Language management, discursive power, and English as lingua franca in island countries and territories

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Abstract: Both geographical factors and colonial histories have contributed to the marginalization of many islands. In the context of globalization, European colonial languages often dominate, and the Standard English ideology has been gradually internalized alongside the spread of English worldwide. Islands face an apparent tension between promoting local languages for the purpose of strengthening social and cultural cohesion and maintaining the favored status of European colonial languages in order to facilitate integration into global markets. Languages are, however, ideologically constructed, and the dominant status of English and other European languages on islands has created a cultural system of ideas, norms, and values originating from the West. This turns islands into norm followers, creating difficulties for the construction of island identities and making it impossible to act from a position of discursive power on the international plane. This paper argues that island governments should carry out language management in such a way as to promote the idea of English as a lingua franca for use in global intercultural communications and thereby enhance the island's discursive power while strengthening social and cultural cohesion.

Introduction

Aspects of island spatiality such as remoteness, isolation, and boundedness (Kelman, 2020; Grydehøj, 2020; Fernandes & Pinho, 2017) are associated with the formation of both cultural and territorial distinction. These two processes are interrelated: Separation from other landmasses can encourage the development of cultures that

both islanders and others regard as unique, while also making it difficult for higher-level governments located elsewhere to effectively or legitimately exercise local governance (Grydehøj, Nadarajah, & Markussen, 2020). As a result, sovereign states and autonomous subnational island jurisdictions (SNIJs) based on islands tend to be smaller in size (in terms of land area, population, and economy) than comparable mainland entities (Grydehøj, 2011). Small size simultaneously presents challenges and opportunities for many island countries and territories (hereafter, islands): On the one hand, they may be particularly vulnerable to shortages of natural and human resources, but on the other hand, their governments (which tend to be disproportionately large *per capita*) may be exceptionally well placed to formulate and implement policies directed at truly local needs (Grydehøj, 2016; Baldacchino, 2010; Baker, 1992). Small size furthermore leads to many "homogenizing and uncritical ascriptions of islands as being 'small' and therefore 'simple'," powerless, and easily understood (Nimführ & Otto, 2021, p. 42).

All the above aspects are further complicated in island territories with histories of colonization. Colonialism placed island societies in new networks of relation and enmeshed them within new power structures, characterized by processes of dominance, extraction, and exploitation. Even island societies that have been formally decolonized or hold the status of largely autonomous SNIJs remain influenced by colonial processes and power relations, which have taken on new forms in the era of globalization (Nadarajah et al, 2022; Grydehøj et al, 2021; Davis, Munger, & Legacy, 2021; Figueroa, 2020). The present paper focuses on a particular aspect of this problem: Linguistic injustices resulting from colonialism present many island societies with what seems to be a difficult choice between promoting their own identities and values on the one hand or maximizing opportunities overseas and in the global market on the other. This produces compromises regarding approaches to discursive power, further re-entrenching structural inequalities.

Around the globe, many island societies remain in formal or informal colonial relationships. In settler colonial settings, Indigenous islanders may today represent a minority of the population, rendering the very assertion of continued colonization a niche opinion and a matter of inheritance. Examples include Hawaii, Guam, and the Torres Strait Islands. There are also island societies with Indigenous-majority populations that maintain close links with or are still jurisdictions of historical colonizers and in which feelings of continued colonial relationships remain. Examples include Greenland, Okinawa, Vanuatu, and the Comoro Islands. In addition, there are islands with populations predominantly descended from peoples brought over by the colonists as slaves, coerced laborers, or even free workers who sought better opportunities within oppressive colonial systems (all these peoples can be said to have been relocated from their own Indigenous homelands). Examples include Singapore, Trinidad and Tobago, and Mauritius. Many islands present mixes of these various processes, with substantial numbers of Indigenous people, descendants of settler colonists, and descendants of other colonially introduced peoples. Examples include New Caledonia, Malta, and Cuba.

