Research Article

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English Language Politics and Economic Theory

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Abstract: Multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary theorists have recently begun to take an interest in the political economy of language, specifically with a concern for the impact of English as a global *lingua franca*. Political, linguistic, educational, and economic researchers interested in the political economy of the English language should remain aware that the diverse disciplines often lack a common language and that it can be easy to misconstrue interpretations of the political implications of linguistic globalisation. In doing so, the research area needs to develop a theoretical base that provides greater depth-of-knowledge. Thus, following a critical review of the most influential work in the area, the purpose of this article is to provide a knowledge map through a theory-based method grounded in a history of ideas.

Keywords: Economics; Politics; English.

1 Introduction

One can judge the political implications of language from numerous vantage points. Researchers in disciplines from politics to linguistics, economics, anthropology, sociology, and education have begun to take an interest in political economy with a particular concern for the impacts of the globalisation of English. Providing an alternative approach to microeconomic and macroeconomic theories, the formal study of political economy began from the assumption that one cannot separate economic analysis from politics. Through the influence of systems theorists like Kenneth Boulding in the periphery of economic thought (see Hammond, 2011), political economy has become uniquely interdisciplinary since the 1970s (see Balaam & Dillman, 2019). It was among the areas that led the current trend of crossing the boundaries of sovereign disciplines. Its interdisciplinary nature proves advantageous to an investigation of the politics of language—but it also poses obstacles for linguistics. Diverse disciplines consistently focus on the integrating economic analysis with social scientific inquiry. However, the term ‘political economy’ can lead to the cognizance of differentiated precepts and concepts in the minds of political scientists, sociologists, and anthropologists alike.

As noted, the major emphasis in the literature on language and political economy concerns English and globalisation. Based on the assumption that it will support economic development, numerous countries have instituted public policies to back the use of the English language as a medium of instruction. The assumption has generally gone unchallenged without any hard data to support the economic benefits. Language researchers have thus turned to political economy in order to bolster either their dissent against language hegemony or their advocacy for the importance of English under the forces of globalist pressures upon state economies. The inroads made through this exploration of ideas into an already multifaceted discipline has resulted in the organic emergence of a hodgepodge of perspectives. The existing research has a great value, but having a practical foundation for interdisciplinary research would prevent misconstrued interpretations of the politics involved and strengthen the current work done in the area.

This article begins with a review of literature. In order to expound the ideas presented, it then provide an overview of the core theories of conservatism, liberalism, and Marxism as they relate to political economy. Further analysis of the reviewed literature orients their respective positions. The research herein answers the question of how a history of political and economic thought can clarify a discussion of linguistic globalisation. While there is no absolute evidence

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to conclude that economies benefit from public policies which promote English, neither is there any proof that it does not. The debates thus remain ideological. So, the approach taken does not attempt to answer normative questions concerning language policy and instruction, but rather offers a knowledge map for informed judgement through a theory-based research grounded in a history of ideas. Theorists and practitioners would benefit from a disciplined theoretical base. The work undertaken steers a direction to achieve that. The comparative relations between disciplines proves necessary inasmuch as the major political economic theories fail to provide decisive solutions. Unity for problem-solving shared issues and concerns would develop from peripheral theories aligned with a social democratic view—a topic discussed in the conclusion as one for further investigation.

2 Critical Review of Literature

The existing literature that discusses the economics of language, specifically global English, markedly engages in a political discourse. With the literature a bit fragmented in its multidisciplinary diversity, it often expresses strong ideological commitments and engages in an insulated politicking—primarily from standpoints characterized as liberal or Marxist. One cannot presume that the task of categorizing is straightforward. While the hope for social sciences in the late nineteenth century was that it could be as scientific as natural and hard sciences, neither political science nor political economy can claim a universal and absolute taxonomy. They remain soft sciences and inescapably interpretive. Despite equally varied evolution of ideas throughout history, we nonetheless require a common language.

