

The Role of English as a Colonial Tool Through the Ages - With an Especial Accent on Africa

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Popište úlohu anglického jazyka během britské kolonizace a jeho dopad na okolní svět

Analytická část

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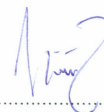
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ABSTRAKT

Práce analyzuje funkci cizího jazyka jako kolonizačního nástroje se zaměřením na Anglický jazyk. Je zde dokázáno, že se získáním znalosti cizího jazyka se mění lidská osobnost. Angličtina je v práci popsána jako světová lingua franca a je zde rozebírána její úloha v Africe.

Klíčová slova: Angličtina, jazyk, osobnost, národ, sebeurčení, přírodní kultura, domorodé národy, kolonizace, Jižní Afrika, apartheid

ABSTRACT

The thesis analyses the function of a foreign language, in this case English, as a colonization tool. It proves that human personality changes with the acquisition of a foreign language. The work depicts the English language as the world's lingua franca and its role as a colonial tool in Africa.

Keywords: English, language, personality, nation, self determination, savage culture, indigenous people, colonization, South Africa, apartheid

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INTRODUCTION

This work studies speech as an organism living in the minds of people. It is not only a tool for communication. Speech is not the same as language. Without the knowledge of any words, we are still able to express our feelings, send messages to the world outside our minds. Imagine painting for example. Do people not embody their feelings through this kind of art? Painting truly is a language. Moreover, language is an art. Speech is an abstract existence created by the nature to be used as an art of expression. Every being's mind is different, so is every way of expression. This means that taking over another way of expression, namely speech, changes one's personality.

This phenomenon and its consequences are going to be discussed within three parts of the thesis. In the first part it talks about English as today's lingua franca, comparing it to the Latin language and emphasizing the similar role of English and Latin as colonial tools.

The second part is devoted to a practical exposition of evidences that a foreign language influences personalities of people who gain the knowledge of it. It will deal with the savage nations of Africa and their acceptance of colonial languages.

The third section applies the mentioned polemics on an example which is the situation in the South African Republic. The Role of English in South Africa from the historical perspective as well as nowadays is depicted here. All together the chapters of this work lead to either the confirmation or a disproof of the hypothesis that human personality changes with learning and usage of a foreign language.

1 THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWING ENGLISH

Let's start with a little cliché: English is a language number one in the world considering its communication value and common usage in the global world. Starting with short essays written by pupils at primary schools and ending by great and respectable linguists, there has been much written proving or arguing with this statement and there have been others wandering around, touching various spheres of science. Whether it is true or not, one fact we can say for sure. English has developed a great influence in our world. That pays even in the case we cannot speak that language! Truly, imagining the scale of that untouchable organism which hugs the whole globe, one must think about a wonder brought to existence by the nature of which we are a part of.

1.1 British Empire

As the largest colonial empire in the history of mankind, in the first half of 20th Century the British Empire covered one fourth of the world's land, with one fourth of the world's population. Under the influence of the invaders, British culture was spread in the colonies Britain held in that the legal and political system replaced the original network. Depending on the scale the order in particular colonies switched and started to be run by the British, the English language started to become more and more important. As the official language of the colonies it penetrated into business and political offices, for why the knowledge of English started being crucial for the locals and started to be taught at schools. The next section sketches the expansion of the Empire and depicts the scale of English as the official state language.

1.2 British and Roman Empire, comparison of English and Latin

Talking about the colonial aspect of the English language, it is more than worth to think about Latin. Latin used to be the great language of Europe, especially the language of its intelligence. It was the real lingua franca of the Old continent for centuries. While being a way different language from English, nowadays not too far from being close to extinction why is it important to mention it here, when it was used ages ago? Exactly because of the fact that it is so old.

It is said that history repeats itself. No matter if it is true or not and however exaggerated this saying is, we could at least take a little lesson from the story of the Latin language. Imagine the world today and the role of English within it and compare to Europe some five hundred years ago and the Latin language.

The Roman Empire, who ruled not a small part of then-known world, carried their language with their expansion. Same as English, the language coming from a corner of the World spreaded along with the rise of its country and settled in its colonies. Same as English, Latin was spoken by the administrative within these colonies and the last, perhaps the most important characteristics which connect our two lingua francas: the knowledge and use of these languages was connected to a social status.¹

The honour of speaking Latin was devoted to the educated, for those who could afford it and for those who had the respected potential of being one of the important members of the society. An important role was played by religion. Christianity and the common belief led the society thus the assets of its members were in the hands of the Church officials. These assets were, as we can see from today's detached point of view, fairly abused. This topic is worth another debate, which will be not involved here, however this fact is important for the comparison of Latin and English and will be mentioned later.

The church with its untouchable supreme position used Latin even as its tool of control of her influence. An American writer and journalist James Carroll polemizes on the issue of the Church keeping the Latin language in usage in his article at the internet journal *Boston.com*. "Countering the Reformation, the Catholic Church emphasized Latin more than ever..." The Church may be afraid of the shift to national languages. The public reading publications in these languages might cause a counter match to the Church's influence. The ideas of reformation were not wanted to settle in the minds of Christians.²

For those who do not see the mentioned similarity with the English language, it can be explained easily, just with some imagination. We have the example of Africa, in our case we will talk concretely about South Africa later in this work, where the people by speaking English acquire some social status. In South Africa, English is perceived as a language of prestige. English is "valued for its usefulness as an instrument for international contact and communication, as means of access to all domains of human achievement, as a symbol of prestige and civilisation, and as a language of wider communication in formal public domains within the country and within large parts of Africa." Moreover in the case of

¹ Françoise Waquet, *Latin: Or the Empire of a Sign*. (New York: Verso, 2001), 213.

² James Carroll, "The changing language of God," *The Boston Globe*, (2006), http://www.boston.com/news/globe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2006/10/30/the_changing_language_of_god/ (accessed August 5, 2010).

