Applied Linguistics in an age of globalization

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In this Chapter, I take a critical look at the disciplinarity and directionality of Applied Linguistics in the age of globalization, and I'll do so from the perspective of postmodernism and postcolonialism. These three areas – globalization, postcolonialism, and postmodernism - represent three important critical discourses that dominate knowledge production in the humanities and social sciences today. And yet, there has been very little systematic scrutiny about the link between these areas and the discipline of Applied Linguistics. If, as we must, make such a link, then, it becomes fairly clear that what is required is no less than disciplinary transformation involving fundamental restructuring of major aspects of Applied Linguistics. Below, I first address the concept of globalization and then discuss its implications for possible disciplinary transformation.

The concept of globalization

The concept of globalization has carried different meanings to different people at different times. Echoing the current thinking, American sociologist Steger (2003, p. 13) defines globalization as "a multidimensional set of social processes that create, multiply, stretch, and intensify worldwide social interdependencies and exchanges while at the same time fostering in people a growing awareness of deepening connections between the local and the distant." While Steger points out that globalization is "as old as humanity itself" and links it to 12,000 years of human history, an Australian historian, Robbie Robertson (2003), argues that globalization as we know it today can be traced to the onset of modern colonial period, about 500 years ago. He identifies three "waves" of globalization which can easily be associated with three phases of modern colonialism/imperialism. The first wave centered on regional trade explorations led by Spain and Portugal; the second gained impetus from industrialization led by Britain; and, the

third is derived from the post-war world order led by the United States. These three waves neatly correspond to the three stages of globalization that postcolonial critic Mignola (1998, p. 36) has talked about: "the banners of Christianization (that is, Spanish and Portuguese colonization), Civilizing Mission (that is, British and French Colonization), and Development/Modernization (that is, U.S. Imperialism)."

The current phase of globalization

The current phase of globalization, however, is dramatically different from its earlier phases. Not in its intent but in its intensity. According to a United Nations Report on Human Development (1999, p.29), the current phase of globalization is changing the world landscape in three distinct ways:

- *"Shrinking space.* People's lives - their jobs, incomes and health - are affected by events on the other side of the globe, often by events that they do not even know about.
- *Shrinking time.* Markets and technologies now change with unprecedented speed, with action at a distance in real time, with impacts on people's lives far away. …
- *Disappearing borders.* National borders are breaking down, not only for trade, capital and information but also for ideas, norms, cultures and values."

What this means is that the economic as well as cultural lives of people all over the world are more intensely and more instantly linked than ever before.

The most distinctive feature of the current phase of globalization is the global electronic communication, the Internet. It has become the major engine that is driving economic imperatives as well as cultural/linguistic identities. In fact, without global communication, economic growth and cultural change would not have taken place with "breakneck speed and with amazing reach" (Human Development Report, 1999, p. 30). That is why cultural critic Jameson (1998, p. 55) calls globalization "a communicational concept, which alternately masks and transmits cultural or economic meanings." In a development that is unprecedented in human history, the Internet has become a unique source that instantly connects millions of individuals with other individuals, with private associations, and with educational institutions and government agencies, making interaction at a distance and in real time possible. And, the

language of global communication is, of course, English, which is at the center of contemporary applied linguistics.

Cultural globalization

The impact of globalization on the sociocultural lives of people all over the world is remarkable. Cultural globalization has become the topic of intense debate among scholars of various disciplines. Unfortunately, it is yet to capture the imagination of applied linguists in any significant way. A close and critical analysis of the relevant literature in sociology and cultural studies reveals the emergence of three overlapping schools of thought. Members of the first school, represented by political theorist Barber, sociologist Ritzer and others, believe that some kind of cultural homogenization is taking place in which the American culture of consumerism constitutes the dominant center. They see a simple and direct equation: Globalization = Westernization = Americanization = McDonaldization. That is to say, they consider globalization predominantly a process of Westernization which, in their view, is not substantially different from Americanization which can, in turn, be easily characterized as McDonaldization. The term 'McDonaldization' was coined by Ritzer (1993) to describe the contemporary sociocultural processes by which the basic principles of the fast-food industry – creation of homogenized consumer goods and imposition of uniform standards - shape the cultural landscape in America and elsewhere.