The need for shared meanings proves true for theory development in the political economy of the English language. Ricento (2015a) provides a valuable resource, offering a broad analysis from the most influential theorists. The major works in the area discussed include: *Liberalism, Community, and Culture* by Kymlicka (1989), *Linguistic Imperialism* by Phillipson (1992), *The Politics of English: A Marxist View of Language* by Holborow (1999), *Gramsci's Politics of Language* by Ives (2004), *The Knowledge Economy, Language and Culture* by Williams (2010), *Linguistic Justice for Europe and for the World* by Van Parijs (2011), *Language Without Rights* by Wee (2011), and *Language Rights: From Free Speech to Linguistic Governance* by Pupavac (2012). A primary concern is whether liberal theories offer an effective theoretical lens—with an emphasis on language policy. Criticisms target neoliberalism and liberalism in general, but not without liberal sympathies amid the call by some to advance a synthesis with other critical theories. While the literatures prove insightful and foundational, the interdisciplinary endeavour would benefit from greater depth and focus.

Among the rebukes of liberalism, Ives (2004, 2015) is noteworthy. Ives (2004, 2015) targets Kymlicka (1989) as 'liberal multiculturalism'—or, in the author's words, multiculturalism as a form of liberalism with shortcomings 'that are symptomatic of liberalism' (Ives, 2015, p. 48, 60). According Ives (2015), the downfalls of 'liberal' theorizing concerns its individualistic assumptions that undermine community and identity in the context of a global division of labour. The author relies heavily on the ideas of Antonio Gramsci in framing his criticism of global English. Language is itself viewed as a commodity through which elites maintain hegemony over peripheral communities, which works as a form of coercion undermining their political consent (Ives, 2004, pp. 2–8). As the state is an instrument of capitalism, it cannot be neutral in policymaking and this proves true with English language policy.

The case study of South Korea's 'English frenzy' by Piller and Cho (2015) suggests strong alignments with views expressed by Ives (2015) and others critical of 'neoliberalism' and globalisation—such as Phillipson (1992) and Holborow (1999). Pressures to excel in English became an integral part of an emergent culture of Korean competition. This led to excessive extra-curricular study and, more recently, the spread of English as the language of instruction in higher education. Piller and Cho (2015) acknowledge that an economic argument supporting the value of English language policies could be made through the South Korean case. The advantages of English are evident. However, they believe that the case is one that ultimately exemplifies neoliberal fallacies inasmuch as the economic benefits do not outweigh the social and cultural costs. Ricento (2015b) also supports a Marxist orientation, one closely associated with Ives (2015, 2004). A major focus of Ricento's work is to challenge 'liberal' conventions; namely that it is a 'global lingua franca for a global demos to achieve social justice' (Ricento, 2015b, p. 27). The author advocates an analysis informed by Immanuel Wallerstein's World Systems Theory, identifying the downfalls of capitalism throughout history and the uneven gains of neoliberal development within the international system. That is, the privileged core of elites benefits at the expense of the periphery and minority populations.

Through a case study of trade relations that have developed throughout the long history of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS), Bruthiaux (2015) describes local misconceptions of globalisation. The author notes that English for 'cross-border communication within and beyond the GMS region is for practical purposes supremely irrelevant' (Bruthiaux, 2015, p. 152). Given the fact that their economies rely heavily on farming, and that GMS countries have low literacy rates in the native languages, the relative poverty of the region makes any trade relationship requiring English unlikely. Even so, this will not stop governments and corporations from advancing English language policies. However misguided the assumptions informing them may be, Bruthiaux (2015) still believes that they should not be deterred. Addressing economic and linguistic arguments for and against the policies, nations cannot predict future needs and English instruction should neither be feared nor accepted uncritically by the local peoples and governments in the opinion of the author.

Noting that the various approaches to the subject either analyse it in historical terms, as a global system, or by considering 'its constituent parts,' Bale (2015) likewise sympathizes with criticisms of neoliberal economic trends while focusing specifically on the issue of language rights. Bale (2015) addresses a debate in the literature over individual, 'liberal' rights and linguistic diversity versus 'collective' language rights as advocated by authors such as Wee (2011). Posing questions over whether speaking English (or any language, for that matter) proves to be a sufficient factor for achieving economic prosperity, the author nevertheless argues that there is a need to ensure that people have equitable access to English education.

Discussing neoliberalism as the driving ideology behind globalisation, Williams (2010, 2015) also echoes criticisms of liberalism by focusing on power dynamics. The author characterizes language as an instrument of cultural dominance, which shapes culture as a part of structural processes. Global English serves as a noteworthy example. Still, the author argues that it has played 'no role in the formulation and consolidation of the national identity' (Williams, 2015, p. 111). Hence, it does not pose a threat and remains a uniquely institutional facet of international organization as national languages dictate social relations.

