



# A Study of Applied Linguistics and Its Historical Implications: English Dominance

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**Abstract.** This study explores the anthropologic implication of linguistic system, scrutinizing its historical implications of English dominance under colonial influence. It aims to provide a discourse into time to unveil the impermeable layer of colonial hegemony and cultural oppression to open a discussion on the social and historic manifestation of linguistics. It adopts the “Pecking Order” philosophy within the ecology to create analogy of English hegemony, hence emphasis its persistence in language suppression and highlights a social trajectory.

**Keywords:** Applied linguistics, English Hegemony, Colonialism.

## 1 Introduction

At the arrival of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, English has become a truly cosmopolitan language. Over time, the English spoken in different countries and regions has developed its own distinctive characteristics, due to the influence of the region and its interaction with the local mother tongue. Linguistic is an epitome of its society, history, and culture. As argued by Italian philosopher and theorist Antonio Gramsci, his theories focus on the analysis of cultural hegemony, and the combination of culture and ideology is a fundamental feature of his theories. According to Gramsci, language is also culture and philosophy, which can influence people's values and worldviews, and he believes that language can also play a 'hegemonic' role. Language policy is the means by which governments control the linguistic life of society and solve its linguistic problems. It raises a question of to what extent does linguistic hegemony imposes challenges on the celebration of cultural identity.

authority and domination. According to modern Chinese dictionaries, hegemony can refer to a person or group of people who oppress others by force or power, or to the pursuit of a policy of power, or the exercise of forceful possession, as when a country is in a position to manipulate or control other countries. In his writings, Gramsci defines hegemony in terms of 'leadership'. According to Gramsci, there are two main ways in which the ruling class rules: firstly, by direct coercive control through power, i.e. hegemonic rule; and secondly, by leadership, i.e. moral and philosophical leadership achieved through the active consent of the major groups in society. In contrast to hegemony, leadership is not violent and coercive, but refers to a non-violent means of cultural and ideological control, which is achieved through the conscious and voluntary consent of the majority of society. Language and cultural hegemony Language is an integral part of culture, it is the vehicle of culture. In Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony, language plays a crucial role. When Italy was unified in 1861, the most important problem facing the country was the lack of an "official language". The Italian writer Manzoni suggested that the best solution would be to use the regional dialects of Tuscany as the official language of Italy. Gramsci, who was studying linguistics at the time at the University of Turin, was very interested in linguistic issues, but he did not agree with Manzoni's view. He and his teachers felt that Manzoni's approach was in fact an imposition of a language on the whole of Italy. Gramsci also mentioned in his later writings that a language cannot be separated from the culture, society, history it carries and the people who use it [1]. Thus Gramsci's initial exploration of the theory of cultural hegemony was in the field of linguistics, where he used cultural hegemony to describe how one people was forced to use another people's form of language, part of a language or an entire language system. Gramsci argued that the imposition of a language created by a small elite on other classes of people in society was a form of hegemony. This language represents only the experience and worldview of the elite and cannot be applied to other classes whose experience is far different from theirs. The purpose of this is to suppress the creativity, productivity, intelligence and even the identity of the ruled classes.

### **3 The 'pecking order' phenomenon in English language system.**

In general, one of the main determinants of the level of a language is the total number of native speakers of that language. By counting the total number of native speakers, we can divide the different languages of the world into three levels: acrolect, mesolect, and basilect. For example, the 350 million native speakers of English worldwide naturally place English in the upper tier, while languages such as Gaelic, a traditional Scottish language, are classified in the lower tier as they have no more than 80,000 speakers worldwide. This arrangement of strengths and weaknesses within the language system reflects the fact that language is not a simple, closed system; rather, it is a constantly changing system influenced by many external factors. In essence, this order of strength and weakness within the language system is similar to the order of strength and weakness of birds. In the bird world, the most aggressive peck at the second most aggressive,

the second most aggressive peck at the average aggressive, and so on, in what is known as a pecking order.

## 4 Linguistic implication of language dominance

The "pecking order" is not only used to describe language systems worldwide, but also to distinguish between different regional variants within the same language system. As a global language, English enjoys a high international status. However, within the English language system there is also a 'pecking order'. Geographical variants of English at different levels of development have undergone many ups and downs, and the resulting ups and downs.

In discussing the English language system, we will use the above model to develop three levels: Upper, Middle and Lower English, in order to distinguish them from traditional global, intercontinental (regional) and national (local) English. In this system, there is a 'Upper English', which has a prominent and prestigious position, and a 'Lower English', which has a humble position and is in danger of extinction, and a variety of 'Middle English', which exists in between. English Upper English is primarily the standard English that is generally accepted by the media, educational and scientific institutions worldwide. Middle English, on the other hand, is that which is dominant on a particular continent or region, for example, in North America, where American English (rather than Canadian English) is overwhelmingly dominant, or in Europe, where Irish English is a difficult counterweight to British English. Jamaican and Singaporean English, and even Scottish English, due to their limitations and uncertainties, are included in the lower tier of English.

