

## Glocalization, English, and Education in Languages of Lesser Power<sup>1)</sup>

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The concept of “glocalization”—the concomitant development of global and local values and practices—is used in this paper to draw together two seemingly disparate areas of research in which the author has been involved. The first is the study of English as a global language; it is shown that the increasing use of English as the lingua franca for international communication has at the same time promoted the development of new, localized varieties of English (beyond the traditional British/American dichotomy). The second area is the maintenance, primarily through education, of small languages and cultures—termed “languages of lesser power” (LLP)—which are threatened by the spread of international languages such as English. LLPs include both indigenous languages (those which have existed in a particular country or locality over an indefinite period) and immigrant languages (whose use in a given setting is more recent and documentable). An LLP is most often, though not necessarily, a minority language of a country; and while its existence may be endangered in a particular setting it is not necessarily endangered on a world scale. Case studies are cited from the author’s co-edited (nearly completed) book project, *Education in languages of lesser power: Asian and Pacific perspectives*, to illustrate representative educational initiatives for maintaining or revitalizing LLPs in East/Southeast Asia and the Pacific: specifically, the Norfolk language of Norfolk Island (from research by Mühlhäusler); Tamil in Singapore (from Shegar and Gopinathan); and Nalik in Papua New Guinea (from Volker). It is suggested that if LLPs are to increase their status, they must adapt to contemporary social conditions, and be taught alongside more powerful languages (such as English) rather than be expected to replace them.

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## 1. Introduction

A key challenge for sociolinguists and language teachers in the twenty-first century will be how to address the concomitant development of globalization and localization of language, and the global and local values that are reflected in different languages. While globalization and localization may appear to represent polar opposite processes, they are in fact more complementary than mutually exclusive. The interaction between the two—"the local in the global" and "the global in the local"—was described as "glocalization" by sociologist Roland Robertson as early as 1995, and the term has since been adapted to language studies, especially in relation to the internationalization of English (e.g., Schneider, 2011).

The concept of glocalization suggests that as the various cultures of the world become outwardly more similar—as seen in such domains as food culture, pop music, and the widespread use of English as an international language—they simultaneously develop local adaptations of the globalized products. In other words, the menus of McDonald's or Starbucks, or the rhythms and themes of pop songs, will be adapted to local audiences based on local values and culture even while adhering to a global template. Similarly, English develops into new localized varieties as its learning and use become more and more widespread. Robertson's (1995) analysis suggests that glocalization breaks down commonly perceived dichotomies such as those of universal vs. particularistic and homogeneous vs. heterogeneous.<sup>2)</sup> Although it is not often mentioned in the same light, the process of glocalization would also seem to be reflected in movements toward revitalization of endangered languages and cultures that are threatened by the intrusion of global forces; that is, as a reaction to global sameness, people become more concerned with preserving the values of their communities.

In this paper I would therefore like to discuss, and attempt to reconcile through the theme of glocalization, two seemingly disparate areas of sociolinguistic research in which I have been active over a number of years. The first is the phenomenon of English as a language of global

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2) It is interesting to note, especially for Japanese speaking readers, that Robertson traces the origin of the "glocalization" concept to Japan. Citing *The Oxford Dictionary of New Words* (1991), Robertson (1995, p. 28) explains that the idea is based on Japanese *dochaku* ("living on one's own land"). Originally this was "the agricultural principle of adapting one's farming techniques to local conditions, but also adopted in Japanese business [during the 1980s] for *global localization*, a global outlook adapted to local conditions."

communication, which is related to my work as a professor of English linguistics and English language in Japan. The second is the idea of linguistic diversity as a worldwide asset, and in particular the notion that all peoples have a basic right to maintain their native languages and cultures even in the face of competition from more powerful, “international” languages such as (but not limited to) English. These issues will be discussed in relation to a project in which I have been involved, collecting and interpreting example case studies of indigenous and immigrant language education in Asian and Pacific communities. Some of these examples were presented earlier, at a symposium of the Language and Visual Culture in East Asia study group of the Kansai University Institute of Oriental and Occidental Studies (Anderson, 2011). A different set of examples will be overviewed in this paper.

