

Legitimacy of English Domination and Its Relationship with Linguistic and Cultural Diversity

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1. INTRODUCTION

As we are currently living in a globalized or, in a progressive tense, “globalizing” world, elements in our society have come closer at an unprecedented speed, like never before in history. Thanks to cutting-edge technology and modern civilization, we can communicate with other people regardless of how far away they are on our planet with an extraordinary ease. Not only can digital communication be achieved through the Internet or other methods, direct face-to-face communication with anyone is also enabled by the development of fantastic technology, such as the innovation of the airplane. The most important advancement in the context of this study is that, due to the English language, we can communicate with people worldwide. If we glance quickly at only the positive side of the advance, these means are convenient, fast, easy, or *cool*.

A quick review might reveal that there are no problems. However, let us examine where these technologies and other means of connecting our world originate from. Their origins are in the Western world, more specifically the United States. Most technologies we rely on stem from U.S. innovations, and English is the official language there. Let us put the argument in another, more familiar way. If you look around, you see a lot of English around you. Think about your daily electronic devices. Do you use an iPhone? Do you have a Macintosh or a Windows computer? When you eat fast food, do you eat at McDonald’s or Burger King? When you want coffee, do you go to Starbucks? Do you use social networking sites (SNS) such as Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram? When you think about it from this perspective, you realize how English as a language and culture penetrates and dominates the world. In a sense, we live in the age of the *Pax Americana* in a slightly-different meaning. This dominance is now generally accepted or even welcomed.

Think about your own or general language and culture. These form part of the core of your identity and are indispensable factors because the way you speak or how you live constitutes who you are. What will happen if the current diversity of languages and cultures is replaced solely by English language and culture? People affected by its dominance may lose their own language and culture. The power of English is not only “an active dominating power” or a power that has reached across the globe but also “a passive dominating power” through which those who are affected by English begin to have a positive attitude toward its dominance and participate in its consolidation, thus collaborating in the enforcement of English domination. The latter power is strikingly complex; if domination is found to be legitimate, it is not easy to alter it.

Therefore, the relationship between the preservation of languages and cultures, i.e., the maintenance of linguistic and cultural diversity, and living in a civilized society under the wave of globalization, which somehow corresponds to accepting English domination in some ways, should be discussed. As previously mentioned, maintaining diversity consequently allows us to save and maintain our own identities. Here, we are not saying it is impossible to progress in civilization without English domination, but is it possible to develop civilization without dominance of one kind or another?

The following topics will be addressed in the paper: (1) a brief introduction to the concept of *pax*; (2) an introduction to the *Pax Americana*, through which we approach our theme; (3) a review of the concept of legitimacy as given by the German sociologist Max Weber in order to discuss the following argument, through which we orient a discussion of the way in which people face English domination; and (4) a discussion of the relationship of the *Pax Americana* and Weberian sense of legitimacy with regard to linguistic and cultural diversity.

2. A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE CONCEPT OF *PAX*

Let us begin with a brief introduction to the concept of *pax* in order to see how the *Pax Americana* came to be labeled as such. Before the United States acquired supremacy and established the stability known as the *Pax Americana*, two prominent world powers had similar dominations, namely the Romans, with their *Pax Romana*, and Great Britain, with its *Pax Britannica*. However, there have been other great powers in history. All these superpowers or empires expanded and colonized others' territories using different means. The first two, Rome and Britain, enjoyed military superiority, which is known as *hard power*; the *Pax Americana*, in contrast, expanded through politics and economic forces, which is known as *soft power*.

The word *pax* means *peace*. However, Weinstock (1960), who treated *pax* as the core of imperial Roman policy, complicated this general notion. He stated, "*Pax*, the root noun of the verb *pacisci*, did not originally mean 'peace' but a 'pact' which ended war and led to submission, friendship, or alliances" (p. 45). According to Muñoz (2010), the word is originally the Latin feminine noun, and the English word 'peace' is derived from the word. He explained, the word roots in the Indo-European languages, *pak-* or *pag-*, meant fasten or fix. It thus means to settle by convention or to reach an agreement between two parties. Therefore, *pax* is considered as the political regime which brings social harmony between the state and its citizens, the assemblies, and the Senate.¹

In other words, the concept of *pax* implies establishing stability by means of various forms of domination; this can be called "peace under domination."