Although most colonizers no longer directly cause language erasure in sovereign island countries and territories (for example, through bans on using local languages), and although Indigenous or local language education is increasingly common, colonial legacies still impact language politics and policies. The mere fact of formal independence or decolonization does not immediately or comprehensively undo the interrelationships between colonial languages, educational practices, language policies, and social structures (Pennycook, 1994, 1998, 2001, 2002; Phillipson, 1992; Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1995). Colonialism cannot be confined to the past; its impacts affect all aspects of society today, both among those whose ancestors were colonized and those whose ancestors did the colonizing (Nimführ & Meloni, 2021; Yusoff, 2019).

Linguistic and social inequalities, local language policies, and the status and development of non-European languages have been subjects of contention in "most formerly colonised regions" already prior to independence (Albury, 2015; Herath, 2015; Léglise & Migge, 2007). Post-independence efforts to bring together the postcolonial nation through linguistic unification can also be considered a lasting impacting of the colonial process.

Even though "ethnolinguistic nationalism" is an established part of European nationbuilding, it is relatively rare for states and territories with histories of colonization to promote local languages as a means of strengthening local culture and identity (Kamusella, 2020). Increased continued use of European colonial languages and English in particular is instead often encouraged as a means by which former colonies can gain entrance to global society and its markets (Phillipson, 2017), what Tupas (2018, p. 150) terms "the global 'imperative' to learn the language for economic and communicative purposes." The imposition of a dominant colonial language upon colonial populations through formal education typically resulted in the formation of groups of Indigenous or local elites, whose mastery of the colonial language grants them social, economic, and political privileges (Mulcahy, 2017; Nadarajah & Grydehøj, 2016). Sometimes, these privileges prompt elites to value colonial languages over local languages (Pennycook, 1998; 2002). In Léglise and Migge's (2007, p. 4) words, "both economic pressure from the former coloniser and opposition to decolonisation from local elites, who stood to lose their privileged positions, have effectively conspired to maintain colonial social and linguistic practices." Indigenous island elites can, however, also take on vanguardist roles in language policy reform, with complex results (e.g. Kristensen, 2019).

Our focus here is on English-language education policy, given that English has become the most widespread 'global language', serving as a communication bridge among speakers with different first languages. Although other languages have been and are still used as the official or working languages in many countries and international organizations (e.g. French and Spanish), they cannot compare with English's status as a language spoken around the world. All such European languages will, however, have particular meanings and connotations on different islands. English will imbue speakers with a different discursive power in Sri Lanka and Zanzibar (where English served as the key colonial language) than it will in the Comoro Islands

and Greenland (where French and Danish respectively served as the key colonial language).

Language and discursive power

Languages communicate how people feel, believe, and relate to one another (Weber & Horner, 2012), and language ideologies are embodied by speakers' behavioral conduct and linguistic practices. English and other European colonial languages (Danish, Dutch, French, Spanish, Portuguese, etc.) hold a dominant status on various formerly colonized islands, establishing Western cultural systems of ideas, feelings, norms, and values. Maintenance of this dominant status involves enforcement of conformity with the linguistic practices of native speakers in the metropole. This may inhibit island societies from constructing their own identities and developing the discursive power necessary for international engagement and competition.

We follow Fuchs and Kalfagianni (2009, p. 554) in defining discursive power as "the capacity to influence policies and political processes through the shaping of norms and ideas […] It is power expressed in language." That is, while emphasis on European languages is often said to be vital for efforts by former colonies to interact with the world (Kirkpatrick & Liddicoat, 2017), neglect of local languages may make it difficult for these former colonies to present themselves as powerful and as legitimate international players.

Discursive power does not simply involve 'the right to speak'. It also involves an actor's right to speak a particular language and express their meaning through that language. The mere right to speak does not guarantee the power to be accepted as a speaker whose beliefs and knowledge matter (Pugh, 2017, 2013). Discursive power is dependent upon the construction of a set of consensus institutional rules, norms, policies, and agendas coming in part from top-down state actors, yet focus is not on the rules themselves but on who makes the rules and whose interests the rules serve.

