



LANGUAGE POLICIES IN NAFTA, MERCOSUR, AND THE EU: REGIONAL BLOCS AS A BARRIER AGAINST ENGLISH HEGEMONY?

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There is little doubt about the role of English as the hegemonic language at present. Opinions only diverge regarding the future outlook. Will the dominance of English persist forever, only reversible through a major political earthquake, as claimed by Crystal (1997), or could the monopolistic status of English be changed through other means such as the emergence of new world languages, perhaps by the end of several decades, as argued by the English Company (Graddol 1997)? A detailed analysis of globalization as such (García Canclini 1999), the way it produces cultural resistance (Wallerstein 1990), and some myths about the real diffusion of English, however, draw a more differentiated picture of the real "géostratégies des langues" in the 21st century (Maurais/Morris 2001).

On the one hand, we find those who practice an unlimited defense of all languages of the world, arguing that the disappearance of any language constitutes an irreparable loss of global linguistic treasures. They particularly defend the fundamental linguistic human rights of all citizens of the world to be educated and to have access to other public services in their own language (Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson 1994, Skutnabb-Kangas 2000). On the other hand, there are those who feel that the main contradiction in the field of language policies today is between English and the other "big" international languages (Calvet 1999). Their main argument is that the spread of English imperialism can not only co-exist with the blossom of minority languages, but will actually benefit from their revitalization, since the strengthening of local languages weakens national and international languages, which are the only obstacle for the spread of English. Therefore they oppose bilingual education based on Native languages, e.g. in Corsica or Francophone Africa in order to avoid undermining the position of French.

Drawing on my research on language conflict, bilingual education, and foreign language planning in Latin and Anglo America, I will analyze the dynamics of language policies in the two regional blocs in America, NAFTA, and Mercosur, from a Latin American perspective, and contrast them with the European Union. My argument is that, if we achieve to overcome a narrow territorial, rather "militarist" approach to language policies, we might be able to integrate divergent perspectives into a broader framework of communicative repertoires and enlarged discourse spaces. (e. g. Guimarães 1999, Hamel 2001). Such a view may help to promote additive plurilingualism on individual and societal level, to develop regional blocs as barriers against the total hegemony of one single language, and to prevent monolingualism in international relations.

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