South Africa English is also considered “politically neutral language” as “English-speaking South Africans were largely opposed to Apartheid.”³

Same as Latin in Medieval, let’s say, France, English may function as a symbol of intelligence in South Africa nowadays. Is not English a language of scholarship more than any other language today? We also said that the Latin language, along with the education was the privilege of the rich.

A parallel could be found concerning the organization whose tool the language is. But just in the case if we can equate religion and the phenomena of the want for progress. They are both types of believes, aren’t they? Look at the medieval society and its values: the faith in God used to determine the way of life of our ancestors here in Europe. What the clergy said, was considered a truth. Similarly we can talk about the need for economic progress. For instance, the society believes it grants a better future to make the economy grow. What does it have to do with English? The need for progress is connected with the need for the knowledge of English as is it the World’s lingua franca of commerce.

Thus in the case of Latin many can be seen and even predicted concerning English in today’s world. Not to mention the descendent languages which come from Latin e. g. French, Italian or Romanian and today’s separate varieties of English. However, today the trend differs, the countries are much more connected in a global structure and more probably the differences among English varieties will never reach such level to become as diverse as the mentioned languages coming from Latin.

Another phenomenon is being in progress though and that is the extinction and recession of local indigenous languages on the account of the colonizing language. The lingua franca makes other languages assimilate according to its progress. We may give an example of the Celtiberian language, a language from the Celtic branch used to be spoken on the Iberian Peninsula, in the area of today’s Spain. Today this language is extinct. It influenced the forming of the Spanish language, though it disappeared thanks to the expansion of Latin in the Medieval era. Similarly we can observe the situation around English and its relation to the other languages of South Africa. As will be discussed later in this work, there are eleven official languages recognized by South African constitution, all

³ Victor N. Webb, *Language in South Africa: The Role of Language in National Transformation, Reconstruction and Development (Impact: Studies in Language and Society)* (Chapel Hill: John Benjamins Publishing Co, 2002), 84.

of them interacting. English, more than any other arches over the whole country, even though it is not the most common first spoken language of the population.

2 FOREIGN LANGUAGE AND MIND

1.3 Language as an instrument for self determination

“Language is the principal means whereby we conduct our social lives. When it is used in contexts of communication, it is bound up with culture in multiple and complex ways.”⁴

In spoken language we use and combine small units of meaning, morphemes and words. “The words people utter refer to common experience. They express facts, ideas or events that are communicable because they refer to a stock of knowledge about the world that other people share. Words also reflect their authors’ attitudes and beliefs, their point of view, that are also those of others. In both cases, *language expresses cultural reality.*”⁵

Another aspect of language is that it is not only used to refer about experience but also by using language a new experience is created. By speaking face-to-face, speaking via telephone, interpreting someone else’s ideas, writing a letter or sending an e-mail, depending on the medium we use to communicate we give the shape of meaning to the message. The way we use the media of communication we give meaning to our message which is pretty much understandable to the group of people we are a part of. We do it “through a speaker’s tone of voice, accent, conversational style, gestures and facial expressions. The aspects of a language, both verbal and non-verbal, embody cultural reality.”⁶

Prof. Sarbani Chaudhury in her extensive introduction to Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* states the following:

Language is the primary mode of comprehending, contextualizing and communicating reality: without it one can neither name nor distinguish what one perceives. Thoughts are as much shaped and expressed by language as that language is shaped by its specific context. The lives of the people who speak it, the terrain which they inhabit, their cultural, social and religious practices, their economic activities – all contribute to the development of a language.⁷

⁴ Claire Kramsch, *Language and Culture (Oxford Introductions to Language Study)* (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 1998), 3

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Sarbani Chaudhury, introduction to *The Tempest, Longman Study Edition*, by William Shakespeare (New Delhi: Dorling Kindersley, 2009), x/v

According to the reasons stated above we can agree with the fact that the environment and cultural practices of people are in mutual interaction.

1.3.1 Denial of a language leading to decline of its culture

A language is very closely connected to its culture and it is having a strong cultural value. People identify the cultural group they belong to in regard of the language and speech they use and language is simply viewed as a sign of one's identity. We can claim that according to the evidence that a prohibition of a language leads to denial of its people and culture.⁸

Regarding to language of a nation and its oppression we can compare our subject of interest, the situation in South Africa, to the atmosphere in the Czech lands under the dominance of Germany. Parallel to the German language will be English and we will like the Czech nation to the indigenous South Africans. Czech fought for the language in their national revival and at the end they can have their culture supreme in the lands where now the Czech Republic is situated, however in their case the violent removal of Germans after World War II helped them to have this privilege. Germans formed the main body of the speakers of their language, after the War, this body disappeared together with the oppressing language. In South Africa, the English language has a different role. We can find a similarity as it is the colonizing language as well as German used to be in Czech lands, however, South Africa is a country of diverse population and English plays a role of a copula of it. Moreover it is the World's lingua franca.

1.4 The influence of foreign languages to thinking

Language, as the basic means of human communication is one of the most determining sign of a nation, furthermore any group of people connected with common living or let's say way of life. It is even more: a tool for one's socialization in the society. Habits, laws, knowledge and the cultural tradition are being taken over primarily by communication via oral language.

It is very easy to prove the importance of the knowledge of a language without nay researches. To explain: you may lose your hearing, then you would not be able to listen. You may lose your sight and not be able to see. However even without these senses you still will be able to live a valuable life, to live with friends and have children. But what

⁸ Kramersch, *Language and Culture* , 3.

happens if you do not manage to master any language? Just imagine you are not able to communicate. It is too hard, isn't it? Language is a set part of human identity.

Prof. Lera Boroditsky published an interesting article about her research of the influence of foreign language to the mind on the internet server of the *Edge Foundation* which associates intellectuals of the World "...to promote inquiry into and discussion of intellectual, philosophical, artistic, and literary issues, as well as to work for the intellectual and social achievement of society."⁹ The basic fact we should realize is that saying the same sentence in different languages does not necessarily mean we are referring to the exactly same event.

