

Is English salvific? Myth-busting “God’s language”

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“A number of factors have catapulted English into becoming the world's most taught, learned, researched and used second or foreign language.”

(Chowdbury & Ha, 2014, p. 14)

Abstract

From intercultural experience, and following scholarly analysis, this article blows the whistle on the supposed advantages of the development of diverse “World Englishes.” While native-speaker English is rooted in biblical faith, global Englishes may not represent either good theology, or good sense. The ongoing popularity of native-speaker English as standard amongst Englishes reflects the inadequacy of prior understandings that all languages are neutral, equally functional, and extra-contextual. Native-agency of colonised people historically having raised English’s profile, does not excuse the West from responsibility for subsidising its language globally. English nowadays spreads in a supposedly secular world *as if* it is itself divine, displacing the Gospel of Jesus from its rightful ascendance.

Keywords: World Englishes, Bible, linguistics, religion, globalisation

Introduction

To find what one has learned in the push and pull of life being authenticated by academics, is indeed wonderful. That is the order in which I have come to know what I want to articulate here.

I am British born and raised, thus a possessor of the apparently “much coveted” inner-circle-native-English.¹ Living in Africa (Zambia then Kenya) from 1988 to date, has given me experience of engaging with various African Englishes. For almost 20 years I taught (theology, part-time) using my English, to Africans. By the end of 20 years, my faith in the value of English had declined. This is for various reasons, some of which I want to discuss below. My preference for African languages has not always made me popular, either amongst fellow Westerners, or Africans.

The following definitions of terms are used in this paper:

- (1) Standard English: “the English that with respect to spelling, grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary is substantially uniform though not devoid of regional differences, that is well established by usage in the formal and informal speech and writing of the educated, and that is widely recognized as acceptable wherever English is spoken and understood.”²
- (2) Native-speaker English: English of “a person who learned to speak the language of the place where he or she was born as a child rather than learning it as a foreign language.”³

The prominence of native-speakers of English

Ha (2016, p. 352) tells us that “colloquial English used by native speakers of English is most often criticised and problematised for being discriminatory and intolerant of other Englishes”. Morrison (2016) makes a very similar point; “native English speakers are the world’s worst communicators” is the title to his article.⁴ Other English users dislike native-speakers! These native-speakers may be the main loser to the globalisation of Englishes. It is very difficult for native-speakers of English to contribute intelligent comment to discussion in contexts in which another WE (World English) is dominant. It is difficult for them to understand what a non-native WE speaker is communicating.

Why are native-speakers of English so disadvantaged? Because non-native speakers of English appropriate English words to their own categories. Native-speakers of English do not understand what they think they understand when hearing or reading WEs. Yet because it is their own language (English) that is being used, they do not have the option of seeking for a translation.⁵ In addition, when native speakers of English talk outside of their normal contexts (for example, in foreign countries), they are most likely to make the most serious blunders because:

1. Many of them are monolingual.⁶
2. Others defer to them, because of the precedence given to native-speakers of English.
3. A lot of the meaning they as native-speakers pack into the words they use goes beyond the dictionary definitions that WE learners tend to follow.

One problem in addressing the above issue is quite simply the sheer monetary and material value, or perceived value, of native-speaker English. Native-speaker English continues, despite opposition to this practice, to be the “norm” for WEs to emulate (Ha, 2015, p. 240). An affront to a native-speaker can be considered a very serious offence, when in many cultures around the world,

one does not openly confront the powerful. Hence in inter-English exchange, when a native-speaker can't be "wrong", others either bend the words they hear to fit the truth (the meaning or impact of words is subtly transformed), or if they find the native-speaker simply to be misguided, remain quiet.⁷ Making sense is compromised by the interests of economic prospects, leaving the native-speaker of English largely "in the dark".

This is very evident to me in the course of my daily life in Anglophone East Africa. Being now fluent in two East African languages, I have a choice of which language to use in conversations.⁸ Should I use English, associations in my language with my country of birth (the UK) result in my saying things in a way that is unfamiliar in East Africa, both in terms of my accent, grammar, and content such as choice of words or concepts. Listening to local people using English forces me to guess ways in which their choice of terms links to the cultural and community reality of their everyday life. Should we use an indigenous tongue, then contrary to the above, I use terms that are clearly rooted in local context, in ways that I have learned locally. I immediately appreciate what a local person is referring to with reference to the local context. Use of English with East Africans comes to be a laborious frustrating imprecise exercise of mouthing terms that people have learned in school but often cannot clearly connect to their daily life experiences.

