

CHAPTER TWO

ENGLISH LANGUAGE IDEOLOGY AND THE STANDARD ENGLISH DEBATE

2.1. PROLOGUE

We have room but for one language here and that is the English language, for we intend to see that the crucible turns our people out as Americans, of American nationality, and not as dwellers in a polyglot boarding house (Roosevelt: Cited by Milroy:1999:192).

Schools should be established which children should be required to attend; their barbarous dialects should be blotted out and the English language substituted... the object of greatest solicitude should be to break down prejudices of tribes among the Indians; to blot out the boundary lines which divide them into distinct nations, and fuse them into one homogenous mass. Uniformity of language will do this. Nothing else will...(Atkins: Cited by Milroy:1999:195).

I feel there is nothing wrong in speaking Creole as there is nothing wrong in speaking cockney, but I feel that when you go for an interview or you are speaking to someone important you should try to speak as close as possible to Standard English (Sebba:1997.14).

In tandem Roosevelt (cited by Milroy:1999) and Atkins (cited by Milroy:1999) project a whiff of both linguistic imperialism and the mobilisation of national identity. The significant mission intoned in the first quote is the creation of an American national identity independent from Britain. The term “crucible” extends this mission by creating an image of a deliberate and forceful action carried through the English language. There is no intention to replace it with another language. Instead the English language they have room for, is the one that asserts their American national identity. The false altruism showcased by Atkins in the second quote is couched in an intemperate tone which reflects nothing else but the promotion of racial domination through schools, particularly through the English language. English is used “...to blot out barbarous Indian dialects so as to break down the prejudice of tribe among them”. This statement is an indication of the lack of respect for the Indian languages and their social organisation. Their languages are regarded as

nothing else but “barbarous dialects” worthy only to be discarded and replaced by English. Their social organisation is described as a prejudiced tribal system. Ensnared in this kind of reasoning, Atkins attempts to provide some kind of justification for the imposition of the English language and culture on the indigenous Indian communities. He creates an impression that this imposition is somehow inevitable. The fact of the matter is that the English language is used as a vehicle of imperialism, oppression and racial discrimination.

Sebba (1997) in the third quote presents yet another significant dimension. His line of thought evinces elements of conflict between different varieties of the English language. The conflict is generated by a need to recognise one variety among the rest as the Standard English. Sebba’s (1997) apparent sympathetic stance towards historically disparaged English dialects is too emphatic as he sees nothing wrong in speaking either Creole or Cockney. The unequal power relation among the dialects becomes obvious as he somehow accepts that neither of the two dialects is appropriate in formal instances such as interviews.



Nothing is mentioned as the reason for their inappropriacy in formal context. It becomes common sense and is accepted as a norm. Impugned, this kind of taken-for-granted generates heated debates, some with waxing passion, that lead to a process of demystifying the question of standard and non-standard English. The crucial issues raised would point at the complex nature of the relationship among the different varieties, the linguistically manifested class struggle and how these relate to the continual challenges within English language standardisation.

The trilogy quoted above raises two points which are thematic to this chapter. Firstly, the English language has an imperial past which is punctuated by racial discrimination and oppression. Secondly, the question of standard English is beset with class struggle in the form of dialects vying

to be regarded as standard English. Confluent to the purpose of this study these two points place this chapter within the broader context of the debate around the politics of the English language and the conflictual ideologies behind the status of its standard version(s). This is important since it helps to clarify the stance of this study in relation to its main discussion on Critical Language Awareness.

2.2. STANDARD LANGUAGE

A perfunctory practice would be to adopt a standard English form in facilitating Critical Language Awareness, or any lesson in ESL or any class adopting English as a medium of instruction. It is done with some sort of zeal that using the non-standard form is regarded as an extreme perfidious act. However, the meaning of the phrase, Standard English, remains a mysterious conundrum. Prior to discussing standard English it is important to explore the generic concept of standard language. The earliest citation of the term standard in the twelfth century was associated with the Germanic word, stand -- be upright in one place (McArthur:1998a:102). The derivative military sense alludes to the English-Scottish war in the year 1138 at Cowton Moore in Yorkshire. Intrigued by the peculiar strategy, a cluster of flags on a ship's mast mounted on a carriage, which proved effective, the contemporary Richard of Hexham called this standard, because "it was there that valour took stand" (MacArthur:1998a:102). The encounter became known as the battle of standards. The battle flag of England was then called the King's standard. The term standard was later extended to less military matters such as weights and measures guaranteed by the monarch. This extension resulted in the attributive use of the term standard as in: standard pound, standard gauge, gold standards, and the likes. Its features of uprightness, firmness and centrality apply to later referents such as principle of honesty and decorum, and even level of excellence or quality. Standard was associated with language and literature in 1709. Talks of standard lyrics, standard poetry, and bringing the beautiful and comprehensive Greek language to a just standard, surfaced.

Suggestions that English should be “refined to a certain standard in an attempt to fix it forever were put forward by the likes of Swift” (McArthur:1998a:104). The association of standard and language is at present well established.

Standard Language can be defined as a codified variety of a language that serves the multiple and complex communicative needs of a speech community that either has achieved modernization or has the desire of achieving it (Garvin:1986:6). Furthermore, Standard Language cuts across differences providing:

a unified means of communication, and thus an institutionalised norm which can be used in mass media, in teaching the language to foreigners, and so on. Linguistic forms or dialects which do not conform to this norm are then referred to as substandard or (with less pejorative prefix) non-standards---though neither terms is intended to suggest that other dialects lack standard in any linguistic sense (Crystal:1985:286).

A standardized language passes through different stages namely: determination, codification, stabilisation and/or maintenance. On language determination a decision is taken concerning the selection of a particular language or variety for particular purposes in the society or the nation in question (Trudgill:1992:71). Codification comes into play after the selected language or variety acquires a publicly recognised and fixed form in the form of dictionaries, grammar books, and style and usage manuals. This means that the language or variety undergoes focusing and takes on a more fixed and stable form through prescriptive methods in Education (Bex and Watts:1999:115). The implication is that the rules of correctness of language which are derived from a standardisation process are codified in a more or less official manner in these documents to which the speech community has access (Garvin:1986:7). The codification process can be represented in a continuum of styles. On the one extreme end is the academy-governed style whilst on the other is the free-enterprise style. The essence of the academy-governed style is the existence and

adherence to one unquestionable source of authority by members of the entire speech community. Typical examples are the English Academy of Southern Africa and the *Academie Francaise*. However, the ministry of education can also exercise such kind of authority through agencies of its choice. Even though the term academy does not feature here one can still speak of academy-governed style of codification.

The free-enterprise style is marked by the lack of a central agency charged with the formulation and propagation of the rules of language correctness. The responsibility with regard to formulation and promulgation of rules is in the hands of private institutions such as publishing companies and editorial boards of various publications; the application of rules is done by a private and decentralised school system (Garvin:1986:7). Standardisation is a matter of degree. The standard variety of a given language can be more or less standardised. The measures that monitor standardization to an approximate extent proposed by the Prague school are: flexible stability and intellectualisation. The operational premise of the flexible stability is that standard language serves its purpose on condition that it is stabilised by appropriate codification processes and the norms established by this codification are sufficiently flexible so as to accommodate the modification required by the cultural change and developments that occur in the speech community (Love:1990:69). The linch-pin behind intellectualisation is the capacity of a language to develop on an increasingly more accurate and detailed means of expression, especially in the domain of modern life, that is to say in the spheres of science and technology, of government and politics, of higher education and contemporary culture. Oppugned to the structural properties of standardisation suggested by the Prague School is the more traditional measure which is based on purity and historical exactness (Sampson:1980:17). The implication of the first criterion is the exclusion of foreign or loaned words whilst the second one is preoccupied with the fact that linguistic correctness and good use should be defined pre-eminently on the basis of historical continuity (Garvin:1986:12).

