

Language has no independent existence apart from the people who use it. It is not an end in itself; it is a means to an end of understanding who you are and what society is like.

David Crystal

Reading, like writing, is a creative act. If readers only bring a narrow range of themselves to the book, then they'll only see their narrow range reflected in it.

Ben Okri



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DEDICATION

In loving memory of my parents, who taught me the value of education.

In memory of Elena MacGaw, who believed I had a future in university education.

To Astrid, who has always been there for me.

To Fabián, who has been a constant source of support and encouragement during
the challenges of life.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude:

To my Tutor, Dr. Héctor Valencia, for his guidance and confidence in my work for so many years.

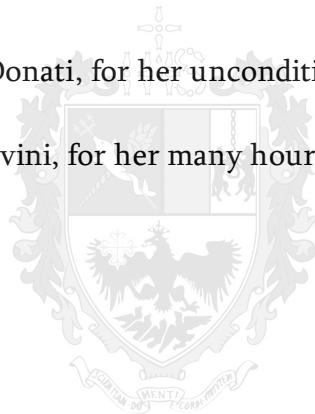
To Paula Ortiz, MBA, for allowing this to happen.

To Rosemary Donati, for her unconditional support and encouragement.

To Agustina Savini, for her many hours of proof reading my manuscript.

Many thanks to you all!

Paul Nielsen



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ABSTRACT

The status of English as a global language has made it not only widely available in Argentina but increasingly necessary to the average Argentinean as well. In the present those seeking a job or a promotion or those pursuing a graduate university education have become acutely aware that proficiency in English is an essential requirement. As a symbol of prestige and modernity, it has become a means of social ascension. This paper sets out to establish that the British assimilation patterns of the second half of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century have influenced the present shaping of the functions of the uses and users of the English language in the city of Buenos Aires and its outskirts.

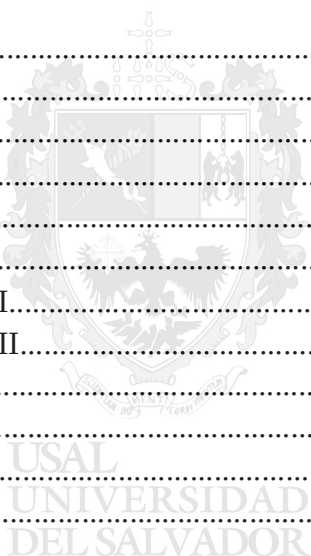
Key words: English Language – British – Attitudes – Functions – Users –
Uses



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1 - INTRODUCTION

The general objective of this paper is to establish a sociolinguistic profile of the English language in the city of Buenos Aires and its outskirts. In doing so, it will be necessary to identify the languages present in the early nineteenth century and the factors that affected these linguistic patterns. All this based on the historical evolution of the presence of English in what was then known as the River Plate and how the economic, social and political factors have affected the uses of the English language today. Thus, the main question to be answered is:

How have the British and American assimilation patterns of the second half of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century influence the present shaping of the functions of the English language in the city of Buenos Aires and its outskirts?

The main hypothesis is then that the British and American assimilation patterns of the second half of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century have influenced the present shaping of the functions of the uses and users of the English language in the city of Buenos Aires and its outskirts.

1.1 - STATE OF THE ART

The status of English in Argentina has been discussed before by several authors. The analysis of the state of the art results in a number of research papers on the subject, both as antecedents of the methodological framework, and as the theoretical framework.

Research methodology is founded on the model developed by Professor Braj Kachru (1992), based on the description -in a specific geographical region- of the presence of the English language, its characterisation, its users and uses, the relative prestige it may have, and the methodology used in teaching it.

In “*Who is it that can tell me who I am? The quest for ethnicity in the Anglo communities of Buenos Aires*”, Florencia Cortés-Conde (2003) examines the discourse changes in a community, when variations in their language are affected by their identity.

In her research work, a group of Anglo-Argentines responded to a questionnaire whose purpose was to reveal what made Anglo-Argentines different in the perception of either of their identities, i.e. their Anglo and their Argentine identity. The results revealed that the borderline was fuzzier than expected. Answers showed an emotional perspective as for example in “*I feel*” as an Anglo-Argentine, but at the same time a high level of detachment as in “*the Anglos feel ...*” Cortés-Conde comes to the conclusion that not even a global language is capable of preserving the identity of its speakers.

