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Megan R. Thompson
mthomps5@iwu.edu

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Choice, Coercion, Capabilities and Conflict:
Multilingualism, Human Development and Peacekeeping in a Globalized World

Megan Thompson

Submission for Research Honors
Illinois Wesleyan University
Department of International Studies
Advisor: William Munro, PhD

ABSTRACT:
The development of English into an international lingua franca is not an inevitable result of globalizing forces. Instead, the "triumph" of the English language and the consequent decline of the world's linguistic diversity cannot be viewed in isolation of its parallel history of conquest, violence, power and exploitation. Today, the languages privileged by the powerful—not only English, but also other dominant languages or standard varieties of those languages—determine access to social, economic and political mobility. This fact renders any discussion of language "choice" irrelevant—when a choice yields the sacrifice of basic human capabilities on one hand and the denial of cultural liberty on the other, the issue becomes one not of choice, but of coercion. Both Amartya Sen and the UNDP Human Development Report (2004) argue that the expansion of freedoms and choices is a prerequisite to human-centered development. Additionally, the UNDP claims that protection of cultural diversity is essential to peacekeeping. Drawing on these premises, this paper explores the notion of linguistic choice by analyzing the personal narratives of multilingual individuals, with the ultimate conclusion that the ability to choose ones language must be understood as an essential resource for human development and conflict prevention.

"The ascendancy of English, like so many phenomena associated with globalization, leaves too many invisible losers, too many people silenced. Regarding languages and migration, I never forget the questions that are so often neglected when progress is abstractly celebrated, the questions that the real suffering human subjects face, one by one by one. Do you come from a place that is poor, that is not fully incorporated into modernity, that does not control a language that commands respect? Do you inhabit a language that does not have armies behind it, and smart bombs and modems and cell phones? Do you reside in a language that will one day be extinct, or whose existence does not have the kind of value in the marketplace that can get you a good job and help you in the everyday struggle to survive? Do you dwell in a language that is wonderful only for making love, for teaching your children the difference between right and wrong, or for praying to God? How does such a language defend itself in our globalizing world?•

Ariel Dorfman

INTRODUCTION: LANGUAGE POWER AND LANGUAGE CHOICES

"The 'good life' is partly a life of genuine choice, and not one in which the person is forced into a particular life – however rich it might be in other respects."[1] *-Amartya Sen*

The now famous Chilean writer Ariel Dorfman learned the English language "*a la fuerza*"—by force. Dorfman's "*idioma materno*" (mother tongue) was Spanish. In his essay, "Breaking Down the Glass Walls of Language," Dorfman tells the story of this conversion, beginning with when his family arrived in New York in February of 1945. While there, he became ill with pneumonia and was hospitalized for three weeks, and as he was isolated from the Spanish language and immersed in English, he had "no alternative" but to learn English "out of sheer necessity." For three weeks nurses and doctors spoke to him in a language he did not know. "In what language do I respond?" Dorfman asks. "In what language can I respond?"[2]

In the 1990s, the Nobel Prize winning economist and former advisor to the World Bank Amartya Sen coined the now well-known "Capability Approach" to development (also known as "Development as Freedom"), claiming that human-centered development requires the expansion of individual freedoms and choices. Similarly, the first UNDP Human Development Report was published in 1990 with a similar primary claim. More recently, the HDR of 2004, "Cultural Liberty in Today's Diverse World" stressed the importance of a more specific type of choice—a cultural choice or "cultural liberty" framed as essential not only to development, but also to the maintenance of peace in a globalized, culturally heterogeneous world.

These conceptions of human development are critical to the understanding of issues of language, as, for many people throughout the world today, there is an inability to choose one's cultural identity without sacrificing other fundamental human rights, or in Sen's view and as will be explored later, fundamental human capabilities. It is clear from Ariel Dorfman's story (a story that is far from an isolated experience) that, for marginalized populations or speakers of minority languages, second language acquisition is often experienced as an imposition—as a coerced choice. Throughout time and across geographic space, language shift has been forced upon entire cultures, peoples and nations through violence, conquest and imperialism. From this historical reality comes the present reality that knowledge of and proficiency in dominant languages, or standard varieties of those languages, can now determine access to political participation, education, and general social mobility. Although perhaps less visibly oppressive, this is a new form of coerced language shift. Given the clear absence of choice and freedom in issues of language acquisition, policy and education, and assuming that the arguments of Sen and the UNDP are valid, this constitutes as a threat to both holistic conceptions of human development and to peace in a globalizing world.

As the world becomes more interconnected and English increasingly becomes a prerequisite for human development, non-English speakers face a strong, coerced incentive to learn the language. When human development is the potential gain, initially it may appear that the solution is simple: learn English. *Choose* to learn English. *Choose* to gain access to the international language and the power it supplies its user, and thus, choose the prosperity that will "inevitably" follow. It is a tempting conclusion, as it is undeniable that English speakers are in possession of a powerful global resource. Speakers of indigenous or minority languages may feel virtually powerless with the knowledge of a language valuable only at the local level—a neglected, undeveloped language stripped of its instrumental vitality and relegated only to the immediate speech community. In

face of the proven correlations between English and higher education, English and income, English and job opportunities etc., many have in fact privileged English in the interests of family, children or individual mobility.

This, however, is not a choice—in its pure, unaffected form. Take philosopher Roderick Chisholm's Principle of Alternate Possibilities as an illustration. If an individual is faced with a "choice" where there is truly only one option available—where no alternative exists and there is no ability on the part of the individual to "do otherwise"—he or she cannot be held responsible for their actions. They cannot be assumed to have had a pure choice in the matter. This is applicable to scenarios in which individuals or families make the "choice" to teach their children English, to learn English, to use it exclusively or to privilege it at the expense of their native language. When English is so intimately connected with political, economic, and social opportunity, is there any alternative? (As Ariel Dorfman asks, "In what language could I respond?") When a child must speak English fluently to access the resources necessary for full human development, can a parent "do otherwise" than to ensure that the child learns English, at whatever cost? The concept of choice is compromised, if not completely invalidated, in such a scenario. Those whose first language is not validated globally or nationally must choose between continuing to speak that language at the sacrifice of human rights (to education, political participation, etc.) and learning to speak a new language at the sacrifice of cultural liberty.[1] In this scenario, if an individual chooses the acquisition of the imposed language, it is only because the costs of doing so are slightly less than the costs of the alternative. This is not choice, but coercion—the associated costs of which create conditions likely to produce social and political conflict. Today, the globalization of English—what Ariel Dorfman calls the "ascendancy" of English, Peter Ives calls the "triumph" of English, and Chinua Achebe calls the "unassailable position" of English—must be understood as a new imposition of this nature, and thus a new threat to choice.

This is the issue at stake: the marginalization of individuals and groups based on their native language constitutes a threat to choice—to cultural choice, to cultural liberty. By applying the framework of the 2004 UNDP Human Development Report and the work of Amartya Sen to this idea, it follows that this threat to choice is also a threat to human-centered development and global peacekeeping. For these reasons, language must be understood in its proper sociohistoric framework as (1) a vector of power and access (2) historically associated with violence, conquest, and imperialism and finally (3) an essential resource for contesting that power, violence and imperialism through the expansion of capabilities (Sen's understanding of human development) and thus also, as an essential resource for the promotion of global peace.

This paper aims to outline this argument through the exploration of the following research questions:

1. What circumstances lead individuals to the acquisition of a second language?
2. Are these circumstances one in which the individual makes a choice to learn that language or, by means of violence or other method of coercion, finds that the language is imposed upon him/her in some sort of compulsory way?

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[1] I will refer to "cultural liberty" repeatedly and use the phrase interchangeably with cultural choice and cultural freedom

3. What are the costs and benefits of learning the dominant language in question and what are the costs and benefits of choosing not to learn or being unable to learn that language?
4. By what means can "choice" be restored to issues regarding language use, as well as language policy and education?

METHODS AND LIMITATIONS:

In order to answer these questions, this paper begins with a literature review outlining relevant discussions of language issues and choice as applied to Amartya Sen's work on Development as Freedom, and the UNDP Human Development Report (2004), as well as to my own particular questions regarding choice, coercion and conflict. Emphasis is placed on extending the position of language beyond the conventional cultural context to include social, economic and political perspectives as well (Sen also calls for a multidimensional approach). Each is necessary for the full understanding of language as both a vector of power in society and as a resource for mitigating that power—promoting human development and general equality and thus preventing the conflict that could potentially have resulted from linguistic power imbalance.

Beyond the literature review, my own contribution to the field comes from content analysis of personal essays, narratives, autobiographies and memoirs written by individuals who have learned a second language. The majority of the sources are from the more well-known voices of Ariel Dorfman, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Richard Rodriguez and Rigoberta Menchu, but the lesser known narratives are perhaps more critical, as they extend the sample and add to the legitimacy of the common themes. These lesser known narratives come primarily from two anthologies dedicated to conversations specifically focused on language: "The Genius of Language: Fifteen Writers Reflect on Their Mother Tongues" and "How I learned English: 55 Accomplished Latinos Recall Lessons in Language and Life." Others come from memoirs and autobiographies of migrants. In total, there were 81 narratives analyzed.[2]

For each of the narratives analyzed, I pay particular attention to the discussion of costs and benefits weighed at the time of the decision/learning process and in retrospective reflection. I also analyze the implications of other discussions, such as: what did the process of learning another language and privileging it in relation to their native language mean to them at the time, what does it mean now, what factors were involved in the decision, what struggles were faced, what ideas were they socialized to believe about language, education or progress. Particularly, I address the recurring themes of coerced choice, lack of alternatives and the more general experience of language as a mechanism of power, marginalization and control. My hope is that the analysis of narratives and first-hand accounts of individuals who have made the "choice" to learn English, and then later reflected on the consequences of that choice, will illuminate the micro context of these issues through the recurring themes. From there, the micro-analysis is resituated within the macro structure. A comparative content analysis emerges as the general framework for the research as a whole.

