

ULRR

Linguistic justice and global English: theoretical and empirical approaches

Item Type	Article
Authors	Soler, Josep; Morales Galvez, Sergi
Citation	International Journal of the Sociology of Language 277, pp 1-16
Publisher	De Gruyter
Download date	2026-06-08 02:09:20
Item License	https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/
Link to Item	https://doi.org/10.34961/researchrepository-ul.24338497



Josep Soler* and Sergi Morales-Gálvez

Linguistic justice and global English: theoretical and empirical approaches

<https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl-2022-0026>

Received February 8, 2022; accepted May 17, 2022

Abstract: The global spread of English and its impact on the pursuit of linguistic justice has been a topic of concern for scholars in a wide range of different fields in the humanities and social sciences. Firmly convinced of the usefulness of cross-field collaboration to advance our understanding of the expansion of English globally, in this special issue we bring together experts in sociolinguistics and political theory with two goals in mind: (1) to illustrate, empirically, its consequences for speakers in situated contexts; and (2) to propose potential normative responses to the global spread of English. In order to frame the overarching theme of the special issue, and to show our stance as guest editors in connection to global English, in this opening piece we develop a critique to Philippe Van Parijs' notion of linguistic justice. In particular, we take issue with his vision that promoting English as a global lingua franca is a good idea in order to enhance everyone's equality of opportunities (e.g., in the labour market). We question such an assumption from both a theoretical and empirical point of view, and argue that having equal access to English is not sufficient to equalize everyone's opportunities.

Keywords: equality of opportunities; global English; linguistic justice; Van Parijs

1 Introduction

In our multilingual world, English (in its facet as a global language) continues to occupy a particular kind of position, one that can place it at the same time in several different roles. As such, theoretical approaches to try and understand what “global English” really is are diverse and, not infrequently, opposed. Indeed, as Ricento (2015) explains, global English has been conceived of (almost in parallel) in very different terms: (a) as an agent of injustice and Anglo-American political and

*Corresponding author: Josep Soler, English, Stockholm University, Universitetsvägen 10E, Stockholm 106 91, Sweden, E-mail: josep.soler@english.su.se. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2813-0101>

Sergi Morales-Gálvez, Department of Politics and Public Administration, University of Limerick, Limerick, Ireland

economic dominance (Phillipson 1992); (b) as a tool of individual empowerment and socio-economic progress (Brutt-Griffler 2002); and (c) as a necessary instrument for the enhancement of equity and democratic progress worldwide (Van Parijs 2011). Ricento (2015) laments this coexistence of conceptually opposed frameworks to investigate the very same object of study, and he concludes that it is due to the lack of rigorous analytical frameworks within applied linguistics and language policy in particular. To address this problem, Ricento calls for more interdisciplinary efforts, connecting language policy with political economy and political theory.

There is no shortage of such interdisciplinary efforts. In fact, in recent years, researchers have continued to delve deeper into the intersection between applied linguistics/language policy and political theory (Léger and Lewis 2016; Morales-Gálvez and Stojanović 2017; Oakes and Peled 2018; Peled and Weinstock 2020; Ricento 2014), building on earlier calls to explore such an inter-disciplinary area (Kymlicka and Patten 2003; Patten 2001). Oftentimes, though, such frameworks have tended to analyse how political philosophical arguments fit with discussions about multilingualism/linguistic diversity, leaving English to one side. This is, of course, with the exception of Van Parijs' theory of linguistic justice (2011), in which he develops two sets of assumptions: on the one hand, he presents arguments in favour of the spread of English as the world's *lingua franca*, while on the other hand, he argues for a strong application of the principle of territoriality as a way of counterbalancing the all-English push that might result from the first of his assumptions. In this opening piece of the special issue, we delve deeper into Van Parijs' notion of linguistic justice and the *lingua franca* role he envisions for English. In our critique, we present both theoretical and empirical arguments to account for what we see are potential shortcomings of Van Parijs' framework. This allows us to make our position explicit as guest editors of the issue and to frame the discussion for the rest of the articles, whose key ideas we also briefly introduce in our paper (see Section 5). In fact, as we shall see, the main arguments of the articles in the special issue feed into our critique of Van Parijs' concept of linguistic justice, helping us underscore both its theoretically and empirically grounded limitations.