The major drawback of the traditional criteria is that linguistic purity ignores the fact that language is in flux and the changes it undergoes are the result of its coexistence with other languages (Love:1990:71). The loan words are not necessarily detrimental but are an indication of a symbiotic relationship among world languages. After all, languages such as English are the products of words borrowing and loaning. Furthermore, the emphasis on purity does not apply in the contemporary world where multilingualism and multiculturalism are the order of the day. The advocates of this criteria overlook the basic sociolinguistic fact of language contact and its effects.

Intellectualisation and flexible stability are the widely preferred structural properties of language standardisation. The two structural properties cut across all aspects of language particularly in the areas of vocabulary and syntax. Even though vocabulary lends itself most easily to these measures it is not a sufficient index on its own. Hence syntax also serves as an index. The difficulty with syntax as index though, is that its elements are much more difficult to codify and more difficult to incorporate in precise measures. They, therefore, lend themselves more to intuitive evaluation (Love:1992:86). It should be noted that language standardization is created by conscious and deliberate planning. It is not raised via a natural course of linguistics evolution or suddenly springs into existence (Romaine:1994:84). It is developed and elaborated for use across a broad range of functions. The functions, meretricious or otherwise, engender corresponding attitudes. Garvin (1986:13) sums up these functions as follows:

1. to serve as a unifying bond in spite of dialectical and other differences;
2. to affirm the separate identity of a speech community in the face of other speech communities;
3. to confer a certain prestige to a speech community that possesses a standard language and to an individual that masters it;
4. to allow a speech community to use its own language in order to participate in the cultural, scientific and other development of the modern world;
5. to serve as a frame of reference primarily in the matters of language correctness, but also in other respects.

Corresponding to the unifying and separatist function is the attitude of language loyalty. A speech community with less intelligible dialects or languages might see the need to be loyal to a standard language because it offers a common vehicle of communication. The uniting force of the standard language has the potential of breeding a sense of loyalty within the speech community in question.

The separate function is linked to the political tendencies towards autonomy. A speech community could be loyal to its dialect or language in order to develop it to a status of being standard language with the hope that its members would be recognised as a distinguishable language community among the other existing communities (Garvin:1986:17). This might to some extent contribute to the independence of that speech community.

The prestige function corresponds with the attitude of pride. The possession of a standard variety might give a speech community the prestige of having a “real language” and not just a “dialect” -- a complete language in all respects (Garvin:1986:16). Such a variety engenders a sense of pride in a speech community the moment it is used in similar platforms accorded to other important languages used by powerful speech communities. The speech community in question would consider itself modern and civilised, and would be recognised as such. The participatory function corresponds to an attitude of desire to participate. It is believed that a speech community has the desire to participate in the modern life on various fields ranging from scientific, intellectual, political and other modern related field (Garvin:1986:17). By virtue of its highly intellectualised standard language is deemed to be capable of serving these communicative needs. The frame of reference function corresponds to an attitude of awareness of norm. Standard language is used as a frame of reference for correct language and other aspects. Perception of literacy and poetic creation are among the most important aspects. It is on the basis of an awareness to such aspects that a member of a speech community becomes conscious of the importance of having a guide that can be referred to.

2.3. DEMYSTIFYING STANDARDIZED LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

Standard English as a product of language standardisation, went through the processes mentioned above. However, the simple explanation of the process of language standardization should by no means dissimulate the struggle that takes place in and on the English language among different interest groups. There is a tendency to conceal this struggle in a move to make a standard form the most natural, and “in the analogous attempt to efface conflict in the metaphoric of inevitability” (Parakrama:1995:7). Arguments typified by the quote that follows are some of the frequent rallying points behind the mystification of the standard form as a simple natural phenomenon.

Once a variety gets a head start, it often builds up a momentum. The more important it gets, the more it is used; the more it is used, the more important it becomes. Such a variety may be spoken in the political or cultural center of a country and may spread into other regions. The dominance in France of [the] Parisian dialect, and in England (to a lesser extent) of the London dialect, is attributed to this cause (Parakrama:1995:7).

Foregrounded and given human quality the standard form “gets a head start” and “ builds up a momentum” and so to speak, makes itself important. It graduates from being a mere dialect, a defeated language, to be a fully-fledged language that has succeeded politically (Phillipson:1997:39). The image projected here is of an athletic track event in which varieties outdo themselves for the number one spot of being regarded as a standard English. In line with the spirit of fair-play language-users are presented as non-participants in this competition. This conceptualisation of language users as passive and powerless is misleading. Determination of a standard variety is done by language-users. Varieties do not have the capacity to operate on their own. Their manifestation is carried by the language-users.

The standard English variety is a historical process driven by social, political and commercial needs

and it is promoted in various ways, including the use of writing system, which is relatively easy to standardise, but absolute standardisation of a spoken language is never a reality (Milroy and Milroy:1992:23). The only fully standardised language is a dead language. It is therefore appropriate to speak more abstractly of standardisation as an ideology and standard language as an idea of the mind than a reality -- a set of abstract norms to which actual usage may conform to a greater or lesser extent (Milroy and Milroy:1992:23). It is an ideology that leads to the oversimplification of the nature of language.

The whole notion of standardisation is bound with the aim of functional efficiency of the language. The desideratum is that everyone should use and understand the language in the same way to minimize unintelligibility so as to maximize efficiency (Milroy and Milroy:1992:23). The notion of unintelligibility which is the driving force behind the prescriptivist argument for the perpetuation of the standard is, however, vitiated by an additional condition in that a standard language must not only be merely intelligible but pleasing to a greater number of the speakers of English; and not only an unobjectionable pronunciation but a good voice production (Parakrama:1995:11). The ultimate point is that the additional conditions set are the compelling indications that standard form is the main agent of inequality among varieties (Romaine:1994:84). Such considerations of superiority of inferiority, beauty and ugliness, and logicity and illogicality are however not tenable.

No language or dialect can be shown to be better or worse than another on linguistic grounds (Milroy and Milroy:1992:12). The number and complexity of grammatical rules in any language or dialect cannot easily be shown to be significantly more or less than in some other language or dialect, and the greater number of complexity of rules would not in any case prove superiority. It is

the common understanding of general linguists that to argue on those lines is a pointless exercise (Milroy and Milroy:1992:15). Common assertion associated with the standard and non-standard dichotomy is that non-standard is a corrupted version of the standard form. Concomitantly, the non-standard arises from the perversity of the speakers. It is perceived as an indication of the speaker's cognitive inefficiency. That means that the speakers cannot learn the correct form.

