professor, puzzled. *What is wrong with changing*

the subject in the middle of an essay? Am I not supposed to present new ideas?

(Of course she didn't say so; she was a polite and respectful student. Speaking of

politeness and respect, there's one thing that I can't do, which is to address my professor by their first name. I just can't do it. Somehow I can call my professors of Spanish by their first name—I mean I felt awful at first but with time and practice I guess I got used to it—but when I write them emails I still always address them Querido/a Profesor/a + their last name. Calling by their first name just isn't right. No, I'll never ever do that. And also, how I wish there was *keigo*[13] in English; if there were I wouldn't have struggled so much to talk to professors in my first years at college. Many of my Japanese friends say English is much easier than Japanese because there's no *keigo*, that they feel liberated without the need to use *keigo* when speaking English, but that's not necessarily true. I miss knowing how to speak appropriately to people. I miss being able to show my respect and put an adequate distance. I wish there was some kind of form to follow when I'm speaking to my professors. It makes me feel uncomfortable.) Meanwhile, Professor Brown returned her eyes to the paper, and crossed out the paragraph.

"You see, your essay flows much better without this paragraph. You need to work on coherence. Your essay should progress in a logical manner, not jumping from one subject to another."

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[13] *Keigo* (literally "respectful language") is a broad term for honorifics in the Japanese language. It includes both special vocabulary and grammatical forms, and consists of three general types: respectful language, humble (or modest) language, and polite language.

She nodded in silence to demonstrate approval, put her paper in her bag and quietly left the professor's office with her head down, still not understanding the diagnosis just given to her.

It was probably a couple of weeks after her entrance to Mount Holyoke College and this was the third essay to write for English 104 (English for Multilingual Speakers, which was a fancy way of saying ESL, English as a Second Language). She took away the problematic paragraph from her essay as was told, making it a standard five-paragraph essay. It was compact and coherent, but she thought it lacked something.

It was not until after a couple of more weeks had passed when she finally figured out what her problem was. It turned out that she was unconsciously following the four-stage structure and development of Japanese narratives: *Ki-sho-ten-ketsu*. *Ki* is the introduction; *sho* is the development of the story following on from the introduction; *ten* is the turn or twist, an introduction of a new or unknown topic, which is considered the crux of the story; and *ketsu* is the resolution or conclusion. She could see the *ki-sho-ten-ketsu* in all of her essays. *Strange*, she thought, *I'd never even really learned how to write essays in Japanese and still this structure had seeped into my subconscious and influenced my writing in English…* What must have concerned her professor was the *ten* part—the turn and the twist, which was considered unnecessary and inappropriate in an English essay.[14]

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[14] A "twist" or complication of ideas is important also in English papers. However, I think

Now that she understood the problem, fixing it was relatively easy. Her revised essay came back to her with an A.

<center>***</center>

Not surprisingly, however, such cultural and political aspects of language learning and teaching—and the connections between the English language and political, economic, and military power—are rarely pursued in language pedagogy, which confines itself to linguistic, literary, or methodological matters focused on what goes on in the classroom (Phillipson, 1992, p. 8). In other words, the theories of language learning and teaching take a *technical* approach based on the "positivistic paradigm" (Pennycook, 1990). Consequently, English is frequently taught as if it were politically neutral. Advocates of English often promulgate the idea that English is a neutral commodity, a mere *tool*, that one can pick up and use to his/her advantage and that "allows people around the world to gain access to knowledge and resources" (Kubota & Ward, 2000, p. 82). The acquisition of this "international language" promises access to greater

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the placement of the twist in an essay is different. Usually it is included in the thesis statement or in the first paragraph in order to foreshadow the direction you are taking in the essay and the argument you will be making. You are not supposed to "surprise" a reader as much as you are in Japanese. I remember struggling to state a conclusion or argument in my first paragraph when I came to college because for me a conclusion was to be stated, well, in the conclusion paragraph. Another different that I struggled at first was being direct and explicit. My English professor once told the class to "walk the reader through" in our analytical essays. The metaphor stood out to me: take the reader through by hand through my thought process and progression of ideas. In my experience, in Japanese schools, our responsibilities as a reader were much more emphasized than our responsibilities as a writer (we had very few writing assignments to begin with). Being too explicit in writing seemed to be associated with rather undermining the intelligence of the reader. My experience at college in the US has been completely opposite; much more emphasis seems to be given to the responsibilities of a writer to make the argument as explicit, logical, and clear as possible.

"opportunities" and privileges—academic, economic, social, etc.—and therefore is beneficial for the economic development of a country as well as achievement of personal goals and professional development of individuals. It *sounds* good, and not only does it sound good but it sounds self-evident: a statement of a matter of fact. As Phillipson (1992) rightly observes, the arguments in favor of English are "intuitively commonsensical, but only in the Gramscian sense of being based on beliefs which reflect the dominant ideology. . . . Hegemonic ideas tend to be internalized by the dominated, even though they are not objectively in their interest" (p. 8). This would partly explain why many people around the world, myself included, have subscribed to the value of English and even become *obsessed* with learning or teaching the language—a phenomenon that I now turn to examine.

<p align="center">***</p>

"Would you like to join our membership card today?" A friendly shopkeeper at *Sears* asked her at the register after a friendly chat on the weather on a Sunday afternoon in June.

"No, thank you," she replied, "I'm not from here."

"Oh," surprised, the shopkeeper replied: "I thought you were Canadian because you don't have accent."

"Well, I'm from Japan… but I'm studying in the US now… I'm working here in Toronto just for the summer."

"Oh, you speak such good English, though. Well, good luck!"

"Thank you," happily she left the shop, blushing.

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Colonization of the Imagination: English, Modernity, and Coloniality of Power

The hegemonic status of English may be explained by the concept of "coloniality of power" developed by a Peruvian sociologist and critical theorist Anibal Quijano. In *Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality* (2007), Quijano argues that the relationship between the European or Western culture and others "continues to be one of colonial domination" characterized by asymmetric structure of power between the two and subordination of the "other" cultures (p. 169). This structure remains even after a demolition of "colonialism," a formal political system of direct social and cultural domination and repression. This asymmetric structure of power is maintained through the hierarchical classification of race, ethnicity, nation, etc., informed and justified by the allegedly "scientific," "objective," and "rational" knowledge. This subordination of the other cultures is not only an *external* relation but rather *internalized*; the high cultures of Asia, for example, are placed in a subordinate relation "not only in the European view, but also in the eyes of their own bearers" (p. 170). In other words, this relationship consists of "a colonization of the imagination of the dominated" and works in "the interior of that imagination" (p. 169). Therefore, "colonialism" has simply been replaced by a new form of colonization: "coloniality of power" or colonization of the imagination, which is characterized

by the internalization of the European conceptual models, values, and modes of

knowing. This is what Phillipson means by "neo-neo-colonialist control by means

of ideas" (1992, p. 53).

Such internalization of European paradigms is realized by the power of

"seduction." Quijano explains:

> The colonizers also imposed a mystified image of their own patterns of
> producing knowledge and meaning. . . . Later, they taught them in a partial
> and selective way, in order to co-opt some of the dominated into their own
> power institutions. Then European culture was made seductive: it gave
> access to power. After all, beyond repression, the main instrument of all
> power is its seduction. Cultural Europeanisation was transformed into an
> aspiration. It was a way of participating and later to reach the same
> material benefits and the same power as the Europeans . . . European
> culture became a universal cultural model. (p. 169)

Following his logic, it is not difficult to imagine then that the language once

imposed by the European colonizer (and most likely resisted by the colonized) has

become associated with the power of the colonizer, and ultimately made itself

seductive. There was no need for the British or American government to impose

the language on other countries by force or "the sticks" anymore; their *desire* for

English has driven their governments, businesses, institutions, schools, and people

to welcome English, willingly accept aids and assistance, consume this

commodity, and demand more. Furthermore, it could be said that once having

interiorized European paradigms and values, people in the Periphery communities

have come to participate in the subordination of their own culture, i.e., their

language.

Quijano's concept of "coloniality of power" has implications also about the role of language itself in the process of colonization of the imagination and sustaining coloniality of power. Because language is one of the primary means of production of knowledge, modes of knowing, intellectual expression, communication, documentation, and more, language performs the role of a "shared code" that allows ideas to be exported, imported, and incorporated among different cultures as Phillipson (1992) postulates. Furthermore, one could argue that language encapsulates cosmovisión (visions of cosmos) and language itself is simultaneously the vehicle *and* the substance of the imagination.

<div align="center">***</div>

Can I write this thesis in Japanese? Probably not. No, I'm not asking about the logistics; whether or not I'm allowed to write a thesis in Japanese at an English-speaking institution. I'm asking about my ability to write in Japanese, to conceptualize and to express that thought. And no, the answer is no. Even though I *am* Japanese, and it's my mother tongue. (When I was a first year of the college I might have said I'd rather write in Japanese. How I wished to write in Japanese. But after four years of education here, I don't think that way anymore.) No, I don't have the vocabulary to adequately address the phenomena that I'm observing, the vocabulary to describe the situations. I don't know how to write academically in Japanese. Or maybe I can, after much reading on the topic in Japanese. Would the outcome be the same if I did research and writing in Japanese? I guess not. The thought cannot be separated from the language. I can

only perceive what I know how to express. My thought is determined by the language I speak.

<div align="center">***</div>

Some of the "ideas" exported with English and incorporated among different cultures are "development" and "modernity," concepts that require reconsideration. There lies a fundamental problem with these terminologies that should be contextualized. According to Esteva (1996), the era of "development" started on January 20th, 1949, the moment President Truman stated in his inaugural address that:

> I believe that we should make available to peace-loving peoples the benefits of our store of technical knowledge in order to help them realize their aspirations for a better life. And, in cooperation with other nations, we should foster capital investment in areas needing development. . . . we must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas. (The Harry S. Truman Library and Museum, "Truman Inaugural Address, January 20, 1949")

"Development" is therefore a "symbiotic relationship" (Phillipson, 1992, p. 43) to underdevelopment, and on the day of Truman's address, two billion people suddenly found themselves "underdeveloped" (Esteva, 1996, p. 52). Even though the word "development" has "a purely positive ring to it" in non-technical language (Phillipson, 1992, p.43), "development" as Truman uses it is a Western invention; it is a colonial legacy which holds the West as the norm and "underdevelopment" is a result of colonization. Phillipson exaplains that:

> The label *underdeveloped* evolved as a euphemistic reformulation of the colonialist epithets *backward* and *primitive*. 'Underdeveloped' was still an ethnocentric term, as it was premised on the belief that other cultures

> should follow along a Darwinian line towards the technical heights of western 'civilization'. (p. 42)

It doesn't matter if we call it "developing" or "emergent" instead of "underdeveloped," for they are still ethnocentric in that they hold up the "developed"—i.e., western civilization—as the norm. Therefore, "[i]n the study of the post-colonial world, development . . . refers to a particular vision of economic and technical advance" (p. 43). Similarly, the term "modernization," which describes the "development" process, is problematic. As Ivy (1995) explains, "modern" indicates:

> not only the urban energies, capitalist structures of life, and mechanical and electrical forms of reproduction . . . It indicates as well the changes effected in identities and subjectivities, through the emergence of individualism and new modes of interiority; in relationships to temporality, through the emergence of "tradition" as the background against which progressive history could be situated[.] (pp. 4-5)

The key word here is "progressive history"; both "development" and "modernization" invoke an imaginary line of evolution—a singular, linear trajectory—that denies the contemporaneity of the so-called "developing" countries and hold the West as an ideal and a goal. History is conceived as an evolutionary, unidirectional path from the "primitive" to the "civilized," "traditional" to "modern," "savage" to "rational," "pre-capitalism" to "capitalism," etc, with mythically conceived starting and ending points. In this unilineal perspective, "[w]e are all headed for the same destination . . . but some people were to arrive earlier than others" (Chakrabarty, 2000, p. 8). They haven't arrived here yet; they are "not yet" civilized enough, this "not yet" creating an

"imaginary waiting room of history" (p. 8). In so doing, it takes away the possibility of developing and modernizing *in their own way* but allows only a homogeneous, united version of progress toward an established goal. At the same time, it justifies the colonizer for making interventions in disguise of "aid," "assistance" and "collaboration."

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"Are you studying at an American university? *Sugoi* (how impressive)!" Such excitement and admiration as always, whether in the study abroad office she worked for two summers, or at the high school from which she graduated, or at meetings with exchange students from Japan.

"All your classes are in English, aren't they? Does that mean you are *fluent in English*?"

Annoyed, she utters "of course" in her head; in reality, she patiently smiles and answers "Yes" to the first question, "No" to the second. "*Mada-mada desu*"(I'm still learning).

"How do you speak English so well? How did you study? How can I become like you, Ami-san?"

She used to think that way. She also used to think that English would make her cool. But now that she was there, the place once she dreamed to be, she knew that speaking English or living abroad didn't make her cool or saintly.

***

In this chapter I have reviewed the historical fact that English has been actively promoted by the British and American agencies (as well as the Periphery governments aligned with the Center ideologies) in order to propagate certain ideologies and export their cultures, while the Periphery countries have willingly adopted the language as a symbol of "universal" values such as "development" and "modernity." Together, English has arguably advanced processes called "Americanization" or "Westernization." However, it is important to ask: Does English *always* and *only* promote Western values and norms? Are *all* teachers of English agents of American imperialism, and are *all* English learners assimilated, indoctrinated, and incorporated into capitalist ideologies—and therefore *colonized*—without exceptions? How does the "power" play out in the *local* as well as the *global*?

In the next chapter, I will turn to the case of a Periphery country, Bhutan, and examine the nature of relationship between English and Western values including "development" and "modernization," which were both introduced around the same time, and the role English plays internally within the border of Bhutan.

CHAPTER THREE:

THE LAST SHANGRI-LA?: ENGLISH AND MODERNIZATION IN

BHUTAN

-OR-

WHO AM I BECOMING?

Who is to say that robbing a people of its language is less violent than war?
—Ray Gwyn Smith

We had left the hotel at 4:30am to catch our 6:50am flight from Bangkok

to Paro, but the flight ended up delayed by 4-5 hours due to inclement weather.

Nora, the other intern from the U.S. and I waited anxiously inside Suvarnabhumi

Airport, a *gigantic* building that resembled a space station with all the glass

façades hung on vaulted metal lattice frames.

With nothing particular to do, I opened my journal to jot down my

thoughts for a blog post titled "Off to the Land of the Thunder Dragon." I flipped

through pages of *Chikyu-no-aruki-kata*, a guidebook of Bhutan that I had

purchased in Japan. I started reading its main article ("Buddhist Kingdom: The

Last Shangri-La in the Himalayas"), admiring the pictures of beautiful rice

paddies and temples for the twentieth or thirtieth time.

The Land of the Thunder Dragon or *Drukyul* as the country is called, the

Kingdom of Bhutan is one of the most geographically isolated nations in the

world. Located in the eastern Himalayas and landlocked between India and China

(Figure 2), Bhutan is home to a population of approximately 725,000 spread over

the territory of about 14,900 square miles, which is smaller than Massachusetts

and Connecticut combined (The World Bank, "Bhutan Overview"). Despite the

size, the terrain actually presents one of the most diverse ranges of altitude zones

and varied climatic conditions in the world.[15]

Figure 2. Map of Bhutan showing its border with China and India as of 2012 (CIA, 2013).

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[15] The country is divided roughly in three areas according to their altitude and climate zones: rugged, mountainous, glacier-covered terrain in the north at an elevation of some 25,000 feet (7,600m); high mountains in the center ranging from 3,000 to 12,000 feet (900m to 3,600m) of altitude; and subtropical plains in the south at an elevation of some 500 feet (150m) (CIA, 2013).

We took off at around noon, and after a brief layover at Bagdogra Airport in West Bengal, India, we finally approached Paro Airport, which was located at an elevation of 7,300 feet (2,230m) above sea level surrounded by high peaks.[16] As the pilot skillfully made its way through deep, narrow valleys of Paro, I could see small farm houses scattered on the slopes and perfectly ordered rice paddies spread on endless mountain ranges—just as I had seen in the pictures of the guidebook.

The dramatic landing of the place was followed by "oohs" and "aahs" of the passengers, many of whom were tourists, taking out their camera and pressing the shutter to capture the amazing scenery that unfolded in front of their eyes. A giant picture of the Fifth King and Queen greeted us with a smile and welcomed us to a small airport built in the traditional style, which looked rather like a temple, intricately hand-carved and painted (Figure 3 and 4). We went inside, and waited on one of the two lines for immigration, which we passed through effortlessly. On the other side of the airport, a taxi driver and a staff from the organization were waiting for us.

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[16] This airport is considered to be one of the world's most challenging airports. Only about eight pilots are certified to land at the airport (Chikyu-no-arukikata henshu-shitsu, 2012).

Figure 3. Paro Airport on June 1st, 2013.