In support of cultural homogenization, it is pointed out that ideas about American individualism and consumerism are circulated more freely and accepted more widely as evidenced in young people in various parts of the world wearing Levi jeans and Nike shoes, sporting Texaco baseball caps and Chicago Bull sweatshirts, watching music videos on MTV and blockbusters from Hollywood, and eating at McDonalds and Pizza Hut. They also stress that such a cultural homogenization is facilitated by global communications industry controlled mostly by American interests. It has been reported that in the year 2000, "only ten media conglomerates – AT&T, Sony, AOL/Time Warner, Bertelsmann, Liberty Media, Vivendi Universal, Viacom, General Electric, Disney, and News Corporation – accounted for more than two-thirds of the $250-275 billion in annual worldwide revenues generated by the

communications industry" (Steger, 2003, p. 76). Once again, in most cases, the medium of the global communications industry is English.

The second school of thought is represented by sociologist Giddens, cultural critic Tomlinson and others. They believe that some kind of cultural heterogenization is taking place in which local cultural and religious identities are being strengthened mainly as a response to the threat posed by globalization. Invoking the image of "a runaway world," Giddens (2000) asserts that globalization is becoming increasingly decentered. He even suggests, rather polemically, that 'reverse colonisation' is taking place. For him, "reverse colonisation means that non-Western countries influence developments in the West. Examples abound – such as the latinising of Los Angeles, the emergence of a globally oriented high-tech sector in India, or the selling of Brazilian television programmes to Portugal" (Giddens, 2000, p. 34-5).

Furthermore, it is being pointed out that the so-called 'global neighborhood' does not really denote enhanced sociability, but only, what Tomlinson (1999, p. 105) calls, "enforced proximity." In other words, globalization has contributed only to the contraction of space, time and borders but not to the expansion of communal harmony or shared values among the peoples of the world. In fact, it has only strengthened the forces of fundamentalism which Giddens (2000, p. 67) describes as "a child of globalisation." Religious fundamentalism, whether it is of Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Islamic or any other persuasion, is premised upon a deep desire to protect and preserve certain types of religious beliefs and practices that are perceived to be threatened by global cultural flows. Although the West's grip is seen to be declining, its dominating power is fully acknowledged. As Tomlinson concedes, "when all is said and done and all these criticisms met, Western cultural practices and institutions still remain firmly in the driving seat of global cultural development" (1999, p. 24).

The third school of thought is represented by cultural critic Appadurai, sociologist Roland Robertson and others. Appadurai's oft-quoted statement, "the central problem of today's global interaction is the tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization" (1996, p. 5) broadly summarizes the stand taken by this group. They believe that both homogenization and heterogenization are taking place at the same time, plunging the world in a

creative as well as chaotic tension that results in what Robertson has called *glocalization* where the global is localized and the local is globalized. They believe that cultural transmission is a two-way process in which cultures in contact shape and reshape each other directly or indirectly. They assert that the forces of globalization and those of localization are so complex that they cannot be understood from the narrow perspective of a center-periphery dichotomy. The global is brought in conjunction with the local, and the local is modified to accommodate the global.

Any tension between the global and the local is seen to be resolved through a simple accommodation that meets the needs and wants of the receiving culture. For instance, successful global marketing of consumer goods necessarily involves what is called micromarketing in which products are tailored to suit religious, cultural and ethnic demands. The American fast-food chain McDonald's, for instance, tries to be sensitive to local food habits conditioned by cultural and religious beliefs and practices. It serves Kosher food in Israel, conforming to the laws of the Jewish religion; or Halal food in Islamic countries, following Islamic religious traditions; or vegetarian food in India where most people do not eat meat. One can also identify certain traditional Islamic societies which have embraced Western consumerism without accepting its social values. A similar situation can be seen in a modernized country like Singapore which claims to strike the right balance between adopting western technological progress and developmental processes, and maintaining Singaporean ethos and Asian values.