## 2. English as an international language, and international varieties of English

It is well known that English is the most widely used language in the world, and the primary lingua franca among nations. Although the number of native speakers of Chinese considerably surpasses that of English,<sup>3)</sup> when considering all English users—non-native as well as native speakers—it was estimated by Crystal (2003) that there were 1,500 million (1.5 billion) English users throughout the world, which far exceeded Chinese speakers, and covered about one-fourth of the world’s total population. One can assume that this figure has only increased in the years since 2003, considering the continued growth of English education in populous nations such as China. Unlike other major world languages—including Chinese, Spanish and Arabic—English is unique in that a majority of its users have learned it as a second or foreign language, and not as their first language. This realization—that the growth of English was being fueled not by its native speakers but rather by its non-native speakers—was a major impetus behind the new field of “world Englishes,” which emerged in the late 1970s and 1980s through the works of Kachru (1982), Smith (1987), and others. Now well into the twenty-first century, world Englishes has become a significant niche area of applied linguistics and sociolinguistics, with its own academic association, journal, and annual international conference; and with new studies and books in the area appearing regularly. There is, for example, a book series, “Asian

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3) According to Crystal (1997) there were over one billion native Chinese speakers at that time, compared with only 427 million of English.

Englishes Today,” published by Hong Kong University Press, which regularly releases new works, among which *World Englishes in Asian contexts* (Kachru & Nelson, 2006) is just one representative title.

From the world Englishes perspective, a key to understanding how English functions in the global community is the recognition that the English language is no longer a single unified entity with a clear set of standards for universal correctness and appropriateness; rather standards differ depending on region or locality (see Svartvik & Leech, 2006). In other words, while it is difficult to define a world standard English, we can talk about “American standard English,” “British standard English,” or “Australian standard English,” and, some may argue, even “South Asian” or “Southeast Asian standard English” (e.g., McArthur, 1987). English is thus a “pluricentric” language, a language with multiple centers each with its own specific standards, but all generally intelligible to other English varieties. This contrasts with languages that have less global reach, such as Japanese, where one finds a clearer distinction between “standard” language (*hyojungo*) and “dialect” (*hogen*); it is likely that Japanese speakers wherever they lived would be in close agreement as to what counted as *hyojungo*. But as the moniker “World Englishes” (with “English” in the plural) implies, English is no longer a single recognizable language, but an array of varieties, some related to each other more closely than to others. To use the terminology introduced earlier, English has been “glocalized.” Schneider (2011, pp. 229-230) describes this as follows:

English itself has been significantly transformed in this process [of being spread globally], however. The term increasingly used for this process is ‘glocalization.’ The English language has been globalized, has become the world’s leading language, but at the same time, as we have seen in many instances and case studies, it is being localized, fusing with indigenous language input to yield new dialects suitable for the expression of local people’s hearts and minds. [...] English is not just the codified standard that we tend to associate with it and that our school teachers talk about—it is also any utterance produced by any indigenous speaker around the globe.

Schneider continues by calling for mutual respect between ethnolinguistic groups, including the promotion of multilingualism in their local languages if the people desire it, a

topic that will be taken up later in this paper in conjunction with the present author's research.

Schneider (2011) also mentions that glocalization entails acceptance of the various, localized forms of English. Thus as a teacher of English language and linguistics to Japanese university students who major in English studies, I attempt to make the students aware of the multiplicity of "Englishes" and to recognize the pluricentric nature of global English beyond the boundaries of North America and the British Isles. I find that most freshman students have only a vague idea about differences between American English (the model for Japanese school English study) and British English, and almost no notion of other varieties. I begin by showing examples from American and British English: common spelling differences such as *color* (American) vs. *colour* (British); as well as vocabulary such as American *elevator* being equivalent to British *lift* (while *lift* in American English has a more general meaning); and even some grammar differences such as American *on the weekend* vs. British *at the weekend*.<sup>4)</sup> But beyond American and British Englishes, simple examples of English variation across cultures can be presented and explored: for instance, "Once a jolly *swagman* camped by a *billabong*" (Australian English, with unique Australian vocabulary from the song *Waltzing Matilda*); "She force you to marry-*la*" (Singapore English, with the representative sentence-final particle *la*); "I *am understanding* what you are saying" (representative Indian English grammar); or "Him go a school every day last year, now sometime him go, sometime him no go" (Jamaican creole English, if indeed creole languages can be considered varieties of English). In order to gain a further appreciation of the linguistic diversity found in the English language, students can be asked investigate varieties of English in more detail, from cultures of particular interest to them, using books, web-based articles, youtube clips, and other resources.