Most questions of whether and how language shapes thought start with the simple observation that languages differ from one another. And a lot! Let's take a (very) hypothetical example. Suppose you want to say, "Bush read Chomsky's latest book." Let's focus on just the verb, "read." To say this sentence in English, we have to mark the verb for tense; in this case, we have to pronounce it like "red" and not like "reed." In Indonesian you need not (in fact, you can't) alter the verb to mark tense. In Russian you would have to alter the verb to indicate tense and gender. So if it was Laura Bush who did the reading, you'd use a different form of the verb than if it was George. In Russian you'd also have to include in the verb information about completion. If George read only part of the book, you'd use a different form of the verb than if he'd diligently plowed through the whole thing. In Turkish you'd have to include in the verb how you acquired this information: if you had witnessed this unlikely event with your own two eyes, you'd use one verb form, but if you had simply read or heard about it, or inferred it from something Bush said, you'd use a different verb form.¹⁰

A way a culture thinks is reflected in its language. An Aboriginal community from North-western Australia has a different system of referring to space. They do not use the positional adverbs like "left, right, forward and back" as we usually do, but refer to the space as it is placed from the view of observer. They use the cardinal direction expressions. So these people instead of saying "move to the left" would say "move to the southeast" or "south southwest" depending on the stance. They would even say "I shake his west hand" instead of "right hand". This is very interesting and it is obvious that these people have to stay oriented all times.

⁹ "About Edge Foundation, Inc.." Edge, http://edge.org/about_edge.html (accessed June 12, 2010).

¹⁰ Lera Boroditsky, "How Does Our Language Shape the Way We Think?," Edge (2009), http://www.edge.org/3rd_culture/boroditsky09/boroditsky09_index.html (accessed June 12, 2010).

Lera Boroditsky describes an experiment where people from different cultures had to give ascending order to pictures on cards on a table. Every time sitting at a different side of a table, the Europeans lined up the pictures from left to right, the Arabs from right to left. The observed Aborigines without doubt ordered the cards from east to west, no matter which cardinal direction they were facing. Speaking about that, we realize that it would not be easy for us to refer to space using the cardinal directions as it means to be concentrated on our position which we are not used to.

Talking about the savage nations Claude Lévi-Strauss points out that often the “primitive” nations refer to each other by a description of the family relation to an elder rather than a name. It is hard to imagine for us that we refer to our colleague for example “he son of daughter of Mr. Michael Jennings” instead of “Paul”.¹¹ The mind of savage nations often is often being beside our understanding. In the case of learning their language, our way of thinking would have had changed significantly since we had to develop this understanding.

Even barely noticeable differences between the grammar features of different languages play a role in the difference people think while speaking these languages.

Even what might be deemed frivolous aspects of language can have far-reaching subconscious effects on how we see the World. Take grammatical gender. In Spanish and other Romance languages, nouns are either masculine or feminine. In many other languages, nouns are divided into many more genders ("gender" in this context meaning class or kind). For example, some Australian Aboriginal languages have up to sixteen genders, including classes of hunting weapons, canines, things that are shiny.¹²

In her publication *Sex, Syntax, and Semantics* Boroditsky proves that the use of gender when talking about things makes the speakers really think about these things like they had a real gender. She is depicting a study they asked Germans and Spaniards to talk about object which in Spanish and German have different grammatical sex. It actually turned out that they used more feminine adjectives for those nouns which are feminine and vice versa

¹¹ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind (Nature of Human Society)* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1968), 137-143.

¹² Lera Boroditsky, "How Does Our Language Shape the Way We Think?," Edge (2009), http://www.edge.org/3rd_culture/boroditsky09/boroditsky09_index.html (accessed June 12, 2010).

with the masculine gender while the tests were all led in English, which has no grammatical gender.¹³

Boroditsky says, it is not necessary to prove this influence of language. It is enough to see the paintings of abstract entities given a human form. If a painter decide to paint death for instance, in 85 percent he chooses the gender according to grammar. So we have death painted as a man in Germany and death as a woman appears in the work of the Russian painters.¹⁴

“The fact that even quirks of grammar, such as grammatical gender, can affect our thinking is profound. Such quirks are pervasive in language; gender, for example, applies to all nouns, which means that it is affecting how people think about anything that can be designated by a noun.”¹⁵This is enough to take in consideration.

1.5 Language colonizing and Shakespeare’s remark

“You taught me language, and my profit on't
Is, I know how to curse: the red plague rid you,
For learning me your language!”¹⁶

Caliban on Miranda’s charge on his ingratitude

Though in the beginning of the 17th Century, in his play *The Tempest* the great poet of Britain William Shakespeare touches the issue of colonization and furthermore, he writes about the language as a part of a man’s identity and a man being colonized through a foreign language. In the quote displayed above a savage man (his name is Caliban which rhymes with “Caribbean” as the destination of overseas exploration and at the same time is an anagram of the word cannibal), a representative of the colonized, blusters and stands out against the colonists, saying that their language crooked his mentality. “But we hear much more than curses in Caliban’s language. He has a rich and sensuous apprehension of nature...”¹⁷

¹³ Lera Boroditsky, *Sex, Syntax, and Semantics*, in *Language in Mind: Advances in the Study of Language and Cognition* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 61-79.

¹⁴ Boroditsky, Lera, "How Does Our Language Shape the Way We Think?," Edge (2009), http://www.edge.org/3rd_culture/boroditsky09/boroditsky09_index.html.

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ William Shakespeare, *The Tempest* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 121.

¹⁷ Stephen Orgel, *Introduction to The Tempest*, by William Shakespeare (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 23.

The *Tempest* is a theatre play about a Duke of Milan Prospero and his daughter Miranda arriving on a remote island taking control of it and enslaving its population, Caliban and Ariel.