Notably, in a context such as Britain, the standard form coexists with other varieties and the fact that it is a standard form does not mean that it existed first. Other varieties did not originate from the standard form. In American and South African contexts, the standard English variety coexists(ed) with other English varieties and other varieties of other languages. Standard English varieties sustained because of the linguistic engineering in the form of language standardisation buttressed by the political, social and economic circumstances. To suggest that speakers cannot learn the correct form is beside the point. Language speakers might resist the standard form for political reasons. This has in fact nothing to do with their deficient intelligent capacity to learn. Moreover, their variety also provides sufficient challenges to learn.

2.4. STANDARD ENGLISH IS STILL *THE* QUESTION

The concept *standard English* highlights important points worthy to be considered. Although they express what standard English is not, these points throw some light in an attempt to clarify what this concept is about. It is clear from the above rubric that standard English is not a language in any meaningful sense of the term, but a variety of English among many (Trudgill:1999:118). It does not necessarily mean good English. It is a technical label used to identify a particular variety of English that has characteristic forms and functions (Perera:1994:81). Like any other variety, it can be used

either well or badly. It is normally used in writing and is associated with education in Anglophone countries of the world, and therefore spoken by those who are regarded as educated people. It is not a form that emanates from the “throne room of Buckingham Palace, or purlieu of Trafalgar Square, the heart of the now defunct British Empire” (Titlestad:1995:181).

Standard English is neither an accent nor a pronunciation. Received pronunciation (RP) in Britain, for instance, can never be regarded as a standard English. Instead, it is a standardised English accent adopted by high status members of British society and it is not tied to a particular geographical area (Trudgill:1999:18). It is not standard English itself. Standard English can be spoken either with a “broad” accent or RP depending on the background of the speakers. The poshness of the accent is never a yardstick to determine the standardness of English. Standard English is not a style. Conversely, style involves varieties of languages which can be arranged on a continuum ranging from formal to informal. All languages of the world reflect some degree of stylistic differentiation in this sense. Likewise, English has the fullest possible range of style running from the most to the least formal (Trudgill:1999:119). Standard English is not a register. The term register is used in a sense of a variety of language determined by topics, subject matter or activities (Trudgill:1999:120). This is a matter of lexis in English or technical vocabulary in other fields such as physical sciences and law. It is untenable to suggest that technical vocabulary is the only prerogative of standard varieties; or that it is possible for a non-standard speaker to acquire new technical vocabulary switching to the standard variety. The linguistic similarities between the standard and non-standard, however, enable inter-dialectal communication. One important point to make is that there is no connection between standard and the technical registers (Trudgill:1999:122).

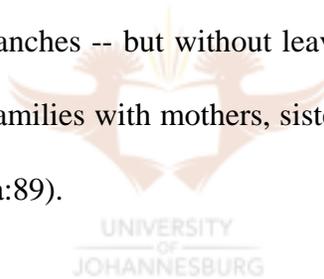
Lastly, standard English is not a set of prescriptive rules. Like all forms of languages it changes. Hence it is possible to find grammatical rules set by grammarians not necessarily tallying with the spoken or written standard form. In fact it is not a “puristic form that preserves grammatical shebbolths and niceties” (Titlestad:1993:193). Some form changes would otherwise be seen as an aberration by the linguistic purist pundits of standard English. The vocabulary of standard English is the shared vocabulary of all users of English worldwide (Titlestad:1995:181).

2.5. STANDARD ENGLISH AND WORLD ENGLISHES

The global expansion of English problematises the concept of Standard English and raises insightful issues which seriously impose strain on the standardised form. Among the issues raised is whether one or more standard form exists or is even desirable (McArthur:1998a:58). These issues become more problematic considering the emerging world Englishes as the result of diverse sociocultural contexts and diverse uses of the English language in a culturally distinct international context (Kachru:1990:5). The plurality of English in the global context generated the influx of models of English by linguists in an attempt to explain its distribution around the world. The operational principles of these models are based on two truisms:

The first truism is that the day-to-day language acts of English worldwide... are so vast and varied that no person, group, or system could ever catch and catalogue them all...The second truism is that since total knowledge of the subject is impossible our efforts to describe, prescribe for, and teach English-- however extensive, elegant, and influential they may be-- are incomplete, indirect, and in last analysis, fictive (McArthur:1998a:78).

The key point here is the general acknowledgement of the important contributions made by language scholars with regard to the different English language models presented. Accompanying this significant affirmation is a cautionary note, that however important these models are, they are exercises of imagination, not embodiments of God's truth. The models are: the Chronological model making (English through time); Biological model (Language as a living thing); and Geopolitical model (The social shape of language) (McArthur:1998a:80;89;93). The first model categorises English language according to its historical periods ranging from Anglo-Saxon, Middle English, Early Modern English, Modern English. Its sub-models are three, four and six phased chronological models of English plus a triangle model of English and Scot. The second model draws a biological analogy and consists of three sub-models: The first sub-model presents language as plants with roots, stems, and branches -- but without leaves, blossoms or fruits. The second presents language as members of families with mothers, sisters, and daughters -- but no fathers, brothers and sons (McArthur:1998a:89).



Although insightful, the first two models simplistically leave out important issues pertaining to this study. The first model chronicles the periodization of English language within a monolithic British context. It is an English nativist mono-model position that appears to be offering little to a contemporary study of English language in diaspora and contentious issues of standard English within a multilingual global context (Kachru:1990:7). The linear approach adopted in the labelling of English according to whether it is Anglo-Saxon, middle English or modern English is devoid of any intention to recognise the multilingual and multicultural existence of English in the contemporary world. The same can be said of the second model. Besides this, the second model is too general an approach in that it covers roots and families of all Indo-European languages. It is too

cumbersome to adopt as it lacks a sharp focus in relation to this study. It does not provide a platform to discuss the problematic concern of Applied Linguistics such as English language standardisation and its effect on English language teaching in both the British and global context. The third model is particularly the main focus of this study. It consists of four types of models:

6. Stevens' map-and-branch model;
7. McArthur's circle of World English;
8. Kachru's three concentric circles of English;
9. and Gollach's circle of international English (McArthur:1998a:95-101).

The map-and-branch model divides English into two main branches British and American.



Diagram 2.1. Stevens' Map-and-Branch Mode (McArthur:1998a:97)

These branches are equal in both pecking order. The British English branch has sub-branches in Africa, the Caribbean, South Asia, and Australasia. The American English branches on the other hand, has sub-branches in the Carribbean Island and Asian contexts. Notably, the tree diagram

imposed on the map indicates the influence of the Indo-European branching model. The taxonomy of this model can be traced to Darwin whilst its cartography signifies the contemporary global context (McArthur:1998a:95). A circle of World Englishes model is portrayed as a wheel with a hub, spokes and arm.



Diagram 2.2. *McArthur's Circle of World English Model* (McArthur:1998a:95)

The hub refers to the Standard World English which is surrounded by a band of regional varieties,

such as the standard and other forms of African English, American English, Canadian English, and Irish English. Beyond these and linked to them by spokes marking off eight regions of the world, is a crowded fringe of sub-varieties such as Aboriginal English, Black English Vernacular, Gullah, Jamaican National Language, Krio, Singapore English and Ulster Scots (McArthur:1998a:95).The converging point of all world Englishes is the world standard English. The central position of the world standard English in relation to the eight regional varieties and multitudes of their sub-varieties conjures two possible dimensions.