The members of the third group emphasize the "the twofold process of the particularization of the universal and the universalization of the particular" (Roland Robertson, 1992, p. 177-78). They draw attention to the lofty ideal of human universality. They believe that the particularization of the universal "facilitates the rise of movements concerned with the 'real meaning' of the world, movements (and individuals) searching for the meaning of the world as a whole," just as the universalization of the particular facilitates "the search for the particular, for increasingly fine-grained modes of identity presentation" (Roland Robertson, 1992, p. 178). Such a search for global and local identities, Robbie Robertson (2003, p. 251) hopes, will ultimately display 'dynamic signs of life in the great concert of this globalized planet." Calling for the creation of effective strategies to handle the challenge of cultural globalization, he urges

educators to pursue all possible alternative avenues that will prepare our academic disciplines as well as our learners to get ready to face the globalized world.

In preparing their academic discipline to get ready to face the globalized world, the practitioners of Applied Linguistics bear a special responsibility because they largely deal with a language that has both global and colonial characteristics. "A language achieves a genuinely global status," observes Crystal (1997, p. 2), "when it develops a special role that is recognized in every country." Clearly, English has achieved such a role. It has become the world's lingua franca. Because of its association with global economy, it is deemed to be "the natural choice for progress" (Crystal 1997, p. 75). It is seen as opening doors for social mobility within and across national borders. As Phillipson (2003, p. 16) observes, "English has acquired a narcotic power in many parts of the world, an addiction that has long-term consequences that are far from clear. As with the drugs trade, in its legal and illegal branches, there are major commercial interests involved in the global English language industry."

Just as we have to deal with the globality of the English language, we also have to deal with its coloniality. According to some, English just happened to be in the right place at the right time (Crystal, 1997), but according to others, it rode on the back of colonialism (Pennycook, 1998). The London-based magazine *The Economist* summed it all up when it asserted that English is just "a world empire by other means" (Dec. 20, 2001). The insidious nature of English linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992), the imperial character that still adheres to it (Pennycook, 1998), the indelible impact it has had on the identities of people around the world (Krishnaswamy & Burde, 1998), as well as practices of resistance (Canagarajah, 1999) have all been documented in considerable detail. Now more than ever applied linguists are conscious of the role played by colonialism in maintaining the Western dominance in knowledge production and dissemination.

Recently, such dominance has come under severe scrutiny partly because of the process of globalization that has resulted in greater contacts between people of different cultures, leading to a better awareness of each other's values and visions, and to a firmer resolve to preserve and protect one's own linguistic and cultural heritage. Applied Linguistics as a profession cannot

afford to ignore the emerging global reality. In order to respond to it effectively, I believe what is required is no less than disciplinary transformation involving fundamental restructuring of major aspects of Applied Linguistics. There are several avenues open for disciplinary transformation. In this essay, consolidating and expanding on what we already know, I shall focus on three of them - transformation from the derivative to the autonomous, from the modern to the postmodern, and from the colonial to the postcolonial. Below I address each of these transformations briefly.

Transformation from the derivative to the autonomous

Although Applied Linguistics as an independent discipline is nearly half a century old, a clear consensus on a definition that captures the nature and scope of the discipline still eludes its practitioners. A review of the relevant literature, however, reveals an earlier narrow definition and a recent broad definition of the field. The narrow definition can be traced to Corder (1973, p. 10-11). For him, Applied Linguistics is "the application of linguistic knowledge to some object … It is not a theoretical study. It makes use of the findings of theoretical studies. The applied linguist is a consumer or user, not a producer of theories." The *Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics* (1985, p. 15) offers similar definitions: "the study of second and foreign language learning and teaching" and "the study of language and linguistics in relation to practical problems, such as lexicography, translation, speech pathology, etc."