In Africa, 'South African English' is in many ways closer to Standard English because of its close links with its place of origin; as a regional variant, 'African English' seems to have difficulty in competing with 'South African English', which is at a higher level. As a regional variant, it seems difficult to compete with the higher level of 'South African English'. In a broad sense, 'African English' refers to the English spoken in Africa. From the southern shores of the Mediterranean, all the way to the Cape of Good Hope, any English spoken in any country on the continent can be included in the category of 'African English'. The English spoken in different countries, whether Arabs in Egypt or Yoruba in Nigeria, within a country (e.g. South Africa), whether Xhosa, Zulu, Dutch- or Hindi-speaking South Africans, and long-settled British and their descendants in South Africa, should all be included in the category of 'African English'. The English they use should be included in the category of "African English". However, this is not the case. Linguists have found that there is a fundamental difference between the English spoken by South Africans of Eurasian descent and Egyptian Arabs and that spoken by black Africans; 'African English' is primarily the English spoken by the local population of Africa (living in the sub-Saharan desert). African English can be divided into three groups according to geographical location: West African English (including English spoken in countries such as Cameroon, Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Libya, which were once British colonies); East African English (including English spoken in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Somalia, Sudan, Rwanda and other countries);

and East African English (including English spoken in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Somalia, Sudan and other countries). English in South Africa (including English spoken in Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa) [2].

The majority of the native English speakers in South Africa are of British origin, as are the Anglo groups settled in Canada and Australia. There is a significant difference between the English spoken by black people living here, which is a form of 'African English', and the English spoken by South Africans of Eurasian descent, which is different from 'African English' despite its geographical location. It is customary for linguists to use the term 'South African English' to refer to this type of English in order to distinguish it from the former [3]. If we rank the languages in order of strength and weakness within the system, it is clear that 'South African English' comes before 'African English'. This 'inversion' is due to a number of factors, such as (i) economic homogeneity, (ii) uneven regional economic development, (iii) a bilingual colonial history (English and Dutch), and (iv) a multi-racial demographic composition. The complexity of the linguistic structure of South Africa is probably unique in the world among countries of predominantly European descent; it is similar to that of the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, while retaining its own distinctive characteristics. This is reflected in four main areas: (1) the long-standing adherence to strict linguistic standards and the dominance of native English speakers (similar to the UK); (2) the long-standing policy of racial segregation, which has led to a dichotomy between (white) English and (black) English (similar to the USA); (3) the bilingual colonial history, which has led to fierce competition between English and Dutch (similar to Canada); (4) the geographical characteristics of the southern hemisphere (similar to Australian and New Zealand English); and (5) the language structure, which is unique in the world. (iv) the regional character of the southern hemisphere (similar to Australian and New Zealand English). In contrast to 'South African English', 'African English' is essentially a Malay language, a creole with an English base. Its origins can be traced back to the seventeenth century. With the establishment of trading posts along the coast, the locals used a variety of pidgin (also known as Pidgin), interspersed with trade terms, to communicate with the Europeans who had travelled from afar, and this is where 'African English' originated. This statement corresponds to the development of English worldwide. It is also believed that 'African English' was formed as a result of the colonisation by the British and other European descendants over the last two centuries, mainly by black Africans who had some education. [4] For historical reasons, and because of its inherent complexity, the definition of 'African English' has led to much controversy, which is growing in intensity. However, it cannot be denied that English is the language of everyday use in at least eighteen countries in the sub-Saharan region [5] In addition to this, English has always been the first foreign language in countries and regions where Arabic and French are the mother tongue. The English spoken in these countries and regions has a distinctly 'African' character. If there were a single name to refer to these languages, 'African English' would be the preferred one. In South Africa, the English spoken by people of European descent living in the country is so different from 'African English' that we cannot simply place the English they speak under the umbrella of 'African English'. Sometimes we have no choice but to distinguish between 'white English' and 'black English'. However, the racial overtones

implied by this approach often put us in an awkward position. Linguists use the term 'South African English' to refer exclusively to the English spoken by people of European descent in this country. Within the English language system, 'South African English' is a strong language in relation to 'African English'.