Affective aspects of language use and word impacts should also be considered. Engaging with people in an African language automatically identifies me as someone on the "inside" of local community, someone who has taken time and made efforts to learn locally, someone who thus cares for people deeply, and so on. Use of English identifies me instead with foreignness and ignorance.

In much of Africa known to me English is preferred in anticipation that the speaker will one day want to "go abroad" (see also Ha, 2015; Tupas & Rubdy, 2015, p. 13). Or they may want to speak to a powerful, influential, wealthy (if ignorant) native-speaker of English who visits them. Time and time again, when I have asked children why English is used in African schools, this is the reason they have given me: they are preparing for the day they meet with a white man.

Non-native speakers of English can speak at cross-purposes with one-another. For example, when terms they use in common have acquired diverse impacts from their differing cultural contexts. (For example, a convention can develop to use a certain English word in one way in one country, but in a different way in another country.) On the other hand, they do not typically invest all the detail of human living into their English. Much detail remains invested into their own languages. As a result, English-usage is typically confined primarily to relatively "simple" exchanges, that do not raise the expectation that something profound is to be understood.⁹ English for such people is a "simplified code" that has limited functionality and is appropriate for use only in certain spheres of life.

Native-speakers of English tend to find some non-native speakers they engage with to be surprisingly incompetent (Chowdbury, 2014, p. 9). They can be taken as not-thinking, showing their ignorance by being reluctant to contribute to class debates, and so on. This is taken by native-English speakers, and often more widely, as indicating that the people concerned are somehow not as intelligent as are native-speakers of English. (In many ways, this underlies the assumed negativity of the “other” that fuels racism.) The question should be raised, whether they aren’t just as intelligent with respect to their own languages, and the presuppositions their own people make about their lives and contexts? That is, is intelligence a universal human characteristic, that can be objectively measured using one language? Certainly, it is regularly my experience when engaging with local people using their own African languages, that I seem to be the incompetent one. This suggests that active participation in debates using their own language amongst native-speakers is very difficult for non-native speakers. This is attested to elsewhere in this article. Native English has a necessary logic that learning standard English alone does not impart.

The Bible

Many contemporary studies of WEs (World Englishes) take relatively little cognizance of the Bible, or the Christian faith, or of the impact of both of these on contemporary English. The question as to just *why* English is so popular globally, is often mute. That is to say; it is assumed to be simply a question of economics. (Ha (2015) brings this simple relationship into question by considering imagination, fantasy, and things being “in the air,” see below, but she does not venture far into the field of theology.) Careful observers will note that native-speakers of English are predominantly Western Protestant Christian in background.¹⁰ I suggest that native-speaker English is a product of Western Protestantism.

I will here confine myself to just a few bible passages. My reader should understand that what I present is a simplification of the whole complexity of the Biblical theme in question. Genesis, a deeply foundational book for Christianity and Judaism states, God speaking to Abraham, that: “I will make you into a great nation ... and all people’s on earth will be blessed through you” (Genesis 12:2a and 3b). Paul picks up this theme in Galatians 3:8, telling us that blessing is acquired by faith. In brief, Christians in general expect that their faithful¹¹ adherence to the Scriptures, will result in God’s using them to bring blessing to the whole earth. In our secular era, overtly “religious” expression of this theme has tended to be suppressed. The fact that native-speakers of today’s global language English, that is the focus of this article, are extremely deeply influenced by the Gospel and the Bible, over many generations in history even if not

apparently in contemporary society, is widely ignored. The global spread of English can thus be taken as:

1. An expression of the fulfilment of Biblical prophecy.
2. Or, an outcome of a confusion; as instead of the Gospel, it is now the English language that is being spread.
3. A continuation of what was once enthusiasm to spread the Gospel now transferred into global spread of a language, being considered to be in the interests of “global blessing”.¹²
4. An outcome of blessing received by Christian nations, that they would like to share with the rest of the world.