The first dimension sees the world standard English as the nucleus of the world Englishes -- a nucleus from which all other forms of English originate. It, in a way, dispenses all other forms according to geopolitical positions but still serves as an anchor. Each form deviates slightly or drastically from the nucleus. The further a variety is from the nucleus the more the differences. Should the nucleus be removed from the central position a possible disintegration of the English language is envisaged. The impression created by this position is that the central position held by the world standard English is a natural consequence. The converse, however, is true. World standard English is an artificial construct of convenience -- a point elaborated by the second dimension.

The second dimension views the world standard English as a product of an attempt to maintain intelligibility among the ever growing divergent world Englishes. The closer it pulls a variety towards it, the less the difference, and the more mutually intelligible the two forms become. Common to the two positions is the fact that world standard English is not tied to a particular region or geographical area.

Kachru's

three concentric circles of the English model consists of a set of three contiguous ovals rising one above the other out of smaller unlabelled ovals (McArthur:1998a:97). The first and the lowest labelled oval is the Inner Circle. Constituents of this oval are USA, UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The second and the larger oval labelled the Outer Circle is constituted by post-colonial English using countries whilst the third and the largest oval labelled the Expanding Circle holds the rest of the world. The three Circles of English have resulted in several English “languages” (Kachru:1990:5).



Diagram 2.3. Kachru's Three Concentric Circles of English Model (Kachru:1990:4)

Emanating from these circles are three variant models namely English as a Native Language (ENL), English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The constituents of the Inner Circle are countries which use ENL. Through the standard form these ENL countries provide a normative variety which has to be emulated by the rest of the world. The ESL countries in the Outer Circle serves as the norm developing agencies of the variety of the ENL countries (McArthur:1998a:59). Two major positions operate in this circle: The nativistic mono-model and the functional poly-model (Kachru:1990:7). The first position becomes operational if for instance, ENL habits are learnt and taught exclusively. The emphatic point is, moreover, intolerance to any deviant from the ENL behaviours. The second position relates the formal and functional characteristics of English in this circle to appropriate sociolinguistic and interactional context -- considering the difference between the first and the second language context (Kachru:1990:7). The English variety in the Expanding Circle, EFL, depends entirely on the ENL. This Circle is the realm of the nativist mono-model position. Evident here is the emergence of the *us* and the *them* dichotomy. The Inner Circle epitomises the former whilst the Outer and Expanding Circle epitomise the latter. The sociolinguistic and attitudinal implication of this dichotomy is that the power to define the other group is with the *us* and not with *them*. This could lead to a seriously divisive distinction made between inclusive and exclusive members of English using speech fellowship (Kachru:1990:8).

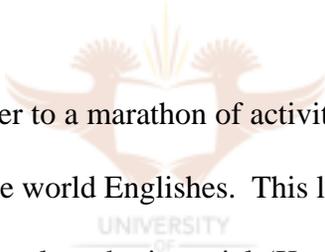
It should be mentioned that Kachru's model suggests that, notwithstanding the need and the existence for a norm, any international standard forms or standards are likely to be heterogenous

(McArthur:1998:59). The noticeable confusion caused by the Kachru's concentric circle is the allocation of countries according to the circles, particularly in the case of Zimbabwe. As to how Kachru could see this country as part of the Expanding Circle, remains a mystery. Zimbabwe is a former British protectorate hence an Anglophones African state. English is adopted as an official language together with Shona and Ndebele. However, its role in international communication within this country is more profound than the two indigenous languages because it is more a language of commerce, government, private sector and education. It serves as a second language rather than as a foreign language. The same scenario applies to the likes of Nigeria, Tanzania and India which are surprisingly placed in a different circle to Zimbabwe.

Gorlach's circle model of International English is in the mould of McArthur's model. It indicates the status of varieties of English and related languages world-wide (McArthur:1998a:98). Unlike McArthur's, the hub is constituted by International English which is surrounded by a range of regional standards. These in turn are enclosed by subregional semi-standards. Beyond lie such forms as Aboriginal English, Black English Vernacular and Yorkshire.

Diagram 2.4. Gortac's model of Circle of International English Model (McArthur:1998a:101)

The eight regions of the world are marked off by spokes, and beyond the rim are Pidgins, Creoles, mixes and 'related languages', such as Anglo-Romani, Krio, Saramaccan, Scot, and Tok Pisin (McArthur:1998a:98). Within Gortac's circle are Englishes whilst beyond it are distinct yet related languages whose Englishness is rejected.



The geopolitical models are a pointer to a marathon of activities behind the spread of the English language and the development of the world Englishes. This linguistic spread is the result of three processes: Demographic, econ-cultural or the imperial (Kachru:1990:7). Demographically, the English language spreads along with the population. Econ-culturally, the English language spreads without a serious population spread, but essentially for scientific, technological and cultural information. The imperial spread of the English language is fuelled by political domination. Concomitant to the demographic spread are several varieties of English in the Inner Circle. As for the econ-cultural and imperial, the aftermath of language spread is the endocentric varieties in Africa, Asia and Phillipines (Kachru:1990:8).

The next course of action is to examine the language ideology as exemplified in the United Kingdom, United States and South Africa so as to establish the present position of language

education policy and practice with regards to English and its standard form.

2.6. LANGUAGE IDEOLOGY

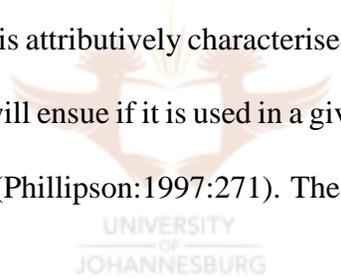
The decision regarding the form of English to be taught at schools in a country is a complex matter that has its core foundation tied to ideology. The ideology is mirrored and shaped by the historical course of events and then manifested linguistically to realize some kind of a gain -- educational, political, socio-cultural or economical. The question of language planning could either be planning inequality, or establishing a feasible and universally accepted language policy that both enhances common communication in a society and mutual respect among different languages. The traditional definition of language planning or policy expresses “an implicit belief in essentially ahistorical, unconstrained action and choices” (Tollefson:1994:16). However, language policy and planning place language within social structure so much so that it determines individuals’ access to political power and economic resources. Tollefson elaborates:

This conception of language policy implies that there is a dynamic relationship between social relations and language. Hierarchical social systems are associated with exploitative language policy, that is, policy which gives advantage to groups speaking a particular language [or variety]. Exploitative policies are evident in educational systems that impose disadvantages on minority students, and in restrictions on bilingualism among both subordinate and dominant populations (1994:17).

Alluring as it sounds, the assumption that a particular section of a society should learn a particular language or a particular variety, at the expense of their own, in order to be economically and socially successful, could be an ideological ploy foregrounded to sustain social inequality. It is, however, presented as a common-sense assumption. Ideology creates and situates these assumptions

within the institution of the society, stall privilege and grant them legitimacy as a natural condition (Fairclough:1989:77). Ideology here is so effective because its operations are less visible. The effectiveness of the invisibility is manifested by presenting ideology as an implicit element and a background assumption which leads society to interpret it as an unequivocal truth.

Language education is exceedingly ideological with the spread of English for specific purposes, curricula and methods that view English as a practical skill, a tool for education and employment (Fairclough:1989:78). The argument that learning English is not related to power, or that it helps people gain power is at the centre of the ideology of language education. The oft academically, professionally and politically articulated polemics advanced to promote English, are couched within the theory of power. Often English is attributively characterised by: The resources that follow with the language; the promise of what will ensue if it is used in a given country, in an education system, or in personal or professional life (Phillipson:1997:271). These arguments can be classified into three sets relating to:



Capacity: English intrinsic argument, what English is; Resources: English-extrinsic arguments, what English has; [and] Uses: English-functional arguments, what English does (Phillipson:1997:271).