Indeed, we should note that the position English has today globally is not accidental. Beyond issues of historical nature (Pennycook 1994), throughout the globe and across a large number of countries, policies exist that make engaging with English a rather inevitable choice, particularly within compulsory education systems (Ives 2020); so, there exist an array of political-economic pressures that pull toward global English, a process that late-modern capitalism has all but strengthened (O'Regan 2021). Aware of this, however, the overarching questions we seek to discuss in this special issue are: is it possible to move beyond dualistic, all-encompassing views of English? Can we go passed conceptualisations of English as an either-or type of language, either hegemonic-dominating or

liberating-empowering? It seems to us there is still much ground to cover by both sociolinguists and political theorists alike, and that joint efforts such as those cited above and the one we propose here are still much needed. Overall, our special issue contributes a critical sociolinguistic and political theoretical appraisal of global English and its impact on matters of linguistic justice.

In an era of enhanced mobility, interconnectivity, and increased political and economic inequalities (Duchêne et al. 2013), it seems all the more pertinent to refine our frameworks to understand global English better and to fine-tune its connection to linguistic justice further. At the time of writing, amidst the Covid-19 pandemic crisis, scholars have already begun to reflect on the multifaceted transformations that will ensue, including for interaction and communication (Adami 2020). English can undoubtedly play a relevant role in this reconfiguration of the flow of communication around the globe, but its double-sided nature (as a facilitator of interaction between speakers of different languages or an inhibitor of multilingualism) can also be exacerbated (on the topic of linguistic diversity and multilingual communication in the pandemic, see the articles included in Zhang and Li 2020).

This opening article of the special issue, then, intends to provide the focus, rationale, and overview of the issue, and to make explicit the terms in which we wish to situate the discussion about global English and linguistic justice from a cross-disciplinary, collaborative perspective.

2 Toward a sociolinguistic and political theoretical understanding of global English and linguistic justice

Within sociolinguistics and applied linguistics, different models have been proposed over the past decades to account for the global spread of English and its consequences for speakers of diverse language backgrounds. Despite all their limitations, these models have helped underscore several key ideas when conceptualising English in its global dimension. These key ideas include the following: (1) that the several Englishes around the world are equally worth, and their speakers equally dignified (Kachru 1985); (2) that the current spread of English globally implies a non-exclusive ownership of the language by its native speakers (Crystal 2003); (3) that in lingua franca situations, speakers can and do cooperate to engage in mutual understanding, despite grammatical or vocabulary “deviations” from the norm (Seidlhofer 2011); (4) that in such situations, in accounting for speakers’ agency, one should in fact place the analytical focus on

the practices speakers engage with in interactional events, not on the language forms and their functions (Canagarajah 2013); and (5) that the position of English globally needs to be read in socio-political, economic, cultural, and historical terms (Pennycook 1994; Phillipson 1992). Some of these models are more linguistically oriented, while others are more socially grounded, but they all have provided useful angles to situate discussions on English as a global language, even if their ontological conception of global English might be sometimes diametrically opposed.

Most relevant for us in this opening article are the models and frameworks developed within (4) and (5) from the above paragraph, which read global English critically and situate it more clearly in its social, economic, and political dimension. Indeed, it is within these models where we find more arguments to anchor the debates connecting applied linguistics and sociolinguistics with political theory, as illustrated by recent discussions on global English, linguistic diversity, and social justice (e.g., Hultgren 2020; Piller 2016). If we agree that the global spread of English continues to represent a source of linguistic injustice, what policies or measures should be devised to counter the consequences of language-related discrimination? Based on what normative/theoretical principles can those policies be grounded? Can we also develop models that account for both the structural and material inequalities, as well as the agentic empowerment that global English generates?

To address these questions, we align ourselves with Oakes and Peled (2018: 8) in seeing that there are “ways in which the empirical study of the politics of language connects with the moral debates that it raises”, and so language policy may certainly be enriched by a more systematic conceptual and normative theorising. The position of English as a global language has not escaped the attention of political philosophers, and in that regard, Van Parijs’ (2011) theory of linguistic justice has been one model that has attracted much attention and criticism. For Van Parijs, providing the world’s population with equal access to English would improve equality of opportunities worldwide and, therefore, would create the conditions for a more just world. In what follows, we delve in some detail into Van Parijs’ framework and the position he envisions in it for English as a world *lingua franca*, flagging some theoretical and empirical shortcomings. Our focus on Van Parijs’ framework is granted given that it is one of the few political theoretical accounts that have engaged explicitly with the global spread of English and have proposed a set of normative arguments around it. In that regard, we disagree with Van Parijs’ claim that the injustices attached to the global spread of English as a *lingua franca* can be remedied (at least partly) by a range of measures. Our thesis, instead, is that giving equal access to English to all the world’s population is not a sufficient condition that can lead to equality of opportunities. We present

arguments to show that more English worldwide, in and of itself, will not lead to more social justice both for theoretical reasons (it is not egalitarian enough) and empirical reasons (it is not happening in real life).