A case study of the southern Indian state of Karnataka by Sonntag (2015) illustrates the ideas expressed by Williams (2015). The author characterizes two narratives of linguistic globalisation that have resulted in opposing political forces competing for control over language policies. Described in the context of Karnataka's regulation of schools in favour of the local language (and an examination of postcolonial politics within India), one supports deregulation while the other rejects liberal claims for a protectionist and communal perspective defined as the 'politics of the governed.' Neither the pro-English institutions nor the counter-English forces to make Kannada the language of instruction represent the protections of India's multilingual ethos as UNESCO has recognized it.

As previously noted, these literatures prove insightful into the phenomenon of global English from a miscellany of perspectives. Nonetheless, aims to address the challenges of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research while seeking to resolve the inconsistencies in its politicking would serve the area well. The risks of a potential lack of depth should not overshadow the value for those involved in the field. In the interests of innovation within a promising field of research, foundational assumptions need be made explicit. The following thus provides a knowledge-map of the core theories and their corollaries.

3 Political and Economic Theory

Theories of political economy essentially begin with Adam Smith and the rise of capitalism, well before political science had even begun to develop an academic discipline for International Relations. Some would argue that all of global politics is economics. Theories of the international political economy are particularly nuanced to begin with, notwithstanding contemporary trends focused on interdisciplinary research. The history of ideas presented here cannot pretend to untangle all knots; it only serves to provide a foundation from which interdisciplinary approaches can develop. Considering this, outlining the major theories here is purposeful to steer directions for investigation, particularly given that solutions cannot develop without taking into consideration disciplines outside of economics itself.

3.1 Liberalism and its Discontents

Liberalism emerged in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with the decline of feudalism, which was caused by the increased trade. The Bubonic Plague had also made labour scarce, so workers could demand better compensation and more rights. The push for rights led to the weakening of Europe's absolute monarchies and the establishment constitutional governments. Political theory has always been closely linked to economic theory. Both John Locke and Adam Smith are recognized as the founders of liberal thought. Liberalism values individualism, private property, freedom, reason, equality, tolerance, and the consent of the governed as its core tenets. The classical ideas of *laissez-faire* economic policy, in which the government assumes a 'hands-off' approach, intended to support those values. (Alexander, 2014, pp. 984–987; Balaam & Dillman, 2019, Ch. 2, Sec. 3, para. 1–2; Heywood, 2017, pp. 26–27, 52–53; Knutsen, 2016, pp. 174–176; Lim, 2014, pp. 52–63; Pease, 2015, pp. 59–64)

Institutionalism is the dominant liberal theory of International Relations. From the influential work of Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, institutionalism gained momentum throughout the 1970s amid increased interdependence (see Keohane & Nye, 1977). Institutionalism upholds a more positive view of human nature than the Marxist or conservative ideologies. The theory maintains politics is a non-zero-sum game of mutual benefit, and that liberal economics promotes democracy, human rights, international cooperation, and the necessary conditions for international peace. Liberals claim to maximize the efficiency of the market through international organizations that promote global economic prosperity. According to liberal claims, no hierarchy of issues dominates the political and economic agenda, which remains in flux and determined by mutable goals and linkages. (Goldstein & Pevehouse, 2014, pp. 86–96; Onyishi & Abugu, 2016, p. 8; Pease, 2015, pp. 69–72)

The difference between institutionalism and neoliberalism is significant. Institutionalism advocates Keynesian economics at the domestic level, in the tradition of late-nineteenth century liberals whom recognized the dangers of *laissez-faire* theory (Balaam & Dillman, 2019, Ch. 2, Sec. 4, para. 1–4; Haywood, 2017, pp. 51–54; Burke, 2008, p. 89; Keohane, 2003, pp. 51–53). Thinkers such as John Stewart Mill and Jeremy Bentham identified the need to redistribute wealth and provide social services, which led to the predominant Keynesian thought after WWII in the West. Neoliberalism advocates a return to liberal orthodoxy. Beginning in the 1980s, the conservative governments of Margaret Thatcher in the U.K. and Ronald Reagan in the U.S. set policies based on *laissez-faire* economics and deregulation of international trade and domestic economies (Haywood, 2017, pp. 86–87; Knutsen, 2016, p. 396). Bill Clinton's administration also supported neoliberal policies throughout the 1990s, though not as dogmatically as the conservatives did. Although neoliberalism has become the ideological basis of globalization, it is important to distinguish political liberalism from economic liberalism as political liberals uphold their core values while neoconservatives, to be noted, likewise advocate neoliberal economics while maintaining their own political values.