[2] The sample was somewhat unbalanced in terms of geographic distribution:
Latin America: 55
Asia: 7
Western and Eastern Europe: 11
Africa: 2
However, strong recurring themes throughout all the narratives, regardless of country of origin.

The most obvious limitations of this research lie in its scope. Narratives in which individuals speak specifically about the process of language learning (rather than more generally within a larger account of immigration, asylum or colonization) are difficult to find. This means that my sample is limited. There is also the question of class bias, as the majority of the available voices are those of accomplished writers or academics in some capacity. Their voices can be viewed as those of allies, however; they reflect on the plight they experienced prior to their economic and social mobility and on the current and continued plight of those "left behind." More importantly, the accounts reveal undeniably consistent themes of choice and coercion, power and marginalization, isolation and frustration. Despite the limitations addressed here, I aim to illustrate the significance of these accounts as valuable sources of insight into debates surrounding language education, policy, protection and development.

An anticipated objection to the argument I present will be one relating to the lack of clear policy goals outlined in my conclusions section. The disclaimer that will hopefully preclude any such refutation is that my intended research goal is not to address extensively the practical and logistical concerns of language planning or legal matters (although I will not omit the discussion entirely), but to contribute a new perspective to the monolingual/multilingual debate: one that outlines significant social and political consequences of linguistic imposition, as opposed to merely individual consequences, and one that situates multilingualism within the Capability Approach to human-centered development.

CHOICE, HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, AND PEACEKEEPING: AMARTYA SEN AND THE UNDP HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORTS OF 1990 AND 2004

Sen's "Capability Approach" was one of the first models to challenge conventional understandings that overemphasize the economic dimension of development—such as rising GDP, increasing personal incomes, industrialization and modernization—and to urge, instead, for the adoption of a multi-dimensional perspective that includes human, social and cultural components. Utilitarian, economic based ideas of development tend to view wealth as an end in itself, as opposed to a means to an end. Additionally, it measures human development or progress solely in terms of quantifiable abstractions rather than on more value-based measurements of human life. As Sen states:

> "Economic growth cannot sensibly be treated as an end in itself. Development has to be more concerned with enhancing the lives we lead and the freedoms we enjoy. Expanding the freedoms that we have reason to value not only makes our lives richer and more unfettered, but also allows us to be fuller social persons, exercising our own volitions and interacting with—and influencing—the world in which we live."[3]

The notion that wealth itself should not be understood as the goal of development is a mere neo-Aristotelian view if it is novel at all. Aristotle argued: "the life of money-making is one undertaken under compulsion. Wealth is evidently not the good we are seeking; for it is merely useful and for the sake of something else."[3] Instead, the goal of development is what Sen

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[3] Parallel sentiments are expressed in the writings of Robert Malthus, John Stuart Mill and many others. Sen himself acknowledges inspiration from Karl Marx's concern with human freedom and emancipation, Adam Smith's view on "necessities" and living conditions, Rawl's "Theory of Justice" (1971), Aristotle, and Classical Political Economics. "Cultural Liberty in Today's Diverse World." UNDP Human Development Report: 2004, 127

identifies as valuable "functionings" or ways of "being and doing" that humans have reason to value. As the first HDR in 1990 asserted, "the end of development must be the human being."

The importance of individual choices enters the equation when the particularities of freedom, agency and the expansion of capabilities are further examined. Capabilities, in Sen's view, reflect a person's ability to realize a certain functioning (way of "being or doing" as mentioned above). For an expansion of these human capabilities, an individual must have multiple functionings available to them; regardless of which function they choose to realize, there must be alternatives. A choice is not a choice if no other real opportunities are available; freedom requires a "range of options…in deciding what kind of life to lead."[4] Sen claims that "choosing x when there is no alternative may be sensibly distinguished from choosing x when substantial alternatives exist,"[5] giving the example: "Fasting is not the same thing as being forced to starve. Having the option of eating makes fasting what it is…choosing not to eat when one could have eaten." Thus, Sen's notion of a "Capability Set" refers to the "set" of alternatives available to an individual in any given scenario involving a choice, including both the individual's "realized functions," or what they are actually able to do or choose to do, and their "capability set of alternatives"—real opportunities or alternative choices that were available. Expansion of these capability sets removes "various types of unfreedoms" that leave people with "little opportunity of exercising their reasoned agency" and allows for "positive freedom of choice between possible life styles"[6] (See Sen 1996; 1999), processes which should be understood as the "principal end" and "principal means" of development.

The UNDP Human Development Report of 1990—the first publication of a now annual initiative—had a primary objective reminiscent of Sen's work, as it asks for the restoration of humanism to measures and theories of development. The report asks the varying actors in development practice to "[put] people back at the center…in terms of economic debate, policy and advocacy."[7] Specifically, this means that analyzing and interpreting human development solely in terms of a lifeless, bloodless set of economic patterns and trends must be recognized as insufficient to a humanistic perception of development. Economic growth does not necessarily translate into human development. Instead, a holistic view would take into consideration a full range of economic, social and cultural human rights, including universal access to political participation, education, and healthcare. Human-centered, the perspective demands "development of the people, by the people and for the people" and emphasizes choices and freedoms as key goals.

The more recent 2004 report, "Cultural Liberty in Today's Diverse World" discusses the importance of a specific type of choice—referring to "cultural liberty" as essential to the maintenance of peace in a globalized, culturally heterogeneous world. According to the report, cultural liberty is about "allowing people to choose their [cultural] identities—and to lead the lives they value—without being excluded from other choices important to them (education, healthcare or job opportunities." Translated into Sen's terms, cultural liberty allows for uncoerced choices between promoting and practicing one's culture and other valued functionings. Cultural globalization has yielded a "clash" of cultures, where cultural norms, values, and traditions mix and reshape each other, often with clear "winners" in terms of

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Clark, David. "The Capability Approach: Its Development, Critiques, and Recent Advances." Global Poverty Research Group.

dominance in the public realm. In such a world, the UNDP finds that cultural discrimination does not occur in isolation of political, social, economic discrimination, as individuals find themselves facing cultural stipulations; for example, speak English, gain access to economic opportunity. In contexts such as these, members of marginalized cultural groups are often coerced into a "choice" between their cultural traditions and access to human rights and human development.[8] Sen would surely problematize such a scenario, as there are little alternatives available to an individual whose cultural decision is attached to such grave political, social and economic consequences.

The issue at hand extends beyond that of implications for human development, however, to that of conflict prevention as well. When lines are drawn between access and deprivation, freedom and "unfreedom" (Sen), "cultural liberty" and cultural imperialism, lines are simultaneously drawn dividing winners and losers. Social divisions of this nature create conditions likely to erupt into political, social, ethnic or cultural conflict. As the UNDP states: "…failing to address the grievances of marginalized groups does not just create injustice…but real problems for the future…unemployed, disaffected youth, angry with the status quo and demanding change, often violently."[9] As globalization continues to threaten and undermine ethnic and indigenous cultures, multicultural (and as I will eventually argue, multilingual) policies must be prioritized in development theory and practice. Otherwise, rising identity politics or "faultlines between 'us' and 'them'" will yield regressive, xenophobic policies and violent conflicts that retard human development and bring political instability. Inequality is, inherently, a threat to peaceful relations at the local, international and global levels. Cultural inequality, due to its connection with other forms of inequality, is no exception, and is especially volatile in the globalizing world.

AN INTRODUCTION TO CHOICE AND LANGUAGE

Language is about power relationships. Even the rhetoric that divides languages along dominant/minority or majority/minority dichotomies serves to develop, by definition, unbalanced relationships of power. The "majority" and "minority" labels often reflect a numerical differential, but in many cases they do not. The example I will refer to throughout this paper, as I find it quite useful across a variety of different discussions of language, is that of South Africa—where currently, 80% of the population is unable to speak the "dominant" languages of English and Afrikaans, the languages that have been historically privileged in the country, both during and after Apartheid. The numbers do not reflect the linguistic division in this case; the majority of the population speaks the "minority" languages. These dominant languages are validated and developed through their status as mediums of education, government affairs and the general public realm, ultimately creating a mutually reinforcing cycle where "dominant" languages become systematically more dominant, and "minority" languages become systematically more marginalized, undeveloped, and stripped of instrumental utility.

Soon a linguistic power imbalance emerges: dominant languages correspond to dominant (powerful) groups (the reverse is true as well). In relationships of power, there are relationships of oppression. Oppression leads to a lack of freedom, choices and "capability sets," as Sen would argue. Left with little to no viable alternatives, minority language speakers must make a "choice": a cost/benefit analysis demands the acquisition of English (or the particular dominant language in question). One must speak the language of education, the language of political

participation, and the language of economic mobility, as it is a prerequisite to these and other fundamental human rights.