In her work “*English in the Estonian multicultural society*”, Lorenza Fonzari (1999) establishes that, even though in various published works the expansion

of the English language is the product of colonialism and political power, Estonians have accepted English as the language of communication and technology as a reaction to the Russian imposition of their language and culture, which lasted over fifty years. Her study analyses the Estonian's attitudes towards the expansion of English in their country. The results show that the Estonians are conscious of the presence of English, which they welcome as a lingua franca that allows them to communicate with a world they want to belong to.

Viginia Pulcini (1997) focuses on the attitudes towards the expansion of English in Italy during the 20th century. In her work, she refers to the *americanisation* of Italian society because of the influence of the United States of America after the Second World War. The attitude towards the penetration of American culture is divided into two well-defined periods: the first half of the century characterised by hostility and xenophobia, and the second half, characterised by accommodation and acceptance as a consequence of the war.

In "*Why they need English in Malaysia: a survey*", Kuldip Kaur (1995) carried out a study which examines the functions of English among school students in Malaysia. The results, carried out on 182 students, revealed that the main function is the use of English for academic purposes. The students associate English with the possibility of being able to pursue higher education abroad and with personal improvement, not for social purposes.

Zhao Yong and Keith P. Campbell (1995) analysed the status of English in China. In their research, they describe the demographic profile of the speakers of English and their level of proficiency. China is the country with the largest number of users of English as a foreign language, what Kachru (1997) describes

as the Expanding Circle. This sociolinguistic profile also includes the uses of English as a social and economic mobility language.

In her paper "*Staff Profiles in Minority and Prestigious Bilingual Education Contexts in Argentina*," Cristina Banfi and Silvia Rettarolli (2008) approach the issue of bilingual education in Argentina. Their research explored the profile of teachers who work as part of bilingual programmes in Argentina, which, according to them, play a key role in the design of an education curriculum. The results of their investigation showed that bilingual programmes are not necessarily designed and implemented with an a priori teacher profile in mind.

Banfi et al (2005) also makes a preliminary description of an important sector of the Argentine education system in bilingual schools. The authors state that the term *bilingual* has been used very lightly, as the standard of English is not always as proficient as it is supposed to be for a traditional bilingual institution. As a consequence of this, they concentrated on schools that aim at educating in two languages. These schools are characterised by their differences with other schools and those things they have in common. Banfi et al suggest that bilingual schools have evolved from being *heritage* schools to bilingual schools and in the last decade or so, to being *Global Language Schools*.

On the other hand, Patricia Friedrich (2003) investigated what happened to the English language in higher education. In her work "*English in Argentina: attitudes of MBA Students*," she analysed the attitude towards the English language of a group of MBA graduates. This analysis focused on the relationship between the attitude towards English and the socio-political fabric. The results of her research establish that there is a strong association between the English language and the labour market. Her analysis relates the

historical moment of Argentina after the crisis of December 2001 with the perception of English as a global language.

Nielsen (2003) provides a profile of the size and dynamism of the English language in Argentina through a sociolinguistic profile. In his work, which is based on Kachru's (1992) framework, he provides the background, describing the availability of the English language and how these factors have influenced its teaching.

Finally, in his paper "*Landmark Review of the Use of Teaching and Learning English in Latin America*," Martin Eayrs offers a description of the general situation of English in Argentina for a foreign audience. He begins with an overview of the country - its geographical location, climate, economy, and education. He describes the teaching of English in Argentina, the British and American influence on methodologies, education laws, the role of bilingual schools and associations. He also provides a view on higher education in English describing the professional areas of concern (translation and interpretation), teacher training and the possibilities for international cooperation and student exchange. With regard to the use of the English language, he reviews the media, publications and social organisations, such as clubs, churches and welfare associations.

1.2 - THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AS A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The relationship between Argentina (then a Spanish colony in the River Plate) and Great Britain dates back to the beginning of the 19th century. This historical relationship establishes a reference frame within which this paper

intends to address the issue of English in the City of Buenos Aires. Historians, journalists and researchers have reported the presence of the British in the River Plate throughout the period in question. This presence and contact provides the evidence that constitutes the background for theoretical framework of this dissertation.

