

# Distinguishing Internationalization from Anglicization in Higher Education

Diagnosis and Strategies

François Grin  
*University of Geneva*

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# Goals and “take-away” of this presentation

- This talk starts out from the observation that universities in historically non-English-speaking countries (**NESC**) are subjected, in the name of globalization, to extreme pressures resulting in anglicization.
- It then proposes a critical discussion of the causes of this trend. They reflect diverging sectoral interests and, at the same time, proceed from structural constraints. Making a distinction between both types of causes can be useful in order to formulate principles for a *non-uniformising* language policy in Higher Education (**HE**).
- Three policy measures in this direction are proposed at the end of this talk.

# Five basic observations about HE in NESC [1]

1. Growing presence of English in:
  - a) Teaching
  - b) Internal (administrative communication)
2. Simultaneous spread along four axes:
  - a) From “hard” and “biomedical” sciences to the social sciences, and from the social sciences to the humanities
  - b) From research to teaching, and from teaching to internal communication
  - c) Within teaching:
    - i. From specialist (often optional) courses to general, large-scale courses
    - ii. From doctoral schools to MA courses and from MA courses to BA classes
3. Although “internationalization” is constantly invoked, this process results in convergence towards one language (English)

# Five basic observations about HE in NESCS [2]

4. In this process, languages other than English (**LOTEs**) risk being marginalized, deligitimized, and “obsoletized”
5. This carries various consequences, some plain to see, and others that are at least plausible:
  - a) Manifest effects:
    - i. Decline in the share of LOTEs in various expressions of scientific life (e.g. journals, conferences, etc.)
    - ii. Erosion of linguistic justice – of which there are admittedly competing definitions, but the decline in justice is manifest under any of them
  - b) Likely effects:
    - i. Decline in the world’s (linguistic) “multipolarity”
    - ii. Adverse consequences on the quality of teaching (and hence learning), when instructors and/or students don’t have adequate competence in English
    - iii. Ambiguous effects on the development and sharing of knowledge

# An area in which clichés abound

- The process just sketched out feeds on various beliefs and clichés, which pertain in particular to:
  - a biased concept of “student quality”
  - hasty assumptions on student motivation
  - clichéd notions of “quality”
  - the very meaning of “internationalization”
  - the meaning of language itself
- These beliefs may converge, but they can also contradict each other

# A necessary clarification

- It's useful to maintain a distinction between two classes of problems:
  1. Questions linked to linguistic hegemony *in general* (irrespective of which language plays the role of *hegemon*)
  2. More directly geopolitical questions that have to do with the fact that at this time, it is English (and not another language) that finds itself in this hegemonic position
- There's a continuity between these two classes of problems, but they are analytically distinct. In this talk, I focus on the *first* set of questions (other authors, e.g. Phillipson, tend to focus on the second)
- Simply note that problem No. 1 wouldn't be different if the *hegemon* were French, Estonian or Lingala – i.e., in what comes next, the expression “hegemonic language” can be substituted for “English”

# Cliché No. 1

"International university education necessarily takes place in an international language"

- This claim (usually in the vein of “proof by assertion”) mixes up the positive and the normative levels
- It's dubious at the *positive* level, since it ignores the reality that the world is linguistically diverse, and that if you *really* mean "internationalisation", then a truly international university education should arguably reflect this, and be multilingual
- It's disturbing in *normative* terms, because it implies a consent to linguistic hegemony

# Cliché No. 2

## "The academic world operates in English anyway"

- A misleading claim on two counts (but with a pernicious effect as a self-fulfilling prophecy, when people start believing it).
- A *widespread* use of English doesn't mean the *exclusive* use of English: for example, in 2012, only 4% of the 15,134 diplomas awarded (at all levels) by German universities were in English
- The academic world does different things in different languages (e.g. internal communication in a research team v. presenting a paper at an international conference)