Points 1 to 4 above should together have us ask: is the English language an adequate substitute for the Gospel, as traditionally presented by the church? My own answer would be that no it is not, and that substitution of a language for the Gospel has been an error.

Chapter 11 of Genesis includes the well-known account of the tower of Babel. In this account, God is shown to be highly displeased with men’s efforts at communicating universally through one language (Genesis 11:6-7). God “comes down” and confuses people’s language. This is a clear biblical injunction in favour of multilingualism.¹³

Destroyers of Sense

One response to the today much evidenced ongoing and even growing primacy of native Englishes, is what I can term that of “destroyers.” I use this rather strong English term intentionally.¹⁴ Kachru (1985) is perhaps best known for his view that all-Englishes should be equal (McKay, 2002, p. 50). In his writing, Kachru (1985) insisted that native-speakers of English have lost control of the means of maintaining English’s standard (p. 30). Instead, he perceived of a tomorrow’s world in which there were numerous “Englishes,” with a variety of norms, yet that such a situation would not result in unintelligibility (McKay, 2002, p. 51).

A very similar theme is picked up by De Costa, Park, and Wee’s (2018, p. 3) critique of the neoliberal “audit culture”. This audit culture proposes that English be valued for imparting “entrepreneurship, self-reliance, and sturdy individualism”. It is to be governed, i.e. English’s quality is to be assessed, by quantifiable numerical means. Implicitly this is so as to maximise “business profits”, especially through increasingly popular “global rankings” (De Costa et al., 2018, p. 13) that are resulting in English-fever¹⁵ in Korea (Park, 2009) and presumably also elsewhere. In short from the above, contemporary means of auditing English language quality are driving people crazy in their lust for English. Knowledge of English seems to offer grandeur if achieved, and shame if

not. English, in this interpretation, is the language of “real” authority: “‘authentic’ English ... is considered to be essential ... for ... economic mobility and social distinction in South Korea,” (Lorente & Tupas, 2014, p. 72). Unless or until Koreans and others grasp that native-speaker authoritative English, they consider themselves to be second class! Extant audits, such as CEFR (the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment),¹⁶ “generate what comes to be accepted as knowledge and truth” (De Costa et al., 2018, p. 17). We “must pay attention to the ideological mechanisms through which such truths are produced, so that our resistance to neo-liberalism can focus on undoing their effects” they tell us (De Costa et al., 2018, p. 17), demonstrating their strong opposition to the audit culture that they are describing.

Alogali (2018, p. 55) is a contemporary author who seems to closely follow Kachru (see above). He wants to provide “equal access to discursive power and honouring of the contributions of multilingual scholars”. It’s hard to argue with Alogali’s (2018, p. 56) intentions, based on the understanding that “the hegemony of English takes advantage of many of the same power mechanisms as those used by former colonial powers”. Yet Alogali appears not to have realised that those very former-powers continue to *run* much of the once-colonised world. Without them, I suggest, much would collapse.¹⁷ They are able to do so, because they have a language, English (in the case of Brits and Americans) in which they can understand one another. By forcing “other Englishes” to have the same authority, it is as if Alogali wants to impose glossolalic-style-speech onto native-speakers of English, permanently dummifying their communication systems, so that what they are running fall apart, with nothing to replace it. English should be able to “mutate and morph,” Alogali (2018, p. 69) tells us advocating “nonsense” in the place of what was once sensible communication.¹⁸

Alogali’s (2018) arguments are easy to reach, given Kachru’s position. This makes it amazing how seriously Kachru has been taken – perhaps more because of a liberal wish or personal audacity than because of scholarly-rigour. “Non-native” speakers of English are at a disadvantage, and Alogali (2018, p. 55) wants to give them “equal access to discursive power” as native-speakers I am questioning the means by which he wants to do so.

WEs, in other words, are not full “languages”. They are a means to enable international inter-cultural communication at a basic level. They are not capable of intercultural communication at depth or with precision. They do not displace indigenous languages, although they may handicap them or reduce their jurisdiction. Non-native-English users of WEs have languages that fill roles that a WE does not fill. Native-speakers of English use the same for this latter role. That is a difference between “standard-English”, and native-speaker English. It is the part of the language that is not picked up in a classroom, but in life-engagement, including the domestic sphere, and people’s diverse customs and traditions. Yet, it

is an essential ingredient for fully functional human communication to happen.

