Introduction: Global English and Social Justice

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The spread of English around the world is often wound up in discourses about equity, fairness and social justice. In other words, the rise of English to become the world's most widely spoken language in the world often prompts questions about its impact on an equitable distribution of resources, opportunities and privileges. At the same time, however, recent sociolinguistic thinking appears to move away from language as the prime source of inequality, turning instead its attention to materiality and the political, economic and social conditions that produce inequality and injustice (Block et al. 2013; Flores 2013; Block 2014, 2018; Ricento 2015; Canagarajah 2017, 2018; Pennycook 2016, 2018; Aronin et al. 2018; Morales-Gálvez and Stojanovic 2017; Léger and Lewis 2017; Flores and Chaparro 2018; Martín Rojo and Del Percio 2020; and many others). It seems timely, therefore, to interrogate the nature of the relationship between the spread of English and social justice. Whilst initiatives that challenge inequity are particularly topical at the time of writing (with Black Lives Matters protests and ethnic differences in the impact of Covid-19 filling the news every day), it is of course a problem of perennial relevance, and exists even when those of us who are relatively more privileged are not reminded of it through spikes in media attention.

Therefore, when Karin Aijmer, editor of the *Nordic Journal of English Studies*, asked if I would edit a special issue on global English, I wanted to do something different. I wanted to question—in a position statement—some what I see as longstanding assumptions in understandings of the relationship between global English and social justice and invite key scholars to respond. I wanted to spark debate among those sociolinguists who have contributed to the field and perhaps even give a sense of moving forward. I am grateful to Karin Aijmer not only for the invitation but for giving me free rein to experiment with this format. I am delighted and thankful that so many eminent scholars have accepted my invitation, and that they have cared to engage with my argument to the extent that they have. I am grateful for their insights and time, not only in producing their own contributions but in offering peer reviews and valuable insights on

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those of others. Some contributors agree with me, others are more skeptical, and all have something valuable to say.

In the opening contribution to the Special Issue, I put forth my argument and set out to question three assumptions. These assumptions are 1) non-native speakers are disadvantaged by the spread of English; 2) English threatens other languages and 3) language policy will curb the spread of English. Some of these asumotions have been particularly prevalent in Nordic debates—academic and public alike—but they bear traces of the international literature too. In essence, I argue that language, or more specifically, English, is not the prime source of inequity and unfairness, but that this source must be sought for elsewhere, in the non-linguistic sphere. I conclude by offering some ways forward for the field that centre on greater interdisciplinarity. The opening statement is followed by fifteen responses, which I outline further below.

I have been seriously tempted by, and mostly resisted, the urge to substantially revise my original piece in light of the many insightful observations offered by my contribtors. Instead, I have added an epilogue in which I sum up and consider what to me are the key themes to emerge from this special issue. I also use the epilogue to suggest some possible ways forward. All other contributions too stand largely as they were initially produced, though with feedback from editor and reviewers incorporated. Below, I outline what I see as the main argument of each contributor.

Josep Soler seeks to move us beyond unhelpful binaries, arguing that it is not a question of 'either-or' but 'both-and' when it comes to identifying whether inquality is located in the linguistic or the non-linguistic sphere. Drawing on his own empirical work on scholars with English as an Additional Language, he points to the importance of both linguistic and non-linguistic factors, whether this has to do with achieving publishing success or falling prey to predatory journals. Soler further notes a degree of 'confusion' in the specific field of English for Research Publication Purposes as to where exactly disadvantage is located: in nations, in non-native speaker status or in both. He concludes that rather than preoccupying ourselves with a possibly futile and insurmountable task of identifying the exact locus of inequality, we should instead query the neoliberalisation of academia and ask how the pressure to publish has been allowed to take on hegemonic status.

David Block finds himself in agreement with the idea that there is a tendency for applied linguists to focus overly narrowly on language matters. He agrees, consequently, with the need to incorporate attention to material inequalities and the unequal distribution of resources to properly understand and eradicate inequality. Class, to Block, is a social category that has become particularly invisibilised in recent struggles, which he sees as centering more on identity and symbolism. He usefully draws attention to the many types of exploitation of workers in the global economy, e.g. factory work and sweat shops, in which "so many workers are employed in Dickensian conditions" and where language use plays no significant role at all for making the world a better place. In relation to increased interdisciplinarity in moving forward, he raises the question of how to attain rapprochement between different disciplines without unduly prioritising one.

Jennifer Jenkins suggests that I may have overstated my challenge to the first assumption, that non-native speakers of English are disadvantaged by the spread of English. Without disputing the existence of other "real-world" power differentials, Jenkins argues that the prioritisation of "native-speaker English" can, in itself, be a cause of injustice and inequality. She gives the example of non-native speakers of English not scoring highly enough in their IELTS entrance exam or having marks deducted in other exams for deviations from an imagined "standard English". She points out that this has potential real-world consequences for their educational attainment and life opportunities. She argues for the potential of the field of English as a Lingua Franca to shift people's ingrained understandings of what English proficiency looks like, with greater equity for "non-native speakers" of English as a result.