To illustrate our points, the rest of the article is organised as follows: in Section 3, we briefly summarise Van Parijs' key arguments in favour of English as a global lingua franca and the main criticisms his model has received. In Section 4, we develop a theoretical critique against the idea that promoting English globally would lead to enhanced equality of opportunities globally. In Section 5 we briefly offer empirical arguments that support our normative thesis against Van Parijs' ideas, arguments that we connect with those developed by the authors in the articles included in this special issue. We conclude in Section 6 with a summary of our key points.

3 Normative claims for English as a global lingua franca

In the book *Linguistic Justice for Europe and for the World* (2011), Philippe Van Parijs argues in favour of the expansion of a global lingua franca, a role that, to him, only English stands some chances to assume. This is a normatively desirable idea, he argues, because it would create the conditions for socio-economic global justice. That is, a world closer to the ideal of equality of opportunities to enjoy real freedom to pursue one's valued ends in life. There are, thus, linguistic preconditions for global justice. For him, socio-economic global justice requires "strong institutions on a scale that reaches far beyond linguistically homogeneous communities and that the political feasibility and sustainability of such institutions has linguistic preconditions that can be satisfied only by the spreading of a lingua franca" (Van Parijs 2015: 231).

For Van Parijs, English has the potential to create these (pre)conditions for social justice for two reasons. First, it would facilitate the existence of a justificatory community, which would create the conditions to perceive other individuals as equals, rather than "sheer curiosities or trade partners" (Van Parijs 2011: 26). Second, it would promote a transnational demos, a collective in which "not only the rich and powerful, but also the poor and powerless [would be able] to communicate, debate, network, cooperate, lobby, demonstrate effectively across borders" (Van Parijs 2011: 31). However, despite his defence of English as a lingua franca for social justice-based reasons, the author recognizes the existence of, at least, three kinds of injustices that would result from the expansion of English worldwide. Briefly put, these are: (1) a cooperative injustice based on the lack of the

shared burden between anglophones and non-anglophones of the spread of English as a global lingua franca; (2) a dignity injustice, based on the fact that by being established as the world's lingua franca, English and its speakers would accrue higher social status and prestige; and (3) a communicative injustice, whereby English L1 speakers would enjoy a greater number of opportunities than speakers of English as a second or additional language.

Van Parijs dedicates meticulous chapter-long analyses of how to overcome these different injustices. He reaches the conclusion that, despite them, the promotion of English as a global lingua franca would represent an affordable tool of communication in order to attain higher levels of social justice globally. However, his normative defence of English as a lingua franca for the sake of justice has received several criticisms, including: an inaccurate understanding of language and English in particular (May 2015; Wright 2015), and an insufficient consideration of its life-world dimension and injustices (De Schutter 2018; Morales-Gálvez 2016). Following the work of Denise Réaume (2015), here we approach one fundamental dimension of Van Parijs' theory that, we argue, is flawed: the idea that having better access to English (even an egalitarian one) would enhance (socio-economic) equality of opportunities for all, especially the worst-off. Attacking this idea might importantly affect Van Parijs' proposal from the point of view of social justice. Indeed, the author defends opportunity-egalitarian theories of distributive justice. That is, the idea that whatever valuable element we choose to be distributed (capabilities, resources, luck, endowments, welfare, real freedom, etc.), it should be distributed guaranteeing everyone's equality of opportunity to enjoy it.

So, the question is "whether the convergence towards one lingua franca systematically generates distributive injustices understood in this way and, if so, how this injustice needs to be addressed" (Van Parijs 2011: 88). Van Parijs, as said before, does argue that the lingua franca ideal generates a range of injustices, but that these injustices might be addressed (or, at least, compensated) with a number of policies and measures. We disagree with Van Parijs in two senses, as we will argue in our next two sections. First, we disagree from a theoretical point of view. And, second, we find empirical evidence that sits uneasily with Van Parijs' framework. We turn first to our theoretical argument in the next section.

4 English as a tool for social justice? A theoretical critique

In order to tackle, or at least compensate, the three injustices generated by the global spread of English as a lingua franca, Van Parijs proposes several measures.

First and foremost, in addressing the communicative injustice, the author argues it would be necessary to ensure that everyone around the world would acquire English to a near-native level, so that, in time, the differences between natives and non-natives would fade away as much as possible. To achieve that goal, he proposes the promotion of immersion schools in English around the world. Given children's higher capacity to acquire languages, Van Parijs argues, this would be an affordable way to reduce native speakers' advantaged position. However, in the absence of a strong global institution that would cater for this educational service, the costs of establishing such immersion schools would be unequally distributed around the world, leading to a cooperative injustice. Again, anglophone countries, as well as countries where English has a significant degree of societal presence, would stand in a better position to acquire English as a global communicative tool more easily and effortlessly. Foreseeing the difficulty of creating such global institution(s) for the establishment of immersion schools in English in the short-term, Van Parijs proposes what he dubs as "poach the web". This means that all anglophone audio-visual productions should be made freely available to everyone. Dubbing should be banned, and everyone should have free access to contents in English created (and paid) by anglophones, with the aim of facilitating the learning and enhancing the skills in English (Van Parijs 2011: 109–113).