The Tempest is as much about linguistic colonization as about territorial aggression. The first altercation between Caliban and Prospero and Miranda revolves round the teaching of language. Miranda claims to have given Caliban the gift of articulation: she has taken ‘pains to make...(him) speak’ has ‘endowed...(his) purposes/With words that made them known’. Caliban acknowledges this claim when he says Prospero has taught him ‘how/To name the bigger light, and how the less’. Together, Prospero and Miranda can maintain that they have *civilized* Caliban because language is the basic distinction between human beings and beasts.¹⁸

Shakespeare unwittingly describes a case of the need of Europeans to spread their culture to barbarians for the profit of both sides. Prospero and his daughter acquired a servant, Caliban in the eyes of Prospero could have learned a better way of life. This is a fictional example of the so called “white men’s burden” and this problematic will be further discussed later in the work. Nonetheless, it shows up that Caliban, unlike Ariel, who wants to gain her freedom by paying her service, refuses the European culture as it is “rotten” and prefers his natural indigenous values. The following section called “The savage mind” also talks about the values of indigenous nations.

Yet, Caliban’s ‘gabble’ as Miranda labels it, was fully invested with ‘meaning’ much before the arrival of the father-daughter team: he could make perfect sense of the world around him, knew all the secrets of the island, could distinguish accurately between ‘fresh springs’ and ‘brine-pits’, ‘barren place and fertile’. Caliban then, must have had a language of his own, incomprehensible to the new inhabitants. Yet, like the early European settlers of America, Miranda reduces this alien tongue to the category of non-language and confidently proceeds to impose her superior language over Caliban.

In teaching him their language, Prospero and Miranda are effectively erasing his native tongue and it is this simultaneous erasure and imposition that Caliban vehemently opposes.¹⁹

¹⁸ Sarbani Chaudhury, Introduction to *The Tempest*, by William Shakespeare (New Delhi: Dorling Kindersley, 2009), x/iv.

¹⁹ Sarbani Chaudhury, Introduction to *The Tempest*, by William Shakespeare (New Delhi: Dorling Kindersley, 2009), x/iv - x/v.

The founder of so called *Negritude*, an ideological and cultural movement aiming to revival and restoration of the African culture and history, Aimé Césaire wrote his own adaptation of the mentioned play by William Shakespeare focusing on the relation between Caliban and Ariel and Prospero from the view of the colonized. The idea of *Negritude* as a reaction to French colonial policies of cultural assimilation reflected in this work, also calls for the importance of intuitive wisdom prior to the rational thinking, individualism and caginess of Europeans and emphasizes the harmony between the nature and Africans.²⁰

In Césaire's *A Tempest* Prospero wants to teach Caliban his language for the purpose of giving him orders which is a clear criticism of the colonial languages being used as tools for colonization. Further, Césaire depicts Caliban nobler than Shakespeare did. There is a difference in the values of the colonizer and colonized. Caliban reprehending Prospero his attitude of being superior to Caliban shows the feeling of the repressed according to Césaire:

“Prospero... you're an old hand at deception...
you ended up by imposing on me
an image of myself:
underdeveloped ... undercompetent
that's how you made me see myself!
And I hate that image...and it's false!”²¹

The fact, that the discussed theatre play, originally written in 1610's was remade after 350 years shows, that the problematic has not been solved yet and is a serious concern for the society to deal with. Note that the remake is still and even more touching the issue of a language as a tool for colonization. Both described by the representative of the colonized power (Shakespeare) and the repressed entity (Césaire), the phenomena of a foreign language causing harm on another culture is shown as a negative process, which rises indignation and which is itself disregarding the values of that culture.

²⁰ Abiola Irele, *African Experience in Literature and Ideology* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 67-94.

²¹ Aime Césaire, *A Tempest* (London: Ubu Repertoary Theater Publications, 1992), 64.

1.6 Savage mind

Talking about Africa, what comes into people's mind is among others the savage life of tribes who live throughout especially the Sub-Saharan Africa. Their life, customs and above all, values, differ from ours greatly. Touched by globalization only a little bit, but still with smiles in their faces, these people carry a sadly disappearing legacy, from which a vast knowledge useful in our lives can be taken by us.

It is without question, that the number of savage African tribes, moreover all those of the World, has rapidly decreased within the last few hundred years. It is a result of the expansion of the empires, the need, or perhaps more apposite to say "want" for land and resources. Might this be an evidence of the Social Darwinist theory, that more applicable cultures, same as animal and plant species, have survived, taking the place of those who are less successful.

To add a criticism towards Social Darwinism, it is worth to say that no one could have proved yet, that the evolution (besides its aim to make the species become more adaptable to the environment) leads to the final survival or to say, that the species, no matter how far they have climbed their evolution ladder, will not be able to harm themselves. This polemic touches the today's exploitation of the natural resources by mankind harming the environment. We shall mention that the reason for extinction of savage cultures is, that they have been overlaid by stronger, but more worth to say "insatiable" ones. The savages have had their own life perfectly adaptable for survival, moreover better fit to nature.

The benefits possible to take from tribal cultures can be seen on the difference between their and the modern languages. In one of his significant publications called *The Savage Mind* a French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss points out that the languages of savage nations are more practical for normal life, as they relate to the real experiences offered by the nature. Sure we cannot compare the "normal life" of a man living in Manhattan and a person from Mongo tribe living in a small village in the middle of Zaire, however only one of them is not corrupted by the phenomena criticized by Lévi-Strauss that to say the want for economical progress being nowadays more important than the want for actual knowledge and wisdom.²²

²² Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind (Nature of Human Society)* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1968), 1-34

On the example of language Lévi-Strauss shows that the intellectual maturity of savage nations can equal the modern one. Natives have developed a great sense of recognizing the natural appearances such as weather, colours and the way of animal and even plant motions, for whom all they set up a name. They are able to distinguish botanic species focusing on very small differences so well that ten different flowers for a savage person might be just one in our eyes. Those ten flowers have ten different names, that is why the vocabulary of tribal nations is enriched so largely, that it is even richer of concrete words than our vocabulary usually is.²³

An adventure of a scientist E. Smith Bowen is described: “...in arrival in an African Tribe, she wanted to begin by learning the language. Her informants found it quite natural, at an elementary stage of their instruction, to collect a large number of botanical specimens, the names of which they told her as they showed them to her. She was unable to identify them, not because of their exotic nature but because she had never taken an interest in the riches and diversities of the plant world. The natives on the other hand took such an interest for granted.”²⁴

Strauss also mentions severe explorers who look up to the abilities of the primitive tribes: “Small differences are noted ... they have a name for every one of the coniferous trees of the region; in these cases differences are not conspicuous. The ordinary individual among the whites does not distinguish (them) ... Indeed, it would be possible to translate a treatise on botany into Tewa ...” Strauss cites a botanist and explorer Barbara Freire-Marreco.