Figure 4. Paro Airport, the picture of the Fifth King and Queen, and
tourists.

The four of us drove to Thimphu on a narrow, winding highway along the mountains. On the way the taxi driver picked up two monks, who were also going to the same direction. We enjoyed a little chat in English and I even tried some phrases in Dzongkha.

Thimphu was filled with people from all over Bhutan as well as foreign temporary workers and expats who have come in search of jobs. The library and resource center where I worked was located in the Changjiji community, site of a government-subsidized national housing complex and home to about 10,000 residents. Housing many immigrants from all over Bhutan, this community reflected the ethnic and linguistic diversity and recent internal migration trends in Bhutan; I met immigrants from the East (Trashiyangtse, Trashigang, Mongar and Pemagatshel in particular), the South (Zhemgang) and the West (Chukha and Samtse). Their length of stay in Thimphu ranged from a few years to more than 20 years. I met many Tsangla speakers among the women and children who frequently visited the community library and resource center (which I'll call "the Changjiji library" from now on).

Bhutan is ethnically and linguistically diverse. A popular saying indicates that there is a "different tongue in every valley" (Chikyu-no-arukikata henshu-shitsu, 2012). Four major languages are spoken in the country as mother tongues of four major ethnic groups, which are more or less equally distributed in terms of percentage of the population (CIA, 2013): Dzongkha is the official national language since 1971 and is spoken by Ngalop villagers, who are people of Tibetan

origin concentrated in western and northern Bhutan; Sharchhopka (also known as

Tsangla) is spoken by the Sharchop, an Indo-Mongoloid people residing in eastern

Bhutan; Nepali (also known as Lhotsam) is spoken by the Lhotshampa, or

Nepalese, who live mostly in southern region; and an aboriginal Khen language is

spoken in central Bhutan along with some 20 other languages spoken by different

aboriginal peoples (Drokpha, Lepcha, and Doya to name but a few) scattered

throughout the country (Worden, 1993). Few studies have been conducted to map

the complex, linguistic landscape of the country, or to document any of these

indigenous languages (some of them are said to be extinct or on verge of

extinction). It is generally agreed, however, that there are 16 to 25 languages,[17] all

of which are spoken languages except their national language, Dzongkha, which

adopted Tibetan letters and developed a writing system in the 1960s (Phuntsho,

2013). The linguistic map below (Figure 5) gives us a sense of where these

people/languages originated (or inhabited for a long time).

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[17] For instance, a popular guidebook of Bhutan (*Chikyu-no arukikata*) states that 19 languages are spoken in Bhutan (except English). Phuntsho (2013) states that there are "about sixteen local vernaculars" (p. 61). Web-based reference, *Ethnologue: Languages of the World* identifies 27 indigenous languages, seven of which are categorized under "threatened."

Figure 5. Linguistic Map of Bhutan (Phuntsho, 2013)

What kind of changes and consequences has the introduction of English brought about to this unique linguistic diversity in Bhutan? For what purpose was English introduced by whom? What kind of discourses surrounds English language education, and education mediated by English? What kind of conflict might there be present between English and indigenous languages, and how do Bhutanese people navigate between the two or more languages? These were some of my questions for my research in Bhutan. In this chapter, I will demonstrate how the introduction of English was connected with development and modernization of the country, and its expansion has driven Bhutan toward increased integration into the global capitalist system. I will also examine how the dominance of English in Bhutanese society has pushed Dzongkha to a periphery

status while also stigmatizing indigenous languages, establishing hierarchies between international, national, and local languages. Different attitudes toward these languages—English, Dzongkha, and others—will be explored through policies, internal debates, and interviews.

From Isolation to Integration: Development Plans and Establishment of Modern Education

Bhutan's isolation from the world is not only geographical but also political, or so narrates their popular discourse. It has chosen to remain in a state of "self-imposed isolation" since its first settlement as far back as 2000 B.C. (Powdyel, 2005, p. 46). The majority of the population were farmers, engaged with self-sufficient agriculture and without developing cash-based economy (Phuntsho, 2013). Bhutan's external relations were therefore limited to contacts with Tibet and (British) India—which, in fact, have had significant influence over Bhutan's ethnic formation, territory, religion, politics, language, culture, social structure, and more.[18] This narrative of "isolation" that is repeated over and over,

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[18] Since the introduction of Buddhism from Tibet in the seventh century and the growth of this religion in the country, Bhutan had religious and geopolitical conflicts with Tibet, which had posed a major external threat to Bhutan's independence until after the force of the British Empire reached the region in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The introduction of Buddhism shaped the religion, social structure, and culture of Bhutan, and significantly impacted internal and external politics of the country for centuries. The connection between Bhutan and Tibet can be seen in the similarity of the Tibetan language and Dzongkha, the language spoken by the Ngalop (the "westerners" of Tibetan origin). Till today, Choekey, classical Tibetan, has been used in religious sector, and its alphabet is adopted to Dzongkha, the national language.

Conflicts over boundary and territories arose also with British India, which tried to gain control over some of lands under Bhutanese control in the eighteenth century. A

however, may have the effect of diminishing the importance of the kinds of

foreign relations and conflicts that Bhutan has had over the centuries with these

two Asian powers. These relationships that simultaneously posed a threat to

Bhutan's sovereignty and brought cultural enrichment may indicate that the

incorporation of English that I will describe later is not just an "invasion" and

threat to native Bhutanese culture but rather another kind of influence that may

lead to another kind of mixture and enrichment—although the scale and pace of

changes in the last half-century are much different from those in the past that

occurred over centuries.

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number of invasions and unsuccessful missions were brought to an end by the British victory in the Duar War (1864-65) and subsequent conclusion of the Treaty of Sinchula, under which Bhutan ceded some border territories in return for an annual subsidy from Britain. In 1907, a hereditary monarchy was set up under British influence; three years later, a new Bhutanese-British agreement, the Treaty of Punakha, was signed whereby Bhutan allowed Britain to direct its foreign affairs and the British agreed not to interfere in Bhutanese internal affairs (Worden, 1993). When India became independent from Britain in 1947, Bhutan's relationship with Britain also ended and India succeeded Britain as the "de facto protector" of this kingdom. Two years later, the Treaty of Friendship Between the Government of India and the Government of Bhutan was signed to define India's responsibilities in guiding the external affairs of Bhutan, and Bhutan's maintenance of its control over its internal affairs (Worden, 1993). In early 2007, India and Bhutan renegotiated this treaty to allow Bhutan greater autonomy in conducting its foreign policy, although the Bhutanese government continues to coordinate policy decisions in this area with India (CIA, 2013). As Bhutan became a member of the UN in 1971 and its affiliated agencies during the 1970s and 1980s, it started to establish formal diplomatic relations with some fifteen other nations, primarily in South Asia and Scandinavia (Worden, 1993). As of 2013, the number has increased to 52 countries, including Japan, Canada and Brazil, but Bhutan has yet to establish formal diplomatic relations with Britain or the United States (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013).

Bhutan has a relationship with India in the area of education and culture; India continues to be one of the most popular places for young Bhutanese to study, and the recent introduction of TV and the Internet (1999) in Bhutanese society has accelerated the spread of Hindi culture (i.e. Bollywood music and dance) among Bhutanese youth. Some think that "modernization" of Bhutan is a process of "Indianization." See Phuntsho (2013) for a more thorough description and analysis of relationship between Bhutan and its neighboring countries.

That being said, Bhutan is arguably one of the last countries to have started what people have frequently called the process of "modernization." It began on a limited scale during the reign of the first hereditary monarch (Druk Gyalpo or "Dragon King"),[19] Ugyen Wangchuck, who reigned from 1907 to 1926 and introduced Western-style schools,[20] revitalized the Buddhist monastic system, and encouraged trade and commerce with India, among others. A more dynamic, "far-reaching development strategy" was put forth by the Third King, Jigme Dorji Wangchuck (reigned 1952-72). He launched a series of Five-Year Development plans beginning in 1961 and effectively brought about Bhutan's "modern era" (The World Bank, "Bhutan Overview"; Worden, 1993).

It is important to note that the perceived need for "development" and "modernization" of the country is necessarily preceded or accompanied by a keen awareness that Bhutan is an "underdeveloped" country that has yet to modernize, and recognition of its backwardness as well as of the necessity to "catch up." These are, as I discussed in the previous chapter, an internalization of colonialist thinking. That being said, what is also important to acknowledge is that Bhutan imagined a somewhat different path to realize its "modernization," articulated in the uniquely Bhutanese concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH). The term

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[19] Bhutan has had three forms of monarchy since its unification in 1651: a dual theocratic-civil system from the sixteenth to the early twentieth century; the hereditary monarchy of the Wangchuck family since 1907, and a constitutional monarchy and multi-party democracy since 2008 (Worden, 1993; The World Bank, "Bhutan Overview").
[20] Before the introduction of Western secular education, Buddhist monastic education had been available for male children since the seventeenth century and has coexisted with public schools to date.

"Gross National Happiness" was first coined by the Fourth King of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, who declared in 1972 that GNH was more important than GNP (Gross National Product). That is to say, economic development and technological advancement should go hand in hand with the preservation of environment and promotion of culture (or tradition). Since then, the ideal of GNH set the framework that has guided the so-called modernization process of Bhutan, including that of education (Bhutan Department of Education, 2004). GNH consisted of four pillars: 1) Sustainable & equitable socio-economic development; 2) Environmental conservation; 3) The preservation and promotion of culture; and 4) Good governance. These were later further classified into nine domains with 33 indicators (Figure 6) in order to reflect its "multidimensional" understanding of happiness and a "holistic" vision of development (Ura, Alkire, Zangmo, & Wandi, 2012). GNH does not reject economic development; on the contrary, it embraces and recognizes the importance of such development. However, GNH may suggest a vision of an alternative path that may *not* assume the unilineal progression toward Western mode of modernity—although to what extent it is realized is open to debate.

Figure 6. The nine domains and 33 indicators of GNH (Ura, Alkire, Zangmo, & Wangdi, 2012)

Both the first Five-Year Plans and GNH regard education as one of the most important—or perhaps single most important—investment for its national development and foundation for increasing happiness (Siaens & Gopal, 2009; Powdyel, 2005; Bhutan Department of Education, 2004). For this reason, the government has made considerable investments since the country's First Five-Year Plan in 1961 in order to establish, promote, and expand modern Western-style education (Siaens & Gopal, 2009; Powdyel, 2005; Rinchen, 1999). Bhutan has yet to establish a legal framework for its education system[21] and primary

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[21] Currently, the school-based education structure in Bhutan consists of 11 years of free basic education starting at the age 6 from pre-primary (PP) to grade 10, which are divided

school enrollment is not compulsory. Nevertheless, education is recognized "both as a basic right and as a pre-requisite for achieving the wider social, cultural and economic goals" (Zam, 2008, p. 6), and the recently adopted Bhutanese Constitution obligates the government to provide free basic education to all children of school age (Bhutan Department of Education, 2004).

English, Modernization, and Expansion of School System

In the early 1960s, the lack of books and other printed materials in the recently adopted written language of Dzongkha led Bhutanese administrators to turn to Hindi (the official language of India, though little spoken in Bhutan at the time) as the primary language of instruction. The new system of formal secular education was made possible also by bringing in many educators from India to teach the affordable Hindi language instructional materials (Rinchen, 1999). Hindi

into 7 years of primary education (PP to grade 6) and 4 years of secondary education (grade 7 to 10), with additional 2 years of higher secondary education (grade 11 to 12) and tertiary education at an undergraduate level. At the end of the basic education (grade 10), students must take National Board Examinations (Bhutan Department of Education, 2004; Zam, 2008). Several organizations share the responsibility for the administration of education in Bhutan: the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labor and Human Resources, the Royal University of Bhutan, the Dzongkhags (administrative and judicial districts) and the Gewogs (administrative units of villages) (Zam, 2008). The Ministry of Education is responsible for the preparation of a uniform national curriculum, administration of the assessment of student performance and certification, and provision of school supplies at all levels of the school, including stationeries, textbooks and sports items (Bhutan Department of Education, 2004). Although all Bhutanese schools from pre-primary to pre-university must follow the national curriculum prepared by the Ministry of Education, regional districts (Dzongkhag and Gewogs) are entrusted with a range of responsibilities for education in their districts, such as school construction and maintenance and implementation of national policies. Furthermore, every teacher is involved in the decision-making process through a bottom-up approach (Bhutan Department of Education, 2004; Zam, 2008).

did not retain its position for long, however, and was soon replaced by English in the 1970s (Phuntsho, 2013).

The choice of English as the language of instruction was pragmatic for the most part, as had been the earlier choice of Hindi. However, perhaps more importantly, there was another ideological dimension to this choice. Rinchen (1999) suggests that English gained popularity and secured its place in the Bhutanese education system not only because of the aforementioned lack of Dzongkha resources (and easy access to English materials on the contrary) but also because of strong Western influences in Bhutan. The status of English as an international language, the presence of English-speaking tourists in Bhutan, and better job opportunities that English could afford, all established an association between English and values such as "development" and "modernity" while "Dzongkha is not regarded [as] a language which can bring development" (p. 4). In other words, Dzongkha was perceived as the language of the past, of tradition, or perhaps even of stagnation and backwardness. These two distinct discourses surrounding these two languages (English and Dzongkha) have assigned distinct roles and values to them, establishing a clear hierarchy between the two.

From a linguistic point of view, however, all languages are equal and equally capable of adopting new concepts and have complex enough grammar and vocabulary needed in the societies where the language is spoken (Lippi-Green, 1997; Salzmann, 2007). Still, it was considered both by scholars and general public that "[m]ost Bhutanese languages are basic spoken languages

lacking [emphasis added] in terminologies for sophisticated ideas . . . [and] do not have sufficient vocabulary and literacy resources to be able to cope with the rapid expansion of knowledge in the country" (Phuntsho, 2013, p. 60). This scholar adds that Dzongkha is "disappointingly short of vocabulary to render new technological and scientific terminology" (p. 53). "Lacking," "inadequate," "insufficient," "limited," "poor," and even "useless"—these are the kind of adjectives that I heard many teachers and adults use to describe Dzongkha and the reason why English, not Dzongkha, should be the language of instruction in schools. This attitude reveals a deficit model, that there is something fundamentally wrong with and inferior about Dzongkha, *devoid* and *in need* of a more "sophisticated" language such as English.

What is perceived as "insufficiency" of Dzongkha or of other local languages (which, by the way, are not even included in the debate) in Bhutan should be understood as an indication of how *foreign* and perhaps *irrelevant* this "knowledge" imported and taught in schools is to the way Bhutanese people have lived their lives in the past. As a matter of fact, the value of school education was not readily or immediately accepted by the general people in Bhutanese society. When the secular school system was first established, governors and teachers had to literally visit each household to convince the population of the value of school education and persuade the parents to send their children to school. Many parents could not afford to send their children to school and would prefer that their children—especially daughters—work in the field.

In the beginning, when the value of school education was yet to consolidate in society, parents were reluctant to send their daughters away to school precisely because girls had more important work to do, and consequently more boys than girls were sent to school. Much of Bhutan is traditionally matrilineal and the majority of the population still follows matrilineal heritage, giving women an advantage in ownership of land and livestock (FAO, "Fact sheet Bhutan"). Because women inherit property, women are often in charge of working in the fields to take care of it. Ironically, when the structure of the society had drastically changed a couple of generations later and the importance of school education had multiplied, women suddenly found themselves marginalized and disadvantaged.

Although the gender distribution in primary school enrollment has improved and was more or less equal as of 2010 (The World Bank, "Bhutan overview"), gender still seems to play an important role in education especially in rural areas. Many of the women (who had migrated from other areas of Bhutan) to whom I taught basic English literacy in the Changjiji library had absolutely no formal education and were therefore illiterate.[22] Those who did have some education had no more than three years and were thus little better off. And most of these women are my generation; the youngest woman in class was 19 and the

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[22] Some of these women were enrolled in Non-Formal Education (NFE) classes, learning basic Dzongkha literacy offered in schools or community centers like the ones where I worked, although these services were minimal in terms of time, location, consistency, and quality.

majority were in their 20s and 30s. Furthermore, almost without exception their husbands or *brothers* had more years of education than they did.