Corresponding to the three sets are three types of powers associated with English. Adding Gulting's (1980:15) three types of power to the above equation transforms the sets to:

| | | | |
|---------------|-------------|------------|-------------------|
| Innate | Being-power | English is | English-intrinsic |
| Power | | | |

| | | | |
|-------------------------|----------------|--------------|-------------------|
| Resource Power | Having-power | English has | English-extrinsic |
| Structural Power | Position-power | English does | English-function |

Table 2.1. *The Triune Power of English* (Adapted from Phillipson:1997:273)

The innate power originates from phenomenal traits which endorse the potency of the sender to influence many receivers (Phillipson:1997:273). The advocacy of the English language accredits it with an innate power that is sort of God-given. The near-supernatural traits of English enable it to achieve what other languages can never accomplish. It is seen as a vehicle of the entire development of human tradition past, present and future (Richards:1961:274). Pre-eminent linguists, business executives, journalists and ordinary people are effusive when describing the innate quality of what English is:

We need to break out. We need to use English for a vehicle of communication and as an instrument of liberation. It frees one from the confinement of thinking like a Zulu or Mosotho. [It gets to point without being circumlocutious]. I think more clearly when I use English, and I reach more people with it (Motau: Cited by Mathiane: 1989:8-9).

...since no cultural requirements are tied to the learning of English, you can learn it without having to subscribe to another sets of value... tied to no particular social, political, economic, or religious system, nor to specific racial or cultural group, English belongs to everyone or to no one, or it at least is quite often regarded as having this property (Wardhaugh:1977:15).

I have never doubted the existence of a universal interest in the English language... The language seems to provide a talking point to everyone (Crystal:1984:25).

Summed up, the English-intrinsic arguments project English as a God-given, civilizing, noble, vehicle of the entire development, not ethnic or ideological, the world's first truly global language of universal interest (Phillipson:1997:276). The impression created is that one might feel that one is really deprived to a point of extinction if one does not know English. Towering this miraculous power of the English language is the basic linguistic fact which truncates the essence of the English-intrinsic argument: No language is intrinsically superior or inferior to the other. All languages have the potential of fulfilling any function.

The English-extrinsic arguments hop on the immaterial and material resources English has. The former encompasses the knowledge, skills and know-how. The latter includes teachers, teacher trainers, teaching materials, literature, dictionaries, multinational publishers, computers and software, BBC English Radio and TV, and low-price book schemes (Phillipson:1997:277). The central theme of the English extrinsic argument is pointing at the inadequacy of other languages. The rationalisation is that since other languages lack these resources, a developed language in the form of English is the ultimate alternative for use in giving modern technological education. Its highly developed technical and scientific terminologies and concepts are a cut above the rest. The other point advanced against other languages is that the cost of producing educational material in indigenous languages is excessive in both money and human effort (Ansre:1979:11). It is an indubitable fact that English has a lot of resources bequeathed by its imperial history. The strength of the organizational pattern of English has spawned English-extrinsic resources just as the English-extrinsic resources have consolidated the strength of the organization pattern of English (Phillipson:1997:279).

The cost factor attributed to the indigenous language and the continued allocation of massive resources to English serve a linguistic purpose of maintaining the inequality between English and the dominated languages. One point might be that the English-extrinsic resources might be irrelevant to the peripheral education system which is characteristically within a multilingual context. Advancing the English-functional arguments, the proponents of English validate the position of English as the international language *par excellence*. With its resources, English is needed in the underdeveloped countries to give access to many important aspects such as modernisation, development, civilisation, the argument goes. This line of thought is consonant to the Makerere Report's stance which purports that the only insightful thing to do is:

to improve and extend the use of English as a gateway to better communication, better education, and so a higher standard of living and better understanding (Makerere Report:1961:47).

In its input to the Namibia language policy the UNIN adds to this rationalisation:

In all branches of science and technology, including medicine, English is paramount as an international medium for offering direct access to workers and specialists in these areas (1981:40).

As for the Zambian:

[they] have found it necessary in [their country] to adopt English as an official language in order to facilitate the administration of the country and the transfer of personnel from one language zone to another (Mundia:1983:6-7).

Discernable from these quotes is the explicit glorification of English at the expense of the indigenous language. Everything positive is attributed to English whilst the less positive ones are accorded to

these languages. Phillipson (1997:283) highlights the way English and other languages are labelled in table 3.2. below.

| Glorifying English | Devaluing other Languages |
|---|--|
| World language International language Language of wider Communication Auxiliary language Link language Window onto the world Neutral language Cosmopolitan language | Localized language (Intra) national language Language of narrower Communication Unhelpful language Confining language Closed language Biased language Language of the hearth |

Table 2.2. Languages Labels (Adapted from Phillipson:1997:283).

Kachru (1986:136) brings together a number of labels and classified them as positive and negative.

This could be observed in table 3.3 below.

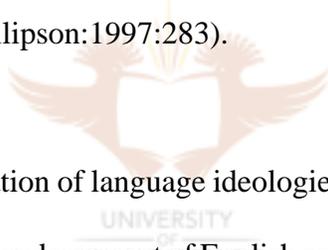


| Positive | Negative |
|--|--|
| National identity Literary renaissance Cultural mirror (for native culture) Modernization Liberalism Universalism Technology Science Mobility Access code | Anti-nationalism Anti-native culture Materialism Rootlessness Ethnocentricism Permissiveness Divisiveness Alienation Immobility Inaccessible code |

Table 2.3. Classification of Languages (Adapted from Kachru:1986:136)

The lugubrious portrayal of the indigenous languages is not as serious as the anomaly associated

with the glorification of English. The all encompassing global position of English as a language of wider communication falls short considering that one gets further with a south Slavic language like Serbocroatian in Central Asia, or with Finnish in northern Norway, than with English (Phillipson:1997:281). Furthermore, calling English a world language erroneously presupposes that English is globally appropriate. The international or global links are immediate benefits of the elites than of primary and secondary school learners. The point on national unity is not tenable enough. As much as promulgating one official language is unable to cancel a multilingual reality, no language can ever claim to promise national unity. The biases of the English-functional arguments warrant a critical examination wherever they are used. Their deep-seated abstruseness and the covert or even overt stigmatisation of other languages are strong ammunition used to validate English linguistic imperialism (Phillipson:1997:283).



Let us further examine the ramification of language ideologies latent in the political and historical developments which influenced the endorsement of English as *lingua franca*. Particular reference is made on the two major Inner circle superpowers, Britain and America, and South Africa, the country in the Outer circle.

2.6.1. THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE IDEOLOGY IN BRITAIN

The British sociolinguistic context has always been monolingual. The language debate is about the teaching of English as a mother tongue to those who already speak a standard or a non-standard variety of the language. The language attitudes derived from standard ideology concern matters of class consciousness and social class discrimination (Milroy:1999:171). The class conflict became conspicuously severe and ferocious at the beginning of the 20th century, so much so that industrial

relations were in effect running a class war (Crowley:1999:209-15). The emerging English proletariat with its unionism was seen as a menace to the future whose resolve is nothing else but to destabilise social order. With this development came a socially stratified English society along distinguishable dialects.