These examples talk about the forgotten, often called “uncivilized”, nations, whose identity is being colonized. This is an extreme thought considering that probably not many hunters or settlers still living a savage life will come to use the English language in their life. However we shall realize all the people of Africa used to be “uncivilized” not more than some hundred years ago. It is their identity, what has been disordered

1.7 White man’s burden

Take up the White Man's burden--

In patience to abide,

To veil the threat of terror

²³ Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind (Nature of Human Society)*, 4-12

²⁴ Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind (Nature of Human Society)*, 6

And check the show of pride;
By open speech and simple,
An hundred times made plain
To seek another's profit,
And work another's gain.

(An extract from *White Man's Burden*, a poem by Rudyard Kipling)²⁵

Should there be an explanation for the growing Imperialism throughout the world and maybe an apology for the cruelty it caused? The expansion of colonial powers, never seen in such scales before indeed may had many, who felt displeased with the happenings in the colonies, not yet speaking of the indigenous people neither the slaves, who played an important role, considering the massive exploitation of their workforce while ruining their lives and therefore even their culture. Although we had to argue about its credibility today, the answer, expurgatory for the colonial powers, came out in the late 19th Century.

1.7.1 On the natural selection

The economic and political expansion of European powers and of America was justified with an official scientific theory. There was an increasing difference between rich and poor people in the world and the rich part of them feeling supreme over the poor. A theory appeared which was based on the teachings of an English clergymen Thomas Malthus, who at the turn of the 18th and 19th Century predicted an insufficiency of food and resources compared to the increasing world's population, with a struggle among nations which necessarily comes along with it.

Charles Darwin worked further on this idea in the first half of the 19th Century. In the "struggle for survival," as he calls it, the plant and animal species struggle for food and the natural selection let those with better abilities and qualities pass these to their descendants. The best-adapted species are to survive, the unsuccessful ones to extinct.

When they extinct, they take their attributes with them. That means, when a quality of a particular kind of being does not help the being to survive, the quality itself is determined to extinct.

²⁵ Rudyard Kipling, *Rudyard Kipling's Verse: Definitive Edition* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1929), 322

1.7.2 Social Darwinism

In the late 19th Century a social theory appeared which was based on the work of Charles Darwin, although he himself did not approve it and would most probably have reservations about different parts of it. Social Darwinists took the theory of natural selection and applied it to the mankind. The best adapted races, or let's say cultures, naturally find themselves on the top of the world's society and have the most successful social, politic and economic systems.²⁶

European powers and America at that time, wanting to extend their influence, could now have their wants backed by this theory. The struggle for resources naturally makes the more successful ones rich and powerful and it would break the natural hierarchy to redistribute the wealth and power among all of the people which would allow the survival of species, in this case people, who are less fit. In fact that means the world powers are naturally superior and it is in the interest of human evolution that they control the rest of the world. Imperialism was now scientifically approved.²⁷

...we should study the problem of language and mind very much in the way we study any problem in biology. We can take as an example the ways in which we study the characteristics of organs or systems of the body. If we were to study the human visual system, we would first attempt to abstract this system away from its physical context. Although it interacts with the circulatory system and many other systems, the scientist tries to identify and separate the visual system by the process of idealization. And it has always been that way as long as it's been called science.²⁸

1.7.3 Impact on the culture and language

Social Darwinism claims that human intellect producing society as it is, is a product of the evolution, thus the imperialism is nothing but promoting the happening in the world. Therefore it justified the political leaders to further use imperialism for the sake of improving the human condition. White man's burden is the need to spread the white culture, which is supreme on the basis discussed above, to the parts of the world where the cultures with their practices are backwards, to help them improve.

²⁶ Robert C Bannister, *Social Darwinism: Science and Myth in Anglo-American Social Thought (American Civilization)* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979)

²⁷ Bannister, *Social Darwinism: Science and Myth in Anglo-American Social Thought (American Civilization)*, 226

²⁸ Noam Chomsky, *Language and Politics* (Albany: Ak Press, 2004), 221-222

No matter what the concerns of various colonizers were and no matter how seriously they meant their progress to help the colonized cultures, the fact that the so called white culture was domesticated all over the world and has impact even in those countries, which were never colonized. A shining example of this occurs and that is the English language.

3 ENGLISH, A LANGUAGE OF WHITES AND THE BLACK CONTINENT

1.8 Colonization of Africa and David Livingstone's legacy

"The end of the geographic fact is but the beginning of the missionary enterprise."

David Livingstone's Cambridge lectures of December 4th and 5th, 1857²⁹

Prior to the 19th century, the rest of the world knew very little about Africa - the Dark Continent. What trade was transacted between Europeans and African traders occurred on the coast. However, beginning in the early 1800s, the interest in the African interior increased. Civilization, commerce and Christianity - those were the three C's Doctor David Livingstone, one of the first and probably the most significant explorer of African mainland stated in his work, and those were the three reasons for Europeans, self-convinced of their culture being supreme, to civilize Africa as to help developing good governmental structures, organize Christian missions which with the religion itself should secure the social, economic, political and spiritual needs of the pagan people. According to Livingstone. The commerce between the two continents and within the African regions, if legitimate and based on Christian principles, was aimed to pacify the human suffering brought by the system of slave trade coming with Arab-Swahili and slave traders from Europe.³⁰

In the time of industrialization, when the science came with medicaments sufficient to heal tropical diseases, the explorations of African interior revealed its potential and attracted the attention of European business spheres who saw the opportunity of a growing sales area as well as the possibility of cheap source of natural resources. We could call it the David Livingstone's legacy, what gave the patronage to this process, though it was a general approach to excuse the expansion of European influence over the black continent.