# Cliché No. 3

## "Everybody speaks English anyway"

- Low-level skills may be quite widespread, but high-level skills are not, and they are *not* significantly more common among the younger than the older generation.
- This is borne out by various data sets, notably *Eurobarometer* and the *Adult Education Survey*:
  - English is the L1 of 14% of the (pre-Brexit) EU population
  - It's an L2 at a very good or good level for 21% of the EU's residents
  - It's the L1 of 7%-8% of the world population
  - As an L1 or L2, *including* modest skills levels, it's spoken by the *at most* 25% of the world population
  - In other words: at least 70% of the world population has little English or no English at all

## Cliché No. 4

### "We must teach in English to attract the 'best' students"

- This might be plausible at PhD level, where the catchment area can be truly global, but there is empirical proof to back up this claim for BA and MA level studies (not to mention that it seems to suggest that the locals, comparatively, must be a bit dim)
- people who really want an English-medium education, *if they really are the best*, are likely to have already registered at Harvard, Yale, or Oxford... and those who register for English-medium degrees in the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, etc., might precisely *not* be the best
- this creates pedagogically absurd situations
- Perhaps those who are *truly* the "best" might just be those who, alongside competence in English, will *also* have acquired receptive skills in Dutch, German, French, etc. (or be interested in doing so)

# Cliché No. 5

## "Offering English-medium education maximizes the intake of foreign students"

- This deserves to be qualified. A rough index of relative over-representation of foreign students in OECD countries (ratio of *share of international student intake* to *share of resident population*) indicates that a country's rank as a destination favoured by international students doesn't correlate with the extent of anglicisation of their universities
- Unsurprisingly, there is strong over-representation of predominantly English-speaking countries (NZ [1st], AUS [2nd], GB [5th], CDN [6th]), largely because students want to learn English
- ... but *among* NESC countries, the strongest overrepresentation is among countries that have *resisted* all-out anglicisation in higher education (A [3rd], CH [4th], B [7th], F [9th]); these countries benefit from the fact that they use large transnational languages – but that's also a part of attracting international students
- "over-anglicised" countries rank lower (S [8th], NL [11th])
- of course, this index needs to be refined and combined with others, but international students may not be attracted by "English" – perhaps the local language(s) are no less important in attracting them

# Cliché No. 6

## "Scientific research is in English"

- This claim ignores the fact that research encompasses different steps:
  - reading of others' research
  - interaction within a research team
  - presentation of results in international conferences
  - publication for an academic readership
  - publication for the educated general public
- Not all these steps are in English, let alone in English *only*
- It also ignores the vitality of research in other languages – e.g., the fact that Brazil alone produces 5,986 scientific and technical journals (Hamel in Carli & Ammon, 2007: 63)

# Cliché No. 7

"The spread of English is a natural phenomenon"

- This claim mixes up (incomplete) *observations*, their *interpretation*, and their possible *policy implications*
  1. qualitative observation of actual language practices in multilingual contexts (incl. academic ones) reveal a high variability of patterns and constant use of code switching
  2. the macro-dynamics of language aren't "natural": they are the outcome of the interaction of various economic and geopolitical forces, which serve some interests more than others
  3. these dynamics are something that societies may legitimately aspire to steer through policy, for reasons of both *efficiency* and *fairness*

## Cliché No. 8

"Languages are neutral and having only one for research constitutes a net communication gain"

- This is a naïve but surprisingly widespread expression of "folk linguistics", which...
  - assumes that language equals communication, *and* that communication equals mere information transfer (whereas language is also an vector of identity, and tool for social construction and belongingness, etc.)
  - omits the psychological, sociological, political and economic *non*-neutrality of languages (abundant circumstantial evidence suggests that languages aren't interchangeable in the perception of an overwhelming majority of users; people attach meaning to the fact of using language X or Y, and there's not necessarily *more* "emotionality" or *less* "pragmatism" in *their* views than in the views of people who, *against all this evidence*, claim that languages are interchangeable codes for communication
  - assumes a cognitive neutrality which is belied by recent research (no need for a crude Sapir-Whorf approach for this)