The trouble with colonized islands emphasizing education in European colonial standard languages as a means of facilitating international integration is that success in these endeavors is inevitably illusory: Non-native or non-standard language speakers tend not to receive recognition as standard speakers, notwithstanding extensive training, and even those who manage to acquire recognized standard language skills must abide by the ideological structures of the acquired language. Islanders struggle to elucidate and enact decoloniality through the words of their colonizers (Nadarajah et al, 2022) and are pushed by standard discourses toward standardized and metropolitan solutions (Grydehøj, 2018). As a result, the gains in internationalization made by advances in European colonial standard language education are illusory: Colonial power structures are further strengthened and globalized through the continued dominance of European languages, while Indigenous and local interests and perspectives are rendered weak and parochial.

In fact, promotion of local languages to enhance island social and political cohesion and to increase discursive power is compatible with use of European

languages (particularly English) for intercultural communication, so long as the European languages are not seen as being in the sole possession of the metropole. That is, it is only when a European language (particularly a European 'standard') takes on hegemonic status that its presence is problematic.

Language is inherently ideological. Rumsey (1990, p. 346; ctd. in Woolard, 1992, p. 235) defines language ideologies as "shared bodies of commonsense notions about the nature of language in the world." Woolard (1992, p. 235) sees language ideology as encompassing "cultural conceptions not only of language and language variation, but of the nature and purpose of communication, and of communicative behavior as an enactment of a collective order." Language ideologies find expression in human behavior and social practice, influencing not just communication at the micro-level but also shaping culture as a whole (Seargeant, 2009). Language actions and choices are inevitably constrained by ideological or structural (class) factors related to power, hegemony, and dominance (Irvine & Gal, 2000; Tollefson, 1991). Language is thus part of the intersectional construction of hierarchies, existing in complex interaction with race, gender, ethnicity, class, and other identities.

The idea that explicit and implicit language ideologies are constructive of "the intersection of language and human beings in a social world" (Woolard, 1998, p. 3) echoes Bourdieu's (1991) understanding of linguistic features as connected with social power relations through the features of variations, for example, the manner in which social hierarchy is reflected in varied vocabularies, sentences patterns, phonological intonations, and accents. Bourdieu's (1991, p. 59) concept of 'habitus', with reference to language ideology, represents a "system of dispositions common to all products of the same conditionings," by which the material form of life is "embodied and turned into second nature" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 63). As hegemonic practices are built into the institutions of society, they reinforce, naturalize, and legitimize privilege (Fairclough, 1989). The attitudes and beliefs regarding a language depend in large part on the language's symbolic power, hence for example the notion that 'standard language' is more credible than nonstandard variants. That is to say, language ideologies reproduce social hierarchies, are determined by power relations, and privilege certain groups. Language ideologies can lend a speaker discursive power or remove such power from them.

Such empowerment is obvious in the case of a standard language, which is "the symbolic possession of a particular community" (Widdowson, 2003, p. 39) and which implies social mobility and holds symbolic value. As Milroy and Milroy (1999, p. 18) argue, standard language implies "'correct' usage […] and this notion of correctness has a powerful role in the maintenance of the standard ideology through prescription." A standard language is ideologically constructed through the notion of 'standards', consisting of the assumptions that people have gradually internalized in terms of the need to do things "in the 'right' way', and in the case of language, language should be used in the 'correct' way (Milroy & Milroy 2012, p. 1). Seidlhofer (2018, p. 89) argues that "the advocacy of Standard English ideology imposes a set of conditions on correct or proper behavior. These conditions are essentially fixed rules for social conduct

established by institutional authority." All this begs the question of who has the right to decide what is referred to as 'standard', 'correct', or 'wrong'? Whose purposes and interests should the 'standard' reflect? Which kinds of linguistic behaviors are deemed 'proper' (Jenkins, 2015; Seidlhofer, 2011)?