Belgian King Leopold II founded the International African Association in order to discover and humanize the natives in the area of Central Africa, mainly in Congo. Experts from different countries were invited to join the association. The original purpose as well as the cooperation among European countries was however unsuccessful and these nations

²⁹ James Macaulay, *Livingstone Anecdotes* (New York: General Books, 2009), 151.

³⁰ Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1992), 23-25

started to claim parts of land for themselves. These claims led in the struggles for African land among European countries.

As following, the so called Berlin Conference was summoned. On France and Germany's urge a meeting of fourteen countries, including the United States of America, was assembled, to discuss their cooperation in the process of colonizing the African continent. This meeting took place in residence of Chancellor Otto von Bismarck in Berlin in 1884; the most important participants were mainly the foreign ministers of the European leading powers. No delegates from African countries were present, neither invited and it was obvious Europe wanted to negotiate the issues for its own interest, no matter what the opinion of the black continent had been. In contrast to the African states, the result of this meeting was highly positive for the European nations. The economic activity in African territories was strengthened and conversely the forms of African autonomy and self-governing were eliminated. The conference approved the “scramble for Africa” and the European powers could lawfully continue with their occupation and annexation of African territories.³¹

The process what we call “the scramble for Africa” was actually a hasty dividing of the continent among the colonial powers. The fact that no representative of an African country was present on the Berlin Conference does nothing less than testifies that the words of David Livingstone were going to be profaned. Although based on the facts this work is discussing above, we can polemize that even the first idea of “helping” Africa by missionary work and forming a better civilization there, this primary purpose of colonizing Africa fell back to the materialistic needs of the Europeans.³²

The Berlin Conference sped up the process of colonization in Africa. The powers frequently forced the tribes' chiefs to sign the treaties in case to observe the only condition set – the “Principle of Effectivity”, which said that a colony could be held only when a treaty with local powers is signed and when an administration run by a police force is established. Within not many years the Black continent was swallowed by the Europeans and “by 1898 the greater part of the continent of Africa was divided between the European powers.” only “Liberia remained independent under the patronage of the United States. The Italians had failed spectacularly at the battle of Adowa in 1896 to make good their bid

³¹ Muriel E Chamberlain,. *The Scramble for Africa (Seminar Studies in History Series)* (New York: Longman, 2010), 50.

³² Chamberlain,. *The Scramble for Africa (Seminar Studies in History Series)*, 50-52.

for Abyssinia. But these were the exceptions.”³³ So only two states, Abyssinia which was an Ethiopian empire on the land where Ethiopia and Eritrea lies today and Liberia, stayed with their own governments. I would be inadequate to call them “independent” on the colonizers of Africa, as they still were influenced: Libya by the USA, Abyssinia by France who had an interest in the control of the sea routes in the Red Sea. That is, however, a topic for another debate.

Not always the powers succeeded easily in their capturing of African territories. For instance in South Africa we talk about Boer wars between the Dutch settlers and the British Empire. Though this is not an example of a struggle of indigenous black people but the descendants of Dutch colonizers (who themselves were involved in a conflict with the Zulu tribe), it is an evidence of an antipathy against British colonial rule.

1.9 English in South Africa

In the middle of the last century, when *Black Skin White Masks*, the first book by Frantz Fanon, was written and published, the world had still mixed thoughts on racial issues. The black people, discriminated in their lives, started to take over the white manners and tried to assimilate into the culture of the whites. Therefore Fanon says they wear white masks, although their skin is black, and points on the fact, that the black people lose their cultures, ways of life and in fact their identity.³⁴

English plays an important role in this phenomenon. The language is an important part of one’s identity, and while taking over language of another culture, one takes over part of the identity of that culture. To speak means to accept the tradition and manners of the culture the language comes from. Fanon claims that the black man speaking a language of whites takes over their way of thinking, adopts their culture and in fact sustains the white culture.³⁵

Now a conception was set of the role of a lingua franca as English is in the environment of the colonized country. The following section talks about the situation of this language in the Republic of South Africa. As we will see, there are not only negatives in English as a colonial tool in this country.

³³ Chamberlain., *The Scramble for Africa (Seminar Studies in History Series)*, 77.

³⁴ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 2008)

³⁵ Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 1-23

1.9.1 The History of English in South Africa before apartheid

The first colonial traces are recorded with the arrival of the first European traders in the middle of the 18th century. It was mainly through the Dutch East India Company (an important trading concern founded by the Dutch in 1602, successful for almost 200 years) which brought the first Germanic language into South Africa. Those were mainly descendants of the Dutch colonists, who started to call themselves Afrikaners only a few generations later. These people were using the Afrikaans language containing patterns of both English and Dutch language and the indigenous languages as well. The Dutch settlers, as well as some Scandinavians, French Huguenots and Germans successfully tried to show their power over the indigenous tribes and did not hesitate to use weapons to enforce their European superiority. Subsequently, the tribes were expelled from their original land.³⁶

The invasion of speakers of a Germanic language took place at the end of 19th century, when the British started to occupy the Dutch colony in the area of Cape by a military force. It was crucial for the British to engage the Cape in order to control the sea-route to India. Finally, the British first permanent settlement appeared in the Cape in 1820, after series of more and less successful struggles. By the time the British replaced the Dutch in the holding, the British intended to set up the English language in the Dutch-speaking colony as well.³⁷