More recent definitions come from Brumfit and from Widdowson. According to Brumfit (1995, p. 27) applied linguistics is "the theoretical and empirical investigation of real-world problems in which language is a central issue." For Widdowson (1996, p. 125), it is "an area of enquiry which seeks to establish the relevance of theoretical studies of language to everyday problems in which language is implicated." Consistent with these broad-based definitions, the profession has been described, metaphorically, as "a broad church" (Brown, 2000) that accommodates anybody and everybody, as "a multiplicity of spokes in search of a hub" (Gass, 2000), and as "the Holy Roman Empire" (Widdowson, 2000, p. 3), because it is no more than a convenient fiction.

A close scrutiny of the Applied Linguistics literature makes one think that the broad-based definition itself is no more than a convenient fiction. In spite of all the emphasis on "real-world" problems and "everyday problems" that are connected to language, applied linguistics as a profession is still informed almost exclusively by linguistically based issues concerning English language policy & planning, and English language learning & teaching. Within that narrow perimeter, it is even more narrowly confined, with very few exceptions, to the dominating agency of Western knowledge industry. Even more distressingly, some leaders of the applied linguistics profession have taken upon themselves the role of gatekeepers deciding, rather arbitrarily, what subject matter is in and what subject matter is out.

Take, for instance, what is considered to be an authoritative, state of the art volume on Applied Linguistics: *The Oxford Handbook of Applied Linguistics.* Published as recently as in the year 2002, it was edited by Robert Kaplan with an Editorial Advisory Board consisting of William Grabe, Merrill Swain, and Richard Tucker. In a self-congratulatory note, the editors claim (p.vi) that "the editorial group represents an enormous amount of experience; its four members have lived through much of the past three or four decades of the development of applied linguistics not only in the United States but throughout the world (through their participation in the International Association of Applied Linguistics (AILA) and their wide individual and collective familiarity with applied linguistics around the world), and they unquestionably know the history of applied linguistics and why applied linguistics has arrived at its present stage of development." The editors also claim that the coverage of subjects in the Handbook "is wide and comprehensive."

But, a close examination of the Handbook reveals quite a different picture. It has a total of 13 sections. With the exception of four sections that deal with bilingualism, multilingualism, language variation, and translation, all the others, in one way or another, focus on English language policy & planning, and English language learning & teaching. Even the sections on bilingualism, multilingualism and language variation include a substantial treatment of classroom implications for English language teaching. The editors rightly observe that "A book of this type will be judged not only on what it includes, but also on what it excludes" (p. v-vi). There are at least two areas of Applied Linguistics that they have excluded, and the exclusion

itself speaks volume of the professional attitude the editors have taken towards the discipline in general.

One area they have excluded is critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy, as is now well-known, seeks to connect the word with the world, language with life. From Paulo Friere to Henry Giroux to Alan Luke to Alastair Pennycook, critical pedagogists have drawn our attention to the way political power, social structure, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by language use and language abuse. There has been, in the last ten years or so, an impressive body of scholarly work on critical pedagogy as it relates to applied linguistics (see, for instance, Benesch, 2001 and Pennycook, 2001, for details). If Applied Linguistics is a field that concerns itself with "real-world problems," then, it is legitimate to ask what exactly is the motivation for excluding critical pedagogy from a volume on the state of art in Applied Linguistics.

The editors who "unquestionably know the history of applied linguistics" have anticipated this question and have provided a response. To quote: "The editorial group spent quite a bit of time debating whether critical (applied) linguistics/critical pedagogy/critical discourse analysis should be included; on the grounds that critical applied linguistics rejects all theories of language, expresses "skepticism towards all metanarratives" (Lyotard 1984), and rejects traditional applied linguistics as an enterprise because it has allegedly never been neutral and has, rather, been hegemonic (Rampton 1997b), the editorial group decided not to include the cluster of "critical" activities" (p. v-vi). In the absence of any further explanation, one wonders how the editors came to the sweeping conclusion that "critical applied linguistics rejects all theories of language." The peremptory explanation betrays not only a lack of knowledge of the field of critical linguistics, but also a lack of professional neutrality one would expect from the editors of an encyclopedic volume.