# Cliché No. 9

"The generalized use of English by all fosters equality"

- Perhaps it could... if there were no native speakers. But linguistic hegemony gives rise to major *uncompensated* transfers in their favour:
  - privileged markets
  - savings in communication effort
  - savings in foreign/second language instruction
  - knock-on effects of the above savings
  - symbolic "legitimation" effects (even the *Financial Times* owns up to this fact)

# Cliché No. 10

"International English isn't *really* English, it's "ELF" or "globish", and therefore no problem of inequality arises"

- This claim reveals a deep, utter confusion:
  - *NOWHERE* is there a clear, logical definition of "English as a lingua franca" (actual *language*? way of communicating? "frame of mind"?)
  - No clear definition of empirical object (with or without NSs ?)
  - Irredeemably anecdotal character of alleged manifestations of ELF
- Ultimately, ELF is nothing but a crude syllogism in three terms (T1, T2, T3):
  - T1 "ok, English might be imperialistic and exclusionary"
  - T2: "ELF  $\neq$  English"
  - T2: "*therefore*, English used as a lingua franca isn't imperialistic or exclusionary"
- The concept of "English as a lingua franca" essentially has a whitewashing, "sanitizing" function



# Why are these clichés so widespread?

- Among the *possible* explanations:
  1. *Naïveté* (and fascination for a language associated with power);
  2. Subservience (and the desire to pay obeisance to power; see e.g. Gobard 1976: *L'aliénation linguistique* or La Boétie 1574: *Le discours de la servitude volontaire*)
  3. Market failure (when the rationality of some actors leads to sub-optimal decisions)

# Anglicisation as a form of market failure

- Non-coincidence of optimal solutions between
  - On the one hand:
    - the MICRO level, where what is in the interest of individual actors is **diversity [sometimes called "plurilingualism" when referring to individuals' language skills]** the MACRO level, where what is in the interest of society as a whole is: **[societal] multilingualism**, for reasons of resource allocation (creativity, innovation, resilience, intrinsic value, political and cultural aspects) AND for reasons of resource distribution ("linguistic justice")
  - On the other hand:
    - the MESO level, where what is in the perceived interest (if viewed in a short-time perspective) of institutions, firms, universities is often **uniformisation** (leading to choices that reinforce self-fulfilling prophecies)
- The problem at hand (the value of diversity) bears strong resemblance with:
  - the evaluation of natural resources (e.g. fisheries)
  - The "Tragedy of the commons" (E. Ostrom)

# Need for a more systemic approach

But also, more generally, we still lack of a more comprehensive approach to Higher Education Language Policy (HELP)

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Hence, each cell in the third column of the matrix should include the three levels G, O, and P. The resulting table generates a general identification of the range of questions with respect to which language-related decisions must be made; as stated earlier, our focus here is on how to handle the third column.

	Response to linguistic environment	Impacts on linguistic environment	Resulting language policy issues (examples)
<i>Languages taught as subjects</i>	Trends affecting macro-level language dynamics and demand for language skills	Effects of universities' linguistic offerings on relative position of languages	G: What languages to teach and for what reasons? O: What budgetary implications? P: Which skills levels in what languages, for whom, with what methods?
<i>Language(s) of instruction</i>	Trends affecting attitudes and representations of what counts as 'appropriate' languages of instruction; legal framework	Effects of universities' practices on relative language legitimacy/prestige; access to education; responsiveness vs. responsibilities towards different constituencies	G: Should languages other than the local one(s) be used for teaching? Why? For which courses? Assuming what level of skills in non-local language[s] by students and instructors? O: What need exists for associated services for staff (e.g. language centre, etc.)? P: Which skills levels in languages other than the local language[s] may be expected from students? From instructors?
<i>Language(s) of research activities</i>	Forces that affect the relative prestige/spread of different languages in research, nationally and internationally	Effects of linguistic practices in research on relative language prestige; 'efficiency' of research; 'return' to taxpayer; cognitive impacts	G: Should the use of a LWC be encouraged or not? Why? Or multilingualism? For which components of research activities? O: What need exists for associated services for staff (e.g. language centre, etc.), support for staff publication activity in non-native language[s]? What need exists for translation services? P: Which type of language-related expertise should be developed – e.g. for the supervision of doctoral theses?