To displace a fully functional language (native-speaker English) with “standard English” as aspired to by WEs is to destroy sense. Even if the global power of English is problematic, it may not be wise to cut off one’s nose to spite one’s face, or to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs. An alternative solution, that does not in the interests of “global communication,” destroy the West, should be found. The West’s objective should be to empower others without destroying itself. WEs may well not be the best way to empower the West at all. In my humble opinion, at the end of the day, Kachru talks nonsense.

“Scholars [themselves] continue to debate among themselves using the highest form of English in the rank out there,” i.e. native-speaker English (Ha, 2016, p. 355). In other words, it would appear that even this debate about better and worse Englishes would fall apart if Kachru (who, ironically, himself wrote using native-speaker English) were to be taken seriously.

Native Englishes to the fore

The prominence of native-speaker English is not declining, but rising, globally (Tupas & Rubdy, 2015, p. 15). Perhaps reasons given above have contributed to this increase, and not decrease (to the chagrin of many), widely perceived importance of acquisition of native-speaker type Englishes. This is partly at least due to the rise of media that uses native-speaker standard: Teachers of English seem themselves to be behind if they teach a standard of English other than native-English, when native-speaker English has become more and more immediately available to students by diverse avenues, including the internet (Ha, 2016, p. 354). As we have mentioned above: despite efforts to the contrary that have had very limited real success; respected global scholarship continues to engage using native-speaker English.

Languages are rooted in families, not institutions

Blommaert (2019, p. 1) points out how language planning was, in the 20th Century, considered to be a state-affair. Many Post-colonial states set up similar policies, that included a formal adoption of a European language. This policy has not had “a long list of successes” (Blommaert, 2019, p. 1). “Some assumptions about how language could work in social environments turned out to be fundamentally flawed and several aspects of socio-linguistic reality turned out to “talk-back” to the[se] carefully designed and energetically enforced policies” (Blommaert, 2019, p. 1). Blommaert (2019, pp. 1-3) identifies three major problems with the above policies. Rationality is not to be found in a language, but instead, it is “found in the normative transparency of [whatever] socio linguistic

regime” (Blommaert, 2019, p. 4). It has been wrong to assume that because English is the “rational” language for its native-speakers, use of it will therefore be “rational” for everyone. Languages do not arise from institutions, such as schools and governments, but are found in families (Blommaert, 2019, p. 5).

Blommaert’s (2019) foreword, cited above, provides us with a radical critique of policies that continue to be “normal” in much of the post-colonial world. Languages turn out not to be as flexible and malleable interculturally as they were once thought to be. The relationship between a language and a culture is much closer than was once thought.¹⁹ This latter realisation should cause one to ask questions about many linguistic situations found around the world today.

Languages’ functional inequalities

Language policies to date have continued on the basis of a faith in “the functional equality of all languages”, and this has been the “anchor” point for spread of Englishes around the world (Tupas & Rubdy, 2015, p. 1). It has created “political and ideological blinkers to the way the English language and its role in the world today have been understood” (Tupas & Rubdy, 2015, p. 1). It has made it “wrong” to consider that English can perpetuate inequality. In actuality Englishes are not equal (Tupas & Rubdy, 2015, p. 3). Hence advocating for or promoting English can be unjust. Many years of effort have not thrown off notions of the “superiority” of native-speaker English. This, it seems to me, is with very good reason.

Language policies implemented post-war in the last century will not “work,” I suggest. The modernist foundations on which they were built have been discredited. The language-policies presupposed Western-style modernism as a norm, yet: “All other [non-Western] modernity’s are ... mimics of a real thing whose full realisation elsewhere is, at best, indefinitely deferred” (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2004, p. 331).