Beyond the critiques received by Van Parijs because of his largely monolithic view of the idea of language, one that is out of touch with its function as a structuring feature of social inequalities (see May 2015 and Wright 2015 for more on these lines of critique), we contend that Van Parijs' compensatory measures to address the injustices generated by the spread of English as a lingua franca globally would exacerbate two key problems: a "transition problem" and an "intra-linguistic problem". Before unpacking these two problems in more detail, we should note that Van Parijs himself acknowledges that the measures he lays out to compensate for the linguistic injustices are not fully remedial, i.e., they are not perfect solutions, and a degree of injustice will inevitably always remain (he has re-emphasised this point again more recently in Van Parijs 2020). His thesis, though, is that despite this embedded inequality, the benefits of the global spread of English as a lingua franca would always outweigh its costs, based on egalitarian principles. We argue that his proposal is, in fact, not sufficiently egalitarian. Having equal access to the tool of English does not translate into having equality of opportunities to use the language and to be seen as a legitimate user of it in all societal contexts. Indeed, in line with Réaume's assessment of Van Parijs' compensatory measures, we agree that "these are cheap, but at best only modestly and very gradually effective, forms of 'compensation'", and that "Hollywood blockbusters and sit-coms certainly would not prepare anyone to write a grant proposal, a brief to parliament for a land use planning body, or even an op-ed piece" (Réaume 2015: 158).

Let us now turn to the two key problems that, as noted above, would be exacerbated by Van Parijs' compensatory measures: a transition problem and an intra-linguistic problem. First, the transition problem posits the following: even if we accept the desirability and feasibility of immersion programmes in English (let us, for the sake of the argument, imagine that it is fairly paid globally, carefully taking into consideration contextual differences and costs), and accepting that "poaching the web" works well, a series of transitional injustices would remain, namely: intergenerational and intra-generational problems. Briefly put, the intergenerational problem postulates that across generations, there would exist an inequalitarian access to English, a good slowly but steadily increasing its value. With better access to and acquisition of skills in English, members of the younger generations would be more favourably positioned than members of the older generations to compete for more valuable resources (for example better jobs, with better salaries, working conditions, etc.).

One could argue that these intergenerational transition costs would decrease over the years. The more people participate in immersion programmes, the less transition costs would be suffered. But it would be precisely the opposite. The more generations participate in immersion schools, the worst for non-immersive generations: they would find themselves more marginalised, in a world where the best jobs, socially valuable opportunities, etc. would have become almost inaccessible to them. Not everyone, therefore, would have equal opportunities to enjoy real freedom (in Van Parijsian terms). In fact, the higher the percentage of people having equal opportunities (because they would have enjoyed early immersion programmes), the higher the transition costs for those oldest generations excluded from those programmes (see also Stilz 2009 for a further critique on the problem with unequal linguistic repertoires between different generations).

Some people might disagree for, at least, two reasons. First, because it might be worth paying these transition costs. As explained by Riera-Gil (2019: 191), "these costs can be addressed as temporary inequalities to be resolved by intensive learning of majority languages. From that perspective, one or two generations may suffer injustice for the benefit of future people, and some theorists have imagined possible compensations (Pool 1991: 510–512)." However, this kind of argumentation has one important flaw: it accepts that idea that it is fair to sacrifice some for the sake of (almost) all. If equality and equal consideration of everyone's interests are to be valued and respected (so that everyone should have equality of opportunities to be free), it would be difficult to accept this kind of justification.

Second, some may argue that socio-economic inequalities are already in place and that English is not going to make them worse, but the opposite. We disagree. From a theoretical perspective, this transition problem might situate the worst-off (those without access to English) in an even worse situation than before. The more

people have access to English, the less the worse-off population will have access to socially valuable things. Gazzola (2016) points to a similar direction from a more empirical point of view. He argues that, in the case of the European Union, an English-only language policy would exclude and disenfranchise a significantly high percentage of the present-day EU population for socially and economically-based reasons (which, indeed, might also include age). English, therefore, seems to imply important transition costs stressing the value of equality of opportunities.