There is yet another area of applied linguistic studies that the editors have excluded from the volume: World Englishes. It is well-known that World Englishes is an established sub-field of Applied Linguistics. It is well represented in the applied linguistics literature through well-established journals like *World Englishes*. It has an active International Association which has

been conducting annual international conferences in, besides the United States, places such as Japan, Singapore, and South Africa. A sizable number of scholars in different parts of the world are relentlessly engaged in deconstructing the social, economic, cultural and ideological issues arising from the spread of English as a global language. But still, it has escaped the attention of a group of eminent scholars who claim to have "wide individual and collective familiarity with applied linguistics around the world." At least in the case of critical linguistics, they felt it necessary to provide an excuse for dismissing it as inconsequential. But, in the case of World Englishes, they have maintained a deafening silence. For them, the sub-field of World Englishes doesn't even deserve to be dismissed!

The textual content of the Handbook and the professional orientation of its editors are reflective of a discipline that continues to be derivative, not autonomous. The field began its life with a narrow focus on applying linguistics to English language teaching. Although it has expanded its focus to include language learning, language testing and language planning, it still remains limited and limiting in its scope. As Brown (2000, p.13) observed recently: "the vast majority of practicing applied linguists who concern themselves with teacher training and with practical aspects of language teaching have never doubted that linguistically informed language study lies at the heart of Applied Linguistics." In spite of persuasive arguments for presenting a way of applied linguistics that "seeks to connect it to questions of gender, class, sexuality, race, ethnicity, culture, identity, politics, ideology, and discourse" (Pennycook, 2001, p. 10), the field continues to ignore the fundamental proposition that applied linguistic inquiry ought to be intercultural, interlingual and interdisciplinary.

Part of the problem may be traced to the historical fact that the field began its life during the ascendancy of structuralism and modernism, and has not yet fully embraced poststructural and postmodern philosophies. And that takes me to the second disciplinary transformation.

Issues # 2: Transformation from the modern to the postmodern

The brand of Applied Linguistics associated with modernism treats language primarily as system and operates within a positivist, prescriptive research paradigm. It investigates language

use generally in a decontextualized, disembodied manner. Even when it contextualizes language use, it does so in order to offer an alternative regime of truth. Even when it explores language planning, it avoids language ideology.   Even when it deals with language and society, it skirts the issues of social inequality and power. In short, the modernist Applied Linguistics strives to preserve the macrostructures of linguistic and cultural domination.

Postmodern philosophy celebrates difference, challenges hegemonies, and seeks alternative forms of expression and interpretation. It actively seeks to deconstruct dominant discourses as well as counter-discourses by posing questions at the boundaries of ideology, power, knowledge, class, race, and gender. In order to move from the modern to the postmodern, applied linguists have to move beyond treating language as system and start treating it as discourse. The word *discourse* is not used here in its limited sense in which it is often used in applied linguistics, that is, to refer to units larger than a sentence with cohesive and other discoursal markers. It is used in the Foucauldian sense.

 For Michel Foucault, discourse is not merely the suprasentential aspect of language; rather, language itself is one aspect of discourse (Foucault, 1972 and elsewhere). In accordance with that view, he offers a three-dimensional definition of discourse "treating it sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements" (Foucault, 1972, p. 80). The first definition relates to all actual utterances or texts. The second relates to specific formations or fields, as in 'the discourse of racism' or 'the discourse of feminism.' The third relates to sociopolitical structures that create the conditions governing particular utterances or texts. Discourse thus designates the entire conceptual territory on which knowledge is produced and reproduced. It includes not only what is actually thought and articulated but also determines what can be said or heard and what silenced, what is acceptable and what tabooed. Discourse in this sense is a whole field or domain within which language is used in particular ways. This field or domain is produced in and through social practices, institutions and actions.

In characterizing language as one, and only one, of the multitude of organisms that constitute discourse, Foucault (1970 and elsewhere) significantly extends the notion of linguistic

text.   A text means what it means not because of any inherent objective linguistic features but because it is generated by discursive formations, each with its particular ideologies and particular ways of controlling power. No text is innocent and every text reflects a fragment of the world we live in.   In other words, texts are political because all discursive formations are political. Analyzing text or discourse therefore means analyzing discursive formations which are essentially political and ideological in character.