There is an implicit hierarchy of choices here, perhaps. One could argue that if the choice to learn a language is associated with the fulfillment of fundamental human rights—such as access to education—then maybe that choice is better (and yields more benefits) than the choice to privilege one's native language, and risk the denial of those human rights. Sen himself addresses this argument extensively in his work. A common argument regarding choice hierarchies centers on the performance of democracy vs. authoritarian governments in relation to economic development. In the case of China, and other Asian countries such as Singapore and South Korea, authoritarian governments—where the choices of individuals are limited and repressed—economic growth and development has been largely successful. People have education and healthcare, but they do not have choices. Not only does this appear to contradict the argument I have begun to outline, but it also begs the question: if faced with the choice between political and civil liberties, and the ability to eat, be educated, and receive healthcare, wouldn't the latter be the obvious choice? Sen calls this the "Lee Thesis," named after President Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore, and following this logic, it suggests that material needs will always trump other considerations.[10] It also suggests that democratic priorities reflect "Western" values, where Asian countries and cultures choose to prioritize order and discipline over liberty and freedom.

Sen's response to this claim is that the choices and freedoms associated with democratic governance expand the capabilities of individuals and ultimately allow them to fulfill more of than just basic material needs. For example, political freedoms—the ability to criticize one's government and to speak on behalf of one's own interests—"draws attention to needs" and "pressure[s] the government to fulfill them." The comparison that Sen provides is illustrative: China's economic development is superior to that of India in many ways, however China has had severe disasters, such as famines, while India has not. This is because, although the rate of economic growth in India may be slower, the immediate needs of its people are being addressed, as they have more expansive political freedoms allowing them to demand entitlements from their government.

So, when one is poor, is there reason to care about democracy, political rights, and choices? Unfortunately, the only way to put the matter to empirical test would be democratically, through free elections, freedom of opposition and expression, which, as Sen states, are "precisely the things that supporters of authoritarianism [would] not allow to happen.[11] Additionally, the values that one holds are questionable as developed within the confines of an authoritarian state. Utility calculus does not really apply when individuals only know deprivation and have not ever experienced political freedom or choices with alternatives. Instead, informed formation of values and priorities requires "openness of communication and arguments, and political freedoms and civil rights can be central to this process." Perhaps even the conception of one's economic needs requires open discussion and exchange.

Thus, people do have reason to value things such as democracy and choices, even when poor and in need of basic material needs. Why? Because the civil and political freedoms that democracy and choice allow are key to the expansion of capabilities. The capability to discuss, debate and exchange allows for value formation that is unregimented. The capability to form values freely

allows prioritization of needs, desires, and cultural or social lifestyles according to the individual. This capability allows for a more holistic development of the individual and the creation of a life worthy of value. As the UNDP 1990 states: "the end of development must be the human."

UNDERSTANDING THE SOCIOHISTORICAL CONTEXT OF LANGUAGE SHIFT

A final central assumption must be addressed before continuing to the evidentiary support for these claims; this is the idea (often used by advocates of monolingual policies) that patterns of language use, dominance and spread are natural or inevitable. If this were true, the lack of alternatives/choice in language acquisition would be irrelevant. One could agree that there is no alternative, but could simultaneously claim that this lack of alternatives is also inescapable and cannot be changed. Many argue that the development of a global language is a natural result of the general globalization process, or that the dominance of the English language in particular is reflective of its unique capacity to describe the modern world of technology and science— that perhaps the language is superior by nature, rather than superior in development. For these reasons and others, many linguists and other academics advocate for surrender of the language rights/language preservation battle cry. Expressed by Christina Bratt Paulston in an issue of the International Journal of Social Language (dedicated entirely to the language debate), the powers of globalization and its associated "inexorable dispersal" of English are beyond circumvention and thus the linguistic human rights framework must be considered "visionary reform" that is "impossibly idealistic"[12] Faced with the "natural, inevitable" march of the English language, any discussion of protecting minority languages must "remain the preserve of moralists" (Bruthiaux; 2009).

These conclusions, however, are reflective of a larger tendency to analyze the dominance, symbolic capital and instrumental value reserved for specific languages independently from the historical context in which those languages—both powerful and powerless—were developed (See May 2005, Alexander, Bruthiaux 2009, Phillipson 2001). Language is a uniquely human, and thus uniquely social, tool for communication. It follows that the evolution of language and its many dominant forms and dialects has occurred not only alongside the evolution of social groups and societies, but also parallel to human development, migration patterns, and general evolution. As linguistic scholar Neville Alexander claims, "All languages are equal in their capacity to express human thought and feeling…it is [rather] a question of resources, political will, and class interest" that separates one from another. Thus, the current hierarchy of languages and their various 'standard' and 'nonstandard' forms developed not as a result of natural processes of language shift but as a direct function of human action—a result of conscious decisions made and policies implemented by powerful actors (May 2005; Alexander).

Specifically, these choices, policies and actions have been made at the expense of marginalized groups: while perhaps those in power chose to privilege a given language, it is likely that marginalized groups did not make such a choice, but rather, experienced the privileging of that language as coerced. We need only look closely at historical documents and records to realize the reality: throughout time and across geographical space, language has been developed and realized as a vector of conquest and control, power and privilege, oppression and coercion. However, all languages can, if they remain uncorrupted by the power of their users, be valorized

and developed parallel to English, French, Spanish or Mandarin. All languages are endowed with the inherent potential to serve as vital *resources*—politically and economically necessary as means to the fulfillment of fundamental human rights and capabilities and socially necessary for human development and peacekeeping.

THE FIRST THREAT TO LANGUAGE CHOICE: EMPIRE, COLONIALISM AND CONFLICT

It is widely known that the story of Apartheid (and Post-Apartheid) South Africa is one of violence, exploitation and inequality. Few know the role of language in sustaining the oppression of the South African people, however. As mentioned previously, Afrikaans and English were the languages of the Apartheid regime, languages imposed upon the native population by a foreign, repressive racial order and used to strip them further of power and control over their lives. Neville Alexander, on the case of South Africa, states: "…while there was no policy [during apartheid] actually denigrating the African languages, there was also no deliberate and systematic attempt to develop, modernize, and spread the knowledge of the indigenous language" not acknowledging the "inherent empowering value of such an exercise" (Alexander). As English and Afrikaans became the exclusive languages used in public realm, they increasingly became the languages of access to that realm, and this resulted in a linguistic division parallel to the racial division.

Given the role played by English as an instrument of power for the Apartheid regime (even without, as Alexander claims, any policy "actually denigrating" the African languages) it begs the question: is the relationship between language and *deliberate, systematic* power imbalance that reveals itself in South Africa one that should be considered an isolated circumstance, or rather, a case study in a general phenomenon? The history of language would show that the latter is the case. As many scholars have pointed out, English pre-eminence today is far from an outcome of accidental or random language shift; instead, English is widespread and dominant today because imperialistic interests have made it so—the British Empire and its mandates, followed by its post-colonial independent territories, and the fledgling American nation—each dispersed English through forceful imposition, through conquest, oppression and exploitation (See Alexander; Tollefson, 2002; Bruthiaux, 2009; May, 2005; Blommaert, Phillipson 2001). Examples beyond that of South Africa—not specifically of English imposition but of linguistic imposition in general—include active deculturalization and English Only policies enacted by the United States against Native Americans, as well as Puerto Ricans, Nicaraguans, and other occupied Latin American countries. These countries unfortunately had already endured previous linguistic cleansing from the Spanish colonial empire, when it banned the use of indigenous languages and violently enforced the subsequent adoption of Spanish. WWII Imperial Japan, under liberationist rhetoric that claimed its actions were intended to rid Asian countries of the "poisonous dung of [western] material civilization," forced Koreans and Chinese citizens to abandon their language and adopt Japanese.[13] Nazi-Germany acted similarly, in line with its more general objective of Aryan eugenics. More recently, in Uganda, the Bantu-speaking people have been economically dominant but politically sidelined relative to their non-Bantu speaking counterparts, and the resulting inequalities are largely responsible for major conflicts in the area, such as the violence initiated by Idi Amin (1970s) and by the second Oboto regime (1983-1985)

(UNDP).[14] The conflicts in Sri Lanka and Moldova, and the Soweto riots in South Africa were also triggered by the imposition of monolinguistic policies.

With these case studies and historical references at hand, the current status of the English language no longer appears "natural"; instead, there can be no denial that its history is one of power and marginalization. Peter Ives says it well: "If one were to bracket the complexity of the politics of immigration and globalization, it would seem counter-intuitive that powerful states would decide to devote authority, energy and resources to supporting a language, English, that was supposedly so triumphant and expansive of its own accord."[15] English dominance (and French and Spanish dominance) has been achieved literally, "on the backs" of Native Americans, Latin Americans, Asians, Africans, Jews and virtually all non-speakers of Indo-European languages.

LANGUAGE AND THE MODERN NATION-STATE

Language shift and distribution understood in the context of empire and colonialism leads directly into another key understanding—that current, contested (and perhaps declining) language ideologies were originally developed as a result of the modern nation-state model. When language tensions arise and conflict emerges in places like the United States or Quebec, it is often forgotten in the midst of the debate that, politically and historically, the concept of monolingualism is (relatively) new. Linguistic uniformity did not exist prior to the nation-state and its associated ideal of a single national and "official" public language (See May 2008; Ives 2009). As Peter Ives states in his work on Cosmopolitanism and Global English,

> "Early nationalists envisaged the construction of a national language for ease of communication alongside local and regional dialects…[as a result], the nation-state became tied to a notion of national culture and viewed not as a political artifact but as the natural political unit for a historically established national community." (Ives 2009).