For Lippi-Green (1994, p. 166), "Standard English ideology is part of a greater power construct, a set of social practices on which people depend without close analysis of underlying assumptions." This ideology suggests a power hierarchy in which native speakers are norm developers and other groups of speakers are norm followers (Jenkins, 2015; Brutt-Griffler, 2002). Such an assumption arouses non-native and non-standard speakers' feeling of "succumbing to the owners" (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 55) and relies "on the imposition of arbitrary norms of usage by authority'" in the top-down process of "highly political and ideological" language standardization (Wright, 2003, p. 53). The ideologies of standard languages are gradually internalized among language users through repeated and frequent use of the language and through repeated negative reinforcement in instances of non-standard use.

The teaching of foreign and widely spoken languages is genuinely vital to a wide range of issues, including national security, trade, and promotion of interests internationally (Huang, 2019, p. 138). Due to its status as the premier language for intercultural communication, ability to communicate in English is an important resource for islands that seek "to launch a series of economic initiatives, to promote more people-to-people exchanges, and deepen strategic ties" with the rest of the world (Huang, 2019, p. 138). However, prioritization of English as a language with its center of discursive power located elsewhere risks buttressing pre-existing hegemonic power structures, especially in island societies in which English is already an elite, colonial language. We argue instead that sensitive language education policy can provide island governments with tools for promoting "different Englishes" (Wang, 2017, p. 5) in order to enhance discursive power at the island scale.

Conceptualizing English as a lingua franca in language education

As discussed above, acquisition of a globalized standard English does not match islands' interests in terms of efforts to increase their discursive power. It is necessary to seek a balance between using English for intercultural communication on the one hand and increasing an island's discursive power in handling global affairs on the other. It may be productive for non-native and non-standard English speaking islands to conceptualize English as a lingua franca.

The concept of English as a lingua franca can be traced back to the early 2000s, in the writings of Jenkins (2000) and Seidlhofer (2001). The concept has been interpreted and reinterpreted over time but has been constant in its emphasis on English's fluidity, hybridity, and development as a global language in a continual process of adaptation and invention, meeting the needs of ever-changing societies around the globe (Pitzl, 2016; Jenkins, 2006; Jenkins, Cogo, & Dewey, 2011; Seidlhofer, 2011). The notion of

'standard' in standard English, however, implies that English is perceived as a stable and fixed linguistic entity, a highly problematic idea in the context of globalization.

Globalization involves a shift in power or authority from clearly defined geographical or political boundaries to deterritorialized, decentered, or networked systems (Brenner, 2004; Beerkens, 2003). The process of globalization has challenged traditional codifications of English and called for a rethinking of the idea that standard English should be the norm (Graddol, 2006; Schneider et al, 2004; McArthur, 2002). Kachru (1985) argues the necessity of moving beyond native varieties to consider non-native speakers' varieties as legitimate within their own speech communities. These approaches push back against researchers' tendency to focus on "'bounded' varieties of English" (Jenkins, Cogo, & Dewey, 2011, p. 284) and on "a narrow selection of standardized forms in particular communities" (Pennycook, 2007, p. 21).

The notion of flexible and dynamic use of English for communication by both native and non-native speakers worldwide means that variations of English cannot be understood as part of a standard/non-standard binary. Indeed, the hybridization that occurs within English blurs the lines dividing speech communities and national boundaries (Cogo, 2012; Jenkins, 2006; Seidlhofer, 2011). Mauranen (2012) argues that it is inappropriate to describe the sociolinguistic phenomenon of English as a lingua franca in terms of traditional understandings of speech community, opting instead for the idea of 'communities of practice' . English as lingua franca users may "process time for both (for example hesitating, repeating, and pausing), assist in mutual comprehension (for example, explicitness, approximation), and help achieve positive social goals (for example, repetition, co-construction)" (Mauranen, 2012, p. 57). Instead of codifying and constructing English, English as lingua franca attends to the process of hybrid and fluid use of English across national boundaries, better reflecting the "real life situation" (Wang, 2015b) than does the notion of a standard English.