The nexus between discourse and larger macro-social structures is also brought out by yet another French thinker, Pierre Bourdieu (1991). He describes symbolic power "as a power of constituting the given through utterances, of making people see and believe, of confirming or transforming the vision of the world and thereby, action on the world and thus the world itself …" (p. 170). He also shows the innumerable and subtle strategies by which language can be used as an instrument of communication as well as control, coercion as well as constraint, and condescension as well as contempt. He points out how variations in accent, intonation and vocabulary reflect differential power positions in the social hierarchy. According to him, "what creates the power of words and slogans, a power capable of maintaining or subverting the social order, is the belief in the legitimacy of words and of those who utter them" (p. 170). In another work, Bourdieu (1977) invokes the notion of "legitimate discourse" and elaborates it by saying that "a language is worth what those who speak it are worth, so too, at the level of interactions between individuals, speech always owes a major part of its value to the value of the person who utters it" (p.652).

Adhering to the poststructual tenet that no discourse is innocent, critical linguists argue that "all representation is mediated, moulded by the value-systems that are ingrained in the medium (language in this case) used for representation; it challenges common sense by pointing out that something could have been represented in some other way, with a very different significance" (Fowler, 1996, p.4).   Saying that ideology and power that constitute dominant discourses are hidden from ordinary people, critical linguists seek to make them visible by engaging in a type of critical discourse analysis that "is more issue-oriented than theory-oriented" (van Dijk 1997, p.22).   In that sense, they seek to actualize Foucault's thoughts through a close linguistic analysis of texts within a particular sociopolitical context. By doing so, they hope to shed light on the way power relations work within the society. They thus move from the local to the global displaying "how discourse cumulatively contributes to the reproduction of macro structures..." (Fairclough, 1995, p.42).

Likewise, applying the principles of critical discourse analysis to explore the nature of input and interaction in the language classroom, I have questioned the present practice of conducting classroom discourse analysis which focuses narrowly on turn-taking, turn sequencing, activity types and elicitation techniques. I have argued that "a true and meaningful understanding of sociocultural aspects of classroom discourse can be achieved not by realizing the surface level features of communicative performance or conversational style but only by recognizing the complex and competing world of discourses that exist in the classroom" (Kumaravadivelu, 1999, p. 470). Accordingly, I have suggested a conceptual framework for conducting critical classroom discourse analysis that will cross the borders of the classroom to investigate broader social, cultural, political and historical structures that have a bearing on classroom input and interaction.

The inevitable impact of the broader social, cultural, political and historical structures is something that Applied Linguistics as a discipline cannot distance itself from. In other words, it cannot escape ideology. It is worth remembering that ideology is nothing but "*meaning in the service of power*" (Thompson, 1990, p. 7, emphasis as in original). Therefore, "*to study ideology is to study the ways in which meaning serves to establish and sustain relations of domination*" (p. 56, emphasis as in original). The best way to investigate ideology, according to Thompson, is "to investigate the ways in which meaning is constructed and conveyed by symbolic forms of various kinds, from everyday linguistic utterances to complex images and texts; it requires us to investigate the social contexts within which symbolic forms are employed and deployed; and it calls upon us to ask whether, and if so how, the meaning mobilized by symbolic forms serves, in specific contexts, to establish and sustain relations of domination" (p. 7).

Expanding on the connection between symbolic forms and relations of domination, Kroskrity (2000, p. 7-23, all italics as in original) suggests that it is profitable to think of language ideologies as a cluster of concepts consisting of four converging dimensions:

- First, "*language ideologies represent the perception of language and discourse that is constructed in the interests of a specific social or cultural group*" (p.8). That is, notions of language and discourse are grounded in social experience and often demonstrably tied to the promotion and protection of political-economic interests.

- Second, "*language ideologies are profitably conceived as multiple because of the multiplicity of meaningful social divisions (class, gender, clan, elites, generations, and so on) within sociocultural groups that have the potential to produce divergent perspectives expressed as indices of group membership*" (p.12). That is, language ideologies are grounded in social experiences which are never uniformly distributed across diverse communities.