Managing languages in academia

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	Response to linguistic environment	Impacts on linguistic environment	Resulting language policy issues (examples)
<i>Language(s) of internal administration</i>	Legislation, if any: actual political weight of legislation relative to other trends	Universities' identity; responsibility towards stakeholders / taxpayers	G: Is there any type of situation where non-local language(s) should be used for internal purposes? O: What implications for internal regulations/by-laws? What type of language support services to provide for clerical staff? P: Specific pedagogical issues arising in the language training of administrative staff
<i>Language(s) of external communication</i>	Relative importance / legitimacy of languages. Expectations from the public in this respect. Actual import of non-local student recruitment	Effects of universities' linguistic behaviour (e.g. in international recruitment practices) on institutional image? On the legitimacy and prestige of different languages?	G: Institutional image aimed at; implications for student recruitment (enrollment; student profile; geographical origin) O: Setting up of language quality assurance and control; P: Specific pedagogical issues arising in the language training of communications teams, international affairs officers, etc.

Clearly, the range of issues to be addressed is enormous, and an exclusive focus on a topic such as "internationalization of the student body" (a popular – though somewhat shallow – indicator of university quality) or "competitiveness in international rankings" (typically approached through egregiously skewed indicators) does not do justice to the issues at hand.

To my knowledge, there is simply no general treatment of the language questions identified in Table 1 available at this time. And when questions are not fully identified, it is difficult or impossible to come up with proper answers. Available documents suggest that some university authorities may be tempted to take a narrow view of these issues, which amounts to making a host of often unstated assumptions. The result may then be a somewhat partial approach to language choices in university governance. Let us turn to a few examples in the following section, focusing on the trend to increase the use of English in

**Source:**  
Grin, F., 2015:  
"Managing languages in academia: Pointers from education economics and language economics", in G. Stickel and C. Robustelli (eds.), *Language Use in University Teaching and Research*. Frankfurt, etc.: Peter Lang, 99-118.

# From HELP questions to HELP responses

- Responses to the challenge depend on:
  - Political priorities
  - Society's evaluation of the allocative and distributive issues at hand
- We can't handle them both here (this would require a full-fledged HELP plan)
- But in what follows, we can:
  - Present recent results about the link between (individual) multilingualism and creativity
  - Suggest a few practical measures for the protection and promotion of diversity in HELP

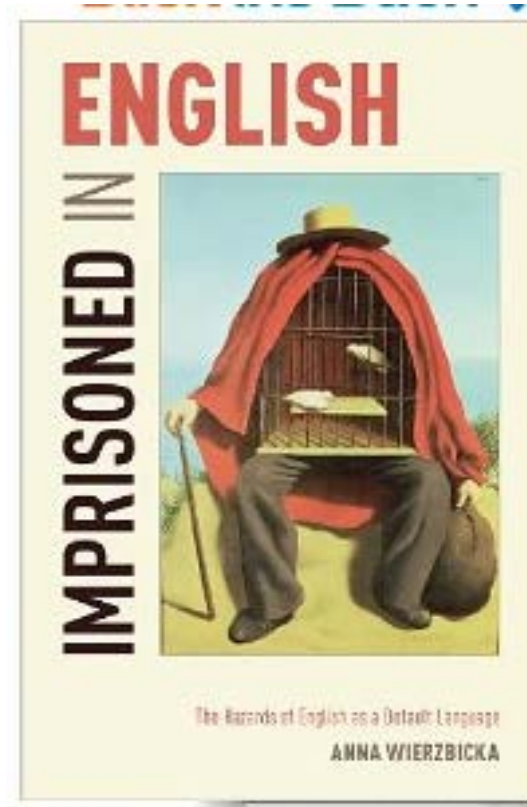
# Multivariate estimates of the link between multilingualism and creativity

