

SUPERDIVERSE TRANSLINGUALISM AND THE STRUCTURALIST DYNAMICS OF ENGLISH AS A GLOBAL LANGUAGE

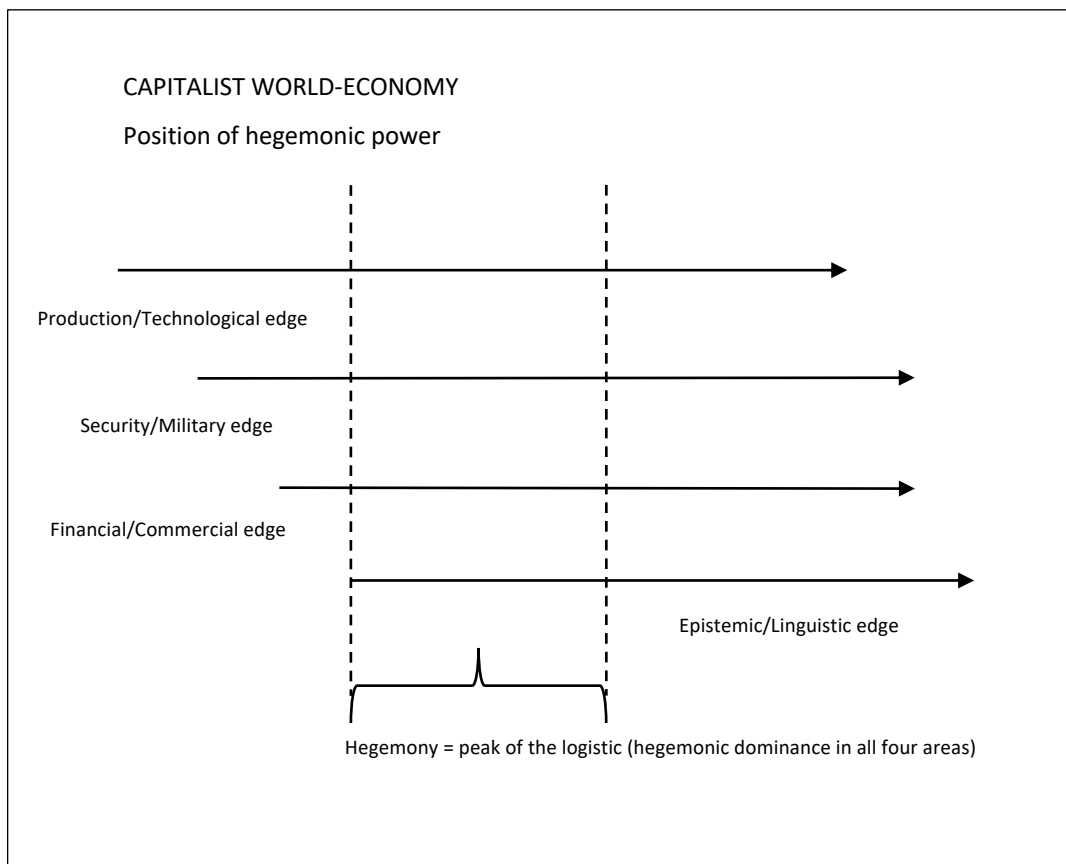
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It is not individuals who are set free by free competition; it is, rather, capital which is set free.
(Marx, 1973: 650)

Retroduction

In a world of multiple Englishes, and multiple realizations of English, what must the world be like for standard English to be the dominant form?

Four facets of hegemonic power (O'Regan, 2021)



Based on Wallerstein, 2000/1983: 256; Strange, 2015/1988: 26-35, 1989: 164-5; O'Regan, 2021: 31-2

Capital circulation: English as free rider

M-C-M' and M-M'
 $M^E-C^E-M'^E$ and $M^E-M'^E$

Materialism and critical realism

- I am a historical materialist. I believe that the capitalist world-system is a deeply historical system whose principal rationale is the endless accumulation of capital.
- I am an ontological realist. I believe that there is a real world which consists in structures, generative mechanisms, and all sorts of complex things which exist and act independently of human beings. In the political economy of global English and the dominance of the standard form, these mechanisms are the generative complexes of capital itself.
- I am an epistemological relativist. I believe that knowledge is socially produced, geo-historically specific and continually in transformation. Knowledge is always changing and is overdetermined by being shaped by historical, political, economic, social, cultural, geographical and discursive forces that surround its production.
- I am a judgemental rationalist. I believe that there are rational grounds for preferring some ideas and outcomes over other ideas and outcomes; that we can adjudicate between competing claims to truth. (Based on O'Regan, 2021a, 2022; Block, 2022)