- Third, "*members may display varying degrees of awareness of local language ideologies*" (p. 18). That is, depending on the role they play, people develop different degrees of consciousness about ideologically grounded discourse.

- Finally, "*members' language ideologies mediate between social structures and forms of talk*" (p. 21). That is, people's sociocultural experience and interactive patterns contribute to their construction and understanding of language ideologies.

These four dimensions must be considered seriously if we are to understand the postmodern and postcolonial perspectives to Applied Linguistics. They also relate to the notion of agency in the professional discourse community, a notion that is very much intertwined with the third disciplinary transformation I wish to talk about.

Issue # 3: Transformation from the colonial to the postcolonial

The nature of agency in Applied Linguists is to a large extent related the coloniality of the English language mentioned earlier. The history of English language shows that its colonial coloration has four inter-related dimensions - scholastic, linguistic, cultural, and economic (see Kumaravadivelu, 2003 for details). The scholastic dimension of English relates to the ways in which western scholars have unscrupulously furthered their own vested interests by disseminating western knowledge and by denigrating local knowledge. The linguistic dimension pertains to the ways in which the knowledge and use of non-English languages were made inconsequential for applied linguistic inquiry. The cultural dimension emphasizes, rather unproblematically, the connection between of English language and Western cultural beliefs and practices.   These three dimensions are linked to a vitally important economic dimension that adds jobs and wealth to the economy of English speaking countries through a worldwide ELT industry. Collectively, then, these four colonial dimensions have served, and continue to serve vested interests in applied linguistics.

In this era of cultural globalization, the four colonial dimensions of the English language get accentuated because of its perceived threat to linguistic and cultural identities. There have been attempts by political leaders as well as professional organizations in various parts of the world to 'sanitize' the English language from its cultural and political baggage, and focus instead on its instrumental value for international and intercultural communication. For instance, a group of applied linguists in the Middle East have recently formed a professional organization to promote English language education in ways that best serve the sociopolitical, sociocultural and socioeconomic interests of the Islamic world. According to their website (www.tesolislamia.org), they wish to take a critical stance towards what they call 'mainstream' applied linguistics particularly in the area of English language education and research.

Although the field of Applied Linguistics as a whole has not shown any sensitivity to these global developments, there are signs that a segment of its membership has started taking note of them. The recent professional engagement presented in volumes such as the ones edited by Hall & Eggington (2000), Ricento (2002), Block & Cameron (2002), and Tollefson (2002) marks a welcome departure. Contributors to these volumes make useful suggestions to deal with the theoretical and pedagogic implications of globalization. However, there is also a parallel tendency to use globalization as a pretext to make language no more than "a vehicle for the affirmation of similar values and beliefs, and for the enactment by speakers of similar social identities and roles. Language becomes a global product available in different local flavours" (Cameron, 2002, p. 69-70).

One should be wary of the use of postmodern and postimperial vocabulary that masks the attempts to preserve the status quo. A striking example of that attempt comes from a recent proposal by Wright (2004) in her book, *Language Policy and Language Planning: From Nationalism to Globalisation.* In it, she has done a commendable job of providing a comprehensive, well-referenced narration of concepts such as identity politics, nationalism, and postnationalism – all in the context of language policy and planning. However, she concludes

that the only solution to the language problem faced by the globalized world is for the people all over the world to become bilingual. She recommends that people should learn "the group language" which is, in most cases, their native language, and "the language of wider diffusion" which is, of course, English. She asserts: "the group language provides for socialisation, rootedness, continuity and identity and the language of wider diffusion allows access to higher education, international networks, to information in the international arena, to social and geographical mobility" (p. 250). What she is shy of talking about is the distinct possibility that, for all practical purposes, her brand of bilingualism for the world would mean only one thing: native-speakers of English will have the luxury of remaining monolingual while all others will have to learn their language.