- Recent research on the psychometric measurement of the **link between multilingualism and creativity** confirms the existence of a positive relation between them
- This link has been tested
  - for the general population (not only immigrants); sample of N=596 collected in Switzerland, France and Belgium
  - with more elaborate measurement of L2 & L3 skills (not just “bilinguals” v. “monolinguals”)
  - using the analytical concepts of specialist psychometric research on creativity
  - with numerous controls, (gender, age, personality variables) and, importantly proxies for "intercultural experience" (e.g. extent and frequency of travel abroad)
- Structural equation modelling (SEM) reveals a link between multilingualism and creativity. Its magnitude depends on specification and varies between 0.15 and 0.30, but it remains statistically significant (Fürst & Grin, 2018)

# Searching for the underlying processes

Several avenues for research, e.g.:

- Cognitive aptitudes which are supported by multilingualism and, in turn, favour creativity (Bialystok et al., 2012)
- Specific connections (such as “language-mediated concept activation”) (Kharkhurin, 2012)
- Access to alternative representations facilitated by multilingual skills (Wierzbicka, 2014)



*Anna Wierzbicka, (psycho-linguist,  
National Australian University, Canberra),  
2014*

*Rarity of “semantic primes”*

# Summing up the points made so far

- Gravitating towards linguistic uniformity in university teaching and research is more likely to do harm than good
- Relations between multilingualism and creativity must be studied theoretically and empirically not just at the individual level, but at the group / collective level (note: much of the research available on team diversity and creativity is descriptive / qualitative)
- The foregoing discussion dovetails with [geo]political considerations and with considerations of linguistic justice
- THEREFORE, available evidence suggests PREVENTING English monolingualism in the universities of NESCs
- What policies can we suggest?

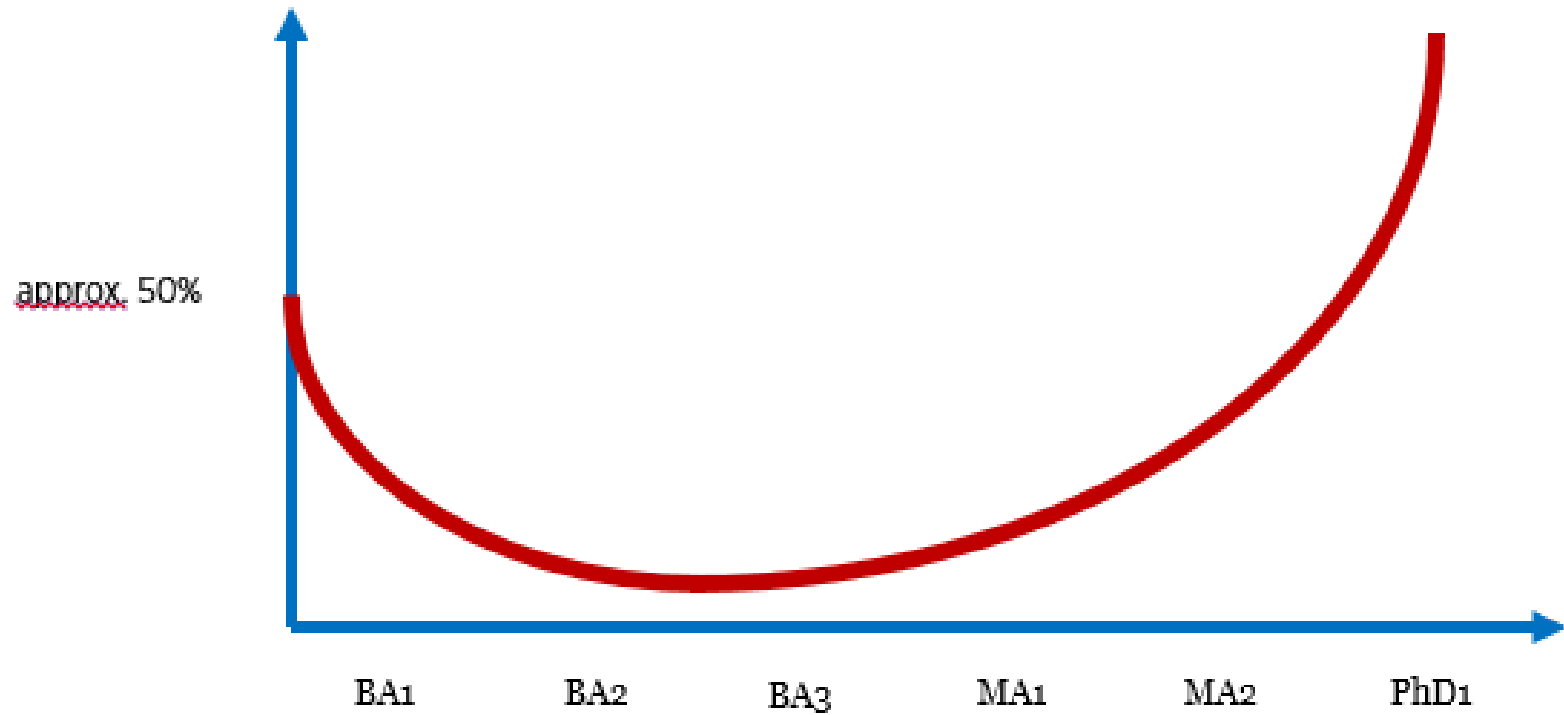
# Two principles and three general policy measures (for avoiding hegemony)