In order to describe the historical background, it has been divided into different periods: the Spanish Colonial period and the English Invasions; the May Revolution; Independence and the first years of the Republic; the supremacy of land owners; the constitution, foreign investments, railroads and the meat packing industry; the World Wars and the years that followed; and finally, a general approach to the Malvinas conflict.

Argentina, like most Latin American countries, is a Spanish-speaking country. The first Spanish settlement was established in the 16th, and became the Viceroyalty of the *Río de la Plata* until 1816. As a result, Spanish is the national and official language. Indian languages have disappeared and those that still survive are spoken in communities of indigenous peoples in different parts of the country.

The conquest and settlement of the vast Argentine territory began after independence in 1816, reaching its current area of over 3,700,000 square kilometres. In order to develop the vast territory, there was a need to increase the Argentine population dramatically. This led to the implementation of policies to encourage European immigration which would then result in the varied cultural matrix of Argentina in general and especially, Buenos Aires.

Graham Yool (2010) argues that if the cultural change that took place in the Modern Ages is taken as a starting point for the European expansion during the 16th centuries, then one may generalise that trade was first installed in overseas regions in a search for exploration and adventure, which provided information for the possibility of a later settlement.

Armies or *armadas* followed traders to support the findings of the adventurers, and finally, educators arrived in order to establish their "culture." This happened in almost all regions of the world. Trade and military expeditions took certain limited forms of culture, which, except for a few, did not make a cultural imprint of significance. What marked the difference was culture brought from the homeland, as religion, language and social concepts, which then intermingles with native elements. It is interesting to develop this way of observation. Trade was usually followed by educators, often priests, and immigrants of different social classes who established their schools and edited their publications. What commercial printers published was mostly general information for the use of local traders and was also a means of maintaining the unity of the community. Newspapers were not political; immigrants did not reach the new lands for politics (except for very small groups of refugees or anarchist) but came to make a living, a characteristic feature of immigration in Argentina for over two centuries.

This is why the immigrants' newspapers, written in foreign languages, were an important component in an effort to educate, as well as to inform and contribute to the cultural merge. But, at the time, the latter was not a priority, but a by-product which is celebrated today as the main heritage of immigration. It is difficult to identify a starting point for the spread and

multiplication of cultures in one given place, and that is why the trend is attributed to the immigration processes in general.

1.2. 1 - THE SPANISH COLONIAL PERIOD AND THE ENGLISH INVASIONS.

According to Cibotti (2006), as from the late 18th century, Britons had plans to control Spanish possessions in South America. England occupied the Falkland Islands in 1765 and 1774, and then withdrew under pressure from Spain, with whom they preferred to be in good terms in order to isolate France. But what changed the struggle between European powers dramatically was the independence of the United States, which became effective in 1783. Consequently, any project of usurpation of Spanish colonial territories would be associated with the idea of emancipation.

The British cabinet was divided; there were doubts on how to proceed. Some ministers warned of the danger posed by waving flags of independence, they feared that the revolutionary spirit would go wild. The boldest promoted the need to encourage the liberation of South America, which would lead to commercial benefits that would be almost entirely in British hands. In 1801, that was the backdrop on which an expedition against Buenos Aires and Montevideo was projected. The initiative did not prosper, but neither was it entirely forgotten (Cibotti, 2006).

In London, Sir Home Popham (Ferns, 1992), a well-known admiral in the British Navy, with an over twenty-five year career, positions in various parts of the Empire, a distinction awarded for his service in China, moved his contacts in the Admiralty office in July 1805, and was given command of the

expedition to recover the Cape of Good Hope, a former Dutch possession that was subject to the Napoleonic rule. This task brought him closer to his real objective: the Rio de la Plata. He needed Beresford's troops, so he had to convince Commander Baird, who was in charge of the Cape, and Beresford's superior, of joining him in his plan to take Buenos Aires. He managed to convince them both with a simple deal: they would divide the booty that was not going to London. The expedition offered no risk, as with the naval victory of Trafalgar in October 1805 the British had become the absolute masters of the seas. Popham believed that Napoleon's alliance with Charles IV, King of Spain, would give him an excuse if he were to be questioned by his superiors back home. On April 14th 1806, Popham set sails towards the South American coast: their destination was Montevideo, though at some point he slightly varied course.