Languages are not “neutral,” so that they can function equally well in any context. Those who believed that was the case were seduced (Tupas & Rubdy, 2015, p. 2). The English language promotes Western values (Ha, 2015, p. 223). Major advantages of use of English in African countries arise because it facilitates the exercise of control from native-English speakers, i.e. outside-dependency.²⁰

The fact that global Englishes have a “centre” has been resisted by scholars, because it is problematic: it implies that English users will continuously privilege that centre. Non-native teachers of English then appear to be second class (Ha, 2015, p. 228). Perhaps there is a balance to be weighed – the advantages that presumably accrue from having a linguistic code that in a basic sense is globally understood, versus the disadvantage that this system leaves the rest of the globe in a “subservient” position to native-speakers. This position

could also of course be in various ways disadvantageous for native-speakers themselves, perhaps leaving them ignorant by comparison to everyone else who also draw on another language (see above).²¹ If it is injustices that will enable native-speakers to benefit, that is likely to be two-edged.²²

Recent decades have seen the emergence of major efforts to promote justice, including in the world of Christian mission.²³ Yet it is ironic, that these very efforts at imparting justice, when (as has invariably been the case) they run on the basis of European languages especially English, are in turn imparting perhaps the largest injustice of all; forcing people to live according to a code that they can neither understand nor control.²⁴ A second injustice or at least deception pointed to in this article, is the use of English as if it is a “secular” language, concealing those of its roots (and benefits) that are ingrained in Christian practice and in the Bible (Harries, 2015, p. 5).

Native-agency in the spread of English

According to Tupas and Rubdy (2015, p. 14), Brutt-Griffler is rather unique as a scholar, for ascribing agency for the dominance of English in Asia and Africa to native people. From personal experience, points made by Brutt-Griffler are important: It has not always been “policy” that English should be dominant in colonial states, or that it should be widely known (Brutt-Griffler, 2002, pp. 73-74). Pressure to this end has often come from nationals themselves (Brutt-Griffler, 2002, p. 65). The same applies today: When teaching at an English-medium theological college in Kenya, I met major opposition to the use of the East African language Swahili in the curriculum from students themselves (between 2005 and 2010). The students themselves wanted English. In the current climate, threats to the hegemony of global English may meet major opposition in ex-colonial states, both from their citizens, and their patrons and donors.

The above begs the question of responsibility – who was and is responsible for intervention into communities in ways that have young people opt for foreign languages in preference to their own? Even if agency by majority world natives was responsible for much of today’s prominence of English, this does not necessarily absolve “colonialists” of blame.

Students’ resentment

There is, according to Ha (2016), a resentment amongst students, to the dominance of English. This kind of resentment against the hand-that-feeds you, I think can be identified in East Africa, even if at an apparently low level. I am personally convicted that should the truths pointed to in this article become more widely known, this resentment may grow, and as already indicated above, could

result in a reversal: Measures contemporarily known as bringing justice could be seen as harbingers of injustice. English that currently seems redemptive, could be re-interpreted as oppressive.

The creation of desire for students to enrol into “international” study programmes that ignore their own histories (Chowdbury & Ha, 2014, p. 4), is one of the clearer injustices of so-called international education that I have seen clearly myself. I have seen African people with vast ministry experience attend English-language theological education, being treated as “babies,” because the accreditation system required native-speaker English, and supposed church traditions found in the West and not in Africa. Ha (2015, p. 239) tells us of foreign students studying at international universities in Malaysia taking almost no interest in the local people’s, culture, traditions, or language, as they focused all their energies on trying to get what was “international”, i.e. Western.

English as divine

Ha (2016, p. 238-9), apparently inadvertently, but certainly in some ways very clearly, points us back towards the “real” attractive foundation that has led to today’s popularity of English.²⁵ Ha (2016) points out that international students from Asia, find imagined Westerners to be more attractive than “real” ones, and it is their *imagination* that causes them to dedicate themselves with great vigour to international education that promises quality-English. Turning to theology, human imagination seems to be involved in enabling us to perceive of and know God (McCormack, 1984, p. 452). International students’ perfect Western dream is of an invisible Australian, rooted in fantasy, located “in the air” (Ha, 2015, p. 240). Ha’s (2015) use of terms such as *fantasy*, and *invisible* has her encroach onto the field of religion. Religious belief, unlike secularism, blurs distinctions between “real” and “unreal.”²⁶ What might in secular terms seem to be “in the air” or “imagined,” have very real impacts indeed for Christians (1 Corinthians 3:18-20). When Ha (2016, p. 349) compares Yoga with global-English she comes even closer to a pivotal conclusion in this article: Englishes’ global attractiveness arises from its having grown amongst historically Christian people. We should recognise that the globalisation of English we now see is an outcome of God’s speaking through Christ to save all people by bringing them to himself (John 11:25).