- **Two consistency principles**
  1. Ensure the external consistency of HELPs with the broader language policy goals of society, explicitly identifying actors' goals and constraints on the allocative (efficiency) plane and on the distributive (fairness) plane
  2. Ensure the internal consistency of practices within the university, on the basis of a systemic approach to the selection, design and evaluation of HELPs
- **Three general policy measures**
  - **Staff recruitment and evaluation** : encourage *genuinely* multilingual profiles (e.g. publication record in at least two languages with a minimum percentage in each)
  - **Pedagogy**: encourage the use of intercomprehensive methods (IC), distinguishing between receptive and productive language use
  - **Curriculum**: ban monolingual degrees (in particular: "English-only" degrees) using the "**U-shaped curve approach**"



# The U-curve

Pourcentage de cours  
donnés en anglais



# Goals and motivations behind the U-shaped curve

- Goal: to boost the enrollment of foreign students by facilitating the early stages of their studies in the host country...
- ... but *without* offering curricula in English *only*...
- ... while encouraging local (host country) language learning by foreign students
- ... thus attracting students who are likely to be *really* the best (with English-language skills, but also the intellectual openness and willingness to learn and use another language like German, Dutch, Italian, French, etc.)

# Implementing the U-shaped curve

- Universities can therefore:
  - Duplicate some 1<sup>st</sup>-year BA courses (in the local language + in English), capping EMI at 50% the total course offering
  - ... then progressively *reduce* the percentage of courses offered in English, in order to encourage allophone students to learn the local language, and avoid that allophone or local students study in English only
  - ... then allow an increase in the proportion of courses taught in a non-local language (e.g. English)
  - throughout the curriculum, make the most of the distinction between productive and receptive skills (and possibly be less demanding in terms of the former than the latter)

# Concluding remarks

- A lot of theoretical and empirical research is still needed before we can deliver appropriately complete and robust language policies for higher education (HELPS)
- Meanwhile, stampeding universities into Anglophone monolingualism is probably a very short-sighted and ill-advised policy
- Available results strongly suggest that the claim that linguistic diversity is an asset that must be protected and promoted is much more plausible than the opposite claim, both in terms of efficiency and in terms of fairness
- These results are up against what political scientist Jonathan Pool used to call “extraordinarily stubborn beliefs”
- Thinking with reference to the notion of “Commons”, or in terms of parallels between linguistic diversity and environmental quality, can be useful in public debate

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