Although many proponents of monolingualism—politicians, academics and common citizens alike—may submit to the idea that indigenous and minority languages are "tragically underdeveloped" or important to a minority group's "cultural preservation" (See Walters (YEAR HERE)), they often believe that any state administrative attempts at preserving linguistic diversity will only serve to inhibit national cohesion. In his article, "Situating Language Rights: English and Swahili in Tanzania Revisited," Jan Blommaert (2005) discusses the idea of this nation-language link in the context of the Tanzanian "ujaama" socialist movement. Post-independence, Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere, as well as many other leaders of post-colonial African states, were concerned with a specific method of nation-building that they believed would unify along grassroots ideologies or economic and political development and organization, as opposed to those that had been imposed upon them by colonial regimes—that of capitalism, and in the case of Tanzania, that of the English language.[16] (The model of monolingualism that characterized the *Ujaama* movement, then, was in fact a reaction against the imposition of English, as opposed to a direct result of that imposition. In other words, it became Swahili-only instead of English-only.). As testament to its true and realized state of independence, the post-colonial Tanzanian (then Tanganyikan) state became one of the first African countries to declare an indigenous language, Swahili, as a national/official language. Nyerere's philosophy was that with one language would come one ideology and essentially, one

nation. The privileging of the Swahili language was central to the nation-building efforts of the 1960s. Swahili was introduced immediately as the medium of instruction in primary education, and it became the language of media, government documents, and public business.

The Swahili-only policies of the *ujaama* government did not create the promised equality of a homogenous nation, however. Caught between international and national pressures, the Tanzanian state distributed linguistic resources unequally. Despite the success in diffusing and enforcing Swahili as the official language, a hierarchy still emerged, as the state placed value on standard varieties of Swahili and not on glocalized vernaculars. Inequality still persisted, despite the attempt at monolingualism.

The power dynamic is far more complex than the dialectic of English versus the rest or one language versus the rest, however. The nation-state model and its corresponding ideal of "official" and "national" languages requires not only the privileging of certain languages, but also of certain varieties of those language—of "standard" forms with rigid and "proper" grammatical rules. Lionel Wee, in particular, finds this view of language to be reductionistic, and he discusses the issue in detail in much of his research. He claims that the discount of pidgeons, creoles, slang and other local vernacular forms of language denies the right of individuals to construct a mode of communication that serves their own specific interactive and communicative purposes. Rather than viewing language as a method by which individuals achieve specific social goals, privileging of standard varieties of language serves to perpetuate a top-down view of languages as "isolated, fully developed delimitable systems" (See Wee 2007; May 2005; Blommaert 2005). It assumes purity of language and cognitive separation of linguistic systems as opposed to a more fluid conception that involves modification and grassroots development. Pidgins, creoles and other similar local language forms are devalorized in this view in much the same way that indigenous and minority languages are on a larger scale. As evidenced by the example of Swahili in Tanzania, the reign of standard varieties is yet another form of linguistic oppression with real consequences for access to economic, political, and social resources.

GLOBALIZATION AS A NEW IMPOSITION: A COERCIVE THREAT TO CULTURAL LIBERTY AND LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY

Issues of language usage, loss and protection have become prominent political, economic and social concerns in the last few decades as a result of the series of interdependent processes that we now refer to as globalization. The nature of the process does seem to pose a practical and justified concern in terms of language: as the world grows increasingly interconnected, there is a growing need for a common language for common communication. Globalization is thus a new pressure demanding language shift (this time easier to detach from human culpability and label as a inexorable force beyond human control). Now, in addition to any "national" or "official" languages that individuals are compelled to learn (and often privilege) in relation to their native language, they must also learn the *lingua mundi* established by the emerging global economy.

As discussed, language, specifically the ideology of monolingualism, emerged within the confines of the modern nation-state model. But, as scholars such as Stephen May stress, as globalization extends its influence the nation-state model may become (and arguably is already

becoming) impractical and inoperable.[17] Even those who disagree must still acknowledge that the nation state's role is undergoing a drastic restructuring at the very least. The decreasing relevance of geographic boundaries that occurs as a result of globalization is intimately related to the geographic expansion required of capitalist accumulation. As capital constantly expands its markets across national boundaries throughout the world—"nestling everywhere, settling everywhere, and establishing connections everywhere, as Marx describes in *The Communist Manifesto*—constraints on international travel, communication, trade, and financial transactions are eroded. Interactions across geographic boundaries are faster, cheaper, easier and more frequent. Consequently, there is an erosion of the boundaries of nation-states, and although this reality does not necessarily require a parallel erosion of linguistic boundaries, it does demand a new conceptualization of language—including its role, its various uses, its structure and its new meanings at the local, national and global levels.

The cultural and linguistic impact of this phenomenon is highly researched and debated, as cultures and languages that were once bound to specific territories have been released from their geographical confines and allowed to permeate porous boundaries, mix, and ultimately, to redefine each other. If processes of cultural globalization were to disseminate features of each of the world's cultures equally, it could potentially create truly diverse and polyglot societies. Due to a power differential, however, Western cultures (particularly that of the United States) dominate through the potent forces of modernization that those cultures often control and even monopolize—that of science and technology, consumerism and market culture.

Some scholars claim that the inevitable result of a cultural power differential of this nature is cultural homogenization as imperialism—that globalization compels the cultures of the world to converge and form a new monoculture heavily influenced (if not completely subsumed by) the dominant Western cultures. Social theorist George Ritzer is a key proponent of this view, describing the phenomenon as the "McDonaldization" of the world (See Ritzer 1996). This is due in part to the inherent link between cultural globalization and its sister form of economic globalization as mentioned above. The introduction and participation in a market-based global economy is touted as the panacea of human development and economic prosperity, even as the gap between the rich and the poor continues to increase drastically throughout the world. Thus, desperate for access to and seduced by the promise of economic development for their nations, national leaders adopt the neoliberal ideologies required of participation in the global economy—including the elimination of trade barriers, outsourcing of production, privatization and deregulation**.** Far from ideologically neutral, these policies are powerful carriers of western culture, propelling consumerism, competition and other aspects of capitalist market culture (Phillipson 2008). Western political interests are imposed as well, and often in partnership with the imposed economic interests; the Western-controlled World Bank and IMF, for example, attach conditions to the loans distributed to developing countries, exploiting the nation's economic need and attaching financial assistance to not only mandated economic reforms (such as cutbacks in social services and privatization) but also political reforms of democratization. Yet, despite social costs, state elites readily accept the loan conditions out of desperation. Similarly, sovereign nation-states in the Global South allow western-based corporations to move production to their countries and exploit lax labor and environmental laws. The colonial legacy of economic dependency that plagues the Global South, combined with the increasing need to participate in the global economy leaves them with little alternative: remain isolated and risk

economic stagnation and crisis, or adopt the imposed economic model and risk the consequences in terms of local culture and human rights.

The linguistic implications of this process are self-evident: the increasing dominance of western culture and modernization occurs in relatively equal proportion to the spread of the English language—the language christened by some academic spheres as the "language of modernization" and a primary prerequisite for entry into the modern world of science, technology, and economic progress. It is for these reasons I have outlined that Robert Phillipson, a prominent advocate for linguistic rights, states:

> "Countries in the post-colonial world are trapped in a contradiction: on the one hand, they need the 'indispensable global medium' [of English] for pragmatic purposes… On the other, there is the fact that the medium is not culturally or ideologically neutral...[running] the risk of negating their own understandings of reality and denying or subverting their own interests."[18]

Yet in spite of this predicament, many would still argue that participation in the global economy trumps any other consideration, be it for the individual or for larger society. Scholars on the side of monolingualism have resigned themselves to what they consider to be a realistic defeat (See Paul Walters; May 2005; Bratt-Paulston 1997). And it surely is a tempting conclusion: under the conditions outlined above, it is reasonable for someone to view the spread of English as a natural consequence of the world becoming increasingly unified, and thus, requiring a common language for new levels of interaction and communication. It is undeniable that as individuals learn English and privilege it above their native languages, they will discover tangible material benefits. Knowledge and proficiency in the English language does provide economic opportunities, political participation, and general social mobility, and this reality bears strong implications for its use-value in relation to minority, indigenous or otherwise less dominant languages.

The power of this predicament over the linguistic diversity of the world is certainly evident in the current trends of language shift—showing a marked decline in the number of world languages and the number of the speakers of those languages. If the trends persist at the current rate, conservative estimates suggest that 90% of the world's 7,000 remaining oral languages will be dead or moribund (no longer learned by children) in only a hundred years' time (See Skutnabb-Kangas 2001; May 2008). Half of all these remaining languages have fewer than 10,000 speakers, a quarter have fewer than 1,000, and more than 80% are endemic, meaning they are spoken in only one country.[19] A mutually reinforcing, cyclical process emerges. Privileged languages become the languages of government, education, and general public life. In order for an individual to maintain mobility and avoid social exclusion, it seems logical for him or her to choose to learn English (or French, or Spanish or the language applicable to the individual's situation). So they too, begin to privilege the dominant language over their native tongue. The cycle begins here: the larger the number of individuals learning the privileged languages, the more privileged those languages become. Relatedly, growing dominance of those languages occurs parallel (perhaps inversely proportional) to the declining prevalence and relevance of other languages—primarily indigenous languages and languages spoken by ethnic minorities.