### 3. Languages of greater power and languages of lesser power

From the above discussion it should be apparent that, as an educator of English language (since the late 1970s), I have been centrally concerned with the promotion of global communication. At the same time, as a member of the International Association for World

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4) The Harry Potter books are one resource that I have found useful for getting students to understand the American/British English distinction. Since each book in the series is published in both an American and British version, they can be compared for differences in spelling, vocabulary and grammar (Anderson 2010).

Englishes (IAWE) since the 1990s, I have also been concerned with the recognition of local varieties of English as expressions of the speakers' respective cultures. But localized varieties of English, as suggested by Schneider's quotation above, are created by "fusing with indigenous language input to yield new dialects suitable for the expression of local people's hearts and minds" (Schneider, 2011, p. 229). I would thus like to take the discussion of glocalization one step further and consider the local languages that are a major source of the localized varieties of English, and which in fact encode the cultural values of communities' speakers more than an externally imposed language like English can ever do.

Although the number of languages used in the world today is a matter of debate, it is generally estimated at around 5,000-6,000 (Crystal, 1997). Moreover, it is believed that at least half of the existing languages—those with few remaining speakers and limited vitality—are endangered (see Fishman, 2001). According to Crystal (1997, p. 286), "A quarter of the world's languages have fewer than 1,000 speakers; half have fewer than 10,000. It is likely that most of these languages will die out in the next 50 years." A major impetus behind the disappearance of these "small languages" is the competition that they endure with languages of wider communication, such as English. This process is often referred to as "linguistic imperialism," from the work of Phillipson (1992), and is sometimes seen as a reason to give second thought to the rapidly growing English-language industry. Other authors, such as Canagarajah (1999), have argued that it is possible to "resist linguistic imperialism" in English language teaching by adapting teaching methods to local cultures and traditions. Nevertheless, the right to maintain the language of one's community, and the maintenance of linguistic diversity more generally, is recognized as a fundamental human right (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 2008); and there is little doubt that globalization—or glocalization—through the spread of English is a contributing force behind the decline and death of local languages and cultures. And while I personally do not believe that it is desirable, or even possible, to decelerate the growth of English worldwide, I see as one of the challenges for world Englishes professionals in the twenty-first century the need to consider the relationship between English and small, less powerful languages, in order to ensure that the spread of English does not conflict with the rights of people to maintain their native languages and cultures.

For the past several years, I have been working with Craig Alan Volker, a colleague from Gifu

Shotoku Gakuen University.<sup>5)</sup> We have been locating researchers throughout the Asia-Pacific region who are concerned with the documentation and preservation of small languages, and collecting their case studies of how the languages are used in educational environments—either as school subjects in themselves, or as means for teaching other subjects. We have come to refer to these collectively as “languages of lesser power” (LLP for short), emphasizing the contrast with the “languages of greater power” (such as English) that contribute directly or indirectly to their demise. In using the label “lesser power” we in no way wish to suggest that these languages are of *lesser value* than their more powerful brethren. In fact, they are more capable of conveying the values, representing the identities, and transmitting the cultures of their speakers than external languages can ever be. However, in terms of the roles of the languages in regional or world affairs, and in the differential access provided by different languages to education, literacy, jobs, and other aspects deemed important in modern society, it is clear that some languages (unrelated to intrinsic linguistic value) have acquired more political power than others.