The standard English dialect with its associative RP accent occupied a prestigious position, and had to be emulated by the rest of the society. The rural dialects were often seen as “pure” or “genuine” and, insofar as they were unaffected by a prescriptive phenomenon, were thought to offer a clearer view of the universal view of language (Milroy:1999:189). But they were not in the same league as the standard form. The urban dialects were described in terms ranging from attractive to unattractive. Glasgow, Birmingham, Liverpool (Scouse) and London (Cockney) dialects are viewed as unattractive, both urban and rural. Yorkshire dialects receive positive evaluation and are viewed as trustworthy (Milroy:1999:189). Resistance to the standard English was met with intemperate attitudes. The typical attitude was expressed by one Rolph in 1901:

the period voice of the East Cockney, ugly and abrasive. Having heard her speak, and registered to my secret rage that she should have been saddled for life with this ugliest of all versions of my native tongue, I immediately lost interest in her as a girl, and now recall her merely as a method of producing unpleasant sound noises (Cited by Honey:1989:35).

Such visceral reactions were reserved for a language variety that signify symbolised fear and stigmatised social classes. Fear for both the defilement of a prestigious variety and the disruption of the existing social order are rolled into one. It is within this single union that the British language ideology resides. Language rights of an ethnic minority group never emerge as a major public issue. The London-Jamaican and Indian-accented varieties, for instance, are low in the ranking

order but do not occupy the most disparaged position (Milroy:1999:189). This is an interesting point which shows that class, rather than race, has been priority number one for the British. It is possible that the British's rather lax approach to the race issues has been a strategy to steam up its anti-American sentiments. Playing down the race issue gave them a false sense of credibility in their quest to critique the American democratic ideals as a mere hypocrisy. Frequently questions and statements made in Britain address their concern about the racial high-ended attitude of the Americans. How is it that the loudest yelps for liberty are heard among the drivers of Negroes, so goes the argument (cited by Hibbert:1990:117).

The other fact that might have given the British a strong argument against the American's racial practice, is their tolerance to allow Afro-British immigrants to go through their high standard education system which was in fact not structured along racial lines. Their ultimate pride could have been the Afro-British intellectuals produced by their education. The likes of Francis Barber, Julius Soubise and the politician-cum-academic Olaudah Equino had their education financed by their master (Milroy:1999:198). These were an educated and articulate group of men who used their position to crusade against slavery and most of their works had been best-sellers published extensively and used by abolitionists such as Thomas Digges (Milroy:1999:199). Ironically, their campaigns against slavery are rooted within the dictum: the power of whites over blacks was the power of the English language (Milroy:1999:198). Insofar the dictum proposes, the only way to wrestle power from the whites is to master the English language. Underlying this dictum emerges the English-functional argument discussed earlier. The benevolence presented by the British is here exposed as equally hypocritical as the Americans. The Afro-British intellectuals mentioned were a few free blacks among throngs of black slaves in Britain. Perhaps, to the British, this was something

to write home about because at least there were freed blacks slaves. Equino exhibits tactics used to refuse re-enslavement:

“Then” said he, “you are now a slave”. I told him my master could not sell me... and by law of the land no man has the right to sell me”. And I added, that I had heard a lawyer and others at different times tell my master so... Upon this Captain Doran said I talked too much English.... On this they made up to me, and were about to handle me; but I told them to be still and keep off; for I had seen those kind of tricks played upon blacks and they must not think to serve me so. At this they paused a little, and the one said to the other– it will not do; the other answered that I talked too good English (Cited by Edwards:1989:58-59 and117).

It is interesting to see how language is used to save one’s skin. Equino could have been re-enslaved had he not “talked too much of English”. One other important thing, though, is that there was a single codified standard English for education, commerce and for use in other formal contexts. The eloquence of Equino’s writing suggests an education carried through a standard English. It could safely be concluded that the language conflict is a clash of interests among language users of different dialects of basically the same language. Notwithstanding the tensions generated by the choice and the continued use of standard English, this variety remains the language of official communication, written and spoken, in Britain and beyond.

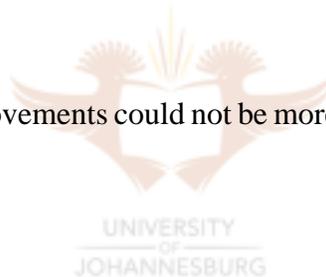
2.6.2. THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE IDEOLOGY IN THE US

The United States’ historical roots of an ideology focus on mono-lingualism and assimilation belies its multicultural and multilingual reality. These run as deep as the corresponding British focus on class and rank (Milroy:1999:193). Unlike the British who were threatened by the proletariat

speaking varieties of English rooted in historically established dialects, the American feared that their language was going to be deluged by immigrants who speak languages other than English. Out of this fear, emerged numerous measures designed to protect the English language in the United States. Chief among those were the English Language Amendment Act (ALA) and the English Only Movements. Their sentiments do not in any way escape notice. The complaint levelled against the German Pennsylvanian reads:

...they come in droves... few of their children learn English... those who come hither are generally the most ignorant and stupid sort of their own nation...They will soon outnumber us, that all the advantage we have will not, in My Opinion, be able to preserve our language (Frankling:1992:19).

The mission of the English Only movements could not be more succinctly captured in the following quote:



While the English Only rhetoric is often cloaked in the rationality of language unification, it has frequently been associated either with crackpot linguistic schemes or xenophobia or sometimes both. For many proponents its real purpose has been to oppose the naturalisation of non-English speakers, whether French, Spanish, German Scandinavian, Central European, African or Asian (Barron:1992:30).

All these anti-pluralistic antics were carried against a strong multilingual and bilingual background. This denial of a fact of life could not sustain the pressure emanating from those who affirm the multilingual reality of the United States. In fact, there are compelling reasons behind this affirmation:

First there are two colonial languages other than English in the United States: Spanish has been spoken in the South West and Florida for more than 400 years; French was spoken in the eastern areas formerly held and populated by the French and still is spoken in parts of the North East(particularly Maine) and the South. Second, a large number of indigenous American languages were spoken. Finally the large German population of the United States has a particularly long history of effective mother-tongue maintenance (Milroy:1999:193).

Not everyone in the United States supported this anti-multilingual stance. Intrigued and proud of the American achievements, the likes of John Adam wanted an Academy to be established in order to correct, improve and fix the English language, so that the final product should be uniquely American English that would strike all the world and Great Britain with envy (Heath:1992:27). Some sensed that such a practice promotes elitism associated with the European monarchies and aristocracy. Filled with a strong desire to create a state free of these Europeans influences, most people never supported the establishment of an Academy. Ideals of a classless form of English were promoted and resulted in the formation of what was called the “Federal English” (Milroy:1999:195).