In addition to the intergenerational problem, an intragenerational problem would also exist. Indeed, there would still be members of the same generation who would continue to acquire English natively and who would continue to enjoy an edge in terms of communicative advantages, being perceived as more eloquent and efficient “in controlling the discussion” (Réaume 2015: 157). In applied linguistics, this has been termed “native-speakerism” (Holliday 2017), an ideological construct that presents native speakers of a language as superior types of speakers vis-à-vis others, a situation that linguistics as a field of inquiry has historically helped to create (Bonfiglio 2010). In recent years, critical appraisals of native-speakerism have become more frequent in applied linguistics (Davies 2003), but this ideological construct, of course, is still well alive. This connects with our next and final theoretical argument, and with the empirical support that we refer to in the next section.

In connection to the second problem with Van Parijs’ compensatory measures, the intralinguistic or accent problem, we note the following: even in a hypothetical scenario where there would not be any of the transitional injustices summarised above, there would still exist problems associated with the internal variation of the language, whereby some varieties or accents would enjoy a more favourable bias in comparison to others, which would be more negatively judged. Intralinguistic justice, thus, deals with the just management of internal linguistic differences within a particular language group, “consisting of regional, class-based, or ethnic dialects existing alongside a standard language” (De Schutter 2020: 146). The way one speaks, especially one’s accent, “can have a powerful impact on how one is perceived and treated by others as social and political actors and that this impact can have significant implications for democratic life” (Peled and Bonotti 2019: 411). In anthropological linguistics, this denotational function of language has been termed “indexicality” (Silverstein 1976), the idea that linguistic forms (and more generally, all semiotic forms) are infused with cultural meaning, and the use of such forms, depending on contextual factors, has the potential to index, to point at, those meanings.

With that in mind, other sociolinguists have levelled similar critiques to Van Parijs’ notion of linguistic justice. For instance, May (2015: 142) explains that “the English acquired by urban Africans may offer them considerable purchase and

prestige for their middle-class identities in African towns, but the same English may well be treated quite differently if they moved to London, identifying them as stigmatized, migrants, and from a lower class” (see also Tupas 2015 on the notion of “unequal Englishes”). Therefore, some forms of inequality (of opportunities) would remain even if there would be a fully egalitarian access to English globally. Some might argue that the global spread of English will delude this problem, or make it more manageable: the more accents and voices are heard in different kinds of English, the more these other accents and voices will become normalised. We disagree because indexicality is an intrinsic capacity of all human languages, and so the capacity for English to index social inequalities will remain.

A further consequence of intra-linguistic injustice is that accent-based inequality (of opportunities) could lead to epistemic injustice (Fricker 2007), namely: evaluating someone’s value (intelligence and credibility) based on how this person’s speech sounds instead of what they are really saying (its content) (Peled and Bonotti 2019: 411–412). Prejudices attached to certain ways of speaking might severely affect equality of opportunities, privileging those accents equated with highly-socially-valued ways of speaking, and discriminating those people speaking in “deviant” manners. This is what Fricker names *credibility excess* and *credibility deficit*, related to accent bias and the epistemic charge we attach to each way of speaking (Fricker 2007: 28). More broadly, social psychologists have referred to this problem as “accentism” (Formanowicz and Suiter 2020).

To address this problem normatively, some scholars have proposed the following solutions: promoting a democratization of English, making all variants as standard ones (De Schutter 2018); expanding metalinguistic awareness (Peled and Bonotti 2019); or promoting a fair distribution of power to influence over standard versions of language (Oakes and Peled 2018). Indeed, in addition to working on an inter-linguistic parity of esteem, so that speakers of different languages would not feel of inferior status vis-à-vis English speakers (Van Parijs 2011), we would argue it is important (perhaps even more) to enhance intra-linguistic parity of esteem, that is: that all forms of English should be equally valuable and dignified. Empirical research, including some of the articles that we feature in this very special issue, continues to demonstrate that this is a hard goal to achieve.

5 Further arguments for a normative critique. An overview of the special issue

There exists abundant empirical evidence that shows the difficulty of handling theoretically issues of native-speakerism and indexicality/accntism, i.e., the

difficulty of overcoming the intra-linguistic problem that we have described above. In this section, we provide just a snapshot of some key empirical arguments that can be raised as proof of this problem. Further evidence that points to the same direction can be found in the articles that are included in this special issue. We briefly summarise their key points, which help complement the theoretical critique of Van Parijs' linguistic justice that we have outlined above. Starting with native-speakerism, one area within applied linguistics that has been concerned with this ideological construct is English language teaching (ELT). As Braine (2018) explains, issues of native-speaker bias had already been the focus of attention amongst US-based scholars since the 1970s, including Kachru and colleagues. However, it was Phillipson's linguistic imperialism framework (1992) that would put forth the "native-speaker fallacy" in ELT more forcefully, questioning the belief that the ideal English language teacher was a native speaker of the language. Since then, the native-non-native dichotomy in ELT has been widely discussed, and there is now a wealth of information that supports the idea that non-native English language teachers are equally good teachers (in some respects even at an advantage) than their native-speaker colleagues (Moussu and Llurda 2008).