The general reproach of liberalism in the literature of English language policy involves common criticisms from political and economic theory. The liberal perspective, as defined, by Kymlicka (1989) had been attractive to language scholars. However, later research by theorists such as Ives (2015) began to dismiss liberalism as a fallacy. Faulting the presumed neutrality of the state concerning matters of language policy and nation building are noteworthy examples of the typical censure of liberal beliefs. However respectable the research into Gramsci's theory of language and notwithstanding the purposeful censure of liberalism itself, the author's rebuke of multiculturalism nonetheless scapegoats it in a deconstruction that fails to assess the lay assumptions underpinning the language research fairly.

This said, the discussion of rights by Bale (2015) likewise undermines historical developments in liberal political theory. The United Nations, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank Group after WWII sought an institutional framework to avoid the dangers of the political order that prevailed before the War. Along with the self-determination of nations previously under colonial rule, the international community recognized social and economic rights. U.S. politics remains sceptical of such positive rights in support for traditional negative rights and freedoms. What Bale (2015) criticizes as an attempt to align individual and communal rights by Wee (2011) actually represents international norms recognized by the U.N. Charter itself. This is not to say that neither liberalism nor institutionalism do not warrant critical examination for their failure to enact their espoused values; only that the criticisms require a more in-depth analysis to be understood and problem-solved.

3.2 The Conservative World Order

Conservatism began as a reactionary movement against liberalism, following the French Revolution in particular. The British politicians Edmund Burke and Benjamin Disraeli receive recognition as conservatism's formative thinkers. Conservatives sought to preserve what was left of the 'Ancien Regime' before the Age of Revolutions overthrew the old-world monarchs by advocating tradition, social cohesion, and hierarchical authority (Heywood, 2017, pp. 62-65; Knutsen, 2016, pp. 181-184). These values motivated their historical support for economic intervention, which enabled conservatives to achieve and maintain national unity. As follows, conservatism demonstrates the theoretical entanglements and dynamics of the way in which comparable economic strategies can serve different ideological ends.

Given the waves of liberalism that led the world to revolution, conservatives recognized that change had become unstoppable and inevitable. Political thinkers thus maintained that leaders needed to introduce enough reforms to pacify the people. In his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Edmund Burke argued that King Louis XVI's greatest mistake was his inability to accept the inevitability of social change. He believed change could have been controlled in the interests of the French monarchy if political reforms to address the 'abusive practices and usages that had prevailed in the state' (Burke, 1790/2014, pp. 136) were instituted by Louis XVI himself (See also Heywood, 2017, pp. 164-167; Welsh, 1995, pp. 93-114; Burke, 1791/1992). Disraeli similarly referred to a leader's responsibility to manage political change as a 'noblesse oblige' (Heywood, 2017, pp. 76-78) in which the nobility has the obligation to take care of the people and make any reform necessary to prevent revolt. This paternalism of the elites became a justification for colonialism.

Conservatives are traditionally mercantilists and advocate protectionism—except when commerce and trade serve their interests (Alexander, 2014, pp. 989-991; Balaam & Dillman, 2019, Ch. 3, Sec. 1-2; Heywood, 2017, pp. 62-65; Knutsen, 2016, pp. 181-184; Lim, 2014, pp. 162-165; Onyishi & Abugu, 2016, p. 9-10;). Mercantilism conventionally functions as an adjunct to political realism in International Relations. Each preoccupies itself with how a nation achieves greater power (as cited in Burke, 2008, p. 91). Political realism draws its origins from the seventeenth century philosopher Thomas Hobbes and earlier thinkers such as Machiavelli, Thucydides, and even Sun Tzu. Contemporary theorists include Hans J. Morgenthau and Kenneth Waltz (See Morgenthau, 1948; Waltz, 1979; Waltz, 2001). The correlating worldviews hold a negative view of human nature and relations, according to which 'political interests are hierarchical with a distinction between high and low politics' (Burke, 2008, p. 91). Realism puts security and military force atop the hierarchy of issues. The state is a rational, unitary actor and domestic industries are an extension of it (Goldstein & Pevehouse, 2014, pp. 75-76; Pease, 2015, pp. 7-8). International organizations and law, economic markets and trade are not to undermine the national interests but serve the state power.