## 5 Discussion

Since the 1970s, a number of language educators have put forward different models of language education to explain the new view of foreign language education, reflecting a shift from language to education. This shift has been recognised by most scholars, and the role of linguistics in language education has been questioned and subsequently criticised, as mentioned above. Since the 1960s, general linguistics has made important advances in the study of language models. The lively debate in general linguistics has been a major stimulus to the teaching of foreign languages. Firstly, the study of language models has had an important influence on the development of syllabuses and the adoption of pedagogies. Secondly, the study of language patterns in general linguistics can help teachers to describe and compare the foreign language their students are learning with their mother tongue, and thus to find a better way of learning a foreign language [6]. The findings of sociolinguistic research can also be useful in improving the teaching of foreign languages. In the past, the teaching of foreign languages has often been confined to the transmission of knowledge about the language system or has focused on the mechanical practice of the language, with the result that what students have learnt is often not used in the actual language environment. Sociolinguistics therefore has two propositions to help improve students' communicative competence: firstly, the specialisation of the curriculum. The second is the functionalisation of the syllabus, i.e. breaking away from traditional syllabuses and developing syllabuses based on conceptual and functional categoric. Psycholinguistics, for example, demonstrates the complex process of learning a foreign language and points out that the success or failure of foreign language teaching depends on a range of factors (teachers, students, training objectives, environment, teaching materials, pedagogy, etc.), making it clear that there is no single, unchanging pedagogy that can be adapted to all situations. Rather than pursuing or believing in one method, a teacher should be familiar with a variety of methods and decide to use different methods depending on the objectives and target group, the stage of teaching and the content. The positive effects of linguistics on language education can also be seen in a number of specific examples. Professor Xu Guozhang has introduced J.L. Austin's "On the Power of Words". This is also an example of the application of language theory. Another example is that students in some regions are affected by dialects and often do not distinguish between n and l. From the point of view of applied phonetics, this has little to do with phonetic symbols and is mainly changed by practice. Moreover, from the point of view of training communication skills, phoneticians believe that the teaching of the suprasegmental component should be strengthened. Davies argues that the relationship between linguistics and language teaching is one of source and target, and that a balance must be struck between the two. The emphasis on 'source' can lead applied linguists to be controlled by

linguistics, while the emphasis on 'target' can lead applied linguists to focus on the practical issues of the day and ignore the theoretical foundations of linguistics. Therefore, while emphasising the importance of educational practice in language education, we cannot deny the role of linguistic theory in guiding language education.

In addition, there are many scholars who question the status of applied linguistics as a discipline. Some scholars believe that applied linguistics is simply the application of linguistic theory and cannot solve practical problems. Others believe that applied linguistics does not have a 'heartland', but follows a similar path to educational linguistics. The author takes a different view on this. In his definition of applied linguistics, Gui Shi-chun (2010) points out that applied linguistics is not only applied theory, but can also have its own theory. In solving language-related problems, it is not only linguistic theories or descriptions that are applied. It emphasises that the real-world problems to be solved are not limited to language or to the application of linguistic research (since language problems in social life are never just about language, limiting them to specific applications of language implies that the research is flawed and limited). Whereas linguistics detaches language from its social context, applied linguistics is about reconnecting it, not only to the linguistic context in which it is produced, but also to the many social practices associated with understanding language. Widdowson has proposed a distinction between AL (Applied Linguistics) and LA (Linguistics Applied). In AL, the practitioner does not have to simply refer to what linguistics has to say, but can independently provide his or her own insights into general linguistic phenomena, and can have his or her own non-conformist theory and develop his or her own descriptive model; but LA does not have this option. In LA, language theory and language models are derived from linguistics, which is conformist. Applied linguistics is not, as some scholars claim, a conformist discipline. It is a relatively open discipline that draws on a variety of related disciplines. The history of applied linguistics also shows that since its inception as a discipline, it has focused on language education and was once synonymous with foreign language teaching. Gillian Brown agrees that there is a heartland for applied linguistics and that for most people, language teaching remains at its core. He emphasises that in many countries around the world, from Russia to China, India, Africa and South America, foreign language teachers and educational leaders still see applied linguistics as an adjunct to language teaching. The above analysis shows that although educational linguistics is a rapidly developing and relevant field focused on language education, we cannot deny the historical and logical relationship between educational linguistics and applied linguistics, nor can we deny the theoretical and practical implications of applied linguistics for language education. Despite being an interdisciplinary field, educational linguistics should be classified as applied linguistics. This is not only for historical reasons, but also to meet the needs of the present. At present, most researchers and practitioners in the field of educational linguistics come from departments of foreign languages or English and are inextricably linked to theoretical and applied linguistic research in terms of their knowledge and affiliation. This is why the development of educational linguistics can be facilitated by maintaining a positive interaction with linguistics and other branches of linguistics, while clarifying the characteristics of educational linguistics itself.

## 6 Conclusion

In conclusion, educational linguistics, in its rapid development, has sought to distinguish itself from applied linguistics in order to assert its disciplinary independence, and has attempted to construct its disciplinary identity through criticism of applied linguistics. The historical and logical links between applied linguistics and educational linguistics cannot be denied because of the expansion of the disciplinary field of applied linguistics and the uniqueness of educational linguistics as a speciality focused on language education, nor can the theoretical and practical implications of applied linguistics for language education be denied. In answering the embarking question of to what extent does linguistic hegemony imposes challenges on the celebration of cultural identity, the question becomes even more difficult to unveil in a colonial and dictatory societies. The complexity lays within its contradictory. There needs to be sense of awareness and respect for all the linguistic traditions and realities of the region. From the oldest, most traditional folk chants to the most popular languages on the Internet, from the lower to the middle to the upper classes, from a country to a region to the world, from the historical to the geographical to the socio-cultural perspective - all languages of humanity should have the same status. The languages of the world Secondly, in an era of increasing linguistic convergence, English can be an effective tool for communication between speakers of different languages, but it must not become an object of worship or a source of discrimination against fellow human beings. The differences between different regions and varieties of English cannot be ignored, but when it comes to the application, planning and education of English, it is important to maintain a common core of language and respect regional differences.

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