However, native-speakerism does not disappear by simply challenging this ideological construct from within certain areas of research. Ramjattan's (2019) work, for example, demonstrates how racialised English language teachers in Toronto can be the victim of micro-aggressions of racist and nativist nature by international students, who might have expected to be taught by "other" types of "native" English teachers. Fielder's paper in our special issue contributes relevant insights in connection to "native" varieties of English. Fiedler shows that in lingua franca contexts, some multilingual speakers attend to a perceived linguistic hierarchy, whereby "native" English varieties are positioned higher, and seen as more highly valued, than non-native ones. Importantly, this happens in interactions amongst peers, in Fiedler's study among Erasmus students.

Moving on to the question of indexicality/accntism, Dovchin's (2020) recent work is useful in digging further into this problem, particularly when it comes to English and in anglophone societies. Indeed, her work shows how international students in Australia may suffer from "ethnic accent bullying" and "linguistic stereotyping", based on prejudiced interpretations on how they are perceived to speak, and despite evidence of their high-level proficiency in English. These prejudiced interpretations can have important psychological consequences for these speakers. Dovchin's work connects with Flores and Rosa's (2015) raciolinguistic perspective, with which the authors flag the idea that members of racialised minority populations in the US, despite empirical evidence of their ability to engage in standard forms of English correctly, continue to be positioned as structurally marginalised by the "white listening subject" (see also Baker-Bell

2020). In their article in this issue, Dovchin and Dryden extend the argument even further, proposing the concept of “covert accentism”, which encapsulates the idea that accent-based social exclusion might exist in a covert, silent and subtle way because of the lack of effort and empathy of dominant members of society (in this case, Australia) towards the so-called “foreign” accents of migrant speakers of English as an Additional Language.

Three other articles in the special issue (Hultgren and Wilkinson, Cho, and Goodman and Kambatyrova) engage with the topic of English in higher education. Hultgren and Wilkinson’s contribution usefully presents the key argument that the significant spread of English that higher education systems have seen in recent years, particularly (but not exclusively) in Europe, might have been driven by specific decisions about higher education reforms at the national level that have, indeed, established a set of favourable conditions (perhaps unintentionally) conducive to the presence of English to grow considerably in universities outside the anglophone world. Specifically, they focus on the political science method of Process Tracing, applied to one particular Dutch university. So, a political-economic orientation to language matters is needed in order to understand better the factors that enhance the spread of English globally, in this case in the domain of higher education, and to understand better the potential injustices that may arise from it. Another perspective that is needed for a sharper understanding of the role of English in higher education is a socio-political and historical one, and Cho’s article illustrates this point sharply with her case study of South Korea. Cho’s contribution builds on Bourdieu’s notion of *habitus* and extends it to encompass what she terms “institutional *habitus*”, which she mobilises in her analysis to better capture the socio-historical factors that have led to the so-called “English fever” in Korean higher education. Finally, Goodman and Kambatyrova’s analysis of Kazakhstan’s trilingual higher education system, with Kazakh, Russian, and English, perfectly illustrates the double-sided nature of global English: a resource that can bring about success and progress for some individual users, but that can also act as a gatekeeping device for others.

Finally, Codó and Riera-Gil provide further theoretically grounded arguments that push the boundaries of traditional conceptualisations of global English/English as a *lingua franca* in linguistic justice debates. In their article, Codó and Riera-Gil provide an excellent synthesis of how sociolinguistic and linguistic ethnographic approaches can inform political theoretical and normative analyses of global English, particularly in connection to the context-dependent values and capital attached to English.

All in all, the articles gathered in this special issue help us better understand and fine-tune the concept of linguistic justice, particularly when associated to English in its global dimension. The articles underscore the importance of key

sociolinguistic factors (socio-economic, historical, cultural, and political variables) that impinge upon parameters that should be of central relevance for any theoretical conceptualisation of linguistic justice such as native-speakerism and indexicality. So far, these two concepts have not yet been fully integrated in any theory of linguistic justice, certainly not in connection to global English and not in Van Parijs' (2011) framework. We are, therefore, confident that the articles here collected have much to offer in terms of sociolinguistic arguments for a political-theoretical re-theorisation of the concept of linguistic justice broadly defined, and particularly in its application to global English.