Despite these setbacks, the education sector in Bhutan has progressively grown since the initial establishment of several private secular schools in the 1950s with a student population of about 400 and some 45 teachers in 11 schools (Powdyel, 2005). By 2013, there were over 172,000 students (and nearly 10,000 adults) taught by over 10,000 teachers in some 554 schools and more than 1,000 Non-Formal Education centers and institutes (Ministry of Education, 2013). Net enrollment rate in primary schools achieved 96% in 2013, and as a result literacy rates have increased tremendously over the last half-century.[23]

Such a rapid expansion of the school system was not possible without foreign aids. In order to meet the increasing demand for education in its country, the Bhutanese government had to resort to loans from various bilateral and multilateral organizations. Breaking from the long "isolation," Bhutan "finally started to open up to the outside world" by joining various international organizations such as the Colombo Plan (1962~), the United Nations (1971~), the World Bank (1981~), the International Monetary Fund (1981~), and the Asian Development Bank (1982~), to name a few, in order to seek assistance for its various development plans including construction of schools (Worden, 1993). As

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[23] According to the Bhutan Living Standard Survey (BLSS) in 2003, the literacy rate for the 10 to 14 age group was 75.3 percent, while it was 42.9 percent for the total population aged 6 and above and only 12.8 percent for the population over age 60 (The World Bank, "Bhutan Overview"). As such, Bhutan's development of its education system has been considered as a "success story."

a result, the country's foreign debt jumped in such a short amount of time;
Bhutan's external debt grew from 2.7 million USD in 1984 to more than 70
million USD in 2004 (Bhutan Department of Education, 2004).

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After working in the head office for the first two days of our internship to
clarify our responsibilities and plan the summer with our supervisor, Nora and I
started working in the Changjiji library from the third day on. Our primary focus
in the first month was pre-evaluation of their five community library and resource
centers, assessing the current situation in each center and conducting focus group
discussions with women and children in the communities to find out their needs.

By mid-June we began our programming in the Changjiji library with the
a group of about twenty women, including English literacy, computer literacy and
health/exercise in the morning. For children we held spontaneous haiku, origami,
and drawing classes in the afternoon until we came up with more structured
programs. We held the first "community tea party" in the nearby park for the
women in June, and soon after that we threw the first "Changjiji kids' party" with
face painting, sport games, storytelling and joke-telling contests, and piñatas.

The women and children were extremely shy around us at first, but
gradually became more open. The children called me "Madam Ami" or "ma'am"
and came running to show me their artwork, whether it was a painting or a poem
("Madam! Madam! Look!"). I grew a strong sense of affection to them and to the
women, and this relationship that I was developing with them made the work all

worthwhile. But I still carried this doubt or hesitation about the approach employed by the organization to the work of community development and empowerment, and I struggled to define my role in relations to the organization and the community.

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One Nation, One People, and One Language?: Invention of a "Bhutanese" Language

Bhutan's entry into international organizations—a global system of nation-states—resulted in their invention of an official national language and standardization of it. In the same year as Bhutan joined the United Nations (1971), Dzongkha was designated as their national language. The word "Dzongkha" means the language (*kha*) spoken in the *dzong*, which are simultaneously a fortress and monastery that serve as the religious, military, administrative, and social centers of administrative districts (called *dzongkhags*). In Anderson (2006)'s term, Dzongkha is an "administrative vernacular" spoken by only a minority of the Bhutanese population at the time. The writing system was invented, and a standard orthographic and grammatical structure was developed (Phuntsho, 2013).

According to Karma Phuntsho, the author of *The History of Bhutan* (2013), this adoption of Dzongkha as their national language was "triggered by a cultural consciousness and nationalistic sentiments aimed at establishing a unique

linguistic identity for Bhutan . . . [and] resisting external claims of linguistic

hegemony as well as uniting the country with a lingua franca" (p. 53). Their

conscious choice of a national language and *systematic imposition* of the language

on the population—which consisted of diverse ethnicities, cultures, and

languages—corresponds with what Benedict Anderson calls "linguistic

nationalism" (2006). Compared to the "gradual, unselfconscious, pragmatic" and

somewhat "haphazard" development or *choices* of the "old administrative

languages," the idea and practice of self-consciously and "systematically

imposing the language on the dynasts' various subject populations" is very recent

and fundamentally different (p. 42).

In the 1980s, the government increased its efforts to consolidate and

promote Bhutan's national and cultural identity. Their "one nation, one people"

policy called *driglam namzha* required the population to wear national dress (the

kira for women and the *gho* for men) in public places and insisted that individual

conduct be based on Buddhist precepts. The Dzongkha Development Commission

was established in 1986 by the Fourth King to standardize and popularize the

newly adopted national language. In 1989, the government mandated Dzongkha

be taught in all schools (Worden, 1993). These measures were taken in an effort

for "Preservation and Promotion of National Identity," outlined as one of the

frameworks of the Sixth Development Plan (1987-92):

> For a small country like Bhutan maintaining and strengthening a distinct
> national identity will always be an important and vital factor for its
> continued well-being and security. . . . Therefore not only must this unique
> identity be preserved and safeguarded against the negative attitudes and

influences that emerge with the growth of the development process but constant efforts must be made to foster an unfailing faith-in and, love and respect for the nation's traditional values and institutions. Concrete steps must also be taken to promote all those aspects of the nation's traditions, culture and customs that are relevent [*sic*] and practical for strengthening the country's unique national identity. (Gross National Happiness Commission, 2011, p. 22)

The promotion of English and Dzongkha seems paradoxical at first; however, both the need for a national language and adoption of English could be understood as part of a globalization process that facilitates a successful integration into the system of nation-states. The turn towards international organizations happens together with increased nationalism.

Their effort to consolidate a unified national (linguistic) identity had yet another dimension; it posed a threat to regional diversity that had existed within the nation. When Dzongkha was designated as their national language, other vernaculars were rendered "dialects"—an "essentially racist ideology" that expresses the way "the dominant group differentiates itself from and stigmatizes the dominated group" (Phillipson, 1992, p. 38). "The rule is that *we* are a nation with a language whereas *they* are tribes with dialects" (p. 38).

The invention of Bhutanese "national language," then, could be viewed as Bhutan's response to the international pressure to rise as a "nation" with a "language" in order to be considered as a legitimate member of the international society; in the meantime, they have stigmatized their own peoples and cultures within the boundary of Bhutan by calling their languages "dialects." According to Calvet (1974), "[a] dialect is never anything other than a defeated language, and a

language is a dialect which has succeeded politically" (as cited in Phillipson, 1992, p. 39). Therefore, these should be called *dominant language* and *dominated language* instead of *language* and *dialect* in order to reflect the power relationship between competing languages. The increased suppression of the Nepali language in Bhutan is an example of this (see Worden, 1993).

Strict language policies at school have also contributed to circumscribe the use of these languages and shape people's attitudes to them. In order to ensure that students speak English in school, some schools inhibit students from speaking local "dialects." If you do, you have to pay fine in some cases, or carry a sign that says, "I will speak only English." The way these languages are treated in school establishes a hierarchy with English at the top, Dzongkha in the middle, and local "dialects" at the bottom. In other words, these languages have not coexisted peacefully; rather, they have been articulated into a hierarchical set of relationships based on political, economic, and cultural powers.

As such, those local "dialects" are increasingly marginalized and conveniently ignored in the discussion of national language policies. Phuntsho (2013) observes that "some of the minor languages are already on the brink of extinction" (p. 52) and "[i]t is very likely that in a few decades most dialects and many minor languages will be dead. A few major languages may survive the onslaught of English and globalization but will nonetheless have changed significantly" (p. 61).

Should we even care? Would the world be better if we all spoke English and got rid of other languages? Would it be the inevitable effect of "natural selection"? Some scholars argue that this "homogenizing" or "globalizing" of human languages through language death may benefit the economy and reduce conflict as it improves communication. "What if half the world's languages are on the verge of extinction? Let them die in peace" (Malik, 2000).

Others argue that there is real loss to the humanity, including those of us who don't speak the language that has disappeared. According to The Hans Rausing Endangered Languages Project, loss of languages actually "is a social, cultural and scientific disaster" (as cited in Everett, 2008, p. 275). In the Epilogue ("Why Care about Other Cultures and Languages?") to *Don't Sleep, There Are Snakes*, Daniel Everett (2008) writes:

> A language is a repository of specialized cultural experiences. . . . Such knowledge [embedded in the words and grammar of the language] can never be recovered if the language has not been studied or recorded. Not all of this knowledge is of immediate practical benefit, of course, but all of it is vital in teaching us different ways of thinking about life, of approaching our day-to-day existence on planet Earth. . . . With terrorism and fundamentalism threatening to sever the ties of trust and common expectations that bind societies together, the examples of endangered languages become ever more precious and their loss ever more damaging to our hopes for survival as a species. (pp. 276-77)

Now, Bhutanese people and government have not completely forgotten about the local languages; GNH, Five-Year Plans and recent manifestos all echo the need to "appreciate the nation's unique cultural heritage," "preserve our traditions," and the like. That being said, discussions of these languages

("dialects") are often marginalized, pushed away to the end of a page under the

section of "others (other languages)."

Marilyn Ivy, an anthropologist of modernity of Japan, writes in her book

Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan (1995) that:

> Through tourism, folklore studies, education, and mass media—and
> through everyday moments of national-cultural interpellation and
> identification—Japanese of all generations seek a recognition of continuity
> that is coterminous with its negation. As culture industries seek to reassure
> Japanese that everything is in place and all is not lost, the concomitant
> understanding arises (sometimes obscurely) that such reassurance would
> not be necessary if loss, indeed, were not at stake. Thus the consuming and
> consumable pleasures of nostalgia as an ambivalent longing to erase the
> temporal difference between subject and object of desire, shot through
> with not only the impossibility but also the ultimate unwillingness to
> reinstate what was lost. For the loss of nostalgia—that is, the loss of the
> desire to long for what is lost because one has *found* the lost object—can
> be more unwelcome than the original loss itself. Despite its labors to
> recover the past and deny the losses of "tradition," modernist nostalgia
> must preserve, in many senses, the sense of absence that motivates its
> desires. (p. 10)

The Royal Family's "ceaseless efforts and sacrifices to conserve,

reconstruct, build and enlarge our rich cultural heritage" (Druk Phuensum

Tshogpa, 2013, p. 91) exemplified by establishments of various museums[24] may

be explained by the above quote; the very need for preserving may mean that it is

already *vanishing*, alienated from daily life and objectified as "heritage." The call

for preservation of indigenous languages is perhaps actually just an

acknowledgement that these languages are no longer, or destined to cease to be,

living and breathing culture. Such "museumization" of indigenous cultures and

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[24] National royal museums that have been established in recent years include: Bhutan
Textile Museum (2001), Folk Heritage Museum (2001), and Ta Dzong Museum (2008).

languages may be a concerted effort to frame indigeneity as old—or dead or dying—, appropriate for the bounded confines of the museum rather than the unbounded sphere of daily life, let alone a part of modern, globalized society. In the meantime, its "exoticness" may be commodified to be consumed by tourists and foreign customers, as a "unique selling point" of Bhutan to attract more international attention (which is already happening) and this may be the only possible way to survive in this "modern" society.

In sum, the "elevation" of a spoken vernacular to the status of "language-of-power," the imagining and (attempted) consolidation of one linguistic and cultural national identity, the stigmatization of other local vernaculars, and the celebration of diversity and promotion of regionalism—coexistence of which may seem paradoxical all form part of a nationalist movement.

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She dragged her luggage inside the Port Authority Bus Terminal in search of a place to sit down and have a breakfast. The bags felt three times heavier after a 16-hour flight from New Delhi. The terminal was already full of people even though it was only six in the morning. She went inside a café, ordered a small coffee, paid, signed the receipt, picked up her coffee, and found herself a seat.

"Hey, you can't sign in Chinese!" The shopkeeper yelled from behind the counter. She was absent-mindedly sipping her coffee. "Hey, you! You can't sign in Chinese!" This time she looked up and looked around. Her eyes met with those of the young man behind the counter. Suddenly she realized that he was yelling at

her; she stood up, silently walked to the counter, calmly took a pen, crossed her

signature on the receipt (寺地亜美), scribbled *Ami Terachi* next to it, and went

back to sit down. Then she suddenly realized what had just happened.

First of all, she swore in her mind, *it's not Chinese, idiot; second of all,*

this is my damn name and I have all the damn right to it, jerk.

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Challenges to Dzongkha's Viability as the National Language: Tension between English and Dzongkha

We may assume that an official national language would play a dominant

role *internally*, if not externally, occupying space in education, workplace,

national media, and so on (while English may take a dominant position for

external, international correspondence). However, Dzongkha's function as a

national language has been minimal for it has met with challenges and resistance

that prevented the language from emerging as a predominant language even

within the national border.

One challenge is, quite obviously, the fact that Dzongkha is only one of

some twenty languages spoken in the country; Dzongkha is estimated to be the

mother tongue of only some 24% of the total population of Bhutan as of 2013

(CIA, 2013).

The second challenge to the promotion of Dzongkha is the dominance of Classical Tibetan in the religious sector.[25] Conservative clerics were "outraged" by the idea of replacing "the rich language of religion" with a vernacular language (Phuntsho, 2013, p. 53). It was feared that "promoting Dzongkha . . . could close the access to the wealth of religious literature available in this medium [through classical Tibetan]" (p. 53).

The third challenge was that the elite, most of whom got educated in English in Western countries, "were and are still today not capable of writing even government correspondences in Dzongkha" (Phuntsho, 2013, p. 53). Having been educated never or little in Dzongkha, even to those who *speak* the language as their mother tongue have difficulty writing and reading it.[26] For those who don't even speak Dzongkha, it is simply another *foreign* language that one has to learn in addition to English.

There were many incidents that made this point clear to me throughout my stay. One day, when I had just arrived in Bhutan and started to plan programs at the Changjiji library, I asked my colleagues, Pema and Namgyel, if we could offer a basic Dzongkha literacy class to the women in the community in addition to the English literacy class. Namgyel, who's a college graduate and native speaker of

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[25] Classical Tibetan used to be used as the written language in Bhutan until they reinvented Dzongkha.

[26] The Bhutan Learning Quality Survey, a nationally representative learning survey conducted in 2007 to assess the achievement level of Classes II and IV in English, Dzongkha and math, found an interesting trend that children whose parents were literate had higher scores in English and math but not Dzongkha, and children belonging to households with more assets performed better, especially in English and math (Siaens & Gopal, 2009). This suggests that the more educated and better off the parents are, the better competence the children have in English (and math) but not in Dzongkha.

Dzongkha, told me flatly that he couldn't: "I can teach English but I cannot teach Dzongkha." All I asked him to teach was the alphabet so that the women could at least learn to write their names, but his answer was no: "I don't know how to spell their names. The spelling is too complicated." Pema, who's also a college graduate but a native Tsangla speaker, repeated the same answer: "I'm sorry, Ami." They told me that Dzongkha teachers were the only persons who could teach the Dzongkha alphabet to the women, but that it would be *very* difficult to find a teacher in Thimphu who would do volunteer community work. Besides, the women were learning English and teaching Dzongkha would confuse them; "they can't learn both at the same time."

When I traveled to a village in Trashigang, in the far east of Bhutan, I stayed at a house of a local politician who was running for the upcoming July election[27]. He had studied in foreign countries ever since he started schooling, but for the election he had to give speeches and answer questions from opponents or local people in Dzongkha. In fact, this is one of few occasions where Dzongkha is used instead of English. "I feel really nervous," he told me, "English is like our first language and now we have to relearn Dzongkha." For him, and for many others like him who got education abroad, English was more like their first language than Dzongkha or Tsangla. "What if I can't understand their questions?" That night I could hear him practice his speech until very late at night.

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[27] On July 13th, 2013, the second round of their National Assembly elections was held. These elections were the second general elections since the country's democratization in 2008.

All these challenges have contributed to shortcomings (so to speak) of Dzongkha as the official national language, which might have led English to "fill the vacuum," performing the role of an official language. To put it in another way, the official linguistic nationalist movement seen in the 1970s through the1980s has been a *failed attempt*. Or, it might be the other way around and "the onslaught of English" may indeed be accountable for pushing Dzongkha to a periphery status (Phuntsho, 2013, p. 54). Perhaps the two are combined and together have produced the effect of a vicious cycle.

In an effort to increase the use of Dzongkha in school, in 2006, textbooks of Bhutanese history were translated from English into Dzongkha. Following a year-long pilot test, the government assigned Dzongkha as the official language of instruction in Bhutanese history class in Classes VII and VIII ("Language Haunts Education System," 2008). This implementation has stirred an ongoing debate whether history and other subjects should be taught in English or Dzongkha.

From the beginning, this implementation was met with some resistance from teachers, students, and parents. In 2008, after two years of implementation, a research was conducted to analyze the effectiveness of teaching the subject in Dzongkha.[28] The team concluded that history should be taught in English for three key reasons: 1) history teachers' incompetence to teach the subject in Dzongkha and Dzongkha teachers' lack of pedagogical skills to teach social

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[28] This research was conducted by a team of lecturers at the Paro College of Education at the request of the Ministry of Education, who were concerned with the quality of teaching ("Language haunts education system," 2008).

science; 2) students' lack of interest in Dzongkha; 3) and lack of materials and other technical or administrative inconveniences (Chhetri, 2009).