Because English has spread so widely as to have become the most important international language, the vast majority of interactions in English do not involve native standard speakers but instead occur among non-native and/or non-standard speakers (Graddol 1997). This has prompted some scholars to discuss 'Englishes' rather than 'English', thereby countering the idea that the language belongs to particular native-speaking countries (Jenkins, 2015; Baker, 2012; Cogo, 2010; Seidlhofer, 2011; Wang, 2015a). It makes no sense for people from particular countries who benefit from English's international status to insist upon their exclusive authority over and possession of the language (Widdowson, 1994). English belongs to everyone. It is not the privilege of the native standard English speaker to make decisions about language standards. Speakers from non-native or non-standard speaking countries also have the right as co-owners to change, adjust, and develop the language in dealing with the ever-changing world in accordance with their communication purposes (Jenkins, 2015; Seidlhofer, 2011; Galloway & Rose, 2014; Cogo & Dewey, 2006).

By breaking down the native English speaking/non-native English speaking and standard/non-standard binaries, the English as lingua franca concept counters some of the language problems confronting islands with histories of colonization. It seeks to

dismantle the power hierarchy in which native speakers alone have the capacity to determine language norms (Seidlhofer, 2011; Brutt-Griffler, 2002) and thereby the forms, priorities, and statuses in international engagement. Instead, it grants non-standard speakers of English co-ownership over the language and equal right to claim the legitimacy of their usage (Jenkins, 2015; Widdowson, 1994). The English as a lingua franca agenda encompasses all uses of all Englishes by both standard and non-standard speakers, not simply acknowledging differences of use in different sociolinguistic contexts but also opening up to flexible self-identifications of being speakers of different Englishes during the intercultural communication process (Jenkins, 2015; Baker, 2011; Wang, 2015b; Seidlhofer, 2011; Graddol, 1997; Widdowson, 1994).

Because language education is a major source of language users' perceptions of English and influences their language choices, it is important to use language education policy as a tool for constructing a country's discursive power in the context of globalization.

Language education policy on islands

Language policy is among the most powerful forces in language management (Spolsky, 2009). It influences the acquisition, structure, and functional allocation of language codes and ultimately impacts speakers' choices and uses of language in social, educational, political, and economic domains. Through language management, governments can intervene directly to impose or enforce changes regarding particular forms of language in an effort to support a particular cultural, political, or economic agenda (Spolsky, 2009; Shohamy, 2006). Language management can be used to strengthen social and cultural cohesion and discursive power. It is in this context that we consider language policy on islands, specifically in island countries and island territories.

Language policy is a set of laws, regulations, rules, or practices set forth by an "authoritative body" and "intended to achieve the planned language change in the society, group or system" (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997, p. xi). Language policy can be explicit or implicit, overt or covert (Shohamy, 2006). Overt language policy refers to the explicitly published regulations or other documents, such as curricula and school language policies. It regulates the forms, functions, structures, uses, or acquisition of language "in order to influence economic, political, and educational opportunity" (Johnson, 2013, p. 25). Covert language policy is concerned with implicitly embraced language attitudes, beliefs, or ideologies and actual language practices (Ricento & Hornberger, 1996; Schiffman, 1996). Such language policy is carried out through "everyday ideologically saturated language-regulating mechanisms" (McCarty & Hopson, 2011, p. 339). Language policy, including top-down language management, should thus be considered as extending beyond explicit declarations.

Language education is key to maintaining language ideologies (Lippi-Green, 2004). As a major resource of language ideologies, it is closely related to language users' perceptions of the target languages, influences their language choices, "serves as an

interface between linguistic realities and language attitudes" (Lippi-Green, 2004, p. 94), and lays the foundations for belief in native speakers' authority in English (Wang, 2015a). Language education policy is thus a powerful mechanism affecting speakers' language ideologies and behaviors, not only to "create and impose language behavior" in an educational system that is "compulsory for all children" but also to "determine criteria for language correctness, oblige people to adopt certain ways of speaking and writing, create definitions about language and especially determine the priority of certain languages in society and how these languages should be used, taught and learned" (Shohamy, 2006, p. 77). The majority of institutions, teachers, and classroom participants may comply, but forms of resistance do exist (Hornberger & Johnson, 2007). Language education policy may be regarded as the putting into practice of language ideologies in educational settings through formal education tools by those in authority, especially in centralized education systems (Shohamy, 2006; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996). Textbooks, curricula, tests, and classroom practices all contribute to reinforcing such policies.