Can we describe the *Pax Americana* using this concept?

3. AN INTRODUCTION TO THE *PAX AMERICANA*

In the era of globalization, especially after World War II, the United States acquired power in many fields. The resulting global system has been called the *Pax Americana*, in an implicit comparison to the stabilities under the empires of Rome and Britain. Cohen (2004) stated, for example, "The historical analogy making the rounds of late is the notion that the United States today is an empire that can and should be compared with imperial powers of the past." He continued, "Casual talk of a *Pax Americana*—harking back to the *Pax Britannica*, itself an echo of the *Pax Romana*—implies that the United States is following a pattern of imperial dominance" (pp. 49–50).

Chronologically, the *Pax Americana* extends from the end of the 1930s until the present (Marchildon, 1995). Among the several structures of domination by the United States in the age of the *Pax Americana*, the most outstanding fields may be economy and politics; the United States had the greatest power in such fields over weaker countries.

Wallerstein (1993) stated, "The United States dominated the capitalist world-economy, being the most efficient producer and the most prosperous country" (p. 1). According to him, the economic forces of the United States steadily grew stronger in the fields of technology, competitiveness, and quantitative share of world production over the previous 100 years. Therefore, the United States was able to establish a new world order that he called the *Pax Americana*. In the age of the *Pax Americana*, the United States "has assumed leadership responsibilities because it has been in its economic, political, and even ideological interests to do so, or at least it has believed this to be the case" (Gilpin, 1987, p. 88).

Moreover, the United States became the undisputed dominant power, exercising global hegemony by means of diplomacy, military alliances, and control over many international organizations after the World War II (Caramanis, 2002).² Bina (2004) used Bretton Woods, the Agency for International Development, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank as examples of such organizations. In the fields of the military, politics, and economics, therefore, Hirst and Thomson (1995) believed that the United States remained "the only possible and credible guarantor of the world free trading system" (p. 419).

Although some experts claim that the United States has lost some hegemonic power in the field of economics and politics, it is still in a hegemonic position, especially with regard to language and culture, which are spreading from the country throughout the world.

If we think about the current situation of the *Pax Americana* in its linguistic and cultural meaning or English domination in these fields despite the fact that the United States' economic and political power have been decreasing, as some scholars have shown, many countries are *ostensibly* decolonized but not essentially or *truly* decolonized, which means that they are still under the influence of the English hegemony. Therefore, on a global scale, political and economic domination or colonization by the United States has become powerless (i.e., ostensible decolonization) while the language and culture that belong to the United States still have the power to influence people around the world (i.e., the English hegemony) with globalization.

For instance, Alasuutari (2004) claimed that it has become clearer that English is the most-used international language, and the same phenomena can be seen in art and popular culture, especially music and film. Thus, "the US cultural industry has gained a dominant position despite attempts to block its world invasion with the means of economic and cultural protectionism, which in the Eastern bloc meant that the state tried to isolate its citizens from all international media flows" (Alasuutari, 2004, p. 247).

Similarly, Bacevich (2002) stated that the United States prefers "seduction to coercion. Rather than impose our [the United States] will by the sword, we [the United States] count on the allure of the "American way of life" to win over doubters and subvert adversaries" (p. 50). Thus, Cohen (2004) noted that during the *Pax Americana*, "to be sure, influence and even a few possessions linger, and the imperial era left a strong legacy in everything from institutions and attitudes to street names and school systems. And some forms of imperial rule persist" (p. 55).

Cohen (2004) critically summarized this situation. He first treated the English language as "*the lingua franca* of the planet for everything from air traffic control to entertainment" and then acknowledged that "US universities dominate in higher education, while low- and middle-brow American culture floods a planet that simultaneously loathes and embraces Spielberg, Starbucks, and MTV. American music, food, idiom, work styles, and manners are inescapable" (p. 54, emphasis added). As a reference, if you look up a statistics from Times Higher Education (2015) for the number of American universities in higher education in 2014–2015, 17 universities out of the top 25 are American universities. Similarly, according to Statista (2015), which calculates the number of Starbucks stores worldwide from 2003 to 2014, there were 21,366 Starbucks stores around the world in 2014 that was up from 19,767 the previous year which means an increase of 1,599 stores in one year³. You may then realize this English dominative situation.