First and foremost, the research found that teachers were not prepared to teach history in Dzongkha.[29] They found that history teachers never used writing in class because of their lack of confidence in writing in Dzongkha, while Dzongkha teachers used only "lecture method" in their class because of their lack of pedagogical skills. Such an "ineffective teaching" led to low performance of students (Chhetri, 2009). Clearly, teaching a subject in Dzongkha would require a whole new training program for teachers who have been taught solely in English all their lives. This reminds me of a conversation that I had with Karma, a vice principal and English/math teacher at a middle secondary school. Asked whether he could teach the subjects in Dzongkha, he answered "definitely no":

> No, that I should say, I definitely I, I'm not able to do this. . . . Because when it comes to the writing, no, so it's very difficult. Especially the spelling and all; it's very difficult. So I think if we happen to teach [in Dzongkha] in future, like, uh, math has to teach in Dzongkha, I think that would be impossible. It's not possible.

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[29] The research showed that only 14% of the history teachers were trained and had a good command of Dzongkha. In addition, more than 50% of Dzongkha teachers were teaching without pedagogical strategies to teach Bhutanese history. On average, only 11% of the teachers teaching history in Dzongkha at the moment had received adequate support and training, and only 65.4% agreed that they were confident to teach history in Dzongkha. In addition, 67.2% of the principals reported that there was a shortage of teachers who could teach history in Dzognkha (Chhetri, 2009).

Interestingly, a history teacher said that "the essence of teaching history was neglected" in the process of implementing the teaching of Bhutanese history in Dzongkha ("Language haunts education system," 2008), perhaps because this change was an attempt to increase the use of Dzongkha in school and history class was turning into a language class. Another history teacher argued that the Ministry of Education should "take alternative measures like organising Dzongkha reading programmes" in order to improve Dzongkha, and "not dilute the essence of subjects like history or geography" (Wangchuck, 2008). The problem behind teachers' unwillingness to teach Bhutanese history in Dzongkha, as it became clear through the research, also lay in the "poor image" associated with Dzongkha teachers (Wangchuck, 2008).

Second, it turned out that students were "losing enthusiasm" and encountering difficulty reading and understanding textbooks written in Dzongkha. Yeshey, 13-year-old and a class VIII student in Thimphu said, "I find the words in the text too tough and the texts are too long. . . . I find it hard to put down in Dzongkha the concepts that I know in English" ("Language haunts education system," 2008). In turn, teachers have expressed concern that most of the children dislike history in Dzongkha, nor do they do well in the examinations (Wangchuck, 2008). "I have experience that the students there [in Thimphu] always prefer to speak in English," told me Eden, a Biology/Chemistry teacher in central Bhutan.[30]

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[30] It does not mean, however, that students in rural villages don't speak English well. I visited a middle secondary school in a village with a population of about 300 people in Bumthang region (central Bhutan) and observed some classes. Despite the absence of a

Pem and Kezang, teachers-in-training from Samtse College of Education, also told me that students in Thimphu were so much more comfortable with English that sometimes even Dzongkha class had to be conducted in English or the teacher would have to explain things in English. Teaching Bhutanese history in Dzongkha, therefore, imposed a burden not only for teachers but also students.

In response to this research, Tshering Tobgay, the leader of PDP (People's Democratic Party, which was the opposition party at the time) wrote in his blog on December 10, 2008, how he hoped the government "acts quickly to undo years of damage." However, "some of the damage can't be undone. . . . thousands of our students have learnt little history [in the last three years] and they probably now dislike Dzongkha even more. Not good for the students. Not good for our national language. Not good for our country."

Is Dzongkha losing its importance in the society completely? What do people think about this situation? I found an interesting post on Facebook that allowed me to take a peek at various attitudes toward this language, specifically the deterioration of its quality. On August 11th, 2013, Bhutanomics (popular

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strict language policy to forbid students from speaking their mother tongue and promote the use of English, the teachers did enforce the use of English in classes. The English, history, and biology classes that I observed were exclusively taught in English (with a minimum use of Dzongkha and no use of the local tongue, Bumthup) and students responded also in English. These students speak English probably only in school, but having studied the subjects in English for 10 to 12 years. The students in the classes that I observed seemed to have a good command of the language.

online news portal) posted the following article on Facebook under the title of

"Dzongkha and *the Bhutanese*[31]":

> How many of us read Dzongkha newspapers? Many of us ignore it even though the government spends huge amount in doing research to find ways for further promulgation. If you want to know the quality of Dzongkha being scripted in our private media, please do read "The Bhutanese" newspaper. You will laugh! . . . If newspapers write like this, with mistakes that even class twelve students can spot, where we are moving?

The "mistakes" listed in this article included "Poor grammar and spellings," "Sentences poorly structured," "No proper heading," "Lacks proper paragraphs," and even "There are rumours that our private media are hit by financial crunch - invites Dzongkha writers from outside the country."

The author of this post (which was accompanied by a picture of an article from *The Bhutanese* highlighting all the "mistakes" in pink color) is not the only one who is concerned with the quality and the "future" of Dzongkha. Among 66 comments, I found three major types of responses to the author's concern. The first is agreements with the author's concern and lament of the deterioration of the quality of the language ("Being Bhutanese, DZONGKHA which is our very own IDENTITY should not be felt like an ALIEN language."). The second category is people who were concerned more with the mistakes in English in the newspapers and in this post than in Dzongkha ("the person reading/correcting the article needs to work on his English as well."). The third is disinterest in or acceptance of the status quo as a natural and unavoidable consequence ("so what?????? what is your

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[31] *The Bhutanese* is one of four national Dzongkha newspapers.

problem then????" "I do not know whether Dzongkha is upcoming language or dying language.....either way it makes no difference."). Apart from these major three types of comments, a couple of people suggested that the Dzongkha Development Commission should "come up with a much simpler and simplified version for all to learn and use dzongkha effectively and very easily." Yet others referred to technical difficulties of typing in Dzongkha. An interesting range of responses, somewhat representing the diversity of general people's attitudes toward Dzongkha (and English). It should be noted, however, that these people who responded, however, apparently already spoke and wrote English, so their views might be partial.

A general consensus among Bhutanese people to whom I talked was that Dzongkha's importance in society was increasing despite all the counter examples I provided above. Teachers teach Dzongkha better at school nowadays, and Dzongkha is used in the parliament since its establishment in 2008. Above all, many—including both native and non-native speakers of Dzongkha—told me that Dzongkha was important for their national identity. When asked about the importance of Dzongkha, Karma, the vice principal, emphasized that "Dzongkha is equally important." He told me that "when I say now English is very important now, it doesn't mean that Dzongkha, we should neglect and that Dzongkha is not important. Yeah Dzongkha is equally important to English since it's our national language." Eden, the Biology/Chemistry teacher, echoed the idea and also referred to the effort to reinvent Dzongkha:

Dzongkha, we must, we must take care of Dzongkha. Because it is our national language. It gives our identity as a Bhutanese. . . . We have to do something to come up, to revitalize the quality of Dzongkha. . . . they [the high officials] are trying their best to come up [with] the Dzongkha almost equivalent to the English.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, there are also people who think it's best to do away with Dzongkha as we saw in the comments on Facebook. I remember a conversation at dinner with alumni of Royal Thimphu College and their friends; I was sharing my observation about the tension between Dzongkha and English in Bhutan, when Tenzin, who had studied in India, told me that "I think it'll be much easier if everyone in the world spoke English. What's the point of teaching Dzongkha? English is so much more useful." For him, Dzongkha writing and reading was a pain, even though it was probably his mother tongue. "We don't need our own language, it's much better if we all speak the same language. Why do we need our own language?" Clearly, he'd rather do away with Dzongkha. He asked me and other friends to imagine the world where there was one common language (English) that everyone spoke. "Wouldn't it be so much more convenient?"

Overall, I get an impression that there was a period of "modernization" and internationalization of Bhutan where people embraced English more, but that now they may be looking back at their path and noticing that they are actually losing something important to their identity and trying to somehow recuperate—

or reinvent—their linguistic and cultural identity. That being said, what is interesting to notice was that *nobody*—not even those Dzongkha advocates—told me that Dzongkha was *more* important than English. Dzongkha was at best *as important as* English because Bhutan is a "small" and "developing" country that has to rely on other countries for assistance and development. Dzongkha's importance is confined within the border of Bhutan, while English is expansive and opens up countless opportunities. Dzongkha, even if the national language, may end up no different from the museumized indigenous languages.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

Taking Anthropology of Japan was perhaps one of her responses to her identity confusion. She wanted to find what it meant to be Japanese. She contemplated Japan as if to look at an exotic artifact in a museum, taking it by her hand to examine and feel the weight of it for the first time. *What is this thing made of, and who is in it?*

Ten months had passed since she came to the US. And ten months were long enough to shake her linguistic, and thus cultural, identity. All these years she'd been trying to understand and appreciate the American and Canadian culture, and act and become more like an American or Canadian, to be accepted there and to feel home. And recently she just came to a realization, all of sudden, that she had never put the same amount of effort into belonging to, or being accepted to, Japanese society. She never thought of putting the same kind of effort into her way of being Japanese. She'd never tried to be "more" Japanese or act

more like Japanese or understand more about being and doing Japanese. She'd never even showed an interest in Japanese culture the way she'd willingly take in any and every aspect of American culture. Because she never had to. Why would she, when she was born and raised in Japan and believed that she was *inherently Japanese* with or without her effort?

How can one learn a foreign language and culture without cutting out one's own space, the comfortable zone, the mother tongue, and taking in the foreign? It's impossible! …Or maybe this is just her defense, an excuse. Maybe she'd hurried too much and hadn't been careful enough about where she should draw a boundary of what she accepts. I don't know.

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Where Is Bhutan Headed?: Language Policies and the Education City Project

The recent National Assembly elections also revealed public discourse around these languages. The manifestos of the two major political parties, DPT (*Druk Phuensum Tshogpa* or Bhutan Peace and Prosperity Party) and PDP (People's Democratic Party) show different attitudes regarding languages, even though both parties barely touch upon language policies in these documents.

First, DPT recognizes that English is one of their "unique selling points (USPs)." "Aside from being privileged with a naturally exotic location, we are the home of GNH where every educated person also speaks the main international language of English" (Druk Phuensum Tshogpa, 2013, p. 24). In addition, DPT

promises that they would "add further variety to the **curriculum for religious institutions** to give our novice monks a certain minimum standard of education in English, mathematics, and computer skills so that those who leave monastic life will find gainful employment in the society at large" (p. 69). Furthermore, DPT promises that it would "explore the possibility of giving our youth the opportunity to work abroad, . . . by leveraging our fluency in the English language and our culture" (p. 79). These opportunities will be sought in the areas of construction, rural electrification, nursing, hospitality, security services, and education. The *absence* of concern for Dzongkha or other local languages coupled with the above quotes demonstrate their strong interest in English, which they regard as an important asset of Bhutanese people.

PDP, on the other hand, seems to consider that cultural heritage including languages is important. They promise that they would "promote the use of Dzongkha and encourage other languages" and "launch programs to make Dzongkha IT friendly and promote its use across social media platforms" (p. 55). Furthermore, they pledge that "[m]odules on dying languages and arts will be planned in school and college syllabus" (p. 55).

Does the fact that PDP won the election indicate the population's concerns over "dying languages"? Probably not, and their actual implementation of their policies are much debatable. In fact, Bhutan seems to be headed to a more dynamic integration to international capitalist society by branding itself and

inviting more foreigners (and foreign investors), particularly in the area of education as is evident in the following example.

One holiday, I went on a short trip with my colleagues and their friend to the nearby Paro city to visit the Taktsang Monastery (also known as "Tiger's Nest"). While driving on the highway, Pema pointed to a vast area under construction and told me that they were constructing an "Education City," a billion-dollar project proposed some years ago by DPT, the former leading party. The Economic Development Policy of 2010 states that the Royal Government aims to "[e]stablish the country as a hub for general education" (p. 22) by bringing in world-class top universities ("including those from the US Ivy Leagues") and about 50,000 international students to this 1,000-acre (405-hectare) land ("Bhutan's Education City," 2012).

According to the Economic Development Policy, this project is part of the Government's efforts toward "building of Brand Bhutan" (2010, p. 2):

> The country's pristine natural environment, political stability and peaceful social environment are some of the advantages that can make the country a major player in attracting educational *clientele* [emphasis added] from around the world. The economic boom in the region is increasing the *spending power* [emphasis added] on high quality education. (p. 21)

In addition, in order to appeal to the international investors, the policy guarantees them 100% foreign equity, tax holidays of up to 15 years, and exemption of customs duty and sales tax on various kinds of school equipment. The Education City Project is in fact "Bhutan's largest foreign direct investment proposal yet" ("Bhutan's Education City," 2012).

Because of the change of the leading party, the project is at a halt and legality of the land purchase is debated (Palden, 2013; Dema, 2013). Although the (scope of) realization of this project is unpredictable, this proposal indicates Bhutan's efforts to better integrate into international economy. Would such a turn toward globalization of education and branding of the country be able to bring "prosperity" and "modernity" as the government envisions? In this process of creating a society which necessitates English more and more while marginalizing their national and local tongues, can English empower Bhutanese people? These are some of the questions I will explore in the next chapter.

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"On my identity as Japanese."

She typed the title of a new entry for her blog and paused. Her blog in Japanese, which she started writing a year before, at the end of her sophomore year, to keep up with her Japanese.

"On my identity as Japanese."

After contemplating on the title for a few more seconds, she took out her notebook and a pen. *How strange*, she wrote, *to think of my Japanese-ness in a foreign concept like "identity."*

"Identity" is a loanword, borrowed from English and incorporated into Japanese (*ai-den-ti-ti*). *But my thinking is filled with such contradictions*, she continued, *and I don't have any other lens through which I could conceptualize my being-ness in the world, and capture and reflect on my Japanese-ness.*

The entry was saved as a blank page never to be completed.

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CHAPTER FOUR:

ENGLISH OPENS DOORS…TO WHAT?: ENGLISH AND

(DIS)EMPOWERMENT

-OR-

DOES ENGLISH BRING HAPPINESS TO BHUTANESE PEOPLE?

> *Deslenguadas. Somos los del español deficiente.* We are your linguistic nightmare, your linguistic aberration, your linguistic *mestizaje*, the subject of your *burla*. Because we speak with tongues of fire we are culturally crucified. Racially, culturally and linguistically *somos huérfanos*—we speak an orphan tongue.
>
> —Gloria Anzaldúa

Throughout the summer as I taught English to some 50 women in the Changjiji community, I conducted individual interviews and facilitated group discussions to find out why they were "genuinely interested" in learning English literacy.[32] One of them simply said that "English will improve every aspect of my life." This comment summarizes how much English is integrated in the current Bhutanese society, without which one's legitimacy as a member of the society can

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[32] These informal interviews were conducted with the help of my colleague, who translated for me between Tsangla and English.

be severely undermined. You are virtually an immigrant in your own country if you don't speak or read English.

As I found out, they wanted to learn English to be able to read prescriptions; find their way around in hospitals; read road signs and be able to travel within the country; understand official forms and be able to sign their names; talk with tourists and show them around their houses; read menus and order at restaurants; help their children with their homework; know which bus to take; go to the bank and make deposits; read newspapers and understand current events; start a business and run a small shop; communicate with other people; travel outside the country; differentiate and read numbers; and sign parent forms for their kids.

Clearly, their motivation to study English had a very practical, functional dimension. This extensive, but by no means exhaustive, list of things they hope to do but cannot yet do, shows the significant limitation to their independence, mobility, and participation in the society that these women have suffered because of their lack of English literacy.

Figure 7. Shop signs on the main street in Thimphu.

Figure 8. A menu at a fast-food restaurant in Thimphu.

Figure 9. Shop signs in Kanglung Village, Trashigang.

Figure 10. Trashcans in a school in Jakar Village, Bumthang.

Figure 11. A road sign on highway to Trashigang.

Lack of English literacy, therefore, had a significant psychological and emotional effect for these women. Not only did they experience frustrating limitations and marginalization, but also they suffered from low self-esteem, embarrassment, and even shame. More than a few of them had the experience of being looked down on, ridiculed, or ignored by others. "Sometimes I cry at night," Ugyen told me once, "I just get very sad." Ugyen was 35 years old and was from Trashigang, the far east of Bhutan, but had lived the past 20 years in Thimphu and had four children. While she spoke Dzongkha, Tsangla, Nepali, and Hindi fluently, she had received no formal education and learned to write only at this age. I saw a deep sorrow in her eyes and heard it in her voice.

Does the "alternative path" that Bhutan is seeking truly lead to a greater "happiness" of their people? Does English empower or somehow *dis*empower them? Or both? In the remainder of the chapter, I will examine the hegemonic status of English and consequential marginalization of non-English speakers in Bhutanese society, and problematize the notion of "empowerment" that English purports to bring to the peoples in the Periphery communities.