Language education policy seeks to affect the decisions people make about languages and language use in the educational settings, such as in the context of schools, institutions, and universities (Lippi-Green, 2004; Shohamy, 2006; Tollefson, 2014). This is governmental action that seeks to use formal educational institutions to promote the government's political agenda (Hornberger & Johnson, 2007).

A growing number of empirical studies consider English-language education policies. Baker and Jarunthawatchai's (2017) study of language management in Thailand finds that assessments of an individual's language proficiency are based largely on a native speaker model, which worsens social inequality. Wen (2012, p. 371) notes the tendency in China for students to still be "learning English as a foreign language (EFL) in the traditional way based on standardized native speakers' norm." These issues recur on many islands with histories of colonization. Kirkpatrick and Liddicoat (2017, p. 28) argue that, in the countries of archipelagic East and Southeast Asia, it is increasingly normal for the majority of the population to be "monolingual in the national language" while "an elite are bilingual in the national language and English." This elite English makes exclusive reference to the standards and norms of native English speakers. Irham et al. (2021) highlight the dominance of native English speakers' norms in foreign language education in the multilingual archipelagic society of Indonesia.

The small island state of Mauritius has English, French, and Creole as its official languages, yet English is the primary language of instruction in education. A difficulty for Mauritius is that the European languages of English and French are regarded as more 'proper' (Mahadeo, 2006) and higher status than is Creole, a language that itself "emerged out of an oppressive colonial context and has been used as support to colonial ideologies on the island" but that has become a marker of Mauritian identity, with decolonial potentials (Pyndiah, 2016, p. 487).

In the archipelagic state of Japan, English has been taught and learned as a foreign language "almost to the exclusion of other languages from the school and university

curriculum" (Kirkpatrick & Liddicoat, 2017), with an official focus on 'internationalization' (Monbusho, 2002), emphasizing "the development of western styles of communication" (Kirkpatrick & Liddicoat, 2017, p. 12). The Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) program has now shifted to accepting applicants from non-native English speaking countries but was launched primarily to recruit language teachers from native-language contexts and still prefers native speakers (Glasgow & Paller, 2016, p. 159). Despite strenuous government efforts to promote learners' English proficiency, often involving assessments and measurements against native speaker-oriented language tests (e.g. TOEFL, EIKEN, CEFR), the outcomes have proved unsatisfactory and have highlighted the problematic nature of the cultural assumptions underlying the focus on native speakers (Saito, 2019; Hashimoto, 2018).

Singapore's multilingual and multiethnic society is a consequence of British colonialism. English, Mandarin Chinese, Malay, and Tamil are all official languages in this small island state, yet English is both the medium of instruction for all subjects in education and the working language of the country. Singapore's language policy has played a key role in nation-building efforts (Low & Pakir, 2018), which "have positioned English as a unifying language, in order to linguistically wed a multilingual and multi-ethnic national population" (Rose & Galloway, 2017, p. 296). Yet although Colloquial Singapore English or 'Singlish' is used as a common contact language by most Singaporeans (Siemund & Li, 2020), national authorities have sought to replace it with standard English by means of the Speak Good English Movement (SGEM), which has run since 2000 (Tan, 2017, p. 85). "My concern is that if we continue to speak Singlish, it will over time become Singapore's common language. Poor English reflects badly on us and makes us seem less intelligent or competent" (excerpt of speech by then PM Goh Chok Tong at the launch of SGEM 2000). Colloquial Singapore English clashes with the government's desire for "Singaporeans to speak and write standard English" (SGEM, 2018). The authorities see the local variety of English as 'improper', causing its speakers to appear linguistically deficient and thereby harming national economic, technological, and educational development (Goh, 2000; Tan, 2017). As posted on SGEM's official website page:

> The role of the Speak Good English Movement is to encourage Singaporeans to speak and write standard English and provide resources to learners who wish to improve their English. The Speak Good English Movement recognises the existence of Singlish as a cultural marker for many Singaporeans. We aim to help those who speak only Singlish, and those who think Singlish is English, to speak standard English. It is important to understand the differences between standard English, broken English and Singlish. To achieve all this, we wish to create an environment of good English in Singapore.