6 Concluding remarks

Our main goal with this special issue is to contribute originally to the discussion of global English and linguistic justice. Even though the balance of the individual articles is tilted towards sociolinguistics, we do believe in the value of the cross-field perspective that we wish to offer here, with a combination of sociolinguistic and political theoretical approaches, and we are convinced that this perspective can bring forward current scholarly debates on the role of English as a global language and its impact in the pursuit of linguistic justice. So far, with the notable exception of Van Parijs (2011), there have been very few systematic treatments of this question, a question that deserves more attention. In this opening article of the special issue, we have made explicit our dissatisfaction with Van Parijs' framework, and we have presented both theoretical and empirical arguments that, in our view, challenge his framework in some fundamental ways, highlighting the problematic aspects of the compensatory measures he envisions to remedy the injustices generated by English becoming the world's lingua franca. We have underscored two types of theoretical problems: a transition problem, and an intra-linguistic problem, connecting the latter with issues of native-speakerism and indexicality/accntism. In connection to these problems, we have highlighted that there is evidence that even in contexts where speakers of other languages have acquired English to professional and academically adequate levels, resistance (active or more implicit) to their forms of talk persists, based on sociological grounds. We would argue that any theoretical model concerned with the idea of linguistic justice should address these issues with full force.

More recently, Van Parijs (2020: 178) has indicated that linguistic injustice is but a sub-component of social injustice, secondary in importance to other material and economic injustices. We cannot agree more with the importance of socio-political, cultural, and economic factors for social justice concerns, but we disagree with the idea of seeing them as hierarchically above linguistic matters.

This would entail seeing language, speakers, and society as autonomous from one another, in imagined boxes. However, as decades of sociolinguistic research have shown, it is virtually impossible to neatly distinguish and compartmentalise language from speakers and society, because there is no language without speakers living in a society, and there is no society in which speakers live languageless lives. Considering alternatives such as Esperanto utopian, Van Parijs says we are left only with global English, whose injustices can be significantly countered, he argues. While it might be true that alternatives to English as a language of worldwide communication for all humanity are presently limited, we argue, as we have tried to show, that in and of itself, English is not enough to foster increased social and linguistic justice globally. For that to be the case, the injustices attached to global English, if one assumes that language is, indeed, an important tool to enhance social justice worldwide, would need to be countered with more radical and far-reaching measures than the ones devised by Van Parijs (2011), which might include an altogether reconsideration of the desirability of global English as a necessary tool (or not) for global justice.

Research funding: Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación (No. FJC2018-037713-I).

References

- Adami, Elisabetta. 2020. *PanMeMic. Interaction and communication in the pandemic and beyond*. <https://panmemic.hypotheses.org> (accessed 3 July 2020).
- Baker-Bell, April. 2020. *Linguistic justice: Black language, literacy, identity, and pedagogy*. New York: Routledge.
- Bonfiglio, Thomas P. 2010. *Mother tongues and nations. The invention of the native speaker*. Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Braine, George. 2018. Non-native-speaker English teachers. In Carol A. Chapelle (ed.), *The encyclopedia of applied linguistics*, 1–5. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell.
- Brutt-Griffler, Janina. 2002. Class, ethnicity, and language rights: An analysis of British colonial policy in Lesotho and Sri Lanka and some implications for language policy. *Journal of Language, Identity and Education* 1(3). 207–234.
- Canagarajah, Suresh. 2013. *Translingual practice. Global Englishes and cosmopolitan relations*. London: Routledge.
- Crystal, David. 2003. *English as a global language*, 2nd edn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Davies, Alan. 2003. *The native speaker: Myth and reality*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- De Schutter, Helder. 2018. Linguistic justice and English as a lingua franca. In Peter A. Kraus & François Grin (eds.), *The politics of multilingualism. Europeanisation, globalisation and linguistic governance*, 167–199. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- De Schutter, Helder. 2020. Intralinguistic justice. In Yael Peled & Daniel Weinstock (eds.), *Language ethics*, 146–177. Montréal-Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