Economic relations defined in terms of political realism and protectionist policies historically dominate the international political economy. Although liberalism challenged this through political revolutions and economic industrialization, it also led to the rise of nationalism while undermining liberal values with it (Balaam & Dillman, 2019, Ch. 3, Sec. 1-2; Burke, 2008, p. 92). From the structural remnants of an international system culturally defined by mercantilist assumptions emerged the economic statecraft of European Imperialism (Knutsen, 2016, pp. 213-216; Burke, 2008, p. 92). Later American hegemony and the bipolar relations of the Cold War likewise destabilized liberal institutionalism (Balaam & Dillman, 2019, Ch. 4, Sec. 1; Lim, 2014, pp. 165-166). Political aims to support democracy and rights through international organization after WWII thus resulted in practices criticized as neo-colonialism—frequently attributed to liberalism in general.

During the 1970s, institutionalism renewed its efforts to achieve cooperation based on liberal values while emphasizing the role of international organisations, trade and economic interdependence in order to bring about a decline in power politics and the use of military force. In the 1980s, 'The New Right' following Thatcher and Regan favoured deregulation and *laissez-faire* economics (Haywood, 2017, pp. 86-87; Knutsen, 2016, p. 396). At the same time, the international community abandoned Bretton Woods' General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) for the less democratic and more bureaucratic World Trade Organization (Balaam & Dillon, 2019, Ch. 3, Sec. 3, para 1-10; Goldstein & Pevehouse, 2014, pp. 294-298). The Washington Consensus set key policies for development, noted for their explicitly neoliberal assumptions (Knutsen, 2016, p. 402-403). Economic liberalism is thus not exclusively associated with political liberalism. International organizations can be exploited to serve conservative and political realist interests, which is an aim advocated by structural realists in particular (and a common criticism of post-WWII American foreign policy). The same would reign true for English language policies as conceived by social institutions, and the South Korean case is a noteworthy example for discussion in this respect.

The study by Piller and Cho (2015) criticizes neoliberalism as culturally destructive. The authors discuss the economic policies following the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, which led to a restructuring characterized as imposed by IMF and World Bank. South Korea has since faced a hyper-competitive environment, defined as a ‘resuscitation of nineteenth-century *laissez-faire* (hence, neoliberal) capitalism based on Adam Smith’s competitive equilibrium model’ (Piller and Cho, 2015, p. 162). Here we find the irony and paradox in the fact that Smith focused his criticism of mercantilism by noting the political exploits of the state and maintaining that less government intervention is good governance and prevents abuses of power, but the Korean government has played a stronger role in development than is commonly recognized in the literature on the subject. As Piller and Cho (2015) even note, the people had little choice in accepting globalism due to the overbearing competitiveness of an academic capitalism and the state intervened more than what neoliberalism would prescribe.

While this might explain why Korea’s successes have proven more sustainable than other Asian countries that credit growth to neoliberalism, the case requires further investigation. A critical question concerns what ideological ends the management of the economy might have ultimately served, which would likewise shed light on the country’s education policies and motivations for English language instruction. While there are signs of conservatism with the influence of Confucianism, the historic and present-day role of the country’s conglomerates (or *chaebol*), for example, warrant examination accordingly. One might even consider the 2017 impeachment of the conservative President Park Geun-hye and the protests leading to it as indicators of the youth-driven, liberal culture that has emerged there. Even so, it is expectedly too early to discern what the future might reveal for their experience with globalism (see Burke, 2010). Although the pains of structural changes are evident, an analysis of the Korean case requires a greater scrutiny of how theory translates into practice in order to understand their economic values and any concerns regarding the cultural consequences.

3.3 Marxism and the Critique of Capitalism

Industrial capitalism led to the rise of Marxism and socialist ideologies throughout the nineteenth century, which were based on the values of equality, fraternity, and community (Haywood, 2017, pp. 95–98). While liberals support equal opportunity and private property, Marxism upholds equality of economic outcomes and collective ownership. Community and fraternity conversely have much in common with social cohesion as advocated by conservatives. Marxism also shares assumptions with political realism—including an emphasis on power and a negative view of human nature (Balaam & Dillman, 2019, Ch. 3, Sec. 2; Burke, 2008, p. 92; Goldstein & Pevehouse, 2014, pp. 103–106). Its defining principles nonetheless iterate the exploitative nature of capitalism. Believing that markets and international institutions operate as mechanisms of domination, it is protectionist (Burke, 2008, p. 92). Marxism likewise focuses on how new technologies become instruments of exploitation and oppression. It would view language politics in a similar vein. For this very reason, the literature on language and globalisation attempts to deconstruct liberal assumptions with claims to support Marxist political views—Gramscian and World Systems Theory in particular.