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It was in her history class that she took in the second year. After the mid-term, which was a series of short essays and which she did surprisingly well, Professor Leonard circulated some "successful" essays in the class, including all her four essays, encouraging the class to read them and prepare better for the finals. Then her professor went on to comment that international students often wrote better than domestic students, even though "their grammar was a mess" as they could all see in the example essays. Still, they made good arguments and their essays were well structured, he said. Well, that was VERY helpful in boosting her confidence, thank you very much.

That evening she told her roommate Kay about what had happened in the class. She bit her lips to hold tears. Empathizing with her feeling, Kay said that the professor's comment was entirely unnecessary. She told her that she should instead feel proud of herself, for he had selected her essays to circulate in the class.

A week or so later she had a chance to talk with Professor Leonard about her mid-term. She told him how "disappointed" (that was the word she chose) she was to see how many grammatical mistakes she had made in her essays despite the fact that she strove for the best and revised many times to make sure there were no mistakes. What can she do to improve? She asked. Professor Leonard told her that he was really impressed by her writing, and that the corrections he had made on her paper meant to be encouraging, rather than discouraging, by demonstrating how her essays could be improved further. If the essays weren't good, he wouldn't have bothered correcting them, he said.

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The Internal Role of English in Bhutanese Society: English as a Marker of Social Status

As I observed a number of social interactions, I started to see that English often marked one's social status and educational background, which in some ways emphasized or worsened existing social divide.[33] (Il)literacy in English seemed to

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[33] One of many incidents that made me see divide between social classes occurred when I traveled to the far east for the first time with the director of the NGO and another intern. Given limited means of public transportation within the country, it is common to travel by a taxi and hire a driver for several days. What astonished me was the relationship between our NGO director and taxi driver, which was comparable to that of a master and a servant. During our a week-long trip, the driver carried our bags, sat on a different table by himself when we ate at restaurants and sometimes even acted like a waiter bringing tea and food to us. We didn't even learn his name until two days after we started the road trip when the director asked him his name. He spoke very little English, so my communication with him was minimum. I also learned during this trip that having servants and/or cooks at home was not uncommon, and such a hierarchical relationship seemed to be accepted as a norm by both parties. After traveling with other colleagues,

be directly linked to social class much more so than (il)literacy in Dzongkha. The better educated and the better off they are, the better English they speak (it's very likely that they studied abroad all their lives or a part of their education). Eden, a science teacher in central Bhutan, articulated the ways in which English and Dzongkha are recognized in society:

> when people speak English very fluently, then the other peoples who are observing him or her, sees him or her little bit higher... Somewhat bigger. But if, . . . if a person is not fluent in English, if he or she is unable to speak fluently, but if he or she is flexile [fluent?] in Dzongkha, then they are saying that they definitely don't get enough recognition. For example if you go, go to seek job, find job, they are saying that they doesn't know their Dzongkha background; they only care about English and the English background.

What I observed was not only do the educated speak *better* English but they speak it *more frequently* and with more people, including, of course, their fellow Bhutanese. When I first arrived in Bhutan and heard people speak English, I thought they were speaking it because of me. Of course there were many instances where this was the case, but there were countless others where this wasn't. Bhutanese people spoke English to each other at restaurants, bars, meetings, family gatherings, temples, offices, and so on. And more interestingly,

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however, I also learned that taxi drivers were not treated unequal at all times by all people.

sometimes one person spoke English and the other person replied in Dzongkha or Tsangla. For example, a high-rank official would speak in English and a low-rank official would reply in Dzongkha, or a businessman would order in English at a restaurant and a waitress would speak in Dzongkha, and so on (although they often mixed two languages and the distinction was not so clear-cut; these examples are meant merely to illustrate a point). This was not necessarily because the low-rank official or the waitress did not know how to speak English; they probably did. However, this seemed to be done as a demonstration of courtesy.

Once in July, there was a minor conflict between the Changjiji library and a woman in the community. She was a wife of a military official of some sort (there was an army camp nearby) and she complained to us that the library's hours were inconvenient, that it was closed every time her daughter came. She called us frequently and even though our librarians apologized and tried to talk with her, her calls were usually just a litany of accusations. It was becoming an unnecessary drama, involving even the administrators of the organization. What was it all about? As I found out, it all started with a phone call that the woman made to ask the hours, to which Pema answered *in English*. Being a "mere" librarian, Pema should have spoken to the wife of a high-rank official in Dzongkha. By responding in English she was putting herself on the same level as the official's wife. That was why the woman was so mad. She kept calling the library to annoy Pema and get her in trouble.

This incident makes me question the alleged "success" and "empowerment" English promises to bring. Is it English—the language—that gives you privilege, power, or status? Does English help you "get ahead" and "move up" the social ladder, only because you have acquired a certain level of fluency in English? Or once born and raised in a certain class, are you marginalized with or without English? At the same time, however, the woman's almost hysterical reaction indicates how threatening English can be when becomes more widespread, for it takes away the privilege reserved for the elite. The woman's overreaction to Pema indicates her own insecurity in herself.

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"Today's party went so well," on our way home I casually commented to Nora on the success of a community tea party that we had organized for the women in the English literacy class.

"PAR-ty," she corrected my pronunciation.

"What?" I turned to her, not understanding her intention.

"PAR-ty," she repeated, emphasizing the "r."

"I'm sorry, I can't help it," she added, blushing. Nora is such a passionate English teacher she never misses a teachable moment, whether it be during our dinner conversation or an internship meeting or a party on a Friday night. It wasn't her first time to correct my pronunciation or grammar in the middle of our conversation, nor was I an exception. She's always trying to help, whenever and whatever issue comes up.

"Oh," I said, finally getting what she meant. "What did I say?"

"You said 'PAH-ty.' It's 'PAR-ty.' And I'm gonna give you a lecture on articles sometime soon, you know, when to use 'a' and when to use 'the,' that kind of stuff," she continued, "your English is great, and I love you very much, but sometimes… you know."

Yeah. I know. After more than ten years of studying I still don't get it right. I know.

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One time in our weekly discussion group that I facilitated for the women in my English literacy class, we talked about "building confidence to speak." We started off our conversation by defining "confidence" and drawing images of what it looked and felt like. Some women approached it in abstract terms while others associated it with very concrete skills and situations. For example, Tashi, 24 years old, drew a picture of a flower and equated confidence to a flower blossoming. Tshering, 52 years old and the eldest in the group, drew a picture of Buddha and commented that hope, aspiration and knowledge for building confidence grew with age. Others said that confidence meant (and could be built by) being able to speak in front of people; being able to read; having education and being independent; and being able to drive a car (and thus be independent and mobile). Many of them stressed the importance of formal education in order to have confidence in themselves.

Over and over again in our discussion, "education" came up as a keyword. Being "illiterate" meant "uneducated," and being "uneducated" meant "unintelligent," "incapable," even "unworthy." Many of the women had internalized this problematic equation. They doubted their intelligence and self-worth, slowly giving up on leadership roles in the family or in the community, silenced. And these same women, by the way, were skillful weavers, spoke two or more languages (some spoke Nepali and Hindi fluently in addition to Tsangla and Dzongkha), and picked up English remarkably quickly in the three months that I was there. And on top of all that they were great people—caring, welcoming, kindhearted, all these good adjectives. They had so much, and yet what they *lacked* had marked them and cost them so much. In fact, even the NGO staff— who purportedly worked for "women's empowerment"—knowingly or unknowingly perpetuated low expectations for these women by commenting that it was "too late" for them to learn to read proficiently and cultivate a culture of reading, or that these women "can't learn poetry" or other kinds of creative writing.

So I challenged the group of women that day: Do they believe that education equals their value? Does the number of years of formal education determine how much they are worth as a human being? Their initial response was "yes," that the number of years of formal education determines how much confidence they should have and how much they should speak. But after some time talking through it, they started to question their own assumptions. Tshering

commented that nobody had told her that she was useless or worthless because of her educational background (but nonetheless she had believed so). She asked others what they thought of their own parents, who had no formal education either. Did they respect their parents? Did they appreciate the education that their parents had provided them at home and in the community? There was a deep, long silence. We concluded our discussion that day by saying that, although they could not change the past they could change the future, and that they should feel proud about taking initiatives to bring about change in their lives.

Perhaps this is why they wanted their children to learn English well. They knew more than anyone the importance of English, and they didn't want their children to go through the same struggle as they had experienced all their lives. Their concern for their children was painfully real.

Opportunities to study abroad and work abroad, greater chance of being offered better salaries, winning respect and admiration of others—these are all very good reasons to want to study English, and speak *good* English, which may indeed bring material, practical benefits. Pema, for example, actually obtained an opportunity to go to Thailand to teach English for a year through a governmental program this year and flew to Thailand soon after I left Bhutan. This program was initiated by the Bhutanese government a year ago to send Bhutanese college graduates to vocational schools in rural Thailand as English teachers. Having never lived or studied abroad, moving to Thailand meant a life-changing event for Pema, and certainly her strong command in English paid off. Conversely, there

are negative material consequences for those who have not learned to speak English. Fewer and limited opportunities. Confinement within the country. Fewer options. As such, the necessity and aspiration of the language of the dominant have become self-reinforcing, creating an ever-growing hegemony.

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Recently I have come to a realization that I haven't got out of the mindset of a language classroom when I speak in English. Oops I messed up the tenses: -1. Oops I forgot to put the article: minus -.5. Oh no, I misused the word: -1. Oops I just mispronounced this word: -.5. Oh my God I just made the most awfully fragmented sentence ever: -2. I know I messed up the preposition: -1. Watch out the subject-verb agreement: -1.

Vocabulary: 3.5/5

Organization: 3/5

Grammar: 3.5/5

Content: 4/5

Total: 14/20

Um, where were we? What was I saying?

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The "Other" Tongue That Bhutanese Speak: Linguistic Marginalization in the International Context

The "empowerment" of English is at stake also in international contexts.

One afternoon at the Changjiji library, we had a meeting with another NGO to

discuss possibility of collaborating on a youth program. Among four Americans,

six Bhutanese and one Japanese, I observed that the conversation was almost

dominated by two Americans—Nora, our intern, and Mike, the representative of

the other NGO. We ended up agreeing to collaborate, which was a great outcome,

but it left me with an impression that the voice of Bhutanese staff was not heard in

the meeting. Later I shared my concern with Namgyel, our librarian, and asked

why he was silent during the meeting. He told me that he didn't fully understand

what was being discussed because the two spoke very fast. As for Pema, the other

librarian, she didn't say anything because her supervisor, who was also present at

the meeting, kept quiet (which implies that you shouldn't speak more than your

supervisor, or "you can speak your heart out but sometimes it's considered

impolite"). I then shared my observation and concern with Nora, who

understandably told me that she couldn't bear the silence. No one was responding

to what Mike had proposed, so "somebody had to say something." I sympathized

with her view, but I wondered: wasn't there any problem with the meeting's

structure itself? Did we even try to create an atmosphere that would allow

everyone to contribute? Who set the rules for this meeting? There are many NGOs

(or CSOs as they are called: Civil Society Organizations) in Bhutan, many of

which are foreign funded and staffed. What happened that day at our meeting

appeared symbolic to me of the limited degree to which Bhutanese people are involved in decision making at administrative levels in these organizations.

Bhutanese members of NGOs are effectively silenced not just by the speed of conversation in English, but also by the constant critique and policing of their English by expats. Bhutanese people's English, even when spoken or written by the educated, is not "perfect" in the eyes (or ears) of American or British native speakers. Sometimes, policing of their language (correction of pronunciation, word choice, grammar mistakes, etc.) is done with a good intention, as a gesture of kindness to help them improve their English. At other times it takes the tone of ridicule. Outside of the NGO context, for example, I heard Americans comment that rap music sung in English by Bhutanese musicians "sounds just so weird" as we listened to the music on the radio. Within the NGO context, there were times when the whole argument or legitimacy of the Bhutanese speak was dismissed because they didn't have the correct punctuation or grammar and therefore "don't even know proper English." When Nora and I found ourselves in disagreement with our Bhutanese colleagues or supervisors, Nora would say (to me, not to them) that they didn't know English. For example, one day we received an email from our supervisor which upset and frustrated both of us. At the end of our long conversation about the content of the email, she let out: "she [the supervisor] doesn't even have proper grammar!" With this cry, she dismissed the content of the email in its entirety. Correcting, ridiculing, and attacking the English that they

spoke, regardless of their (lack of) intentions, all contributed to undermining their legitimacy in one way or another.

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You know how they ask your name at Starbucks when they take your order? One day the person spelled it "Ahmie." I don't know how he came up with such a complicated way to spell my name, which is only three letters. How it made me laugh. He wasn't too far off, though; that's exactly how it sounds like when I pronounce my name—especially when I articulate each syllable carefully and slowly—in English: Ah-mie.

It's been so long since she has heard her name in Japanese or written it in Japanese except when she signs on important documents… She's now much more used to seeing her name in the English alphabet than in Japanese characters. Her name as it appears on her passport; her name that is intelligible to everyone, decontextualized, simple three letters, A-m-i. But now I'm so used to it I feel home in this name, I feel that it is indeed my name. Qué raro. Strange.

Still looking for that piece of the puzzle, the lost part of myself. But, was there anything to lose in the first place? Was there anything that *could* be lost, something that constituted my essence that's unchanged? Was there really?

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A more subtle and insidious way to dismiss Bhutanese legitimacy comes in the form of admiration with a tone of bewilderment. An American may exclaim, "Your English is really good!" or "You speak such good English!" with

disbelief. Of course, sometimes these compliments are genuine and appropriate, if, for instance, the compliment was offered to a student from an English teacher. They really do recognize the effort that you have put into learning English or the improvement that you have made. At other times—I dare say most times—it is patronizing and condescending when it comes from an American or British "native speaker" to non-native speakers of English from other countries, and even more so when a white native speaker makes the comment to a native English speaker of color. The condescension is strongly felt by the recipient of such compliments even though the speaker didn't mean to be patronizing; they either have good intentions or are not even conscious of their comment.

To illustrate the point, suppose you are a white American. How often do you tell your fellow white American adult, "you speak such good English"? The only times when you would ever give such a comment would be when you hear someone speak English *despite* something that comes down to this: they don't *look* like they would speak (good) English. Maybe because it's not their mother tongue; maybe because you've heard the reputation that Japanese people don't speak good English; maybe because you didn't know they speak English in South Africa; maybe because you didn't expect that Bhutanese people could speak (such good) English. Asian Americans receive this kind of comment all the time, and

this is registered as an example of racial microaggressions[34] (Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, & Torino, 2007).

A study conducted in 1992 by Donald Rubin indicates a similar point. In this study, two groups of undergraduate students listened to the same audio recording of a lecture while looking at two different pictures: a picture of a Caucasian female instructor for the first group and a picture of an Asian female instructor dressed exactly the same for the second. Their listening comprehension test showed a significant difference even though the two groups listened to the same lecture recorded by a native speaker of English from the Midwest. The second group perceived more accent and performed more poorly compared to the first group. These results imply that "it is not only nonnative speakers of English, but also native speakers, who are responsible for problems in cross-cultural communication" (as cited by Kubota & Ward, 2000, p. 81). This experiment shows that even if a person of color acquires a perfect "standard" accent and speaks flawlessly, s/he can still be judged by others as accented and unintelligible; it is not the language that determines your position but rather, in this case, the color of your skin.

All these examples above show that the English that the Bhutanese speak is permanently an "other" English. It is either "not good enough" or "too good"

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[34] Racial microaggression is defined as "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory or negative racial slights and insults that potentially have harmful or unpleasant psychological impact on the target person or group." (Sue et al., 2007, p. 72)

for a Bhutanese. It never escapes scrutiny of American and British native speakers nor is it considered to be a language *fully their own*.

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It seems difficult for many of her classmates to understand that she works as a peer mentor at the writing center. "In which language do you mentor?" is the most common response. "Do you mentor in Japanese?" is the second most common response. When she tells them that, "Sure, I can work in Japanese, but I mostly work in English and also Spanish,"… There's this pause, while they process that information, and they go, "Oh."

Like they had never considered that possibility. Questioning her legitimacy and credibility as a writing center mentor, reminding her of the fact that English does not belong to her. "How did you become a mentor?" some of them ask, amazed at best, doubtful at worst. It doesn't seem to occur to them that a non-native speaker could in fact become a quite effective mentor in writing and speaking.

She doesn't blame them. *She* couldn't believe she would be able to do it, either. She stopped explaining herself, though. She stopped defending herself in those moments. She doesn't lecture them about what mentoring involves. She just gives them the fact every time she's asked and like it or not they have to deal with it. That's their problem, not hers.

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What Does "Empowerment" Mean?

But what are the circumstances that create the very need for English for survival in the world (in the global economy, in the international relations, in career, in higher education, etc.)? We need to step back and examine whose interest English is really serving. As Phillipson (1992) puts it, "[t]he vital underlying question is what purposes English is being learnt for, what 'needs' it responds to" (p. 10). What kind of dysfunctional system is it if learning English is the only option for survival and success?