Markets and institutions are the “all powerful deity or God” of today say Chowdbury and Ha (2014, p. 16). On the contrary I suggest that the all-powerful deity, which has the West be “educator of the other” (Chowdhury & Ha, 2014, p. 15), is not foundationally “markets or institutions” at all, but Yhwh, God, King of kings, Lord of Lords, creator and everlasting father of mankind.²⁷ Reading the pages of the Bible one perceives how God’s people function to bring others into

the sphere of God's authority, known by Jesus (in English translation) as the Kingdom of God.²⁸ Native-speakers of English's desirability, whether imagined (see above) or otherwise, arises from their cultures' historical deep rootedness in God's kingdom. People's flocking to English is, I suggest, a reflection of native-speakers of English's ongoing habituation towards evangelism, an urge to bring others into the same fold, now to a language rather than to God. It is as if, English is assumed to be salvific.

In light of the above, the origins, as well as the solutions, to issues caused by WEs, is in a return to the recognition that what is of value to share globally primarily is God's good news in Jesus Christ. This is the origin of today's "faith" in English, the enthusiasm with which Westerners want it spread, and the almost fantasy-like, invisible, imagined image of God seen only "as through a glass darkly" (1 Corinthians 13:12), perceived by Ha's (2016, pp. 239-240) English students in Malaysia.

Conclusion

Only theology can give us a satisfactory resolution to the conflicting ideals that the authors on WEs that this article draws on, present us with. Christianity, not liberalism, has made the world what it is today (Losurdo, 2011; Mangalwadi, 2011). The philosopher kings mentioned by Chowdbury and Ha (2014, p. 5), are "kings" influenced by a Christian vision. It is not English that is divine, it is God, of whom the Christian Scriptures speak. Why have Protestant nations, recently in (secular) denial about God, been pushing English? Their enthusiasm to spread the word has shifted from the Gospel to their language. English is powerful, because it arises from peoples who have in the past taken God's truths very seriously (Mangalwadi, 2011). That truth about the origins of English should be in mind when considering language policies globally. God himself prefers people to use their own languages (see reference to Babel above), so as to be better able to understand themselves and him from the foundation of who they are, not a *superior* European tongue. The idea that globalisation of English will be an equaliser has been shown to be a myth.

In writing this article, I do not aim at macro-government or policy level. Rather at individuals who want to work with people in the majority world today. I hope that my readers will perceive weaknesses in "WEs", and seek to invest in majority world peoples own languages rather than in English. The content that the West has to legitimately share with others around the globe is not English. It is the word of God, that is translatable. Hence the future of intercultural communication, and the way to reach the poor and lost, is through God's plan, which requires missionaries sent by him ready to lay down their lives for others in sharing the Gospel. It is the Gospel of Jesus that is salvific, not English. English is not "God's

language”.

Notes

¹For Malaysian students, and no doubt those in many other parts of the world, “native speakers of English” provide the “linguistic norms and cultural values [that are] the yardstick against which ideal intercultural communication practices are measured” (Ha, 2015, p. 223).

²<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Standard%20English>

³<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/native%20speaker>

⁴<http://www.bbc.com/capital/story/20161028-native-english-speakers-are-the-worlds-worst-communicators>

⁵An example to illustrate this. Aboriginal English uses the same term, which is often translated into English as “mother”, to refer to someone’s aunts as well as to their mother (Sharifian, 2015). An aboriginal child saying “she is my mother” would erroneously be understood by a native-English speaker as “she is my *biological* mother”. Were the aboriginal person to be translated into English from their indigenous language, a translator aware of both contexts could make an adjustment, for example in this case instead of “mother” to say “the equivalent of a woman who is part of my family in my mother’s generation”. When the aboriginal person uses English, that translation possibility is lost.

⁶Whereas other people around the world are these days increasingly obliged to learn a second language (English) in order to communicate internationally, native-speakers of English, already having English, can see themselves as “getting by” without learning another language.

⁷I draw here particularly on my personal experience in Africa.

⁸I am a fluent speaker of the Swahili and Luo languages.