Wallerstein’s World Systems Theory underscores the enduring effects of colonialism, employing a Marxist study of history to demonstrate how core countries exploit the periphery of the international system. Wallerstein’s theory is itself influenced by Gramsci. Gramsci’s Marxism can be challenging inasmuch as he never developed a formal philosophy, and interpretations rely on his prison notebooks. Nonetheless, Gramsci noted that capitalism is not only an agent of economic control but also of cultural domination (i.e., hegemony). He argued institutions would break down if the periphery were to separate itself from it—the central stratagem of what he called ‘passive revolution.’ His stance was one of non-violent revolution. Not a reformism by working from within the system as moderates and Italian liberals had conceived it; but one in which the periphery eventually overtakes the system and pursues a radical transformation of the following the ‘catastrophic equilibrium’ between Jacobinism and Caesarism-Bonapartism ‘in the absence of other active elements’ (Gramsci, 1931/2000, pp. 264–265; See also García Linera, 2008, pp. 27–28; Forgacs, 2000, pp. 246–249; Gramsci, 1918/2000, pp. 42–44). As each adopts a protectionism comparable to conventional realism, these Marxist views have been termed ‘peripheral realism’ in theories of international political economy. (Alexander, 2014, pp. 987–989; Balaam & Dillman, 2019, Ch. 3, Sec. 1–2, 5; Heywood, 2017, pp. 95–107; Knutsen, 2016, pp. 267, 384–385; Pease, 2015, pp. 67, 80–83, 110)

From the vantage point of a Marxist perspective, the value of discussing language rights through Wee (2011) and Bale (2015) concerns recognizing the way in which protectionism might serve a peripheral government's interests in maintaining power. This point is specifically underscored by Bale (2015), believing the crux of the matter is that the efforts to assert communal language rights have the potential to exploit as well as 'challenge the nation-state and the neoliberal imperatives it enforces' (p. 93). Identifying such nuances from theory into practice proves significant in terms of the power political interests of illiberal or 'fake' democracies that operate to preserve autocracy and even fascist interpretations of Marxism (see Haywood, 2017; Onyishi & Abugu, 2016, p. 8–9). However agreeable the critique of liberalism (once again), the analyses risk misapprehending the problem and require a more attentive deconstruction of a government's lip service to rights. At the same time, the conclusion that English should be neither ostracized nor romanticized does echo a common theme. Meaning that the area's leading scholars implicitly and explicitly question whether Marxism itself can solve critical social issues with linguistic globalisation despite their frequent rebukes of globalisation, liberalism in general, and neoliberalism in particular.

4 Seeking Solutions to Liberal Fallacies

The current research on English language politics expresses commitments to a refutation of liberalism, but not always without being critical of the Marxist ideas at the core of their rejection of so-called liberal theories. Much of the recent literature on linguistic globalisation can thus be characterized as aligned with theories that reject the dominant approaches to political economy. Feminism, Constructivism, theorists in Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution, Environmentalism, Postmodernism, and other peripheral theories have sought to define alternatives to Realism, Liberalism, and Marxism. The common focus among each of them takes issue with the failure to account for the social and cultural dynamics of economic development and political change.

Concerns about globalism's consequences lead Piller and Cho (2015), for example, to explore Pierre Bourdieu's writings on cultural production while asserting that the benefits of English do not outweigh the costs. Another case is Williams (2015), who takes a unique viewpoint from linguistics itself while expressing the cultural concerns about liberalism. Inasmuch as language operates as a means of communication, it creates a symbolic relation to the 'emotive that is inherent in the relationship between language and identity, and the link to a territorially defined community' (Williams, 2015, p. 111). Williams (2010, 2015) consistently advocates shared meanings through communities of practice while critical of globalization and neoliberalism; but liberal assumptions remain embedded in these nuanced, theoretical perspectives despite criticisms and an emphasis on socialist or Marxist-oriented principles. Arguing that English itself is unlikely to have any transformative impact, Williams (2010, 2015) also notes that the nation-state continues to play an important role and that globalism will not challenge national sovereignty—a defining liberal institutionalist position.