The issue is not whether non-English speakers around the world should learn English or not. The globality of the language, and the connectedness of world economy will ensure that English will continue to reign supreme. The issue that must be addressed by the applied linguistic community is one of difficulty and discrimination encountered by non-native speakers of English as well as the power and privilege enjoyed by native speakers of English. Wright seems to be unaware that, as Phillipson (2003, p. 140) observes in the context of language policy in the European Union, what is "at stake here is whether it is reasonable to expect that someone speaking a foreign language should use the language in exactly the same way as a native speaker. Anyone who functions regularly in a foreign language knows how extremely challenging it is to express oneself in the same degree of complexity, persuasiveness, and correctness as in one's mother tongue." Wondering whether monolinguals in Britain and the United States even see the problem where others are obliged to function in English, he states: "those of us who have gone through the demanding process of learning a second language well, and use one regularly, are likely to be in a better position to understand the predicament of users of English or French as a foreign language" (p. 141).

Wright does acknowledge the advantages enjoyed by native-speakers of English and the disadvantages faced by non-native professionals. In spite of apparent inequities, she goes on to predict an egalitarian outcome: "There may be all the advantages that accrue to those who possess the language of power and there may be a hierarchy that puts non-native speakers in a

weaker position, but, as the language is taken up in more and more sites, the advantages are spread more widely" (p. 250). Coming as it does in the penultimate page of the book, this unexplained and unsubstantiated claim leaves it to the reader to figure out how and when the advantages will spread. Or, whose advantage will spread. As the cultural critic Walter Mignolo (1998, p. 41) succinctly puts it, "the question is not so much the number of speakers as it is the hegemonic power of colonial languages in the domain of knowledge, intellectual production, and cultures of scholarship."

There is yet another point to be made. Any meaningful transformation from the colonial to the postcolonial necessarily demands new ways of applied linguistic inquiry. We need to question whether and to what extent the overwhelmingly positivist approach to applied linguistic inquiry confines the profession to a narrow perimeter. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) asserts in her classic book *Decolonizing Methodologies*, "research is not an innocent or distant academic exercise but an activity that has something at stake and that occurs in a set of political and social conditions" (p.5). She correctly argues that "most of the 'traditional' disciplines are grounded in cultural world views which are either antagonistic to other belief systems or have no methodology for dealing with other knowledge systems" (p. 65). Applied linguistic inquiry, with its intercultural, interlingual and interdisciplinary character, has to transcend its positivist approach and experiment with other possibilities. Anthropologists recognized long ago that their field, in the words of Clifford Geertz, is "not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning" (Geertz, 1973:5). Similarly, the aim of applied linguistic research that is informed by postmodern and postcolonial philosophies should not be searching for law but searching for meaning.

Conclusion

No academic discipline in social sciences and humanities remains unaffected by the processes and discourses of globalization. Arguing that Applied Linguistics cannot be isolated and insulated from such processes and discourses, I have attempted to critique the disciplinarity and directionality of the field, and have done so from the perspective of postmodernism and postcolonialism. I have emphasized that in order to effectively respond to emerging global

realities, and to benefit from the dominant discourses in related fields, Applied Linguistics has to undergo disciplinary transformation. Accordingly, I focused on three possibilities - transformation from the derivative to the autonomous, from the modern to the postmodern, and from the colonial to the postcolonial.

Clearly, any meaningful disciplinary transformation would require significant shifts in our philosophical and attitudinal orientation towards the profession as a whole. There are vested interests that cast a long hegemonic shadow over the discipline, and any attempt at disciplinary transformation will be resisted by such forces. In this context, what Noam Chomsky said about hegemony and survival in the international political arena has some relevance to Applied Linguistics as well: "One can discern two trajectories in current history: one aiming toward hegemony, acting rationally within a lunatic doctrinal framework as it threatens survival; the other dedicated to the belief that "another world is possible," … challenging the reigning ideological system and seeking to create constructive alternatives of thought, action, and institutions" (Chomsky, 2003, p. 236). In this era of globalization, constructing alternatives of thought, action and institutions in Applied Linguistics is not just an option but it is indeed an obligation.

<p style="text-align:center">*****</p>

<p style="text-align:center">References</p>

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