There is a great difference between the standard languages in a colonial context and standard languages in Europe. The crucial difference is that the European context is succoured by the “aristocratic models, and [the] deeply entrenched social class differences favour that development of institutionally prescribed standards and the emergence of class rather than ethnicity as the chief basis

of social and political cleavage” (Milroy:1999:202). The choice of a neutral English in the United States is as complex as it is in Britain, though. Linguists never reach an agreement on this matter. A common point among linguists is that a class accent similar to the British RP does not exist. Mostly the Network American and the famous Brahmin of Boston accent are perceived as the American equivalent to the RP. However, the two varieties differ with RP in that they are chiefly unmarked mainstream accent from which localised features have been expunged, and in that they lack institutional support and nationwide geographical distribution enjoyed by the British RP (Milroy:1999:202). The widely held perception, as indicated by Preston’s research, is that the levelled and neutral variety is in the Northern Midwest but there is little agreement on the locus of the most correct variety (1996:25). Southerners regard the Brahman as the most correct whilst the Michigan speakers identify their own as the most correct. The varieties spoken in the south of the United States and New York City are viewed as the least correct forms. The socio-historical facts in support of such beliefs are culture specific and such beliefs could be derived from the Civil War conflict between an urban, progressive north and a rural conservative, slave-owning south (Milroy:1999:203). There is a great possibility that the low rating of the New York dialect emanates from the fact that the dialect is spoken by the poorest community who immigrated to the city in large numbers. The variety spoken by the African community in the United States, namely Ebonics or African American Vernacular English (AAVE), was particularly rated low. The reference towards this variety exhibits racist attitudes as in:

As for “I be”, “you be”, etc. which should give us all the heebie-jeebie, these may indeed be comprehensible, but they go against all accepted classical and modern grammar and are the products not of a language with roots in history but of ignorance of how language works (Pinker:1994:385).

Such kind of negative remarks would more likely be levelled against the Cockney and Milton

Keynes in Britain than they would against British Black English. Notably, this tendency highlights the striking differences between the United States and Britain on the polemics behind the choice of the correct and the standard varieties. The urban dialects of the industrial cities are not stigmatised as the speech of the south, which is linked to both historic and divisive tension, and with rural poverty (Milroy:1999:203). The British attitudes to the urban industrial accents, on the other hand, are adverse and connected to class consciousness.

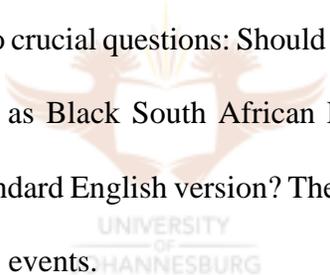
2.6.3. THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE IDEOLOGY IN THE RSA

Unlike Britain, but similar to the United States, the South African socio-linguistics context is multilingual and multicultural. The society is polyglottic in that most members are often able to converse in more than one language (Beukes:1991:90). The context, however, has long been dominated by a language policy that elevated English and Afrikaans as the chief languages of officialdom. The nine indigenous languages had ancillary status in that their roles were restricted to the “homelands”-- the ethnic-based pseudo government created by the apartheid nationalist government for the African communities in South Africa. Even in these designated dominions, English and Afrikaans were seen as the ultimate languages of officialdom. The two languages served as mediums of instruction in African schools from standard three and beyond.

Associating Afrikaans with oppression, students revolted calling for the abolishment of this language as a medium of instruction. Preference to English rather than Afrikaans was more of an attitudinal matter than a linguistic fact. The negative attitude was precipitated by the oppressive practices of the Afrikaner regime. Hence anything associated with the regime including language was branded

negative. A purely linguistic fact is that any language, including Afrikaans, has the potential to serve any role assigned. Be that as it may, English ultimately became the most preferred medium of instruction hitherto.

The English-intrinsic, English-extrinsic and English-functional arguments strengthened its choice as a language of official and formal context. The model of standard English adopted is the British standard version. Some attempts to keep the South African standard English closer to British standard version could not match the massive influence of the other existing South African languages. Ultimately, a number of English varieties with strong influence of these languages developed. Albeit not regarded as official means in formal contexts, the consistent everyday social function of these varieties sparks two crucial questions: Should these varieties be developed into one variety which could be referred to as Black South African English; and should this variety be officialised as the South African standard English version? The emergence of different Englishes in South Africa is tied to the historical events.

The logo of the University of Johannesburg is centered in the background of the text. It features a stylized orange and yellow emblem above the text 'UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG'.

Briefly, as early as 1820 the dominion of the British empire was asserted by the monolingual language policy in which English was the sole official language (Mphahlele:1984:103). Buttressed by agencies such as the English Academy, the 1820 Foundation and the South Africa Council of English Education, English engraved its official status to a point of invincibility. The majority of the early Christian missionary teachers who worked among the indigenous people were English-speaking hence their medium of instruction, evangelicalization and westernization had to be English (Mawasha:1986:16). The main target was to force all the schools, irrespective of race to adopt English as the language of instruction.

However, within the English community numerous varieties existed originating from the mother country, Britain, and this replicated the British linguistic class system in South Africa. The Yorkshire and Lancaster varieties were, for instance, strongly represented in Natal and the settlement in this area was largely made up of middle or higher social class (Lanham:1996:21). The Natalians succeeded in creating the Victorian England in the alien soil. The Cape settlers also attempted to create the Victorian England with minimal success, though. Natal English was regarded as the “purest” whilst the Cape Colony was stigmatised as the “aberration that has to be avoided by Africa’s daughter” (Lanham:1996:21). A significant representation of Standard Southern British was observable in both Cape Town and Natal. These centres served as anchors that maintained the social meaning and form of Standard English as it spread throughout South Africa. The Indian community’s arrival in 1860 gave birth to an Indian English variety. The coloured community of the Cape generated their own English variety. Lanham sums this up:



The coloured community (of ethnically mixed ancestry) were traditionally part of the Dutch speech community which antedates the British settlement in the Cape. Church Schools, mainly Anglican, provided a small number with a tradition of multilingualism, had probably developed some precursors to what is easily recognised today as coloured English (1996:22).

A variety of English with a strong Afrikaans accent, Afrikaner-English, became more visible after Afrikaans lost its status to English as a popular language of instruction and officialdom. This variety could be seen as a last stroke used by its speakers, to defy the dominance of English, consciously or otherwise. The alternative, somewhat less controversial, view is that this Afrikaans-English is the product of the natural processes of the coexistence of the two languages-- contact, borrowing and

loaning. A brief reference to the development of Afrikaans illuminates some important points here. In the 19th century Afrikaans was set up in opposition to English. Influenced by their dire need to advance their nationalism, the militant Afrikaner rallied themselves around the concept of *taalstryd* (language struggle) (Lanham:1996:25).

The *Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurverenigings* became a significant agency that promoted Afrikaans. The Afrikaner Christian National Education ensured that Afrikaner ideological supremacy was enhanced further (Mphahlele:1984:102). Afrikaans became the language of instruction at both school and tertiary levels, thus reducing English to the position of a “foreign language” (Mphahlele:1984:102). This ideology was the brain child of the Institute for the Christian Education which was founded in order to discredit the dual medium of instruction policy. Currently, English is the main language of instruction. Afrikaans as a of medium instruction is mostly restricted to the predominantly conservative Afrikaans areas. Indications are that the enthusiasm around Afrikaans as a language of instruction wanes with time. With all the influences that generated the South African “Englishes”, with their symbolic identities and the aspirations of the speakers, the conviction of keeping the conservative standard South African English (StdSAE), in the mould of the British standard English, is vigorously questioned. In the zeal of freedom, the case of accepting such a standard English in South Africa in the interests of international and intra-national is brushed aside (Lanham:1996:28). Strong arguments for an informal re-standardisation of the StdSAE in the direction of Black South African English (BSAE) are presented from some quarters of the country. This move is enhanced by the ideological climate that prevails in South Africa.