As noted, similar contradictions riddle the other literatures discussed. Ricento (2015b) supports a Marxist orientation and asserts that elites benefit from linguistic resources in a neoliberal knowledge economy while criticizing liberal claims about promoting democracy and social justice, as noted, but also suggests that those resources become both a means and an impediment for social mobility (p. 41). Ricento (2015b) also rejects that the proliferation of English in non-English countries as a form of imperialism, which thus contradicts claims fundamental to Marxist perspectives on language such as Phillipson (1992), Holborow (1999), and Ives (2004, 2015), while situating the analysis to be at odds with assumptions central to Wallerstein as a postcolonial theory—which Ricento (2015b) claims to advocate.

From questions about projects involving multinational corporations to concerns about policies that view language as a neutral skill and promote the 'nonintervention of government in a competition of languages in the marketplace' (Bruthiaux, 2015, p. 155; Sonntag, 2015, p. 212), all of the literature unfailingly censures generalized, liberal assumptions. The views equally reject that populations must become fluent in English to participate in a globalized economy (Bruthiaux, 2015, p. 155). At the same time, conclusions suggest that linguistic globalisation remains contested and researchers must move beyond the 'pro- versus anti-English dichotomy' (Sonntag, 2015, p. 212). The research supports equal access and participation when the push for English instruction happens, thus advancing liberal values such as equal opportunity—however, markedly not without ensuring that it does not displace literacy in local languages and noting the need to analyse the specific contexts.

Clarifying liberal economics and politics addresses the complex dynamics of political economy, but the shared assumptions likewise need develop awareness of the differing values and motivating ends for economic globalism. There is also the point that Marx recognized the value of capitalism and understood it as an evolutionary stage in history. Capitalism breaks down feudalism and transforms society by raising material living standards (Balaam & Dillman, 2019, Ch. 3, Sec. 2, para. 6). Where the research criticizes Marxism, the commonalities among them regarding global English seems to be a Keynesian-oriented synthesis of mixed models—although Keynes receives no attention as an economic theorist of historical importance. Keynes noted the flaws of both *laissez-faire* capitalism as it led to the Great Depression and communist ideologies of the time in that they led to European fascism (Balaam & Dillman, Ch. 3, Sec. 2; Burke, 2008, p. 93). The Keynesian view gained influence after WWII as the Cold War had created a global split between capitalism and socialism, which is ‘fundamental to understanding the patterns of world economic development since 1945’ (as cited in Burke, 2008, p. 93). Keynes attempted to solve the pitfalls of each by creating a synthesis of capitalism and socialism. Although not without its own critics and their discontents, Keynesianism found greater favour and success throughout Europe than it did in the U.S.

In pursuing an interdisciplinary agenda for the development of a deeper understanding of the global economic environment, one should note that disciplines beyond economics equally sought to challenge and change the conventional assumptions after the World Wars. Many of the advancements were a result of paradigm shifts in science, as true of the systems thought of Boulding—who searched for a better understanding of the complexities of economics (see Hammond, 2011, p. 198). Following the tradition of Boulding’s interdisciplinary research with anthropology, Peace Studies, Conflict Resolution and the systems thought of Ludwig von Bertalanffy, Burke (2008, 2009, 2010) argues that organizational solutions need address the fallacies of liberalism accordingly. Where the leading perspectives on political economy fail to provide answers to the challenges, theory development needs to focus on problem solving. From which, solutions would likely result through a modern Keynesianism as advocated by institutionalists and articulated by social democracy. However, not without overcoming the discontents (and one would note that linguists have much to contribute to causes identified by Feminism, Constructivism, Postmodernism, and like-minded theories).

5 Conclusion

The current research on linguistic globalisation and proliferation of English language is valuable for understanding the social and cultural context of global trends. It contributes to theories that have sought alternatives to the core dogmas of conservatism, political realism, both economic and political liberalism, and Marxism. Identifying the assumptions, values, and interests sought by those dominant theories and deepening an understanding of the nuances serves to achieve such ends. While no hard data exists to either support or demythologize the value of English at present, theory-based solutions can only arise through a more vigilant analysis of the problems ascribed to neoliberal trends and globalisation, through which a common language can be sought in order to alleviate the challenges of interdisciplinary research. Developing shared meanings is critical, as disciplines transverse the academic boundaries that separate them. While the aim of this article was not to answer any normative questions about what should be concerning English language policies and politics in an era of globalization, unity would most likely result through research into the prospective for a social democratic view and insight from multidisciplinary sources.

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