In the case of Japan, these linguistic and cultural influences are prominent. It remains to be determined whether this situation is the same in Japan as in European countries.

From these discussions, therefore, there are two forms of hegemonies in terms of the *Pax Americana* in its linguistic and cultural meaning or English domination. One is what we may call *obvious hegemony*, the first phase of the *Pax Americana*, which is mainly economic/political hegemony, the power of which has been declining although it is still somewhat effective. The other is what we may call *hidden hegemony*, the second phase of the *Pax Americana* coming after the first in which we live, which implies a linguistic/cultural hegemony that focuses more on the general public on a worldwide scale. The latter is the issue with which we are currently concerned. To grapple with this, we will review Weber's concept of legitimacy.

4. A CONCEPT OF LEGITIMACY

In order to understand the relationship between the *Pax Americana* in its linguistic and cultural meaning or English domination and its legitimacy or validity of the structure (i.e., people's positive attitudes toward this authority system), we will review the concept of legitimacy developed by Max Weber. He is well known for his extraordinary

analyses of the relationship between power or authority and the legitimacy or validity of the domination generated from/attributed to this factor.

Weber (1978) stated,

Domination was defined ... as the probability that certain specific commands will be obeyed by a given group of persons. It thus does not include every mode of exercising "power" or "influence" over other persons. Domination in this sense may be based on the most diverse motives of compliance: all the way from simple habituation to the most purely rational calculation of advantage. Hence, every genuine form of domination implies a minimum of voluntary compliance, that is, an *interest* (based on ulterior motives or genuine acceptance) in obedience (p. 212).

In order to acquire this domination, authority, or rule, he asserted the need for supporters to sustain this structure. He continued, "Custom, personal advantage, purely affectual or ideal motives of solidarity, do not form a sufficiently reliable basis for a given domination. In addition, there is normally a further element, *the belief in legitimacy*" (p. 213). Thus, it is "a relationship of *command and obedience*" (Beetham, 1991, p. 35, emphasis added). Likewise, Bensman (2015) stated, "Weber, in adapting and defining the concept and making it central to much of his political sociology, focused on *the voluntaristic elements* in legitimacy" (p. 326, emphasis added). Here, Weber does not focus on how dominators, authorities, or rulers dominate but focuses on examining subordinates, inferiors, or subjects, thus showing how they are dominated and how they legitimize or justify this domination.

In this regard, according to Bensman (2015), "the validity is achieved only when followers accept, believe in, or grant *the claims for legitimacy*" made by the ruler (p. 329, emphasis added). For this, he explained that "legitimacy is achieved when the claims for legitimacy are believed, or when the dominant group successfully habituates its followers to the claim, or induces belief, faith, devotion, or rational belief deduced or derived from agreed-upon principles" (p. 330). On reviewing these statements, it is fair to say that legitimacy is instantiated when the relationship between rulers and subjects is successfully built or when subjects cooperatively deal with claims of legitimacy brought by rulers.

Bensman (2015) explained,

The *validity* of a set of legitimate norms rests on the *voluntary obedience* of a follower, a disciple, or official to a leader, tradition, or legal code. While legitimacy may exist to support a system of domination or political order, others' motives, pure expediency, or responses to naked coercion may also sustain that order. But to the extent that legitimacy is a factor responsible for compliance, the validity of the order rests upon voluntary obedience (p. 327).

Here, one of the keys to understanding Weber's conception is the idea of "voluntary obedience", which implies that the validity of the legitimate norm is based not only on the dominators or rulers but also on the consent or voluntarily obedience of the subordinates or subjects.

Therefore, legitimacy can be viewed as belief in or claims for a system of domination or of a social or political order. It is the justification of a political or social order or system of domination (Bensman, 2015). Weber himself acknowledged that more than one system of legitimacy might coexist in any empirical situation and that individuals may believe in elements of more than one system and vice versa. Taking the concept as existing within these dimensions, we can examine the current structure of English domination.

5. PAX AMERICANA, LEGITIMACY, AND LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

There are certain relationships between the first phase of the *Pax Americana* and its legitimacy, but here the focus will be on the second phase. Languages and cultures are much more familiar to us, and those are considered critical factors in the establishment and maintenance of English domination. As mentioned at the beginning of this

paper, language and culture are part of the very core of your identity and are indispensable for human beings. However, hypothetically speaking, if our languages and cultures are replaced by the English language and culture, the core slowly starts to change; eventually, it may disappear forever.