Goh Eck Kheng (qtd. in Tan, 2017, p. 100), Chair of SGEM in 2010, states that "this is a key element in making sure that people who are disadvantaged, or who come from dysfunctional environments, will not be further disadvantaged by poverty of language.

[Colloquial Singapore English represents] low social status, poor employment and a general sense of dysfunctionality." However, the manner in which Colloquial Singapore English combines elements of the country's other languages means it plays a powerful role in joining Singapore's peoples together into a nation.

Discussing language education and varieties of English in the Caribbean, Nero (2015, p. 344) notes:

> the stigmatization of creole as 'broken English,' marked as the vernacular of the lower class and uneducated, to be shunned at all cost, especially in school. Demonstrated knowledge of, and proficiency in, standardized (British) English is upheld as the gold standard of a refined and educated person. English is framed as the unmarked language, and therefore the unmarked public linguistic identity of many in former British colonies, aided by a still existing colonial school structure that enforces the ideology of the superiority of English vis-à-vis creoles.

Standard English is the language of education across the islands of the Anglophone Caribbean, existing in complex interrelation with—and usually socially subordinate positions to—the local Creoles (Meer et al, 2019). The use of assessments based on standard English continually disadvantage non-standard speakers and devalue local forms (Smith et al, 2018).

Education in English as a foreign language or in accordance with a global standard largely continues to operate on the basis of "entrenched attitudes and established traditional views of native-speaker authority" (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 16). There thus arises a conflict between linguistic reality and language attitude, while "the myth of native English" continues to constrain the decisions people make about language (Wang, 2015a, p. 100). As a result, non-standard English speakers become norm followers. In the process of developing skills in standard English, they lose their discursive power in the global system. Meanwhile, standard English speakers' discursive power is reinforced through the everyday use of English by speakers around the world. The negative effects of encouraging standard native-norm based English are far greater than the positive effects for those island nations that wish to enhance their discursive power.

Discussion and conclusion

It is important that local island languages be promoted, but there is no escaping the importance of English for intercultural communication. Because of this, and because of the failures, disempowerments, and inequalities that accompany efforts to elevate or maintain the status of standard English, we recommend that island governments take the approach of conceptualizing English as a lingua franca.

The key to discursive power is not the system itself but who makes the rules and whose interests these rules represent. The choice to passively obey or actively

formulate rules has become unavoidable for islands with histories or colonization. The increasing globalization of goods and harms, of interests and responsibilities continues to heighten the need for island societies to speak with their own voice in the international area. Language is a key component of discursive power, and language management, through language education policy, is among the most direct and effective ways of influencing how language is used and received.

As English becomes more and more prominent as a global language, new challenges will arise, some of which resemble the old challenges connected with colonialism in earlier eras. For example, a powerful global English has the potential to crowd out and pressure other languages. In some cases though, the languages that risk being crowded out of island societies by English are precisely the European languages (Danish, Dutch, French, Spanish, Portuguese, etc.) that accompanied earlier waves of conquest and violence and ultimately settled into roles as languages of elite privilege.

The establishment of discursive power is particularly relevant for those islands that seek to compensate for their relative lack of material and human resources with enhanced engagement in the international sphere (establishing beneficial trade relationships, encouraging intercultural exchange, opening up to the importation of new skills) or with authority in global governance. Although languages change and develop from the bottom up, top-down language planning and language education policy can have an important role to play in altering perceptions about and practices of language use. If English is to be seen as the lingua franca it already is, then educational systems must recognize and practice it as such.

Funding

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