⁹Something profound may be intended to listeners of the speaker’s own context, but there will be little or no expectation that others will grasp it. (That is how English is used as a second language.) For example, users of English in parts of Western Kenya realise that fellow “locals” will link English words, sentences, or phrases, to key issues, like the avoiding of certain curses (known as *Chira*, (Mboya, 1978)), but know that outsiders will not do so (Harries, 2012, p. 47).

¹⁰Many churches outside of the West are known as “Protestant”. Without wanting to be splitting hairs, in reality many of them in Africa can only be considered Protestant to a certain extent: A central criteria of Protestantism is that people interpret the bible using their own languages, whereas the theology of many African people is, in formal circles, designed and articulated using not-indigenous languages such as English.

- ¹¹I am aware of some ambiguity in this English expression. This could mean faithful adherence to the Scriptures, or adherence to the Scriptures, by faith. I consider it to be both.
- ¹²Hence “Protestant” America’s self-understanding of its role as having a manifest destiny to lead the world to make it into a better place.
- ¹³<https://jimsayers.wordpress.com/2016/06/15/babel-nations-and-empire-builders/>
- ¹⁴Although it may be a “strong” term for native-speakers of English, that may not apply everywhere, for example at Mukinge Girls Secondary School in Zambia at which I was once a teacher, the term “destroy” was applied much more liberally. Students would say “you are destroying me” when meaning something like “you are holding me back.” I make this point here as an example, if WEs were to be “disconnected” from native-speaker English, the intention behind use of a term like “destroy” would be so ambiguous, as to risk becoming meaningless. The same applies to other, if not all, terms in English. Hence I consider the notion that WEs might totally displace native-speaker English as close to ridiculous, and frankly, dangerous, or life-threatening.
- ¹⁵A desperate sense of necessity to learn English.
- ¹⁶<https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages>
- ¹⁷Western organisations setting out to “solve social problems” have “blanketed the globe” according to Bronkema (2015. P. 211). The gross dependency of much of Africa on outside Western control is not easy to reference in the literature because of the many efforts constantly made to conceal it. As someone who has lived on the continent of Africa for over 30 years, I should say it is more extensive than is widely realised, and constantly growing.
- ¹⁸What Alogali advocates, would seem to be a kind of removal of any system of standards in English publishing, in which Journals would be forced to publish whatever came along, which to serious academics sounds ridiculous.
- ¹⁹Lindbeck (2009) considers this with respect to church doctrines (2009). Lakoff and Johnson (1980) are amongst the scholars who have contributed to there being much more profound understanding of the relationship between language and its context since the 1970s. This should make it clear, that imposition of a foreign language may not be at all helpful to a community.
- ²⁰This is evidenced in many ways. For example in Kenya, a telecommunications network originated in colonial times and handed over to locals was beset by multiple issues of corruption. Today’s mobile phone networks avoid this on account of being managed from outside of the continent. Kenya is widely seen as booming economically by comparison with Tanzania. One evident reason for this, is because English is widespread in Kenya, making Kenya much more accessible to Western control than is Tanzania, in which Swahili is more dominant.

- ²¹One cannot help but recall efforts made from the 1880s (http://esperanto.50webs.com/EsrGrammar-1_01.html) to promote Esperanto as global language, which was to have been a language that did not have native-speakers, but which English latterly seemed to overthrow.
- ²²For example, prosperous English speaking countries may be preferred destinations for immigrants, with the pluses and minuses that this entails.
- ²³See for example the IJM, International Justice Mission (<https://www.ijm.org/>).
- ²⁴Alexander (1999) explains this well.
- ²⁵See for example the IJM, International Justice Mission (<https://www.ijm.org/>).
- ²⁶Alexander (1999) explains this well.
- ²⁷I say “apparently inadvertently”, because of course I don’t know what was in Ha’s head as she wrote. Perhaps she has herself already recognised the way the Gospel of Jesus underlies global English? If not, then she certainly very effectively points towards it.
- ²⁸I take the term “religion” as referring to Christianity, on which other “religions” are modelled (Cusack, 2015, p. 5). I suggest that the distinction between “real” and “unreal” is an accretion to Christian societies in recent centuries arising from modern dualism (Harries 2016, p. 61).
- ²⁹These descriptors of God originate in the English-language bible.
- ³⁰<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Kingdom-of-God>
- ³¹John 3:16.

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