Dorte Lønsmann shows how language "is intimately connected with social structures and change" and how it is sometimes invoked by political agents to underpin their cause, whether this is that national culture is under threat from English or something else. She also argues for the usefulness of language to applied linguists in identifying and analysing inequality. Drawing on Spolsky and Shohamy's (1999) tripartite framework of language practices, language policies and language ideologies, and her own research in international companies, she argues that language may "contribute to creating or reducing inequalities—and not just reflect them". She offers the example of employees in international companies avoiding participating in meetings conducted in English and deprioritising

emails written in English, thus highlighting how the use of English can have real-world consequences for inclusion and exclusion. There is an affinity between hers and Soler's contribution in that to Lønsmann, the focal point between language and non-language should not be "either or" but "both and".

Despite a proposal to replace the metaphor of "red herring" with "scapegoat", Maria Kuteeva finds herself largely in agreement with the main idea of the position statement. However, before entirely giving up on the idea of *language*, she does urge applied linguists of different sub-fields to engage in greater interaction. Fields such as English for Research Publication Purposes and English for Aacademic Purposes on the one hand and Bi- and Multilingualism on the other, would, she argues, benefit from a fuller understanding of deficit, language practices and language perceptions. Following an overview of key developments within applied linguistics, Kuteeva explores the relevant merits of recent concepts including "translanguaging" and "raciolinguistics" for the social justice agenda. Reaffirming her call for greater interaction between sub-fields within applied linguistics, she concludes her piece by saying "Before we tone down language in our scholarly inquiry, we still need to hear more voices".

In his theoretical exposé, Suresh Canagarajah also seeks to move us beyond unhelpful binaries. Like Soler and Lønsmann, he sets out to challenge the primacy of either language or materiality, but goes even further to challenge also the primacy of either agency or structure, individuals or society. Even so, Canagarajah does entertain the possibility that in recent shifts towards neoliberal governance, language has become increasingly important as a locus of power. To this end, he cites the Sri Lancan scholar Sivanandan (1997): "It is no longer the ownership of the means of production that is important, but the ownership of the means of communication. Not Britannia, but Murdoch, rules the waves" (1997: 288). Canagarajah reminds us of some of the ways in which agency and structure and other binaries have been theorized—and dismantled—through the ages, proposing instead that "[h]uman and non-human beings and material objects mediate each other". Whilst acknowledging that this poses challenges to "easily identify the sources and directions of power" and that "people might be lulled into complacency", his illustrative example of a Tibetan student who manages to construct her identity

through "slow" and "subtle" acts of resistance offers hope and a possible way forward for resisting structures of oppression.

Taina Saarinen and Johanna Ennser-Kananen are fully on board with the idea that English is but a proxy for other ideological battles, as captured in their sub-title: "What we talk about when we think we talk about language". Underpinning their argument with two examples of "corrective" language intervention in higher education: accent neutralization courses in US universities and language policies in Finnish higher education, they reveal how these interventions are analyzable, respectively, in terms of racism and pro-Finnish populist nationalism. They proceed to remind us that the concern with English and its imagined threat is a European artifact stemming from an ideal monolingual, nationalist and modernist social order. Instead, as a way of moving beyond our obsessive concern with English, they suggest considering post-colonial contexts and their often-prevalent multilingualism as the norm.

Salikoko Mufwene offers a brief history of colonialization and settlement practices and their implications for language change and shift. In doing so, he agrees with the idea that the centre of inequality is not to be found within language itself. Emphasising the secondary status of language, he argues instead for "[t]he spread of English as a byproduct of colonization". He notes that when English came to the Americas, it quite quickly replaced the European languages, and only much later had an effect on the Native American languages, demonstrating how those at the socioeconomic fringes were not at the same speed impacted linguistically. Mufwene joins me in arguing that injustice must be fought "at the level of nonlinguistic power competition that has produced this language inequality" and even goes as far as to question whether linguists are really able to "weigh in on these language evolution issues, which are the outcome of socioeconomic dynamics beyond their expertise."

Diane Pecorari agrees with my challenge to two of the assumptions, that is that inequality is located outside of language, and that language policy focused solely on language is unlikely to be effective. However, she calls for further evidence to support my challenge to the assumption that English does not pose a threat to other languages, although she does accept that loss of linguistic diversity may erroneously be attributed to English rather than underlying social, technological and economic developments that prompt the need for new terminology and new ways of expression. Pecorari concludes by calling for applied linguistics to "live

up to its name" and explore how monolingualism can be challenged in the real world, e.g. in teaching and other practices. She hails translanguaging as a promising concept in this regard but suggests that there is still work to do in terms of how to "develop, evaluate and implement multilingual pedagogical techniques".