We define two principal types of LLP: indigenous languages of lesser power, and immigrant languages of lesser power. Indigenous refers to those languages which have existed in a country, and been used by an indigenous group of people, over an indefinite period of time; taking Japan as an example, Ainu or Ryukyuan languages would fit in here. Immigrant languages are more recent additions to the national linguistic repertoire: for example, Korean language or Brazilian Portuguese in Japan.<sup>6)</sup>

Volker and I further subdivide the LLPs according to minority or majority status. Examples from our collection are as follows:

- Indigenous minority LLPs: Wirangu in western Australia; Yami in Orchid Island, Taiwan; Bai in Yunan Province, China.
- Immigrant minority LLPs: Samoan in New Zealand; Tamil in Singapore.
- Indigenous majority LLPs: This status would seem to be rare, since majority languages

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5) At the time of this writing, Volker has retired from his position at Gifu Shotoku Gakuen University, and is preparing to take up a new post as professor of linguistics at Divine Word University in Medang, Papua New Guinea from early 2013.

6) See Noguchi and Fotos (2001) for an overview of immigrant and indigenous language communities in Japan at the time of publication of their volume.

tend to have greater power. However, Tetum, an official language of Timor Leste since 2002 independence from Indonesia, would seem to be close to this status. It is the most widely spoken indigenous language of Timor Leste, though its speakers may not constitute a true majority.

- Immigrant majority LLPs: Theoretically this is possible, but is an unlikely case, and not one that we have encountered in our collection. If an immigrant language becomes the majority language of a nation, then it usually acquires a “greater power” status, as was the case with English in the USA, or Spanish/Portuguese in Latin America.

#### 4. Education in languages of lesser power: Some case studies

The project that Volker and I have been pursuing we expect to culminate in the publication of an edited book, or possibly two books, with the working title of *Education in languages of lesser power: Asian and Pacific perspectives*. As the title suggests, we are interested primarily in the role of education in language maintenance and revitalization, though we recognize that education is very much a double-edged sword. On the one hand, as stated by Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (2008, p. 4), “Schools have played and continue to play a major role in annihilating languages and identities.” That is, schools have been notorious for discouraging native-language use among LLP speakers, often forcibly, in environments where a more powerful language is the official language of instruction. On the other hand, education remains one of the main avenues for transmission of languages from one generation to the next. In fact, schools may serve as the only means of transmission in cases where a language is seriously endangered, such that it is no longer the main mode of communication in the home between parents and children. For this reason alone we believe it important to document the successes and failures of education in this endeavor, and to make the studies available as reference for indigenous and immigrant LLP communities that wish to initiate programs to teach their local languages, or teach through their local languages, in schools or community programs. Nevertheless, as Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (2008, p. 4) have lamented, “Only some few hundred of the world’s around 7,000 spoken languages and a few dozen sign languages are learned in education systems even as subjects, let alone used as teaching



languages.”<sup>7)</sup>

The case studies described below are all examples from our book-in-progress. Because the emphasis in the present paper is on the interplay between English as an international language (including localized varieties of English) and local (indigenous and immigrant) languages, I have chosen studies where English is a main language of greater power threatening the existence of the LLP. There are additional cases to be included in our collection where it is a language other than English (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese) that is the major competitor.

*Tamil, an Indian language of Singapore* (Shegar & Gopinathan, 2012)

Singapore is well known as a multilingual nation, with four official languages, three of which represent the major ethnic groups of the country—Mandarin Chinese, Malay and Tamil (a major Indian language)—and the fourth—English—a result of the British colonial period, but now an important lingua franca and education language in its own right. Shegar and Gopinathan note that bilingualism in education has been the official policy of the nation since 1965, with English given the status of “First Language” by the Ministry of Education in 1987, with its consequent use as the medium of instruction in the multiethnic Singapore schools for all subjects except Mother Tongue and Mother Tongue Literature. In the Singapore context, “Mother Tongue” refers to the language of the ethnic community of the student’s father (usually Mandarin, Malay or Tamil), even if it is not the student’s dominant or home language. In addition to English, students are required to learn a Mother Tongue language from elementary school grade 1. Tamil hence is commonly learned and used in Singapore, and is not immediately endangered in the Singapore environment. Yet, according to Shegar and Gopinathan, it is in a disadvantageous position compared with the other Mother Tongues.