This perceived need for English, I believe, is only one of the symptoms of a much larger global issue that we are facing: homogenization of the world; American imperialism; you name it. The spread of English seems to continue to be a way of sustaining this "more subtle, modern, scientific, technological kind of domination" or "a new kind of imperialist intervention" that Freire started to observe in Chile in the 1960s (Gadotti, 1994, p. 38). By learning English, are we not making ourselves more susceptible for exploitation—capable of understanding instructions but not fluent enough to critique the system? Does it not reproduce and reinforce the inequality between the Center and Periphery as Phillipson argued? It seems to me that English lays the foundation that facilitates a successful integration of other countries into the global capitalist system that allows more efficient exploitation of "educated" labor force produced in these Third World countries. The prevalence of English gives privilege to a minority while put others at the bottom of the ladder (or just one rung from the bottom).

Individuals may change their positioning in society, within the hierarchy

of languages, moving up or down the social ladder according to their proficiency

in English. Some people may call it "empowerment," but the hierarchy of

languages remains the same in this model of "empowerment." And the moment

we accept the alleged universal value of English, and buy into this hierarchy

between English and our national/local languages, we may very well be

disempowering ourselves by devaluing our own language and culture. Surely, I do

not believe that any individual teacher, language theorist, or pedagogue intends to

oppress or "colonize" the minds of language learners. On the contrary, I am

convinced that any teacher wishes nothing but help his/her students. However,

English Language Teaching as an institution, enterprise, or profession, may have

oppressive effects, as well as the global capitalist system within which it operates.

Assisting individuals, or entire peoples, with this limited scope of

"empowerment" is what Paulo Freire (2000/1968) calls *false generosity*, which, in

fact, "maintains and embodies oppression" and may well further dehumanizes us

rather than humanizes us (p. 54). Freire argues that *true generosity*, on the other

hand, lies in "fighting to destroy the causes" that necessitate "humanitarian" work

in the first place:

> Any attempt to "soften" the power of the oppressor in deference to the
> weakness of the oppressed almost always manifests itself in the form of
> false generosity; indeed, the attempt never goes beyond this. In order to
> have the continued opportunity to express their "generosity," the
> oppressors must perpetuate injustice as well. An unjust social order is the
> permanent fount of this "generosity," . . . That is why the dispensers of
> false generosity become desperate at the slightest threat to its source. . . .
> True generosity consists precisely in fighting to destroy the causes which

nourish false charity. False charity constrains the fearful and subdued, the "rejects of life," to extend their trembling hands. True generosity lies in striving so that these hands—whether of individuals or entire peoples— need be extended less and less in supplication, so that more and more they become human hands which work and, working, transform the world. (pp. 44-45)

From this Freirean perspective with which I align myself, I found the organization (where I worked) problematic in that their perspective and approach toward "empowerment" did not seem to include working at and problematizing the root cause of the "disempowerment" the community members, especially women, were experiencing. Additionally, one of their motivations for asking the two interns to develop literacy programs for children was to create a book or some kind of *product* to sell to tourists as a means of fundraising to maintain their work. I believe that such practice is quite common and accepted in the non-profit world, but this is one of the examples that made me question for whom they were working. Is this work truly for the benefit of the children? Or is it merely a pretense, a "false generosity" that in reality holds the inequality and injustice in place for the sake of sustaining the organization? Furthermore, I perceived a problematic divide—or a hierarchy—between the administration (in the capital) and field staff (in rural areas, many of whom were dropouts or "passouts" from school). Their working condition and environment did not seem to match the avowed empowerment principles of this organization.

Having background in critical social thought and critical pedagogy, Nora and I had a number of conversations throughout the summer in order to process and understand what we perceived as problematic. One approach that I took in

response was to simply incorporate my own values informed by Freirean principles to the programs that I was creating as well as professional workshops that I led for the field staff. We never had a profound conversation with our supervisor or other administrative staff about what we thought of their work, except for a couple of failed attempts to find out their opinions about the labor condition. Therefore, by modeling, I tried as much as possible to offer the field staff alternative ways to think about teaching and empower them to speak for themselves.

As the end of our internship approached, however, Nora and I were compelled to raise some of the issues around their organizational structure and culture to the administration. We chose the occasion of an advisory board meeting, where we were to present our accomplishments and recommendations to the board members and administrative staff, to voice our concerns. However, our recommendations to the organization were met with very negative responses, and led to a conflict—even hostility—between the director and us interns, as well as unintended ramifications to and tension among all staff.

I learned later through a series of individual private conversations that their overly negative and dramatic response to our speech were partly due to the platform that we chose (board meeting), and the content of our speech, which I admit was somehow misinformed and inaccurate. They were also triggered by the fact that we completely went against the norm and expectations about what student interns, who "were given the opportunity to present to our [their] board,"

can and should say at such a public forum in the presence of people in higher

positions. But besides these strategic mistakes, their hard feelings had to do with

this: the fact that the critiques came from people from a "developed" country

(Americans) to people in a "developing" country (Bhutanese). I am not from the

US, but I still represented a white American institution along with Nora. It was

seen as if Americans, who are ignorant of the native culture and social contexts,

came in and created problems that didn't exist before and critiqued the way

Bhutanese people were doing things; we the "critical thinkers" could see the

problems and offer "solutions" to the not-yet-critical Bhutanese people who

suffered from "false consciousness." Of course, that is NOT the message that

Nora and I intended to convey, but it was how it was perceived, at least by the

director of the organization. Her five-page long email that was sent to us shortly

after our presentation included the following passage:

> As much as [our names] come from "critical thinking and questioning"
> background (as often self quoted), both have to realize that Bhutan has our
> own culture and way of doing things, way of asking questions, providing
> critical and constructive feedback and there are certain norms - it may not
> be agreeable with the western standards, but that does not mean it is any
> less or that people feel intimidated or suppressed. People are shy to talk in
> public, which is very normal in Asian society.

As is evident in the above quote, the intervention that I made, which was

initially motivated by Freirean ideas, totally backfired and came across as

"culturally insensitive" and invasive, even "colonizing" in a sense. Strong as they

may sound, these are the actual adjectives that the director used in our

conversation. These are exactly the opposite of the kind of effect one would hope from applying critical pedagogy.

How, then, should we implement critical pedagogy in a way that is effective? One approach may be to work with the people at the bottom of the ladder in order to empower them—and not be concerned with top-level administrators. This is the initial approach that I took. Another approach might be to recognize the potential that even those administrators could indeed be important allies and to initiate a conversation. In fact, the private conversations that I had with each individual in the organization after the initial conflict proved so much more effective than the one-time presentation in the public forum. It didn't necessarily lead to a consensus, but at least eliminated misunderstandings and hard feelings, and opened up an opportunity to have an open, productive dialogue. Why did I assume that this kind of democratic dialogue would not be possible before the advisory board meeting? One lesson that I learned was that we never know until we try. I have come to believe through this experience that the most effective implementation would indeed involve an *ongoing* process of reflection and action, and dialogue, that makes the empowerment work possible to evolve organically rather than having it structurally imposed or being lectured what to do. We cannot "deposit" critical pedagogy. I think I knew it in theory, but this fundamental principle never became clearer to me than after this experience. There is really no model—no finished product—that is readily available. A proper

and effective approach depends on social dynamics of each group and each given context.

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I am _____.

Fill in the blank.

Japanese;

Kaigai-ni sumu nihon-jin (Japanese living in a foreign land);

a woman;

an international student;

young;

humanista;

a Spanish major;

from Sapporo;

an English language learner;

a traveler;

an (aspiring) educator;

multilingual;

Ami.

She had been taught that the verb "to be" is a copular verb, requiring a complement for the sentence to be complete.

Which adjective describes me? None seems adequate to me.

I am _____.

No need to fill in the blank.

She stops searching for the complement.

I am.

Period.

And it's complete as it is.

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CHAPTER FIVE:

TALKING BACK: TOWARDS A PEDAGOGY OF HOPE

-OR-

SEARCHING FOR THE WAY OUT

But still, at least WE challenging da hegemony of english.

—Lee A. Tonouchi

A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which *something begins its presencing.*"

—Martin Heidegger

She couldn't learn English without being transformed by it. And I believed that it was the English language that paved the way of her life. Was it the language itself? Or was it what she *did* with the language? Was it the kind of information that she gained through the medium of this language? Or was it the kind of *people* with whom she came in acquaintance because of this language? She doesn't know. I still don't know. Maybe a little bit of everything?

I think it is important to distinguish and separate what English *is* intrinsically and what English *has* or *does*, which are extrinsic to the nature of the

language—if such a distinction is possible. How can we teach English and *not* promote Western values and norms? How can learners of English *not* be assimilated, indoctrinated, transformed, and incorporated into ideologies embedded in or brought with the language? In this chapter, I will examine resistance perspectives that challenge the growing hegemony of English.

Between One Language or the Other, Between Linguistic Poverty and Mastery, Between "Neither" and "Both"

I have reiterated the idea until now that language comes with a set of values and practices, and that learning language means acquiring a "taste" of culture and potentially "ideological conditioning." To put it in another way, a language represents "a way of life," an attainment of which may be experienced as "an increasing sense of identity confusion" (Rinchen, 1999, p. 6) and an eventual conflict. Canagarajah (1999) also observes that millions of people in post-colonial communities have experienced conflicts and dilemmas between "the claims of Western values" embedded in the English language and their indigenous cultures embedded in their vernacular (p. 1). In the face of this conflict between two cultures and two languages, there have been people who have chosen English over the vernacular for the advantages it brings, while others have rejected English in order to "remain faithful" to indigenous traditions.

In the midst of confusion and conflict, it might be difficult even to truly "remain faithful" to and choose one over the other. Phuntsho (2013) observes that

the predominance of English "poses a serious challenge for the [Bhutanese] youth to continue learning a different language or stay fluent in their native tongues. . . . A few [educated Bhutanese] manage to excel in seamlessly blending two ways of life and having a native first language and speaking others with fluency" (p. 61). Furthermore,

> This linguistic conundrum of multiple imperfect tongues with no solid grounding in one as the first language aptly reflects the very fragmented but dynamic personality of many young Bhutanese, who are grappling between the traditional past and postmodern future. They have neither fully relinquished the old world and embraced the new, nor fully inherited the old and rejected the new; they linger in a limbo halfway between tradition and modernity, the East and the West, simplicity and sophistication, between linguistic poverty and proficiency. (p. 61)

Learning English to get ahead, then, may have an effect of depriving them of their fluency in Dzongkha (or any other vernacular) without giving them fluency in any other language, leaving them with no language to claim as their own.

Canagarajah points out that this position that demands an "either/or" decision—having to choose between the two (English or the indigenous language) and reject one in order to be true to the other—constitutes a "deterministic perspective on power" (p. 2). The underlying assumptions in this perspective on power are that language functions to spread and sustain *only* the interests of dominant groups, which represents a monolithic and impoverished understanding of language. Such a limited understanding of language renders learners "passive" and "lacking agency to manage linguistic and ideological conflicts to their best advantage" (p. 2).

In the Introduction to his book *Resisting Linguistic Imperialism in English Teaching*, Canagarajah (1999) challenges the idea that English comes with one *homogeneous* set of ideologies such as Westernization, Capitalism and Individualism. He proposes an alternative way to respond to—or *transcend*—this "painful linguistic conflict," which is to *engage favorably with both languages*. This is what Canagarajah calls "resistance perspective," which requires a different set of assumptions than the deterministic perspective. While he also acknowledges that learning English comes with values and ideologies—English is never neutral—the alternative perspective assumes that a language is "sufficiently *heterogeneous* [emphasis added] for marginalized groups to make it serve their own purposes" (p. 2). Perhaps the ideologies are not embedded in the language itself, but in *the way it is taught*, or *the way it is learned*, or even *the way it is spoken*, etc. And even if the ideologies are embedded, those are not uniform. While English may have a repressive effect, it also has the "liberatory potential" of facilitating critical thinking and enabling subjects to rise above domination. Learners, therefore, have the *agency* to "work out ideological alternatives that favor their own empowerment" (p .2). In this resistance perspective, the question is not whether we should reject English or not, nor is it whether we should choose one language over the other. The matter is *how* to reconstitute English "in more inclusive, ethical, and democratic terms" (p. 2) and so bring about the creative resolutions to, and *transcend*, the linguistic conflicts sought by many in the Periphery communities.

A way to respond to this linguistic "confusion" and transcend the "conflict" for Bhutanese people might be the emergence and development of what is often referred to as *Dzonglish*, "a queer Bhutanese hybrid English" (Phuntsho, 2013, p. 61). After all, English has not completely taken over Dzongkha; people freely mix the two languages when they speak, switching back and forth between the two, starting a sentence in one and ending in the other, throwing in English words when speaking in Dzongkha, and so on. One day I asked one of my colleagues, Tandin, which language he felt more comfortable speaking. He said perhaps English, but on a second thought he added that it was difficult to say because he always mixed the two languages when he spoke. As he and many others pointed out, it is not so easy to discern when one language ends and another begins; we might as well consider English and Dzongkha as a continuum.

While there is no Dzongkha that remains unaffected by English, the English language, too, has adapted to the particular linguistic situation of Bhutan. The use of "la" and "lasla" is an example. In Dzongkha, the suffix "la" indicates politeness. For example, you would say "kuzuzangpo-la" (hello) instead of "kuzuzangpo" (hi) to your teacher. In the same way, you say "thank you la," "nice to meet you la," "hello la," "I think so la," etc., in order to express your respect in formal occasions or when you talk to someone in a superior position.

According to "Bhutan Media Impact Study 2008" conducted by the Ministry of Information and Communications, national and popular media has contributed to the emergence, development, and, to some degree, promotion of

Dzonglish, particularly among the Bhutanese youth. The report analyzes that the use of Dzonglish (defined as "a mixture of English and Dzongkha") in the media is "an indication of the mash-up culture of the 21st century" (p. 52). While Dzonglish is accepted as a reflection of the way many people actually speak, a reaction to the emergence of Dzonglish among the conservatives has been negative: "the future generation will speak neither English nor Dzongkha, well" (p. 6). The radio in particular is *accused* of promoting Dzonglish "contrary to the Government's policy to promote *Dzongkha*" and "[m]ore people feel it will result in poorer language skills with Bhutanese children ultimately speaking 'neither *Dzongkha* nor English properly'" (p. 52).

In my experience, Dzonglish seemed prevalent among both adults and youth, and its use increased as the formality of the occasions increased. I remember being greeted "good afternoon la, please come in la" at a business meeting where we—the director of the NGO and two interns—met for the first time with the director and a professor of a college to discuss our partnership. During the meeting, "la" was attached virtually after every single sentence. On another occasion where I was interviewed by high school and college students who were working on a community project, they talked to me in Dzonglish to show respect. Later, at their event, students gave formal presentations of their work to the invited guests—NGO workers, officials, and community members— in Dzonglish, in accordance with the formality of the occasion.

Although Dzonglish is often critiqued by Bhutanese themselves as well as foreigners as a deficient, "informal" mode of speaking, Dzonglish seems to me a very creative, even resistant, form of adaptation to the peculiar linguistic situation in which many Bhutanese find themselves. On the one hand, we could argue that such "friction" between two languages and cultures might very well serve as a vehicle of hegemony, making it difficult for people to *not* incorporate English in some ways and helping English get hold in society. English has such an overwhelming force. Yet there is something more dynamic in these "contingent encounters," whose products are not predetermined and outcomes unexpected. We could interpret Dzonglish as resistant, creative friction, which may "lead to new arrangements of culture and power" (Tsing, 2005, pp. 5-6).

Talking Back to the Empire: Revaluing Creole and Pidgin Language

As English spread around the world, it came in contact with different languages along the way, creating a great variety of Englishes which are sometimes referred to as "World Englishes" (Kachru, 1992). These varieties are also called *pidgin* or *creole* English, as they are product of mixture of two or more languages, or more precisely, developed as a means of communication between speakers of different languages.

In linguistics, pidgin is defined as a "subsidiary language system used for communication by people with no common language" (Aitchison, 1994, p. 3181) while creole is defined as "a pidgin which has become someone's first language"

(p. 3182), although these definitions are not so strictly separated and they often overlap. "Pidginization" is a process of simplification and hybridization, and therefore often linked to the "reduction," "impoverishment," or "corruption" of a (European) language. For this reason and others, these languages have long been stigmatized—described and dismissed as "marginal languages" and "bastardized jargons" (Todd, 1994, p. 3177).