English was proclaimed the only official language in 1822. The majority of the Dutch settlers however still used to speak their language. The shift on behalf of English started to occur during the Great Trek (years 1836-1838), when the Dutch, Germans and other European nationalities living in Cape were migrating away from the British control. This migration happened when the British abolished slavery that was crucial for the Dutch agriculture. The British took advantage from this migration and hired schoolmasters and clergymen from Britain and Scotland who were sent to South Africa with the intension to maintain English as the official language. Subsequently, English became the language of education, law, business, entertainment etc. English did not fully expand to the rural areas, neither to religious or domestic life where Afrikaans was more spoken.³⁸

³⁶ Roger Lass, "South African English," in: *Studies in South African Sociolinguistics*, by Rajend Mesthrie (Cape Town: Clyson Printers, 1995), 92

³⁷ Lass, *Language and Social History*, 93

³⁸ Lass, *Language and Social History*, 93-95

English used in the British Cape colony was specific since its beginning. As the Dutch was influenced and turned in the Afrikaans, there were two main reasons which highly influenced this variety of English. At first, the British who settled at the Cape were mostly members of the working-class who did not really follow the rules of Standard English. At second, English was affected by other languages spoken in the area, mainly Afrikaans.³⁹

Several ethnic groups have been living in South Africa since the slavery was abolished in the year 1833. The main groups are Asians, black South Africans and white coloured descendants of mainly Dutch, British, French settlers. These ethnic groups have used the ethnic languages, which have not been standardized or recognized at national level as well as not used in public contexts.

With the upswing of the mining industry in She knowledge of the English language became important for the workers' professional growth because the mining companies were established only by the English speaking people. The Boer workers were among those ethnic groups that were unable to speak English and therefore assigned a lower social status. The lack of English knowledge caused their migration to the countryside where the chances to learn English were limited. The Boers however started to fight for the equal rights concerning their Afrikaans language in comparison with English and they succeeded in 1875. Even if the languages became equal, the only official language of Transvaal Republic was granted English in 1906. The Boers were irritated and did not hesitate to lead a resistance against the English language that was driving away Afrikaans. The constitution of South Africa responded to these circumstances by entrenching two languages, Dutch and English, as official languages. Afrikaans was added later in 1925 while replacing the Dutch language.⁴⁰

1.9.2 Apartheid

The multi-ethnic environment in South Africa where the black Africans used to speak only their native languages became highly explosive during the apartheid era. The apartheid policy came into being in the year 1948 when the National Party was re-elected. The language diversity acted as a social problem and was seen as a barrier to the integration of the various ethno linguistic groups. The English language came to stand as a means for the

³⁹ Josef J. Schmied, *English in Africa: An Introduction (Longman Linguistics Library)* (London: Longman Pub Group, 1991), 13

⁴⁰ Rajend Mesthrie, *English in language shift: The history, structure and sociolinguistics of South African Indian English* (Cambridge: University Press 1992), xix

unity of these people, as well as it was a link to the world outside the borders of the regime.

South Africa ... is a society that is remarkably open to international cultural forces and has been so in many different ways for a long time. It is important to remember that the opposition to apartheid was shaped and fought with language, style, and forms that emerged out of Western influences rather than any traditional or atavistic approaches. From the formation of the African National Congress ... early in the twentieth century by urban, missionary-educated, and mainly middle-class Africans, to the socialist ideologies of the liberation movements in exile, to the Western trade union-inspired domestic opposition forces, the impact of Western ideas, culture, money, and influence is strikingly apparent.⁴¹

The first goal of the apartheid policy was to force the black Africans to learn both official languages English and Afrikaans in order to understand the white Africans who were the only government officials taking control of South Africa. While understanding English and Afrikaans, the people could be controlled and observed by the government more easily. It happened though, that English, unlike Afrikaans, was adopted as a language of opposition of the government, because the white leadership spoke mainly in Afrikaans.⁴²

As following the Black people were separated from the whites to preserve their ethnic character even more than before. The townships or so called “homelands” were created next to the cities. The largest African ethnic groups were assigned as separate residential areas which the Whites sometimes called “nations” and its Blacks labeled as “non-citizens” of South Africa during the 1950s – 1960s.⁴³

The government however recognized nine (Ndebele, Swazi, Northern Sotho, Southern Sotho, Tsonga, Tswana, Venda, Xhosa and Zulu) indigenous languages for purposes of population classification and policy. These “nine plus two linguistic entities” separated the particular ethnic groups from other, where the equality could not be seen. The separation had deep racialist overtone. In South Africa, the language had the function of establishing the ethnic boundaries and assigning the different social position. The Afrikaans language

⁴¹ Ann Bernstein. “Globalization, Culture and Development,” in *Many globalizations: cultural diversity in the contemporary world*, ed. Peter L. Berger and Samuel P. Huntington (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 186-187

⁴² Bernstein, *Many globalizations: cultural diversity in the contemporary world*, 185

⁴³ Robert K. Herbert, *Language and Society in Africa: Theory and Practice of Sociolinguistic* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 1992), 105

together with the European culture was seen as supreme. Since the end of the apartheid policy the Blacks have been reclaiming their ethnic heritage that was disavowed during apartheid and again pride in their ancestry.⁴⁴

1.9.3 The multilingual society since 1994

Nowadays South Africa is made up from various ethnic groups and their diverse languages. Since the end of the apartheid, the South African population has been divided into four ethnic groups, namely English-speaking or Afrikaans-speaking whites, coloured people, black Africans and Indians. There have been eleven official languages from which nine is indigenous. The government has supported the status and advance the use of indigenous languages that were historically diminished since 1996.⁴⁵

South Africa is linguistically greatly diverse and the languages have had great effect on each other. South African English contains words and phrases from Afrikaans, isiZulu and other Africans languages. On the other hand also the African languages are often peppered with English or Afrikaans.

The following table represents the South African language distribution according to the censuses from 1996 and 2001. It is obvious the isiZulu language is the mother tongue for almost 24 % of population; Afrikaans occupies the third position and in 2001 English shares the fifth place with Setswana.