- Dovchin, Sender. 2020. The psychological damages of linguistic racism and international students in Australia. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 23(7). 804–818.
- Duchêne, Alexandre, Melissa Moyer & Celia Roberts (eds.). 2013. *Language, migration and social inequalities: A critical sociolinguistic perspective on institutions and work*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Flores, Nelson & Jonathan Rosa. 2015. Undoing appropriateness: Raciolinguistic ideologies and language diversity in education. *Harvard Educational Review* 85(2). 149–171.
- Formanowicz, Magdalena & Caterina Suiter. 2020. Sounding strange(r): Origins, consequences, and boundary conditions of sociophonetic discrimination. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 39(1). 4–21.
- Fricker, Miranda. 2007. *Epistemic injustice: Power and the ethics of knowing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gazzola, Michele. 2016. Multilingual communication for whom? Language policy and fairness in the European Union. *European Union Politics* 17(4). 546–569.
- Holliday, Adrian. 2017. Native-speakerism. In John Liontas (ed.), *The TESOL encyclopedia of English language teaching*. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell.
- Hultgren, Anna Kristina. 2020. Introduction: Global English and social justice. *Nordic Journal of English Studies* 19(3). 1–9.
- Ives, Peter. 2020. Global English in the wake of the collapse of globalism. *Alternate Routes: A Journal of Critical Social Research* 31(1). 219–230.
- Kachru, Braj. 1985. Standard, codification and sociolinguistic realism: The English language in the outer circle. In Raymond Quirk & Henry Widdowson (eds.), *English in the world: Teaching and learning the language and literatures*, 11–30. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kymlicka, Will & Alan Patten (eds.). 2003. *Language Rights and political theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Léger, Rémi & Huw Lewis. 2016. Normative political theory's contribution to Language policy research. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 38(7). 577–583.
- May, Stephen. 2015. The problem with English(Es) and linguistic (in)justice. Addressing the limits of liberalEgalitarian accounts of language. *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 18(2). 131–148.
- Morales-Gálvez, Sergi. 2016. Why should we prevent a global Anglo-American life-world? A democratic-deliberative answer. *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, European and Regional Studies* 9. 15–22.
- Morales-Gálvez, Sergi & Nenad Stojanović. 2017. Alan patten's theory of equal recognition and its contribution to the debate over multiculturalism. *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 20(1). 1–7.
- Moussu, Lucie & Enric Llorca. 2008. Non-native English-speaking English language teachers: History and research. *Language Teaching* 41(3). 315–348.
- Oakes, Leigh & Yael Peled. 2018. *Normative language policy. Ethics, politics, principles*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- O'Regan, John. 2021. *Global English and political economy*. London: Routledge.
- Patten, Alan. 2001. Political theory and language policy. *Political Theory* 29(5). 691–715.
- Peled, Yael & Matteo Bonotti. 2019. Sound reasoning: Why accent bias matters for democratic theory. *The Journal of Politics* 81(2). 411–425.
- Peled, Yael & Daniel Weinstock (eds.). 2020. *Language ethics*. Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

- Pennycook, Alastair. 1994. *The cultural politics of English as an international language*. London: Routledge.
- Phillipson, Robert. 1992. *Linguistic imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Piller, Ingrid. 2016. *Linguistic diversity and social justice: An introduction to applied sociolinguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pool, Jonathan. 1991. The official language problem. *American Political Science Review* 85(2). 495–514.
- Ramjattan, Vijay A. 2019. Racist nativist microaggressions and the professional resistance of racialized English language teachers in Toronto. *Race, Ethnicity and Education* 22(3). 374–390.
- Réaume, Denise. 2015. Lingua franca fever: Sceptical remarks. *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 18(2). 149–163.
- Ricento, Thomas, Yael Peled & Peter Ives (eds.). 2014. Language policy and political theory. Building bridges, assessing breaches. *Language Policy* 13(4). 295–415.
- Ricento, Thomas. 2015. Political economy and English as a “Global” language. In Thomas Ricento (ed.), *Language policy and political economy: English in a global context*, 27–47. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Riera-Gil, Elvira. 2019. The communicative value of local languages: An underestimated interest in theories of linguistic justice. *Ethnicities* 19(1). 174–199.
- Seidlhofer, Barbara. 2011. *Understanding English as a lingua franca*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Silverstein, Michael. 1976. Shifters, linguistic categories and cultural description. In Keith H. Basso & Henry A. Selby (eds.), *Meaning in anthropology*, 11–55. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
- Stilz, Anna. 2009. Civic nationalism and language policy. *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 37(3). 257–292.
- Tupas, Ruanni (ed.). 2015 *Unequal Englishes. The politics of Englishes today*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Van Parijs, Philippe. 2011. *Linguistic justice for Europe and for the world*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Van Parijs, Philippe. 2015. Lingua franca and linguistic territoriality. Why they both matter to justice and why justice matters for both. *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 18(2). 224–240.
- Van Parijs, Philippe. 2020. Linguistic injustice for the sake of greater social justice. A response to Anna Kristina Hultgren. *Nordic Journal of English Studies* 19(3). 175–178.
- Wright, Sue. 2015. What is language? A response to Philippe Van Parijs. *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 18(2). 113–130.
- Zhang, Jie & Jia Li (eds.). 2020. Linguistic diversity in a time of crisis: Language challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, *Multilingua* 39(5). 503–629 (Special issue).