But to view the effects of globalization, particularly its linguistic consequences, as inevitable, is again, illustrative of a tendency to detach social phenomena from their social actors.

Globalization is largely driven by human agency, but instead, it is all too easy to reify social creations and forget that their purpose, form and evolution are subject to human control. The myth of an "invisible hand" of the global market economy or the view of English as the natural panacea of human progress is merely a rationalization for new inequalities—something all too common in the history of marginalization, exploitation, and other injustices.

Thus not all would agree with the fatalistic and reductionistic conclusion that the path of cultural globalization and the English language is predetermined. Such a conclusion is one premised on the false assumption that globalizing forces function independently of the powerful countries and powerful institutional bodies that govern them. Given the right circumstances, globalization can result in an inclusive diversity and democratic multiculturalism. The current form of top-down globalization that privileges Western ideologies and Western languages is not inevitable, and grassroots, democratic alternatives that preserve cultural liberty, diversity, language choice and human dignity are possible. Globalization is a new imperialism; it is a new imposition, a new form of coercion. The restoration of choice through multilingual, inclusive policies is necessary.

CHOICE, COERCION AND CONFLICT: THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE SOCIAL

"All the while, English is waiting for me in the wings—a madman,
a conqueror, a liberator with an axe."
--From "The Learning Curve," by Ruben Martinez

Analysis of the world requires an interdisciplinary approach, with specific emphasis on the perpetual tensions between the individual and the larger social system in which he or she operates. The structural view of language suggests that linguistic choice has been historically threatened by various forces of coercion and imposition, in the sense of both Sen's and the UNDP'S view of real alternatives as necessary for real choice and choice as necessary for holistic self-actualizing human development. For the empirical research section of this paper, I chose to address the personal within the social, by conducting a content analysis of personal narratives, written by multilingual individuals and describing the experience of learning or abandoning a language. The hypothesis: that these individuals would express a lack of choice or alternatives in the process of language acquisition, serving to corroborate the larger structural theory of this work.

Throughout the analysis, a general pattern emerged in support of this hypothesis. Although no situation of any two individuals is identical, as no two individuals could possibly be exposed to or confronted by identical circumstances, it is undeniably clear that language acquisition is commonly experienced as a coerced choice or imperial imposition, differing only in whether that coercion/imposition was understood as entirely negative, entirely positive, or somewhere in between, and in what particular form it manifested itself (e.g. as an accident of immersion, as an actual act of force, as a conditional necessity, etc.). I attempt to discuss the narratives in categories, themes or recurring types of linguistic coercion, although, despite these attempts at formal organization, there is some overlap and intersectionality that was difficult to circumvent. These recurring themes are:

1. Colonization
2. Cultural imperialism

3. The view of English as the only avenue for social mobility
4. The internalized oppression that results from this socialized view
5. Coercion by linguistic/racial/cultural othering
6. Resistance and agency expressed in contest of each of these impositions, and finally,
7. The reappropriation/reframing of the imposed language and the consequent positive acceptance of bilingualism as a resource and beneficial tool for democratic global citizenship, peacekeeping and development.

The bilingual narratives that I examined repeatedly described a shared experience of language acquisition as colonial imposition (and post-colonial internalized inferiority, which will be discussed in more detail later). This is illustrated clearly by the story of Ngugi wa Thiong'o, a prominent Kenyan writer of African-based anti-colonial literature, as well as an activist for linguistic protection and valorization. In his essay, "Recovering the Original," Ngugi describes the climate surrounding language use that was present in Kenyan schools when he was a child. He begins his story with a child brutally beaten by school authorities for being caught speaking his native language of Gikuyu. In both colonial and post-colonial schools, it is a crime to speak any language but English, and those who did not comply were punished accordingly, with humiliation and physical abuse. As Ngugi notes, the teachers—who were all African, black, and Gikuyu—"devised all sorts of methods for associating African languages with negative images, including making linguistic sinners carry placards that asserted that they were asses" (Lesser 105). Franc J. Camara tells a similar story, outlining how Spanish was imposed upon the indigenous Mayans in Mexico. Children were corporally punished for speaking Maya in schools as well, and told "over and over" that they needed to abandon Maya for Spanish. Camara's fourth grade teacher told his students to "forget Maya" because it was "worthless." Under "no circumstance, [should they] think about speaking it in his class. His job was to educate people that deserve to be educated" (Miller 13). The association of this disdain for the Mayan language with an aversion to the oppression of its speakers was clear as well, as he claimed that speaking Maya would confine them to peasantry and "never get them anywhere" (Miller 13).

Experiences like the two discussed above, that reflect the relationship between language imposition and colonial and imperialist violence illustrate the argument delineated previously, that language shift has historically not been a result of choice, but of coercion through colonization and imperialism. Ariel Dorfman, the famous Chilean author, writes his works in both English and Spanish, (and does so eloquently and fluently in both languages.) Many of his essays focus on his struggle to decide in which language he should "write his life." He describes a sense of betrayal he feels toward the Spanish language, his culture, and his family whenever he chooses to write in English, the language by which can only be translated to Spanish as a "series of footnotes to a text written by someone else, more powerful, apparently in command." He feels that when Latinos speak English in the contexts that they are expected to, or when they begin to view their own language as a "second-class" language, then they are "embracing [their] margins as if [they] had chosen them, instead of history imposing that marginality upon [them]."[20] Similarly, Frank McCourt, who wrote the afterword to "How I Learned English," snidely refers to his contribution to the book as a "thank you note" to the English for "imposing their language" on his Irish ancestors during the centuries of English repression. The reality is that for him, despite his fluency and acceptance of the language now, years later, the imposed language of English is still a symbol of the oppression that accompanied its arrival to Ireland, on the tongues of unwanted settlers and colonizers.

Relations between Latin American countries and the United States created particularly strong tension for bilingual Spanish-English speakers. For Guillermo Linares, his life in the Dominican Republic was characterized by U.S. military occupation, and thus the English language was a marker of repression (as it was for Frank McCourt and his Irish ancestors). Young, and ignorant of the meaning of the U.S. invasion, he was excited to learn the word for "adios" in English. After a friendly "Goodbye" to an American soldier, an appalled Dominican witness reprimanded him, and proceeded to chase after the military jeep yelling, "YANKEES GO HOME! YANKEES GO HOME!" ensuring that the soldiers knew they were unwanted and that the "gesture of friendship" from young Guillermo was a gesture of naivety and innocence. Later, when he was old enough to study and understand the history of U.S.-Dominican relations, he "understood the anger" and the rejection of the English language that accompanied it (210). An almost identical scenario arose for Daisy Zamora, a Nicaraguan. As she declares in her essay, "The Secret Language," Daisy remembers the extreme disdain her grandfather expressed for English, as he viewed it as an "offense to his personal dignity and Nicaragua's integrity." She explains this disdain with historical details:

> "Since the middle of the 19th century, too many interventions by successive U.S. governments had occurred in Nicaraguan history not to have their bitter consequences extended to the language, contaminating it for many Nicaraguans as the odious tongue of the invader whose supreme act of cruelty was to withdraw the Marines from our country and leave us with an installed dictator…[who], at the service of U.S. interests and not our country's, initiated a repressive, bloodthirsty family dynasty that the Nicaraguan people suffered under from 1936 to July 19th, 1979, the date the last representative of the dictatorship was overthrown by a popular and massive revolution" (168).

Beyond these examples (of Daisy Zamora, Guillermo Linares, Frank McCourt, Ariel Dorfman Franc J. Camara and Ngugi wa Thiong'o), the experience of marginalization and historical oppression is described frequently throughout the sample of narratives, and the resistance of these speakers to the imposed language is summarized effectively by the words of Enrique Fernandez, author of the essay, "A Subtitled Life." (As you read, different languages and wars can be substituted according to those in question). He says:

> "The love/hate relationship between Spanish and English boils down to history. Hate with extreme prejudice is war, and that dysfunctional Spanish/English relationship had two peak moments: the Spanish Armada and the Spanish-American War. In both cases, the English speakers sank Spanish ships, and in both cases Spanish speakers lost the battle to English speakers. We, the children of those empires, bear the scars of those wars. *How can you feel good about the language of your enemy?"*

Extending beyond the historical memory of oppression by colonization is the current reality of oppression by cultural and hegemonic imperialism. As described in his essay, "Ghost Boy," when Francisco Goldman and his friend Jose encounter what they believe to be an extremely inept Spanish-English translator, Jose is appalled. He asks: Isn't the United States the richest, most powerful nation on Earth? How could it have such incompetent professional literary translators? Goldman replies: "It is because we are the nation we are, so rich and powerful, that we have such incompetent translators." His essay is sarcastic and biting toward the United States' linguistic and immigration policy more generally, noting that it "criminalizes" and "stigmatizes" speakers of languages other than English, and labeling its "defiant monolingualism" as a defining feature of the country's national character. "Everyone knows that if people in other countries want to do business with us, they have to do it in our language…[but]

a country that speaks to the world only in its own language and describes reality to itself only in its own language will be able to convince itself of anything." He also asks: "What kind of country producers educators who think it is necessary to exorcise foreign languages and accents from little children?" Rosario Ferre, a native Puerto Rican who now writes children's books and other literary works in the United States, relates to these questions as well. In her essay, "Writing in Between," she asks, "Why is it so difficult for Americans to learn Spanish?" and then proceeds to answer her own question, claiming:

> "The United States thinks it's the navel of the world and doesn't need to pick up anyone else's tongue. To have a second tongue is suspect; double-tongued is a deprecatory term. And yet it's important for Americans to learn other languages; it's the reasonable, practical thing to do, as well as the most humane. It's ironic that the United States, with its cultural influence and economic power, often behaves like an island with the rest of the world." (Miller 244)

Currently, political rhetoric frames individuals who are in the process of learning English as a Second Language (ESL) as though they are overcoming a deficit or replacing an inferior, backward language with the progressive language of English. This explains the refusal of many Americans to learn other languages; they do not see a benefit in doing so. Believing that they are in possession of the ability to speak the most advanced and superior language in the world, they consequently expect that the rest of the world would, without any hesitancy or resistance, covet and seek that same ability.