As is well known, Hawai'i has belonged to the United States since its 1898 annexation. Since then, the state has been forced to accept U.S. policy. Until now, with a civilized way of life, the English language, and modern culture, Hawai'i has seen dramatic development. Although, at one time, traditional Hawaiian language and culture were close to extinction because of state policy, they have survived. Due to the "Hawaiian Renaissance", which aimed at retrieving the traditional language and culture and restoring the dignity, spirit, and pride of Aloha, these traditions have been preserved in an ongoing process. While English is the dominant language of administration and culture, Hawai'i maintains its language and culture; therefore, doing what Hawai'i has been doing for years could be an effective endeavor to save linguistic and cultural diversity.

We should admit that English has become the world's language. There are benefits to this. It is very convenient when we meet foreigners who can speak English. It is especially useful if they are from entirely different regions. In towns, many signs are often written both in the language of that place and in English. In fact, this conference is possible because of the English language.

In addition to language, culture brought with the spreading of English, which means American culture, attract us. As was previously noted, using cutting-edge technology or modern civilized society brought from the United States may be more convenient and reasonable than living a country life in keeping with a traditional or uncivilized lifestyle. Even the things, that people refer to as "American ways of life", have spread around the world. We hear American pop songs, we can find Starbucks and MacDonald everywhere, and U.S. companies are ubiquitous all over the world. We watch movies from Hollywood while we eat popcorn.

If people are positively receiving or are affected by these dominant structures and want to participate more in modern civilization, they tilt toward the side of English domination, and they will eventually be swallowed up by it. Among other factors, one of the causes is using cutting-edge technology by their will; for instance, utilization of smartphones. One of the studies of smartphone penetration rate in the world show that the number is increasing yearly, and it will reach to 113.6% by 2020⁴. This movement supposedly changes their culture or the way people live because it may change the way they communicate with each other, the way they use their language, and the way they face their civilization. People in general likely find its legitimacy in the Weberian sense of the concept when they encounter domination, and they accept it without question. Because these people are not forced to but willingly obey this domination, it is not easy to free them from it. If they do not refuse or reject it and believe in its legitimacy, their language and culture will ultimately disappear from the planet.

Here, the author would like to briefly introduce a model of the relationship between English domination and linguistic and cultural diversity. The model shows a progression of domination and its relationship with diversity. More specifically, it demonstrates what will happen when English domination progresses and people accept its domination, which means that diverse languages and cultures, as cores of identity, will be replaced by the English language and culture. The model includes three phases: (1) intercultural rejection model; (2) intercultural acceptance model; and (3) intercultural indulgence model. In brief, the core will shrink as domination expands, and it will eventually disappear. It is quite a drastic situation, but it could occur if domination remains unchallenged within the status quo.

How can we live in an age of English domination or compromise the domination of English while maintaining our own identity? Is it impossible to stop its expansion? Should we just receive what it brings and throw away what we have? Should we just give up and surrender? It is possible to co-exist with it; Hawai'i has successfully lived side-by-side with the English language and culture, as can be seen by the current situation in the country.

The relationship between preserving linguistic and cultural diversity and living in a civilized way under the

wave of globalization, which means somehow accepting English domination, should be discussed because, as previously noted, preserving diversity is connected to maintaining one's own identity. Now is the time to realize that English has the great power to change the structure of language and culture if people support its domination. The author is sure that there are ways to maintain the development of civilization while maintaining linguistic and cultural diversity, as the historical achievement of Hawai'i teaches us.

Notes

1. He mentions that the word has numerous meanings; see Muñoz (2010).
2. For this argument, see also Hoffmann (1977), Huntington (1999), and Wills (1999).
3. See Times Higher Education (2015) World University Rankings 2014–15 (<https://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/world-university-rankings/2015/world-ranking#/sort/0/direction/asc>) and Statista (2015) Number of Starbucks stores worldwide 2014 (<http://www.statista.com/statistics/266465/number-of-starbucks-stores-worldwide/>)
4. The number is taken from Nikkei Business Publications (2015) (<http://itpro.nikkeibp.co.jp/atcl/news/14/110601779/062300209/>)

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