Just a few months after the invasion began, Popham was forced to return to London (Ferns, 1993). He went back beaten and faced a court martial because he had acted without official instructions. In his defence, he recalled the plan of emancipation and justified his failure on the grounds of the lack of clear orders from the Cabinet. Had the Cabinet supported his actions, he would have had the support of the group of natives who were struggling for independence. It is difficult to assess Popham's real intentions. He hardly set foot on River Plate soil, and gave orders from aboard his ship. Though he did sign the act of capitulation, he did not interact with the natives as Beresford did.

1.2.2 - THE MAY REVOLUTION

Landowners and farmers had laid the economic foundations that would eventually lead the Revolution. With their own revenue obtained from the

fruit of genuine wealth, it was possible to aspire to the establishment of a state. Most of the population would benefit, i.e. the Creoles and all European who were not part of the Spanish monopoly especially the members of the British business community (Cibotti, 2006).

In reviewing the events during that short period, it is possible to understand why the Creoles and Spaniards, who fought together to defeat the British during the invasions, drifted apart. If this was not imaginable in the heat of the struggle of 1807, neither were its consequences. In 1810, most natives were joined by their old enemies, the British, in the Plaza de la Victoria, in favour of the Revolution (Cibotti, 2006).

The *Junta*, officials, the army and the people in general were ready to continue in alliance with Britain. They did so by protecting the British subjects and their properties, and by accepting the British Government and subjects. From that moment on, a complex relationship began to be woven between members of the government and Great Britain.

1.2.3 - INDEPENDENCE AND THE FIRST YEARS OF THE REPUBLIC

The Declaration of Independence on July 9th, 1816 had strengthened the relationship between the government and the British community. At the time, everybody expected that the step taken in Tucuman would imply immediate recognition in London of the government of the United Provinces of the Río de la Plata. A few days after the Declaration, the British merchants in Buenos Aires summoned a public meeting to appoint who should represent them as British Consul in the River Plate. The choice was Robert Staples. They decided to pay him a percentage of the revenue produced by the importation of goods

transported on British ships. They waited for confirmation from London, which, incidentally, never came. It was not until 1822 that official recognition began to be discussed seriously. Staples continued as unofficial agent.

Great Britain's foreign policy strictly maintained its policy of no direct intervention in the internal politics of former colonies. This policy served two purposes: first, it served free trade, and secondly, it was the best way not to interfere with the delicate balance that Britain kept in a context where all the old European monarchies were Spanish allies. The English influence was exerted through resident tradesmen and naval commanders stationed in the River Plate to guarantee free trade.

The new order that emerged in 1820 put the province of Buenos Aires in a position that enabled its rapid economic growth. Although the province had a small population –some 100,000 inhabitants– it had vast natural resources and added to an exceptional geographical location and access to the sea, which enabled direct export of leather, meat and tallow to Europe, Brazil and Cuba. The landowners became rich overnight. The province was no longer dependent on internal trade because it could obtain the items it did not produce in the European markets, especially in Great Britain.

In 1821, Buenos Aires became a Provincial State. It was governed by Martin Rodriguez and two outstanding and controversial figures: Bernardino Rivadavia, appointed Minister of Government and Foreign Affairs, and José García, who took office in the Treasury–though younger, he was an influential relative of Anchorena's, and endowed with great financial acumen.

Rivadavia tried to adjust the reality of the province of Buenos Aires to the two state models that inspired him: the US and Great Britain; the former for its liberal education and its democracy, and the latter for its financial and trade policies that became the source of authority of the State.

In order to achieve this, he hoped to draw the attention of creditors to back the State by offering loans to develop education, encourage immigration, expand agriculture, settle new villages on the border, build a port and install running water services in the city.

In London, as from 1820, financial rates began to decrease and thousands of small private savers looked for a more cost-effective investment abroad. South American states began to be viewed as attractive businesses, and in 1822, Buenos Aires was added to the list of possible investments together with Mexico, Colombia, Peru and Chile. In this context, in 1822, the Board of Representatives of the Province of Buenos Aires voted a law that authorised the government to carry out negotiations with *Baring Brothers & Co.*, a British banking group. This group was supposed to obtain a loan that would enable the funding of a public investment programme for the construction of a port, the founding of new towns and cities on the border line, and the provision of running water for the capital city.

The launching of the loan bonds was initially a success although the expectations of the English savers in the River Plate were rather exaggerated.

Rivadavia had the idea of founding a modern state that would control a populated and productive territory. In order to do so, he made a determined attempt to bring immigrants to agricultural activities.