Although Goldman and Ferre's discussion of language imperialism is compelling, and was focused on here, it is again, not an anomaly, but reflective of a more general pattern. The English language is understood and touted as the panacea to "progress" and "development"—in their ethnocentric, Western rationalism definitions—superior to all other languages in its supposed unprecedented ability to describe key features of modern societies, such as technology and science. Disdain for this linguistic hierarchy and for the imposition of the English language that results is prevalent throughout the autobiographies, essays and narratives, as it is yet another method by which powerful actors, cultures, and nations are able to construct a parallel hierarchy of peoples to accompany the linguistic one. For example, Bert Keizer, a man bilingual in Dutch and English, recalls a time when an English woman asked him if there was such a thing as a Dutch language at all. His response to the question was the following: "she sought my confirmation of her opinion that probably we merely spoke a ragbag of dialects, assembled over the years from passing marauders such as Romans, Celts, Frisians, Vikings, Franks and Saxons, out of whose verbal droppings, we, the local monkeys, somehow fabricated what we took to be a language." However, despite his personal feelings about the English language, Dutch people more generally appear to view English as the "panacea" of progress, like much of the world has been socialized to view it. Keizer reflects on the "idolatry" and "silly veneration" with which English is approached in Holland, and then proceeds to claim that this is "one of the most repulsive effects of the fact that English is now lording it globally."

As a result of this ethnocentric framing of English as the sole means to economic opportunity, political mobility, and social inclusion—which is unfortunately a current practical reality, even if it is not true in theory—is largely the reason for the "choice" made by parents to have their children learn English. Parents, determined to secure a promising future for their children, often privilege the English language in the home so that their children will learn it more quickly or send their children to English language immersion schools in their home country. In the famous bilingual memoir written by Richard Rodriguez, "Hunger of Memory," nuns from his Catholic

school ask his parents to stop speaking Spanish in their home, in the hopes that it will help him to learn English. Richard says, "Of course, my parents complied. What would they not do for their children's wellbeing?" (21). But the moral of his narrative is not that this was a choice without coercion or a choice without significant costs. Later he describes what happens when his parents replace Spanish with English in their home. He writes, "The scene was inevitable: one Saturday morning I entered the kitchen where my parents were talking in Spanish…the moment they saw me, I heard their voices change to speak English. Those gringo sounds they uttered startled me. Pushed me away. In that moment of trivial misunderstanding and profound insight, I felt my throat twisted by unsounded grief." The acquisition of English and general disappearance of Spanish had consequences for Richard's relationship to his family and his past. There was "a new quiet at home" as a result of "sharing fewer and fewer words with their parents" (23).

The parents of Coco Fusco, a Cuban woman, and Francisco Goldman, a child of Guatemalan immigrants (mentioned above), also showed no hesitation to adopt English as the language of the home. They too, were called on by school officials to do so. Goldman remembers that his mother was called into the school by administrators and asked to begin speaking only English in the home, for both his and his sister's benefit. Coco's mother was asked to do the same, and in her essay, "Pura Bicultura," Coco recalls: "What could my mother say? Teachers were warning her that our learning abilities would be impaired by our being subjected to more than one language at home." Certainly, the question Coco raises is a valid one: *what choice does a parent have* when the only means by which to access economic opportunity, education and social mobility is through the acquisition of a new language and the abandonment of another

Language imposition is also problematic due to the fact that language itself is not ideologically neutral. There is a language-culture link that needs to be taken into consideration in any discussion of language rights and particularly one in which notions of cultural liberty are examined. This is because the imposition of a language is not merely an imposition of a communication form—it is also the imposition of a larger hegemony that includes culture, worldview, and political and economic systems. In her essay, "The Yellow Magazine," Elena Poniatowska reflects on her education at the Windsor English language school in Mexico City, where she was taught not only the English language, but also how to "count in pounds, shillings and pence." Every morning her teacher Mrs. Hart (a native Englishwoman herself), would lead the children in saying "God Save the Queen," so that they would "learn to respect Elizabeth II more than the Mexican president." An almost identical scenario is described by Ha-yun Jung, a Korean-speaking Filipino who was forced to learn English with American culture attached to it. Describing the international school she attended, Ruamrudee, she states: "There were no American students…but our curriculum was American, as was our principal, Mr. Maxwell." Additionally, she goes on to describe how the school had father and sisters who led the Lord's Prayer during assemblies—although they did in fact do so after the raising of the Thai flag, not the American flag—that they learned about the fifty states and their capitals, about Lewis and Clark and Paul Revere, and how to sing "America the Beautiful."[21]

In his memoir, "Talk Thai: Adventures of a Buddhist Boy," Ira Sukrungruang discusses how inescapable the English language was, as an immigrant in the United States, and especially as a young boy in grade school. Despite the family rule that banned English from being spoken inside the house—they could only "talk thai"—he says that English, and the American culture that accompanied it, began "infecting his dreams," "invading" their house, "seeping through

cracks and underneath doors, climbing through open windows, like an invasive vine that devoured houses…" (8, 19). Cultural and linguistic imperialism of this potency and determined diffusion is not easy to circumvent—its hegemonic presence, once again, undermines any notion of "choice" in cultural assimilation and linguistic acquisition.

There is another, more personal impact of language imposition, that is, like the cultural imperialism described above, a function of the language-culture link. Native or indigenous languages are also known as "mother" languages, and according to many of the narratives analyzed for this project, this speaks to the sense of intimacy and attachment to the familial that comes with the language one is born into. Bharati Mukherjee eloquently captures this sentiment in her essay on the Bangla language, "The Way Back." She says that there is a reason why our native languages are called "mother tongues." "It is our mother, forgiving, embracing, naming the world and all its emotions" (11). She remains loyal to her Bangla language in the same way she remains loyal to her mother, her family, and her homeland—believing them to be intimately connected. At the time she is writing the essay, she has lived the last fourty years in cities where English or French are the majority languages, but still, "it is Bangla that exercises motherly restraint over [her] provisional immigrant identity…to [her] inner Bengali [she] remains constant." Framed by western nations as "backward" or "undeveloped," like many indigenous languages are, Bangla is "the mother tongue of esurient poverty" to international relief agency workers. But to her, the language is one of "harvest-ready paddyfields and fish-filled rivers, it is the mother tongue of poetry, passion and abundance."

Russian Gary Shteyngart feels the same affection for the Russian language. When he visits Russia, "the Russian language swaddles [him], he is reunited with his "primordial identity." It is only after being able to speak the Russian language as he "orders mushroom and barley soup" or "directs the cab driver to some forgotten grave" that he truly feels "home at last" (176-178). Rosario Ferre (mentioned previously), says that "some time ago [she] read that newborn babies suck faster at the breast if they hear someone speak their mother's language, which they learn to recognize in the womb." She then themes the essay that will follow that statement by claiming:

> "Spanish still makes me suck faster at life's breast…To say it in plain English, I love to write in Spanish. Spanish is like an exuberant jungle I love to get lost in, meandering down paths of words that often don't lead anywhere but to the rustle of their own foliage…I love to make love in Spanish; I've never been able to make love in English. In English I get puritanical; I could never do a belly dance, dance a Flamenco, or do a *zapateao [an indigenous Mexican dance similar to tap dance]* in English" (241-242).

Evidenced clearly by these descriptions, native languages symbolize an intimacy with memory, childhood, family and cultural identity that often cannot be replicated by a second language, despite the level of fluency one might achieve. As Ruben Martinez, a Mexican-American writer, poet and musician, says, "Ironically, American English for our family was more formal than Spanish. English was the language for bank transactions, to address men in suits…*usteds, gringos*…Consider the *gravitas* of *te amo* compared to the playful but ultimately bland package of 'I love you'" (101).

There is certainly differentiation in how linguistic imposition is understood or reacted to by the various bilinguals studied. For example, Elena Poniatowska did not feel threatened by the fact that her English language lessons were accompanied by lessons in English nationalism, English

currency, and other icons of English culture. From her statement that Mrs. Hart's lessons made her into a "citizen of the world" and other similarly positive appraisals, it is clear that Elena viewed her experience at the Windsor School as beneficial. Judging by this research sample, it appears that many bilinguals and multilinguals would express similar sentiments.