A well-documented example of a "stabilized and extended pidgin" is the pidgin English of Papua New Guinea (known as *Tok Pisin*). In 1953, this language was described as "inferiority made half articulate" and its grammar was criticized as "crude and incredibly tortuous" (as cited in Todd, 1994, p. 3177). In the 1990s, the same language occupied a much better position in the society: it was widely used in the parliament, news and entertainment; it was officially recognized in the constitution as one of the country's national languages; and it was spoken as a mother tongue by over 20,000 Papua New Guineans and as a lingua franca by an estimated 1.5 million people (p. 3177).

According to Todd (1994), the attitudes toward pidgin and creole have "improved" since the late twentieth century at least among linguists, if not the general public:

> The change in the status of Tok Pisin resembles the change in attitude towards pidgin and creole languages generally. In the period between 1950 and 1975, these languages . . . became central to linguistic discussion on acquisition of language, linguistic universals, and language change. (p.

3177)

Perhaps the overt discrimination against pidgin and creole is gone or reduced; however, various prejudices remain in forms of correction, shame associated with these languages, aspiration for "Standard English," and so on. Lee Tonouchi, a Hawaii born, Japanese American writer who calls himself "Da Pidgin Guerilla," is one person who has fought against "Pidgin prejudice" throughout his career as an academic, educator, and writer (Tonouchi, 2004). In his article "Da State of Pidgin Address" (2004), Tonouchi calls on the reader to reconsider various negative assumptions and attitudes toward the Hawaiian Pidgin English. As he himself has experienced, "We's brought up for believe dat we cannot do certain tings if we talk Pidgin" (p. 75) and there is much *shame* for speaking in Pidgin. This does not mean that students are explicitly taught to devalue Pidgin— or told that "you're stupid if you talk in Pidgin"; rather, "Wuz mo' INSIDIOUS da way dey do 'em" (p. 76). Correcting students' use of Pidgin to American "Standard English" is one way. One would have to say, "May I please use the restroom?" instead of "Teachah, can go bachroom?" to get permission (p. 77). Young students' attitude toward Pidgin—feeling of shame—is also exemplified by the following comment made by a student of Tonouchi's, who was "da biggest Pidgin talker in da class" (p. 77). When asked why he wasn't willing to participate in an extra-credit class to speak in Pidgin, the student replied, "Nah Mistah, I trying fo' cut back" (p. 77). As Tonouchi rightly observes, this student was "equating talking Pidgin to smoking cigarettes cuz he gatta 'cut back.' If he talk

too much Pidgin, den he going get Pidgin cancer and he going DIE, brah. Pua

ting. Sad yeah, da tinking" (p. 77).

In his Pidgin class, his students came up with a list of things that people

told them over the years that they *cannot* do with Pidgin. They included: "be

smart," "be important," "be successful," "be professional," "be taken seriously,"

"be one teacher," "be one doctor," "be big businessman," "communicate," "eat at

fine dining restaurants," "enter a beauty pageant (and win)," "function," "go

forward," "go out tonight," "give public speeches," "look high-class," "pray to

God," "sound intellectual," "survive," "talk proper," "talk to da phone operator,"

"teach," "understand," "write papers to pass this class," and the list goes on (pp.

77-78). In a nutshell, "Dey say if you talk Pidgin / YOU NO CAN" (p. 79).

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You know what frustrates me? When we do acquire English, after years of

learning, we are still the "other," our English is still stigmatized and marginalized,

dependent of the rules and norms arbitrarily determined by an exclusive group of

"native speakers." And English never belongs to us. Our English is constantly

under scrutiny and critique, and with one mistake in pronunciation or idioms or

grammar or article and people can dismiss us with "she doesn't even know proper

English." English may be the language of the privileged, but learning English—or

even speaking English as mother tongue—does not necessarily grant us the same

privilege and power. Who said that English gives voice to people who are

marginalized in the world? Is English education simply an act of assimilation,

indoctrination, an extension of the paradigm of the dominant, domesticating and enslaving, contributing to reproduction of hierarchy of power to continue missionary work under disguise of "humanitarian" work and "education" for everyone and "empowerment"? Or does it truly have a potential of leveling the playing field?

<div align="center">***</div>

Tonouchi then encourages his students to ask themselves: how much of this is perceived and how much of it is real? "How many of dem actually TRIED, ATTEMPTED talking to judges, tried working customer service, or tried writing formal papahs in Pidgin?? . . . How dey know no can? . . . But sometimes we dunno, maybe we going be surprise" (p. 79). Tonouchi points out that first there is "self-censorship" actions that hold them back from using Pidgin. This does not mean that there aren't any prejudices on the part of non-Pidgin speakers; there are. Many people hold, at best, "good for know Pidgin, but you gotta know english" attitude (p. 81). Change in attitudes is slow in progress: "I dunno. Slow yeah da evolution. Little acecdotal bright spots hea and dea. But nahting on one grand scale. Still waiting for da big Pidgin revolution" (p. 82). But still, "at least WE challenging da hegemony of english" (p. 79) by educating students and other educators to see that "Pidgin is one language and ees not jus bad english" (p. 82).

Singapore is another interesting case. In 2000, the Singapore government started a campaign called "Speak Good English Movement" to encourage the usage of "Standard English" while discouraging the usage of Singlish, a

Singaporean creole English (Tonouchi, 2004). There have been several themes to

date: "Speak Well. Be Understood" (2000-2004); "Speak Up. Speak Out. Speak

Well." (2005-06); "Be Understood. Not only in Singapore, Malaysia and Batam."

(2006-07); "Rock Your World! Express Yourself" (2007-08); "I Can" (2008-09);

"Impress. Inspire. Intoxicate." (2009-10); "Get it Right" (2010-11); "How You

Speak Makes A Difference." (2011-12); "Make Good English Stick" (2012-13).

In response to this government-initiated movement, the "Speak Good

Singlish Movement" started on September 11th, 2010 on Facebook, gathering

more than 3,000 supporters. The cover picture exclaimed, "Singlish also can!"

and the original Facebook page started with the following statement:

> We are not against the Speak Good English Movement in Singapore. But
> we believe that we should get it right with speaking English as well as
> Singlish. We are tired of people confusing Singlish with broken English.
> We are tired of people pretending to speak Singlish by speaking bad
> English. We are tired of people caricaturising Singlish speakers as uncouth
> and unintelligent. Please wake up your ideas! ("Speak Good Singlish
> Movement," 2010)

Similarly, a popular website *TalkingCock* ("Singapore's most powderful satirical

humour website"), launched the "Save Our Singlish Campaign" in 2002. During

the launch event, the director and producer of TalkingCock The Movie and the

editor of "The Coxford Singlish Dictionary," Colin Goh made a speech and

claimed that Singlish is "not just broken English" but a distinctive marker of

Singaporean identity:

> Why we're fighting for Singlish, is because it's simply a part of our
> culture. In fact, it may be the ONLY thing that makes us uniquely
> Singaporean. It mixes all the various languages, which to me, seems to
> spread multi-cultural understanding. I thought this was something to be

proud of. ("Thanks for making the launch of the SAVE OUR SINGLISH CAMPAIGN such a success!," 2002)

Goh also critiqued the government's increasing censorship of the English grammar and accent in the media and stated that "trying to wipe out Singlish is the creeping colonialism and double standards." It is "double standards" because American or British colloquial English is allowed in the media (e.g. BBC) while Singaporean English is "unfairly singled out." For example, "the SBA [Singapore Broadcasting Authority] is suggesting that it's okay if Singaporeans say, 'Yo, bro', wassup, man? Just chillin', ya know what I'm sayin'?' but cannot say, 'Arbuthen?'[35]" Clearly, the preference is nothing but arbitrary, based on power and privilege associated with each culturalized mode of speaking than actual effectiveness or colloquialism. Furthermore, Goh pointed out that the "ostensible aim" behind the Speak Good English movement is "to improve our global competitiveness" by becoming more creative and innovative. However:

How can we tell Singaporeans to be creative, daring, and innovative, but only in the right language? How can we ask Singaporeans to dare to speak their minds and take risks in order to be more globally competitive and yet silence the way we normally communicate?

The contradictions that Goh points out are worth noting. Indeed, how do we creatively express our ideas and effectively engage in dialogue "but only in the right language" concerned so much with the *form*?

[35] According to the "Coxford Singlish Dictionary," "arbuthen!" [ah-bah-**den**] is a condensed form of "ah, but then?" and equivalent to "of course!" "duh!" an exclamation that something is "manifestly self-evident or obvious."

What these movements (both in Hawaii and Singapore) have in common are: 1) eradicating the misconceptions that their creole language is just "bad" or a "lazy" kind of English, and promoting it as a legitimate language with its own grammatical structures and vocabulary; 2) promoting the status of these languages in the society at large (in everyday life, in academia, in business, in the government, etc.); 3) cultivating a sense of pride in the language.

As Tonouchi (2004) pointed out, the evolution is slow. However, similar movements are occurring around the world resisting the imposition of standardized English and revaluing their own (creole or indigenous) languages (The Martinican *créolité* movement is one example; see Stewart, 2007). Creolization is a dynamic process, which has a potential to "decentre" and "destabilise" the hegemony of standardized English. Mercer (1988) writes that:

> Across a whole range of cultural forms there is a "syncretic" dynamic which critically appropriates elements from the master-codes of the dominant culture and "creolises" them, disarticulating given signs and re-articulating their symbolic meaning. The subversive force of this hybridizing tendency is most apparent at the level of language itself where creoles, patois, and black English decentre, destabilise and carnivalise the linguistic domination of "English"—the nation-language of the master-discourse—through strategic inflections, re-accentuations and other performative moves in semantic, syntactic, and lexical codes. Creolising practices of counter-appropriation exemplify the critical process of dialogism. (as cited in Hall, 1990, p. 236)

In his introduction to *Creolization: History, Ethnography, Theory*, Stewart (2007) offers another important observation, that is *all* cultures are products of creolization: "[a]ll cultures have absorbed and continue to absorb influences from other cultures. Since no one has been spared creolization, no one can assert

'purity' of origins as a pretext for domination" (p. 3). Does a "pure" form of language or culture really exist? When does creolization start? According to Khan (2001), the concept of "creolization" itself is "inherently paradoxical" (p. 8) because it invents a "pure noncreole" or "uncreole" culture that is "authentic" and "intact." But there's simply no such thing as "pure," "authentic" culture. "Creolization," then, "is an antidote to, at best, anachronistic notions and, at worst, misleading notions of culture in terms of bounded, static, predictable, totalities" (p. 24).

This understanding of dynamic culture—unbounded, moving/mobile/mobilizing, and unpredictable—radically departs from that of culture as an integrated, crystalized whole, which needs to be *protected* and *preserved*. Such an understanding of culture (and of language) leads to either a violent imposition of a "pure" standardized English or futile efforts to promote and preserve a "pure" other indigenous language.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

But still, WHY SHOULD WE HAVE TO LEARN ENGLISH TO SURVIVE, why should we have to learn English to have voice in the world, why should we have to learn English to pursue intellectual curiosity, why should we have to learn English to participate in the economy? And why do those who choose not to learn English have to be *punished*? And why should one feel deprived of self-esteem because they don't speak English? WHY SHOULD THEY SUFFER FOR LACK OF ENGLISH and why should native speakers of

English be automatically granted opportunities to travel and teach English just because they are native speakers of English, without even qualification and training in teaching???? Ugh. I can't still get my head around it.

<center>***</center>

Resistance Perspective: Unlocking the Liberatory Potential

Canagarajah's "resistance perspective" that I introduced earlier reminds us of Saussure's distinction between *langue* (language) and *parole* (speech). According to the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1986/1916), the *langue* or the language itself is "social in its essence and independent of the individual" (p. 19). Langue encompasses the abstract, systematic rules and conventions of a signifying system produced by the "collectivity"; it is independent of, and pre-exists, individual speakers. It is "a system of values" (p. 87), involving the unchanging principles of language, without which no meaningful utterance—speech—would be possible. *Parole* or speech, on the other hand, refers to "an individual act of the will and the intelligence . . . in order to express his own thought" (p. 14). This is the individual, personal phenomenon, which is rather accidental than systematic. They are "modifications of the system" (p. 87). Langue and parole are not separate; they are closely linked and each presupposes the other, for a language is "necessary in order that speech should be intelligible and produce all its effects" and speech is also "necessary in order that a language may be established" (p. 19).

Saussure (1986/1916) compares these concepts to the game of chess;

langue is "one variable set of conventions," much like the rules of the game,

"which exist before the beginning of the game and remain in force after each

move" (p. 88). Alternatively, parole may be compared to individual moves in

playing the game. Saussure notes, however, that this comparison is limited in that

intentions of the chess player and the speakers are quite different. According to

Saussure:

> the player *intends* to make his moves and to have some effect upon the
> system. In a language, on the contrary, there is no premeditation. Its pieces
> are moved, or rather modified, spontaneously and fortuitously. . . . If the
> game of chess were to be like the operations of a language in every
> respect, we would have to imagine a player who was either unaware of
> what he was doing or unintelligent. . . . even when a change of this kind is
> made deliberately, this will be the case even less when blind forces of
> change disturb the organization of a system of signs. (pp. 88-89)

Saussure's analysis is ambiguous in terms of the extent of agency he

attributes to the speaker of a language in influencing the system of the language,

while Canagarajah's assumption is much more optimistic. Other scholars have

also pointed out this possibility of turning the language of the oppressor into

advantage of the oppressed. Homi Bhabha argues in *The Location of Culture*

(1994), for example, that *hybridity* is "inherently subversive" because it has

necessarily destabilized the colonizer's identity (as cited in Greenfield, 2007).

According to Bhabha (1990), hybridity opens up a new possibility, creating the

"third space":

> The importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace the two original
> moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the "third
> space" which enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces

the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives which are inadequately understood through received wisdom. (as cited in Rutherford, 1990, p. 211)

Therefore, speaking the oppressor's language is inherently subversive and has the force to undermine the old structure.

Freire and Hale argue that the dominant language (whether it is the "standard" pattern of one's own language or a foreign language that the master speaks) gives access to political and legal tools, and equips one to make interventions. In other words, the language of the oppressor allows access to some resources to which you are denied access if you refuse to speak it, and therefore denied the very practical benefits it brings or the possibility of negotiation. Hale argues that language allows a "struggle from within" (2006, pp. 111-12), a process of resistance and change from inside the system. Freire points out that mastery of the "standard" language empowers the marginalized to "fight for the necessary reinvention of the world," and literacy in particular allows one to "rewrite" their world (as cited in Greenfield, 2007, p. 155). Both refer to the possibility of negotiation permitted by speaking the master's language. I question, however, to *what degree* such negotiation would be allowed; and if it is the *language* that may allow such negotiation or if it is the *assimilation*—the acquiring of the discourse and culture, and mastering of the rhetoric—that allows it; and furthermore, if such possibility for negotiation is determined *outside* the language the person speaks, i.e., social class, race, gender, educational background, political affiliation, and so on.

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I know I'm doing that. I'm attempting precisely that: enter into the discourse in order to influence it by writing a thesis in "Standard English," to be heard. But why did I, and many others, have to go through this process to be heard, in the first place? Why couldn't we contribute to the academia without learning, and ONLY learning, English? And rip off some part of our identity to do that? And conditioned to believe that English is more important and useful than our own home language? What am I doing to myself, what are we doing to ourselves?

***

There is a common assumption in the teaching of composition or language that "one must learn the rules first in order to break them." But what does this process to "learn the rules" entail? In *Academic Discourse and Critical Consciousness* (1992), an American composition scholar Patricia Bizzell examines the connection between ideology (academic discourse) and language learning ("Standard English" in particular) and argues that learning of the "rules" itself may very well serve as an assimilation process (which might eliminate the desire for "breaking the rules" in the course). Let's take an example of a college student who is learning to write in "Standard English." Learning that abstract thinking is valued in academia, the student might try to leave their "precollege experience" or "vivid sense of a surrounding world" behind in order to become a "skilled" writer or "rise to supposedly higher levels of cognitive development and

mental health" (p. 133). This is a movement *away* from developing "critical consciousness" of their own world, which requires not only analytic skills but also the ability to interact with and intervene in the very reality in which they live. In fact, "academic discourse itself comes to seem an obstacle to critical consciousness" (p. 134). Although this is a reduced version of an example of a very particular kind of language learning, English acquisition in general could be considered as entering into a certain kind of community informed by a certain kind of discourse (in my case, it was strongly associated with white American middle-class popular culture), which involves a similar process of "ideological conditioning."

Similarly, Black lesbian feminist, Audre Lorde (1984) presents the limitation of ending the system of oppression (racism, sexism, and homophobia) with the "tools" that have created and sustained such a system in the first place. "What does it mean when the tools of a racist patriarchy are used to examine the fruits of that same patriarchy? It means that only the most narrow perimeters of change are possible and allowable" (pp. 110-111). This is because: "*the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house*. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change" (p. 112). Her point of view directly challenges the "possibility of negotiation" argument made by Hale and Freire, or perhaps it is just that: a possibility of negotiation within the "allowable" range to make some adjustments. Acquiring the "tool" of English would never suffice to bring about "genuine

change" in the world order, and worse yet, it might very well discourage us from

wanting such a change anymore: a step *away* from social change.