The concept of ideological climate is likened to Pennycook's "discursive fields", and similarly the two concepts refer to themes and values that define a society at a particular time (Pennycook:1994:24). These themes include pragmatism, multiracialism and meritocratism for Singapore for instance, and democracy, non-racialism and egalitarianism for South Africa (Wade:1998:24). Policy and actions are popularized and legitimated on the basis of these, although South Africa is inconsistent in this regard. In line with egalitarianism, greater acceptance of variability in the classroom, in boardroom and in the media is a common practice that strengthens the call for the standardisation of BSAE. Notably, arguments for the adoption of BSAE as language of instruction are based purely on sentimental, and ideological reasons. In reality, this is not a pressing issue at the moment in South Africa and cannot be equated to the Ebonics issue in the United States. South African learners have the advantage of using their mother tongues as a medium in junior grades, and as means to facilitate understanding even in senior grades. Teachers use the learners' mother tongue as a resource to enhance learner's cognition in order to maximize academic performance of their learners. English and a mother tongue are held in symbiotic relationship.

The situation is quite different in the African American communities. Students from these communities are deprived of the advantages a mother tongue offers their South African counterparts. The Oakland School Board's resolution to recognize and accept the primary language of the African American, namely African American vernacular English (AAVE) or Ebonics, in the classroom was not done purely for linguistic interest. It was taken as an attempt to solve an acute educational problem affecting the African American students in their district with the hope that taking these children's vernacular into account might alleviate academic under achievement (Rickford:1999:5). While admitting that other factors contributed to the widening gap between

African Americans and Whites reading scores for instance, evidence of positive response to vernaculars actually improves students' performance in reading and writing exist:

A study in Oakland itself which showed that teachers who constantly interrupt Ebonics-speaking children to correct them produced the lowest-scoring and most apathetic readers, while teachers who built artfully on the children's language produced the highest-scoring and most enthusiastic readers (Piestrup:1973:13)

Evidence from a bi-dialectal program in the 5th and 6th grades in DeKalb county, Georgia and at Aurora University outside Chicago [shows] the Contrastive Analysis similar to that employed in the [Standard English Language Proficiency] and in Oakland it yields greater progress in reading and writing for Ebonics speakers than conventional methods (Rickford:1999:5)

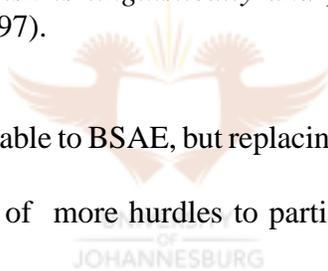
Evidence that teaching children to read first in their vernacular, and then translating to the standard variety, has led to better reading results, both among African Americans students (Simpkin and Simpkin:1981:12).

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The concern here is not on the replacement of standard English as a language of instruction by the AAVE. AAVE is earmarked to serve the same purpose served by the mother tongue in South African educational context. The controversy caused by the Oakland school boards could be linked to attitudes people have against this variety. It should be noted that this is a disparaged variety seen by most as a "corrupted form of English", a "slave English" and nothing else but "slang". These connotations could not help but exacerbate the vehement rejection of the Oakland School Board resolution. Amid the height of controversy, the Linguistics Society of America (LSA) rightly resolved that:

Ebonics is systematic and rule governed like all natural speech

varieties. The systematic and expressive nature of its grammar and pronunciation pattern have been established by numerous scientific studies in the past thirty years or so. Characterizations of Ebonics as “slang”, “mutant”, “lazy”, “defective”, “ungrammatical”, or “broken English” are incorrect and demeaning. What is important from linguistic and educational point of view is not whether AAVE is called a “language” or a “dialect” but rather that its systematicity be recognised. There are individual and group benefits for maintaining vernacular speech varieties and there are scientific and human advantages to linguistic diversity. There are also benefits in acquiring Standard English and resources should be made available to all who aspire to mastery of Standard English. The Oakland School Board’s commitment to helping students master Standard English is commendable. There is evidence from Sweden, the US and other countries that speakers of other varieties can be aided in their learning of the standard variety by pedagogical approaches which recognize the legitimacy of other varieties of a language. From this perspective, the Oakland School Board’s decision to recognize the vernacular of African American students in teaching them Standard English is linguistically and pedagogically sound (LSA Resolution:1997).

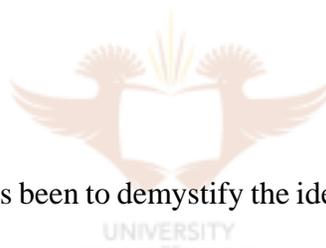


The same arguments could be applicable to BSAE, but replacing the current StdSAE with the former could be equivalent to an addition of more hurdles to particularly second language learners of English. The purpose of this study is to implement a Critical Language Awareness perspective in ESL grade eleven class. Its approach is set within StdSAE medium whilst acknowledging the existence of other South African “Englishes”, and the other ten South African languages and their varieties. For pragmatic reasons the position adopted is that StdSAE should remain the language of instruction.

It should be pointed out that among the various language rights is the right of every child to be taught not just English but Standard English, which is regarded as a vital national resource not as something to be disparaged or broken down (Titlestad:1993:181). The nationalistic feeling, the Whiteness, the post-colonial backwash, “endonormative” as opposed to the “exonormative” standards are important emotional issues that are linked to the function of language as marker of identity

(Titlestad:1993:179). It is equally significant to consider the emotional point that stems from the pragmatic desire, a need to teach learners to use English, access knowledge the English language offers, the job opportunities that come with the language, the personal fulfilment felt by parents when their children succeed educationally and economically as the result of their command of English and the desire to participate on an International platform. As observed by the Transvaal United African Teachers Association (TUATA) the removal of StdSAE from the classroom or its weakening in any way will not be in the best interest of South African education and advancement generally (Cited by:Mawasha:1986:21). This point is still true and will continue to ring true for more decades to come.

2.7. CONCLUSION



The main concern of this chapter has been to demystify the ideologies behind the English language and its standard form. A need to develop sensitivity to ideological values attached to language policy and planning, in particular the choice of language of instruction, and the standard variety that serves the said role is important so that whatever choice the society makes regarding its own children's education and future is an informed one. The critical reflection generated by CLA ensures that the society engages issues it confronts in order to be well aware of the consequences of its choice. Furthermore, it affords the possibility of balancing the ideological gaps with the pragmatic factor facing the society. There is no point, for instance, in dismissing English on the basis of its imperial history. An insightful thing to do is to adopt to the following stance: note its use and vigilantly challenge possible tendencies to perpetuate one ideology at the expense of the other; accept it as one of the adopted and naturalized African language; and consider the current important

role it plays within the country and beyond. The main concern of ESL teachers is, therefore, to exploit its resources in order to facilitate a better language learning. Hence, it is significant not to over-emphasize the ideological issues whilst ignoring our immediate role as ESL teachers. The next chapter gives a psycholinguistic account of language learning. It aims at examining the relationship between language and mind by looking at both the pre-linguistic and the linguistic stage of a learner. It further examines language acquisition by focusing on the parallels and the commonalities that exist in first and second language acquisition. The fundamental point is to posit areas where ESL teachers can intervene in order to maximize the implementation of Critical Language Awareness perspective in ESL classes.