Despite the emphasis on Mother Tongue education, Shegar and Gopinathan have pointed to two aspects of Tamil language use that are problematic. Firstly, its domains of use appear to be declining. For example, government census data is cited to show how the percentage of Indians

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7) Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson’s estimate of 7,000 languages in the world is a greater number than suggested by Crystal, as presented earlier in the paper; however, as mentioned earlier, there is no clear agreement among linguists on the actual number of languages. This is in large part due to the difficulty of distinguishing between “language” and “dialect.”

using Tamil as the principal home language declined between 2000 and 2010, while English use in Indian homes increased. Secondly, even though Tamil is a major world language with an established literary tradition, it has in the past been associated with lower class workers in the Singaporean context, and hence has had lower status than the other official languages. In addition, the Singapore Indian community is not united around Tamil as a single ethnic language as the Chinese are around Mandarin.

Shegar and Gopinathan conducted research on the Umar Pulavar Tamil Language Centre (UPTLC), which has taken a number of initiatives to combat the decline in Tamil use. Particularly notable is the finding of how—as a complement to school learning—the media, particularly Singapore’s state funded broadcaster, Mediacorp, have redesigned programming for young people to make Tamil relevant to their lives and to show them Tamil as a living language. This seems to be having a positive effect on attitudes toward the language. Tamil quiz shows, chat shows, reality shows, dramas, and other programs that are of interest to young people are frequently broadcast; and issues that are of concern to young people, such as gangsterism and bullying, are taken up. In other words, it appears that a move away from the traditional, literary domains, and toward modern, spoken-language domains, may be what is necessary for maintenance of a language like Tamil in Singapore, in consideration of the strong competition from English.

*Norfolk, a language of Norfolk Island, Australia* (Mühlhäusler, 2012)

Norfolk Island is a small island in the Pacific Ocean; it is a partially self-governing territory of the Commonwealth of Australia located between Australia, New Zealand, and New Caledonia. According to Peter Mühlhäusler, a well-known expert on pidgin and creole languages and linguistic ecology in the Pacific region, the indigenous language of the island, which is now officially known as “Norf’k,” was only recently recognized as an independent language. Mühlhäusler (2012) notes that in the past Norf’k was regarded as “a dialect of English, a debased form of English, an ad hoc mixture of English and other languages, a dialect of Tahitian, among others.” The history of the language is unique in that it was originally found on Pitcairn Island in the north Pacific region, 8,000 kilometers away, but was transferred to Norfolk Island in 1856, when the entire population of Pitcairn was moved to Norfolk through an

experiment of the British government. Mühlhäusler notes how the status of Norf'k in education has gone through various stages in its history, including toleration, then prohibition and assimilation, later unofficial teaching, and finally, since 1990, official teaching and attempts at mainstreaming. In this current linguistic environment, Mühlhäusler has been researching contemporary Norf'k language use, including family language policies for passing the language on to the next generation, language choice in the community, and Norf'k language in education. There are said to be only 750 speakers of the language alive today, only 50 of whom speak the traditional “broad Norf'k” variety (which is not mutually intelligible with English), and the language has been recognized as an endangered language by UNESCO since 2007. Moreover, according to Mühlhäusler, there are fewer than ten households where Norf'k is still learned and used as a first language. Nevertheless, Mühlhäusler has found positive attitudes toward the language in the community. It is taught as a second language, behind English, in schools, with about as many parents opting that their children learn Norf'k as French—even though French has much greater instrumental value in the Pacific region. In addition, immersion language camps have been in operation since 2004, based on immersion programs in Canada (for French) and New Zealand (for Maori).