Depth ontology

Need for a stratified understanding of reality. Depth ontology:

- Reality: Generative mechanisms (generate) > events (which generate) > experiences (in which events are apprehended)
- They, 'constitute three overlapping domains of reality.' (Bhaskar 2008: 56):
- The Real: Underlying generative (causal) mechanisms or structures that co-produce the flux of phenomena (i.e. events and experiences)
- The Actual: Events and experiences (inc. beliefs about the world)
- The Empirical: Experiences, empirical observations of events (e.g. what you see when you look at semiotic practices)
- Real > Actual > Empirical

(Bhaskar 1975/2008: 56)

Actualism/empirical realism

Absenting of the real world. Reduction of ontology (what is) to epistemology (what we know).

Orientation to individual agency, local practices, micro-physical techniques, micro-resistances, etc.

- 'The collapse of the real to the actual is what I call actualism; it presupposes the collapse of open to closed systems and, when coupled with the additional collapse of the actual to the empirical, results in *empirical realism*.' (Bhaskar, 2016: 24; original emphasis).
- In WE, ELF, TL, LC etc. a postmodern sensibility and an emphasis on fluidity, hybridity, diversity, flexibility, fragmentation, instability, liquidity and the unboundedness of languages and language in use.
- World as a *flat ontology* – primacy given to documenting the 'conduct of conduct' in the actualist domain (Foucault, 1980; Martín Rojo, 2019)

Superdiverse translingualism and empirical realism

‘the communicative practices of transnational groups that interact using different languages and communicative codes simultaneously present in a range of communicative channels, both local and distant.’ (Jacquemet 2005: 265)

Refers to “the overlapping fields of superdiversity, translanguaging, and translingual practice [...] In closer or lesser empirical alignment with these fields have been the competing *World Englishes* (WE) and *English as a Lingua Franca* (ELF) paradigms, each of which in their own way make claims regarding the legitimacy of the diverse realizations of English in the world.” (O’Regan, 2021: 182)

In superdiverse translingualism (SD, TL, TP, ELF, WE etc), empirical realism is the dominant lens for dealing with the materiality of the world. This entails a primary focus on the actual and the empirical [events, experiences and semiotic practices] at the expense of the real [causal mechanisms and structures].

What *use* is English?

- Standard English has value (desirability), not only in terms of its use, but also in terms of its assumed potential for exchange.
- In the world-system the indexical values of language repertoires are determined by their *imagined* potential for *exchange*.
- Translanguaging, ELF, WE, superdiversity etc. (PRIMACY GIVEN TO **USE**)
- SE (PRIMACY GIVEN TO **EXCHANGE**)

The real materially matters

Necessary to deal with ‘the underlying generative framework’ (Fraser, 2008: 28) and ‘the generative complexes at work’ (Bhaskar, 2008/1975: 48)

‘[I]t is vital not to ignore [...] the constraints and affordances of the material world’ (Fairclough, 2010: 165-6)

‘These arguments take us toward a rethinking of the divisions between material and non-material worlds’ (Pennycook, 2022: 15)

‘From this we may conclude that in the history of the capitalist world-system it is not so much language which is set free by free individuals; it is, rather, as Marx might say, capital which is set free to decide the limits upon the freedom of language’ (O’Regan, 2021b: 38-39)

Conclusion

- *Desiring* social change (or epistemic/linguistic/pedagogical change) is not sufficient for change to occur. (Bhaskar, 2008/1975: 35). It is necessary to take account of structural as well as social realities to *enact* change.
- ‘Feel good’ ELT pedagogies (Phan, 2020) which emphasize the legitimacy of *free-form* language use in the classroom, and elsewhere, are largely irrelevant in the face of the *real structural realities* of English in the world and the circumstances in which real teachers teach.
- As the poet Gil Scott Heron might have said, the revolution will not be free form, it will be collective. That goes for language too.

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