⁴⁴ Herbert, *Language and Society in Africa: Theory and Practice of Sociolinguistic*, 105-120

⁴⁵ Rajend Mesthrie, *Language and Social History: Studies in South African Sociolinguistics* (Cape Town: Clyson Printers, 1995), 335

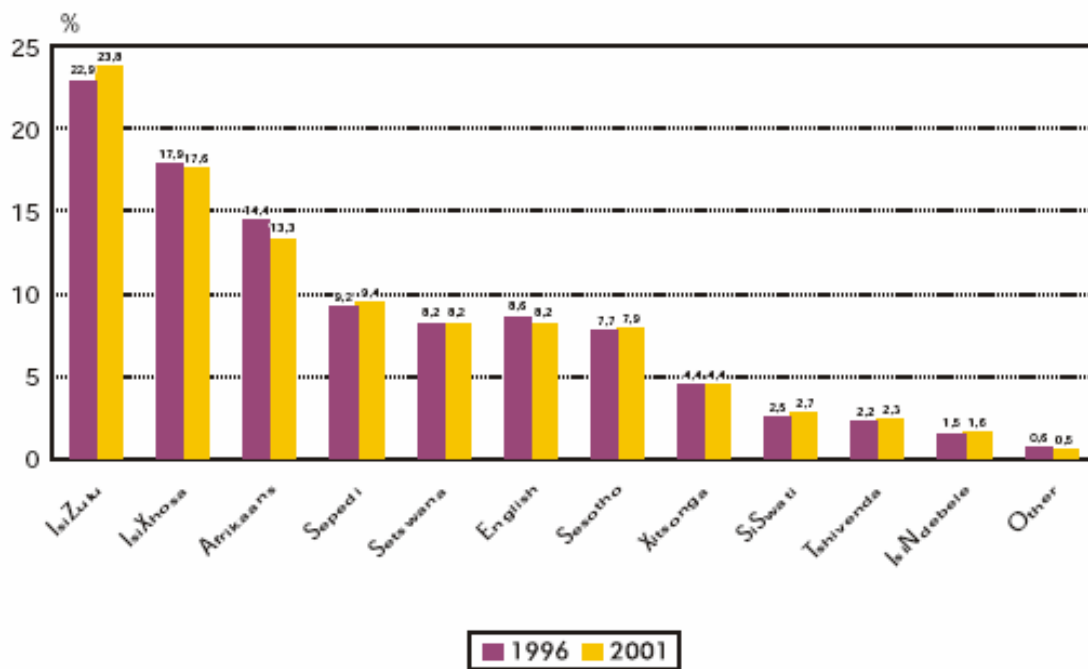


Table: *Distribution of the population by language spoken most often at home – 1996 and 2001*⁴⁶

Having a focus on English, the census from 2001 showed that only a bare number of Blacks uses it as their home language. According to the table there is a decline of the usage of English as the first language. However the estimates also say that about half population has a speaking knowledge of English and in contrast it moreover is becoming more popular together with the integration to the World's economics last years.

The Afrikaans language has been one of the most used languages since the beginning of colonialism. Firstly it was the language of European descendants and their slaves, as it is mentioned above. This language however has suffered historically; it has been connected with 40 years long apartheid era. It was the core language during the apartheid regime while English was seen as a language used for anti-apartheid campaigns. Seeing the table above we note that the Afrikaans language has decreased.

The relations between races of people are trying to improve. Not only in the apartheid era the skin colour determined the rights and freedoms of people. The Whites used to be the only powerful people, nowadays the economically and politically powerful people come from different ethnic groups. Unfortunately the people living in South Africa are still

⁴⁶ "Statistics South Africa - Census 2001." Statistics South Africa - Home. 2001. <http://www.statssa.gov.za/census01/html/C2001publications.asp> (accessed August 9, 2010).

broken and influenced by the past and there are problems with poverty within the black communities.

1.9.4 English as a “killer language” in South Africa

English could be seen as a “killer language” in South African multilingual environment in the sense that it undermines the colourful ethnic and cultural uniqueness. This term arose as early as in the colonial period when the British people forced the people of indigenous languages to speak English. The result was not only the shift from indigenous languages to English, but their total extinction.⁴⁷

Nowadays the world globalization caused, that English became a lingua franca of South Africa, even if this state is multilingual with great diversity of languages. The two main powers – business and policy, had a great influence on that. The blacks did not have much power to promote their languages and even the black intellectuals were not writing or publishing in their languages. Here we can see the similarity to Latin, as was discussed in this work before. English functions as a language of intelligence.⁴⁸

The situation has improved since 1994 and even if half of South African citizens use English, they speak by indigenous languages at home. The government is protecting the indigenous cultural, religious and linguistic communities. “The use of English does not have to mean to lose the own identity”⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Peter Lucko, *Studies in African Varieties of English*, (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2003), 152-162

⁴⁸ Ibid

⁴⁹ Ibid

CONCLUSION

This thesis' goal was to prove that English as a foreign language influences minds of people as language is a part of human identity and speaking another language means taking over a part of this identity.

The first section stressed the importance of English according to the influence it has had within the scale of power of the British Empire and it compares English to the Latin language which, as we realize in chapter 1.2, had many similar features. These two languages share especially the role of a language of a great belief, which was Christianity in the case of Latin and the need for progress in the case of English.

The second part proves the influence of a language to one's mind and its belonging to human identity, and is giving an opinion of language as a colonial tool written by William Shakespeare. Language by various means refers to the attitudes and beliefs of the people who communicate, thus it is infiltrating other ways of thinking. Not always however, is this influence wanted, which is shown on the oppression of the savage nations.

The role of English in the multi-linguistic environment of South Africa is described in the last part. English arches over the community, it is spoken by intelligence and it is a symbol of oppression against the apartheid regime. The influence of English over South African population means its remarkable ties to the West.

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