There are a few ways in which to interpret positive reactions to imposed language; one of which is that of "internalized oppression." Ajit K. Mohanty addresses this paradox in his work on what he sees as the "vicious cycle of language disadvantage" that is a result of a "colonized mind" (See Mahonty 2006). Socialized from birth to view the language of the powerful as an avenue by which to acquire that power, the mother tongue becomes understood as inherently deficient and incapable of bringing progress and modernization (this assuming that it is not problematic in of itself that "progress" and modernization are understood as natural or necessary in the first place) (Alexander). This socialization process creates a cyclical process in which speakers of marginalized languages become victims to crimes of which *they are also perpetrators.* This is a common occurrence, as claimed by scholars of bilingualism and general linguistics, and the phenomenon is corroborated by the narratives examined for this paper. After asking the question, "how can you love the language of your enemy?" (as mentioned previously), Enrique Fernandez actually proceeds to answer his own question. Later in the essay, he adds that the ability to love an imposed language "hinges on your enemy's powers of seduction." What does this mean? This means that the ability to love an imposed language is dependent on the power and influence of cultural imperialism to actually convince an individual that his or her language or culture is inferior, backward, or otherwise deficient in some way.

Although there were many narratives that highlighted this notion, Rafael Campo's essay "The Way of Dinosaurs" is particularly exemplary. He begins by discussing his childhood love for dinosaurs, and then transforms that discussion—of extinction and backwardness—into a symbol of his original view of the Spanish language, in comparison to English. As a child, he viewed Spanish as "the language of the receding jungle, the language of the distant past, the language of certain extinction." The narrative is full of rich imagery contrasting dead, rotting trees, with young trees full of life and promise, reminiscent of his evolutionary understanding of his two languages. In his case, he made a deliberate decision to "unlearn the primal tongue," believing its replacement with English was the only way to become American and abandon the savage Cuban.

All of these ideas came completely from American socialization, however. Rafael learned to be disdainful of his own heritage, culture and language by the disdain that was directed at those things by Americans, American culture, and generally, American hegemony. The distinction he drew between Spanish and English, Cuba and America, was entirely based in imagination and assumption, as demonstrated by this quote:

> "Though I had never actually been to Cuba, I imagined it was a terribly primitive place. On the maps I had seen, it looked like something unpleasant the United States had inadvertently stepped on. I populated its uncharted mountainous terrain with naked, dark-skinned Indians and all manner of exotic flora and fauna—I even imagined it might be a last refuge for the dinosaurs."

Of course, Rafael wrote this essay as an adult, reflecting on his childhood linguistic acquisition and accompanying worldview. The tone and voice of his essay illustrated that his views had

changed. As a child, while washing dishes with his grandmother, he pretended he did not understand the Spanish she spoke to him, so that he would not have to speak it in return. He willfully refused to speak his native language. Now, however, 40 years later, when Rafael tries intentionally to remember a Spanish word, the image that first appears in his mind is of the "heartbroken expression on [his] *abuela's* kind face" (51). Internalizing the oppression of Spanish-speaking people in the United States, Rafael was determined to distance himself from what those around him believed to be inferior—if he himself believed that the language was inferior, then some semblance of agency was restored.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o (the Kenyan, Gikuyu-speaking activist and writer), calls his experiences part of a "war of attrition" that gradually "eroded pride and confidence in [his] language." He was taught to believe that "there was nothing [Gikuyu] could teach [him], at least nothing that could make [him] become educated and modern" (105). In the Kenyan schools, cities and general rhetoric, English was glorified in relation to Gikuyu (or other languages). For him, choosing to write in English seemed natural, after being taught throughout his education, in Africa and abroad, to believe it was natural to use English, as well as preferential for social mobility. He grew up with the task delegated to him by his parents and teachers to "distance [himself] from the core in my own language to attain the glory in English mastery." Ngugi goes on to state:

> "I wanted to climb on English words to the highest peak of the mountain of human experience. But why choose English as the vehicle of my ambitions*? It was not a question of choice*…I had been socialized into regarding English as normal and desirable, even when the subject matter was the drama of decolonization and independence" (106).

The socialization process that catalyzes Mohanty's "colonization of the mind" is a common experience of bilinguals. Liliana Valenzuela, who labels herself as having a "forked tongue" of *dos lenguas,* explains how children in Mexico and the United States learn the value of one language in relation to others at an early age. While living in Mexico at a young age, she quickly became aware of the "prominence that English held…as a "door to 'progress': education, jobs, travel, opportunities, college, popular books, textbooks and the world at large." Later, living in the United States, she knew that speaking Spanish was a "brand" of "second-class citizenry," regardless of any public attempts to deny the fact.

James Campbell, in telling the story of his life in post-colonial Scotland, outlines a similar class-status associated with language. For him, however, the split was not between English and a completely different language, but between "Standard" English, and the Scottish "abominable Glasgow tongue." This linguistic division occurred in conjunction with the Union of the Crowns of England and Scotland circa 1600, resulting in the relegation of the speakers of Glasgow/Scots English to the lowest of society, given inferior class-status simply by virtue of their linguistic dialect. For these individuals and others, when the choice between one's own native language and the language of the powerful other is "dramatized as a choice between light and dark," or socially acceptable and socially deviant, as Campbell notes, it is not a pure choice (200). It is coercion.

Relatedly, of the individuals whose narratives were studied, many accepted the language (and culture) imposed upon them simply as a means by which to escape oppression in the form of humiliation, social exclusion and "othering." A suitable example is the story that Ira Sukrungruang, a Buddhist immigrant from Thailand, tells of his early childhood in the United

States. His memoir is written in a highly literary form, with theme, symbolism and imagery serving as key mechanisms for describing his evolving relationship with the English language. After recalling his repeated childhood encounters with bullying and ridicule for his accent and mispronunciations, Ira writes about an internal fantasy, a wish for himself:

> "I slipped into an alternate world. I am on top of an elephant—a warrior, a king—bursting through the wall of Mrs. S's classroom. With me are the animals of the world. I stand on my elephant, raise my arms up into the sky, and tell my classmates that I am their new leader…I do not talk funny; it is you who speak with an accent. At recess, I will not be pushed around…Today I will be King. As soon as I stepped out of the house, however, my built-up courage seeped out of me, and the strange invisibly walls of this country closed in. I remembered watching a nature show about bees on PBS, remembered that if an alien bee mistakenly flew into a hive it was immediately terminated." (7).

When the bullying became too much, and the feeling of perpetual ostracism and exclusion became too strong, Ira began to resent Thai culture—or, as he calls it, his "Thai-ness" (57):

> "I looked like them, talked like them, ate like them. It was the 'them' in my blood that set me apart while all I wanted was to be a part of something. I began to see my family in the way the neighborhood saw us, the way my classmates saw me. We stood out…I didn't want to be 'them' anymore. I wanted to be normal." (57)

It is for this reason that he began to resent the Thai language as well. Whenever Ira would speak English in the home, his mother would say, "Talk Thai." And he would respond with, "I like talking this way. I'm good at it. I hate speaking Thai." His mother would be offended by statements like these, and he would apologize and promise to continue speaking Thai. Yet his disdain for the language pursued, as he could not separate his feelings for the language from the marginalization that accompanied and resulted from it. Thus he learned it to escape persecution; little (if any) alternative was available to him.

RESISTANCE TO COERCION

It is paternalistic to assume that the situation of an individual who speaks a non-dominant language is one solely of victimization, coercion and lack of agency—or at least it is an overly simplistic conclusion. In fact, there are many instances in which individuals who have had a language imposed upon them have strongly and stubbornly resisted it, or have, after learning the language, used the language itself as a form of resistance. Nobel Peace Prize winner Rigoberta Menchu is perhaps the most famous example; determined to advocate for the rights of her people, indigenous Guatemalans subjected to violent oppression by the Spanish colonial state, Rigoberta made the decision to learn Spanish at the age of 17. She was not merely a passive victim of language imposition and general oppression; she acted on her own behalf—and that of her family and larger community—and made a choice. But that choice was coerced—without the ability to speak Spanish, her people were vulnerable and more easily oppressed. For example, in "I, Rigoberta Menchu," she tells the story of how government officials took advantage of her father's inability to speak Spanish, deceptively convincing him to sign a contract that he could not read or understand, and then using that very document to strip the community of its traditional land claims.

Analysis of the personal narrative sample shows that Rigoberta's story is not an isolated incident. For many people who have been coerced into learning a second language, imposed upon them

from above, the goal is to find a way to make that language their own. Ariel Dorfman believes he is "not alone in the quest to make the [English] tongue [his] own"—that, "millions of Latino voices" are replicating his ambition. He believes strongly that the Hispanic and Latino immigrants in the United States are vastly reshaping the cultural and linguistic landscape as "part of a gigantic migratory wave that will transform the [English] language." Rosario Ferre claims that in Puerto Rico, "learning English *a la tragala,* by force, wasn't a matter of learning a second language; it was a matter of giving up one language for another." But from the moment that they were told they must learn English, they refused. They resisted. "People laughed at English," she said. "It was the language of those who saw themselves as superior to us and weren't; the tongue of *los Estados Fundillos*, who though we couldn't govern ourselves and had turned us into a protectorate" (243).