Given the range of opinions of different scholars, does English really have

the "liberatory potential" proposed by Canagarajah (1999)? And if it does, how do

educators and learners unlock such potential? Canagarajah himself points out the

difficulty and complexity of such an endeavor:

> The achievement of new identities and discourses none the less involves a
> painful process of conflicting ideologies and interests. If we are to
> appropriate the language for our purposes, the oppressive history and
> hegemonic values associated with English have to be kept very much in
> mind, and engaged judiciously. (p. 2)

Similarly, Phillipson (1992) indicates the necessity of investigating, analyzing,

and working through different interests and ideologies embedded in the English

language as well as English language teaching profession in order to open up such

possibility:

> The English language and English language teaching are hegemonic if
> they uphold the values of dominant groups, and if the pre-eminence of
> English is legitimated as being a "common sense" social fact, thus
> concealing whose interests are being served by the dominant ideology and
> dominant professional practice. Analyzing English linguistic imperialism
> in a context of hegemony, with its reproduction under continuous
> contestation and with its own internal contradictions, holds open the
> possibility of change. (p. 76)

Perhaps Laura Greenfield (2007) summarizes this point most succinctly in her

dissertation *Towards a Revolutionary Praxis: The Ethics of Teaching Standardized*

English. In analyzing the historical establishment of the American "Standard

English" in the US society, Greenfield acknowledges that "Standardized English

may very well serve as a tool of resistance" (p. 158). However,

> it must always be utilized by individuals who are highly conscious of the intrinsic interplay between words and values, who recognize the sociopolitical implications of working within a particular discourse, and who intentionally manipulate *language* for their own designs, rather than passively allowing language to manipulate *them*. (p. 158)

All three scholars (Canagarajah, Phillipson, and Greenfield) refer explicitly or implicitly to critical pedagogy as the key platform to *conscietize* (in the Freirean sense) English language learners and teachers, which in turn allows them to become agents of change and transform English into a tool of resistance.

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But what is left there to resist if English was all there is? …There are a growing number of schools and programs and classes of English to respond to these growing demands and needs of English. We are investing so much to come up with different theories and approaches to teach English more efficiently and effectively. More, better, faster, easier, cheaper, more. But the *real* need is to examine the condition by which this necessity is created and recreated in the first place! It is like inventing all different kinds of pills in an attempt to cure a patient without looking at the cause and condition by which this disease was created. The world doesn't need more English. We need a change in the system where English is not required for survival and prosperity, where English speakers are not automatically favored and non-native speakers of English are punished, and where native English speakers have voice and people without English are rendered voiceless.

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Yes, But How?: Towards a Revolutionary Praxis

Intervention can be made in a number of different ways (in research and writing as I'm doing now, for example) but as an educator I think that language teachers have both opportunity and responsibility to question and challenge the hegemony of English. English teachers around the globe should critically reflect on their pedagogy and, instead of simply finding methods to assimilate into and survive within existing systems (and presenting English as if it were a neutral skill, a "common sense" knowledge, an innocent tool for upward mobility, or a ticket to success), a more ethical and responsible pedagogy that allows us to explore the cultural and political aspects of language learning must be developed, particularly from the Periphery countries and teachers.

Such pedagogy may include: presenting the history and politics of English language teaching and learning; questioning the notion of "native" speakers; exploring different varieties of Englishes (Pidgin, Singlish, Dzonglish, etc.) instead of teaching only the U.S. or British standardized versions of English; teaching materials from Third World Literature; exploring different ways of using English (teaching students to use English to construct their own knowledge and make interventions in the system rather than passively consuming the knowledge produced by the Center and presented as a settled knowledge); questioning the universality of values such as "development," "modernity," and "advancement," as they are associated with the language—and in so doing, "provincializing

Europe" in English language teaching. Teaching of English is never politically neutral and English should not be taught without critical discussion of it.

But questions remain: How do we do it, really? What does it look like? Can we apply the problem-posing approach when students are *actually* in the process of acquiring the language? Can we take a critical distance while they are trying to master the language? Is it possible to learn English without being changed by it and retain and cultivate critical thinking? How realistic is it; is it even imaginable?—There is no uniform model to follow, and it has to be negotiated with students in each given social context. As much as it is wrong to impose English on someone, it's also wrong to take away the knowledge of English from a person who has shown interest in learning the language. We are not in the position to judge and say: "Don't study English; it's bad for you." Or, "why are you studying it? You shouldn't." We should be mindful of "false generosity," but also we should *not* deny their right to and reason for studying English in pursuing what *we* believe to be "true generosity." I cannot and should not make the choice *for* them, for anybody.

<div align="center">***</div>

Makeinu no toboe. I hear a voice in my head. *Grumbling of a loser. It's an excuse. You're criticizing English because you've given up. It's an excuse for not trying enough.* This voice that questions my act of questioning. The oppressor in myself that haunts me.

<div align="center">***</div>

It's like looking into a black hole. I'm scared to ask these questions. Am *I* colonized? Is *my* way of thinking, is *my* way of being in the world, domesticated and enslaved? Is *my* imagination colonized?

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Very recently I had a conversation with Sou Hyun, one of my best friends and an international student from Korea, and Professor Greenwood, about how to improve our English—especially spoken English. "I know I speak in broken English," Sou Hyun said, "and when I speak it's even worse than writing. I speak this grammatically-incorrect sentence that is not even making sense… How can I improve it?"

Professor Greenwood's first advice to Sou Hyun was to find a "different adjective to describe" her English. "Broken" English presumes that there is a perfect, whole, beautiful form and that hers was somehow "shuttered," incomplete and deformed. "But your English is not an incomplete, lesser version of what it should be," she said. Instead it is a beautiful, evolving thing. "Choose a different adjective that is more fair to yourself."

After leaving Professor Greenwood's office, Sou Hyun and I continued the conversation and brainstormed different adjectives that could better describe her—and my own—English. "Incorrect?" Sou Hyun suggested. I said "no," because it still presumes a "correct" form of English to which we should conform. "Baby?" I said "no" to this, too. I suggested "evolving." This has a more positive tone. "Or we could simply say, 'my,'" I made another suggestion, "Just 'my'

English. Without an adjective." We brainstormed some more. "Unique" came up. "This 'unique' English that I speak that becomes even more 'unique' when I talk…" Sou Hyun said amusingly. How about "singular" or "original," along the same lines? Then I suggested "functional," because our English is, well, functioning, even though they it may not be "perfect" to whatever standard measure against which we are comparing our English.

There was a long pause. Then a question came up in my mind: "Why are we being so moderate about our English? Why are we not using adjectives like 'great,' 'exceptionally good,' 'wonderful,' 'beautiful,' you know, these kinds of adjectives to describe our English?" I went on: "I mean, we are surviving in an American college, and that must mean our English is good. More than fine. It's a matter of only making it even better."

Indeed, why do we keep attributing such negative adjectives, and why is it so difficult to come up with positive descriptions? We discussed further that, having learned English as a foreign language, we have never quite got out of this mindset of being "visitors"—this language has always been someone else's and never belonged to us (I mean in terms of personal, emotional connection, not official status). So we constantly compare our English with "theirs." And you know what, I'm *so* lost in my *inability* in expressing my ideas that sometimes (or often times) I forget the fact that I *am* communicating in English. Quite successfully. But my brain doesn't register the successes; only failures…

"It's a problem about ownership," Professor Greenwood told us. We don't have to wait to be given a permission to claim English as our own; we don't need others to affirm for us that it is ours. *We've got our English.* For one thing, there are more speakers of English as a second and foreign language than native English speakers in the world today. And even within the native English speakers, American and British people comprise only minority. We need to make a "psychological shift" to make English our own.

YES! Yes.

…But.

There's this hesitation. There's this "but." I understand it intellectually, *but*.

I'm still going after the phantasm of a "perfect" English. I haven't done away with the desire for "perfection," this anxiety to conform to the imaginary "standard" form of the language. I say one thing and I deny it with my own action. I'm in a dilemma. You see I have carefully crafted a boundary, divided by three asterisks, demarcating the zone for expressing myself in the way I speak. But neither is this space free of (self-)censorship.

"Should I not copyedit?" Professor Roth jokingly asked me once in our regular meeting after I had drafted the second chapter. No, professor, please do! That's not what I meant! Each version of draft came back with suggestions for copyediting, which I truly appreciated, and I'm not being sarcastic. I want people to take this work seriously, and I wouldn't submit my work without asking my

professor—a native speaker—to edit it. Here I am again, having to prove myself. Add articles here and there, fix prepositions, clear up some tangled sentences, bump up the level of my vocabulary to sound more academic. Voilà. Do I feel better now? Do I feel more confident?

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

During the summer I struggled not knowing how to introduce critical pedagogy in the English literacy class for adult women that I co-taught with Nora. Teaching English was accompanied even with a feeling of guilt at times, or it might have been just frustration of not knowing the "right" way to do it. What I knew was the students' very practical need and deep desire to learn English. Yet I still wanted to somehow problematize their negative assumption about their ability stemming from being illiterate.

In English class, I focused on responding to their functional need as well as making the class as interactive, fun, and practical as possible. We started from the alphabet, phonemes, basic vocabulary such as vegetables, fruits, colors, numbers, food, and some phrases necessary for shopping and ordering at restaurants. One time I brought all my *kira* (traditional Bhutanese dress for women) to the class, created menus, made paper money, and we spent the whole class virtually shopping and eating at restaurants, taking turns being customers and shopkeepers. Initially, getting them to talk was challenging, for the interactive approach that we took was very different from that of Bhutanese teachers who had been teaching the class for a month prior to our arrival. We practiced filling

official forms and bank deposit forms, making sure that they could write their own addresses, names of their home villages, and names of their relatives. On Pema's birthday, I had everyone sign their names and write "happy birthday" on a giant card. Sometimes I taught basic computer skills too, such as switching on and off the computer, clicking and scrolling, and typing, and used online games to reinforce their knowledge of the vocabulary and alphabet. Little by little they got better at writing letters, reading, and speaking. Seeing these women learn to write was exciting and inspiring, and more than anything, seeing them open up little by little, become more talkative and a little more daring, brought me great joy as a teacher.

The class expanded during the summer, too; at the end of July a second group of 22 women were recruited to join the first class (in which we had about 24 students). The second group was as passionate and motivated as the first one, and you would sense their enthusiasm—a thirst for learning—the moment you stepped in the class. The two classes were always filled with laughter. In my final week in Bhutan, I had a poetry class ("Where I'm From") with the first group of women and later displayed their works on the wall of the library.

The weekly discussion group that I started in July was my platform for bringing in a more "critical" piece to the group. There we talked about confidence building, strategies for effective communication, gender dynamics in the community leadership, and so on. The group was never bigger than several people at a time, but our conversation was always stimulating, and at times provocative.

Needless to say, I had developed a strong bond with these women, especially from the first group, whom I taught for three months, and with whom I had picnics and home parties together. I felt really sad to leave them, and they were sad to see us leave. Surprisingly, even the students from the second group, whom I taught for only about three weeks, demonstrated as much affection and *grief* upon my departure and brought me gifts, letters, and cards (some of which were written by their husbands on their behalf). Not to say that I did not develop any relationship with them, but their strong emotional response was something that I didn't exactly expect to see. On the last day of class—which turned into a tea party and spontaneous bingo game—some of them were even crying.

I opened and read one of the letters from those women, and only then did I realize what this class might have meant to these women, most of whom had never received formal education before and many of whom were learning to read and write the alphabet for the first time in their lives. I realized then that, indeed, I might have been their very first—and perhaps only—"teacher." And our class might as well have been the only "classroom" experience for them, a gathering for the purpose of *learning*. Perhaps Nora and I had offered something that they had never been offered before: a safe space, recognition, and respect. Respect and acknowledgement as people who are deserving of full recognition, as people who have legitimate space in society, as smart women capable of learning and growing. Such an acknowledgement, which to me came very naturally, might have been something new to them, who had (been) underestimated their abilities

for such a long time. Through the medium of English class (and discussion group), I was trying to teach them to value themselves, to have confidence, and to see themselves as capable and smart women. That was my goal—and maybe that had come across. Quite honestly, I was amazed by the positive impact that the class had on many of these women, if not all of them.

As for my own growth as a teacher, I had never enjoyed teaching so much before; it was an incredibly empowering experience for me, too. They were the kind of students that any teacher would dream of: eager and excited to learn. This experience also made me see that the way we teach matters. That mode of instruction matters. And that it can make a difference in English class, or really in any other subject matter.

Although our situations are vastly different, something about these women's passion for learning English reminds me of my own past. What propelled me to learn the language, beyond the seemingly childish infatuation with Harry Potter, was the excitement to learn to express myself in a new language, the simple joy of having a conversation with someone from a different country, a sense of self-fulfillment and agency, and longing for going beyond all and every limit and constraint I felt: a yearning to be *more*. My passion was real—it was my *choice*—and so was theirs. Otherwise, what would I be, a puppet without a will? Is my passing through the world predetermined and preestablished? No. Conditioned, yes, but not determined.

If I could go back to the past and undo my decisions, would I? I say no, because I already cannot imagine myself without English. I would feel incomplete without it. This is already my language. Well, one of my languages. It's plural. So I don't choose one or the other. I can't. English is already within me as an inalienable part that forms my being and being-ness. Once I thought I lost a piece of the puzzle, but the picture itself keeps changing, evolving. Were I to find the original piece, it wouldn't fit in to the picture anymore anyway.

I know that a part of me is still pulsating, in a sense, with bitterness and unanswered questions. But I also know that this path was not about subtraction, about loss, or becoming less; it's not a zero-sum game, even though I saw it that way for quite some time. On the contrary, it was about addition, about expansion, about growth, of becoming more. And it hasn't ended yet; this is not the end of the story—this is a beginning of a path which I will begin to construct from now on with my hands.

AFTERWORD

> Roads create pathways that make motion easier and more efficient, but in doing so they limit where we go. The ease of travel they facilitate is also a structure of confinement.
>
> —Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing

I think what is considered to be "conventional" (or "standard") structure and style of a thesis is comparable to paved "roads." Maybe the language, too. The "standard" language is similar to a paved "pathway" that facilitates communication. Or I could say that language is the vehicle. Following them—the conventions of structure, style, and language—is like driving a car on paved roads. It's a rather smooth ride.

Someone has been on that road before. Many others. You see other cars in front of and behind your car. Familiar sceneries are reassuring not only for the driver but also for the passengers. You have to know the traffic rules (The APA Style Guide instructs us, for example, to "avoid poetic language" and "minimize the amount of figurative language" such as metaphors and analogies in order to avoid confusion), but as long as you follow them no one will bother you. Road

maps show how to get to your destination. All you have to know is where you are going.

But it can be a bit boring. It's a little too limiting. You can't stop in the middle of the road; you have to keep moving at a certain speed. And you can't be on the road without knowing your destination (have you been honked at recently?). And maybe that's the whole point of driving in the first place: you are expected to go from a point A to B. It is expected that there is a destination: a conclusion. From a research question and an answer. From a hypothesis to an affirmation or negation of it.

I didn't know where I wanted to go. Well, initially I did want to "get" somewhere, which existed only in my imagination. I hadn't located the "point B." I hadn't learned all the traffic rules, either (who set the rules in the first place?). To begin with, I've learned to drive on the left in Japan but here in the US the rule is to drive on the right. I have to constantly remind myself of the rule so that I won't drive in the wrong direction (and avoid much worse consequences). So I hesitated. I wanted to explore, but I was reluctant to start driving.

What I ended up doing was putting aside the map that wasn't serving me. I got out of my car and started walking around to explore where I was. I decided to go off track instead of following paved roads. Forget the traffic rules for a while and just drive with my instincts. I decided to lose track of my way. Let's see where it takes me.

Gravel roads are bumpy. Sometimes I lose control of my car, taken over if I'm not careful. But at least I can drive on my own pace. I set the rules for myself. Slow or fast. No honking, no speeding tickets. It's easy to change directions, or stop for a while, or back up. Or leave the car for a while. It didn't free me of all restrictions—I'm still driving the same vehicle—and I don't mean to suggest that I'm a revolutionary who's discovered a new, unexplored territory. Certainly other people have been here before. But I felt liberated and enjoyed the ride so much more than the alternative.

In the end, it seems that I kept circling around the "point A," round and round, revisiting and rediscovering. I cultivated a new appreciation of the complexity of the starting point. I stopped trying to "get there" and instead just enjoy the process, of the "not getting there," to know the starting place anew. *Where* I was going mattered little as compared to *how* I was traveling. That's right, the meaning of the travels doesn't lie in the destination but in the journey itself: each step that I take from exactly where I am.

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