An interesting finding of Mühlhäusler's research is that the purpose of learning Norf'k for many young speakers seems to be tied to their identity as part of a select group of people who trace their roots to the original immigrants from Pitcairn Island. For this reason—as a way to maintain an identity separate from outsiders—the non-Pitcairn descended residents of Norfolk Island, as well as tourists, are often discouraged from studying Norf'k. At the same time, Mühlhäusler has heard speakers of broad Norfolk complain that “what they are teaching in schools is not really Norf'k”; which may be partially because the domains in which the language is used in education have been extended past the traditional boundaries. The question of how to maintain a balance between traditional identity and modernization is a theme that is implicit in studies of LLPs in education generally, and one that I have also encountered in researching Ainu revitalization in Japan (Anderson & Iwasaki-Goodman, 2001). Nevertheless, without some degree of adaptation of LLPs to meet the needs of contemporary society, it is difficult to see how they can compete with English and other languages of greater power for a place in the language ecology.

*Nalik, an indigenous language of New Ireland, Papua New Guinea* (Volker, 2011)

Craig Volker is a linguist who, for many years, has been studying the languages of Papua New Guinea, and especially the Nalik language of Madina, a village of 600 people on the island of New Ireland. According to Volker, there are currently approximately 5,000 Nalik speakers, all bilingual with other languages (especially Tok Pisin and English), the last monolingual speaker having died in 1988. Volker discusses an educational reform movement that started in Papua New Guinea around 1995, in which free and village based education were offered up to grade 8, education was supposed to be culturally appropriate, and early education was to be in the students' mother language rather than, say, Tok Pisin or English. Mother-tongue education (in indigenous languages) was thus offered in pre-school and through the second year of primary school. English was the medium of education beginning with primary school grade 3. In Madina, Volker found considerable enthusiasm for the reforms around the year 2000, to the extent that Nalik words that were not widely used at that time were being reintroduced to the community through education. Moreover, mathematics terminology was being coined, and literature was being written in Nalik; and in this way the Nalik language seemed to be acquiring new, non-traditional domains that would enhance its viability. The language, it seemed, was being recognized as one of the languages used in education.

However, in the ensuing years Volker found the enthusiasm to have waned. There was no permanent school for Nalik-medium education, and thus attendance dropped off, so that less Nalik was used in the community. In interviews with local residents, he found that a common complaint against the use of Nalik in schools was that "They [the children] can't speak English." By 2010 the initiative to introduce Nalik in the schools seems to have been largely rejected. Nalik remained only in pre-school, with English taking over as the medium of instruction from elementary school grade 1. In researching why the program seemed to be failing, Volker found that there were complaints about the training for teachers, that there was little support from parents, and that there was poor liaison with the elementary school curriculum. On the one hand, parents lamented that their own children could not understand Nalik; yet they also commented that there was "nothing to read" in Nalik, or that "no one would give you a job just because you know Nalik." Although Volker's research in the Nalik speech community is ongoing, he has tentatively concluded that vernacular language education might work there if it

has the support of teachers, responds to the community, and is not initiated at a time of crisis. In addition he argues that Nalik education needs to be coordinated with English, and linked to job-creation. He also believes that there is a link between being trained in traditional Nalik language and culture, and success in the modern world; and to this end he is participating in a multidisciplinary study of using Malagan rituals and oratory as a means of changing HIV-dangerous behaviors. This need to adapt to contemporary society would seem to be true in all situations where local languages compete with English, or other official languages, within the linguistic ecology of the larger nation.

## 5. Conclusion

As globalization proceeds, and English becomes a tool of international communication for more and more people throughout the world, we can expect to see an accompanying interest in localized varieties of English, as well as a concern for local indigenous and immigrant languages. In a glocalized society, is it possible, we may ask, to maintain a reasonable ecology between local varieties of English, languages of lesser power, and English for global communication? How can education best be used to implement this goal? The case studies above provide a few hints: relevant use of media to supplement traditional education, expansion of the language into new domains, and drawing connections between LLPs and English, as well as with the world of employment outside of the immediate community. Linguists and educators can assist in this endeavor, but in the end it is the members of the communities themselves who will make the decisions as to whether and how to empower their native languages.

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