Quique Aviles, from El Salvador, tells how "English became [his] imperial liberator" in his essay, "My Tongue is Divided in Two." At night, after being required to attend daytime ESL classes, he attended nighttime "ESL" classes where he learned how to protest U.S. occupation, saying things such as "No draft, no war/US out of El Salvador!" (177). Through protests, and his political poems and essays, Quique began to feel good about English, as he began to view "words as weapons" (178). He began to understand the English language, the language that had been forced upon him, as one that he could learn to "tame," "seduce," "use to advantage," and "use as revenge" (179-180). When Latinos and others ask why he doesn't write more in Spanish, he responds:

> "Payback. I use English to challenge English speakers to question their assumptions about Latinos, about each other, and, in these xenophobic times, about immigrants in general. I use it to poke, prod, question, and make people feel uncomfortable. I always read my poems from a music stand…and when I carry it to the car, I always feel that I am carrying my machete. Words are my weapon" (180).

Even for those who describe their ability to use English as an empowering tool now, the language was originally unwanted or the process by which it was learned was involuntary. These individuals are mostly writers who have published books, poems, plays and other works in English, speaking out against the marginalization of their people, and in many cases, for the protection of language rights. Although they have now accepted English as their own and employed it defensively, it was originally a result of coercion.

THE RESTORATION OF CHOICE: ADDITIVE MULTILINGUALISM AS A RESOURCE FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND PEACEKEEPING:

> "To live on the border [between two languages] means being the vanguard of a movement
> that is global and democratic, capable of taking in both its own and the Other,
> native and foreign, strengthening ourselves as a culture and adapting to the changing world,
> living our lives with real opportunities for creativity and persistence, will and work, art
> and passion. A window that is always open, where my house is your house,
> my Spanish is your English, and my culture is your culture. In any case, to
> learn another language is to lose the fear of the others who are our neighbors…
> [language] is a bridge—never a wall—that communicates and connects us."

Why does it matter that language choice is coerced? If a coerced choice ultimately brings a coerced good, is it still problematic? When a parent makes a choice on behalf of his or her child, it is a coerced choice for the child, but it is most likely in the interest of the child to have the

choice imposed upon them—under the assumption or belief that the choice will bring prosperity, health, happiness or some other benefit for the child. Similarly, when a state mandates its citizens to learn the emerging lingua mundi, or perhaps a national language in addition to indigenous languages, it is often in the interest of a public good, such as national cohesion or international marketability. As stated in the opening pages of this paper, however, I believe the costs of the imposition outweigh the benefits, and issues of language—policy, education, bilingualism, etc.—must be reconceptualized at the local, national and international level. Through the analysis of the personal narratives, it is evident that the cost of imposition is the sacrifice of liberty, equality and justice—three central components of human development and peacekeeping. Even when an imposition is resisted or reframed, it is still an imposition, and still a threat to the fulfillment of these imperative human goals.

A common argument against language preservation needs to be addressed if (and before) the opposite argument formed here is to prove persuasive: how can multilingual policies and the active protection of language diversity be achieved in absence of some form of hypocritical, authoritarian enforcement? How can the language rights movement simultaneously declare English dominance to be imperialistic at the same time that it advocates for repressive motions that force individuals to speak a language that, in many cases, has no tangible material value? Many scholars have addressed this issue, referring to proponents of language rights as "essentializing" or "ghettoizing" minority and indigenous language speakers within the confines of their speech community, barring them from economic opportunity and denying them the right to abandon tradition for modernity and the right to adapt and evolve as a culture and a community (See Bratt Paulston 1997; Alexander; May 2005). As Neville Alexander notes, and as one of his critics Paul Walters agrees, "we cannot sjambok the people to paradise." When addressing language issues, the attitudes of the people concerned cannot be ignored.

This argument, although valid, contains an assumptions about the goals of language preservation or language rights movements, that is in fact, a critical misconception. The right to language does not imply a right to a *specific* language (See Bratt Paulston 2007; Alexander, Rojas and Reagan 2003). If human rights to language required everyone to only speak their native language, it would, in fact, be authoritarian, paternalistic and inherently contradictory, as the argument above suggests. Instead, the human right to language is the human right to *choose* a language. It does not confine a cultural group to a particular language, but allows its members to choose for themselves what language to speak in a particular context or for a specific purpose. As Will Kymlicka states, the valorization of indigenous/minority languages allows an individual to "maintain…membership in a distinct culture, and to continue developing that culture in the same (impure) way that the members of majority cultures are able to develop theirs" (Kymlicka 2005). Language rights movements call for a restoration of autonomy to the process of cultural change and adaptation, rather than "retrenchment, isolation or stasis."[22] Essentially, the human right to language is the human right to *cultural liberty*—which demands that all individuals be able to choose what language to speak (as it is central to cultural identity and understandings of the world), without being excluded from other things necessary for development, such as economic opportunity, education and political participation.

In order for this scenario to become reality, for someone to choose the language they speak without coercion and with alternatives, two processes must be prioritized in both theory and

practice regarding human development and conflict prevention: additive multilingualism and language planning. Current models of bilingual education commonly follow ideologies of subtractive bilingualism. This means that although bilingual education may be present in schools, it is primarily confined to early levels of education, where the objective is not to enrich the intellectual development of the child and expand utility of both of their languages, but to eliminate the native language and replace it with the second (and society-dominant) language (See Skutnab-Kangas; Alexander; Rojas and Reagan 2003; It is an accommodating means to the same unaccommodating end: monolingualism and forced linguistic conversion. Additive multilingualism, on the other hand, recognizes language as a resource, and the ability to speak multiple languages as a marker of intelligence, rather than one of deficit. It encourages all individuals to learn a second (or third or fourth) language, in the interest of preservation of traditional and indigenous languages, and increased communicative capacity at the local, national and international levels.

The personal narratives examined for this research corroborates this claim. For a large majority of the individuals, learning the second language was an imposition—a coerced choice with no alternatives—but rather than resist the language imposed upon them, many found that they could reframe the language, and adopt it as their own. This was part of a new understanding of their ability to speak multiple languages as a resource. As an example, a quote from Franc Camara (Mexico):

> "Personally, I don't think it's about speaking Maya, but rather about being exposed to more than one language at an early age. Albeit a blessing for me, my multilingual ability was ironically developed by fear and oppression, but instead of looking at it that way, I've learned to leverage it and use it as a foundation for my success."

And similarly, Francisco Goldman (Guatemala) said:

> "Once you possess another language, your sense of reality changes—it's as simple as being able to connect to the Internet and read, say, what people in Mexico are saying about the immigration issue. Suddenly the world seems twice as large, and twice as peopled, and more interesting than it did before."

Therefore, although the imposed language was "learned by bloodshed" it is not resisted or abandoned.[23] It is also not necessarily privileged or prioritized at the expense of the native language. Both languages are valorized and developed in the interest of their capacity for more democratic global citizenry, human development and peacekeeping.

The second requirement for the "restoration of choice" to human development is language planning and policy that is as participative as possible and involving many elements of civil society. Without deliberate and systematic actions taken to develop indigenous languages, there will be no incentive for the shift toward the perspective of additive multilingualism as a positive social resource. Returning to the example of South Africa, Neville Alexander adamantly advocates for language planning as a democratization, development and post-conflict resolution method. As a result of the privileging of Afrikaans and English and the neglect of other African vernaculars, the majority of South Africans do not have effective command of the languages of power, and therefore do not have the necessary resources to compete effectively for well-paid jobs and other economic opportunities. Instead, these are accessible only to the minority 20% of the population who do speak those languages (Alexander).

Post-Apartheid, the South African state has taken administrative steps to correct this imbalance. On November 9th, 1995, the Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology established an advisory committee—the Language Plan Task Group (LANGTAG)—with the mandate of mapping a conflict-resolution focused language plan for South Africa. From there, a new constitution was adopted in May 1996, with explicit clauses on the new language policies of the country, including the promotion of multilingualism, interpretation and translation services, equal treatment of all languages spoken in South Africa, and development and modernization of African languages. It also named eleven languages spoken in South Africa as "official" languages, in an unprecedented policy move.

ADDITIVE MULTILINGUALISM, LANGUAGE PLANNING, CULTURAL LIBERTY AND CAPABILITIES

Peter Ives defines "diversity" as social and cultural differences that are unstructured by power relations (See Ives 2010). It is possible for globalization to create this form of diversity, but there must be a restoration of choice. This will come from multicultural language planning and educational policy that promotes the creation of inclusive and pluralistic societies. Additionally, there needs to be a shift of consciousness—a change in political culture—where citizens stop viewing difference as a threat, and begin to see it as a resource.

The ability to choose what language one will speak, and in what context, expands the capabilities of human beings. If learning the English language and entering a global capitalist market is the only method by which survival is possible, control over one's own well-being does not exist. The only option available is to learn English and to compete in the global market. Agency is sacrificed. Sen's view of a just world is one in which individuals are able to be agents in control of their own lives—both the type of lives they lead and the outcomes of those lives. This is the hallmark of democracy. Participation, agency, and grassroots development are central to a pluralistic world that is "unstructured by power relations." Perhaps the world will eventually speak only English, but that final result must only occur in a situation where individuals made free and reasoned choices to do so, unhindered by threat of social exclusion, unaffected by fears of injustice.

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