In his piece, Hartmut Haberland urges us to move away from abstract concepts such as "commodification", "hegemony" and "markets", which he believes are unhelpful in identifying inequality. He suggests instead a reorientation away from *language* towards *speakers*, and specifically proposes conceptualising inequality as residing between speakers of different languages rather than between different languages per se. He also subtly warns us against having too high hopes when it comes to eradicating inequality, suggesting that the process towards achieving complete equality—even if this were possible—is bound to itself produce new inequalities. With this caveat in mind, he concludes that, in discussing global English, we should seek to explore and identify "ownership and control in a concrete manner: who owns and who controls".

Writing from a US perspective, Janina Brutt-Griffler draws on the concept of "intersectionality", i.e. the way in which minority groups face multiple layers of oppression: through ethnic, racial and also, as shown by Brutt-Griffler, linguistic identity. Drawing on research undertaken in a Spanish-English bilingual school in a large midwestern city in the US, she shows how many Spanish-English-speaking Puerto Rican students start out by valuing their dual linguistic heritage. She notes, however, that by the time these students transition to English-only education, their linguistic proficiency and pride in their heritage language may decline. Echoing Jenkins, Brutt-Griffler argues for wider and de-Anglocised conceptualisations of English proficiency, in which multilingualism is integral and accepted. She views this as a promising way forward to challenge what she sees as prevalent "monolingualist ideologies" which are at odds with the ubiquity of multilingualism across the world.

A plea for applied linguists to *listen* is made by David Crystal. A conversation he had some years ago when travelling in southern Africa brought him a sense that advocating linguistic diversity can in certain contexts be seen as an elitist endeavour. When Crystal expressed his admiration for Xhosa and linguistic diversity to his local driver, it fell on deaf ears as his driver, who himself had limited proficiency in English, insisted that his children learn English to improve their life opportunities.

Crystal, like Jenkins, does point to some very real and material consequences of linguistic discrimination, that of native-speaking English teachers generally being paid more than non-native-speaking English teachers. Moving on to consider the ongoing revivification of Welsh, Crystal introduces the concept of "empowerment" and shows how linguistic revitalisation needs to go hand in hand with economic revitalization and empowerment.

In his contribution, Van Parijs suggests that no one would be likely to agree with the most extreme interpretation of my position statement that there is no inequality at all, and that everyone would agree with a weaker version that there are inequalities, but that they are not primarily linguistically founded. Referring to his book on linguistic justice, Van Parijs identifies three ways in which inequalities are generated by the dominance of a particular natural language. He then goes on to suggest that English can also be beneficial in eradicating, or at least mitigating, any injustices, something that, apart from in Van Parijs's work, seems to have been accorded considerably less attention in the literature. Van Parijs concludes that "some degree of linguistic injustice is the price we need to pay for an effective pursuit of social justice in all its dimensions." This echoes Haberland's view that pursuing linguistic equality for some will produce linguistic inequality for others.

Anne Fabricius is not convinced that we need to decenter language in our analyses, arguing that the concept "linguistic inequality" does have merit. Like others in this special issue, including Soler, Canagarajah and Lønsmann, she insists on not seeing the linguistic world as separate from the non-linguistic world. She gives the important example of the Australian Aboriginal and Canadian First Nation contexts where "the presence of the English language as part and parcel of colonial and missionary activity has had a truly devastating impact on language transmission and language ideologies over the last 150 years". In tune with both Jenkins and Brutt-Griffler, she also points to the experiences of learners of a majority language not being taken seriously. She goes on to challenge the entire idea of "global English", which she sees as a "myth, a reified construct, an enregisterment" and calls for a greater anchoring of language analysis in empirical, sociolinguistic and anthropological approaches where diversity, hybridity and indexicality are allowed to come into play.

Robert Phillipson, finally, one of the field's founders, is given the last word. He disagrees with my description of English as a "red herring", citing examples from across the world in which language is seen as a key variable in producing and sustaining inequality, noting too, along with Van Parijs, that English can also be used as a force for good. To Phillipson, the interdisiplinarity that I seek to push forward is already characterising the field, notably through the works of Gramsci, Bourdieu, Bernstein and May. Philipson shares my view that applied linguistics is and must be concerned with external linguistics, which to Philipson involves attention to material resources (structure) as well as values and policies (ideology). He views this externally oriented linguistics as contrasting with the type of internal theoretical linguistics propagated by Saussure and Chomsky.

The following pages see my position statement followed by each contributor's response, in the order previewed through the synopses above. I conclude with an epilogue in an attempt to summarise the main themes and issues raised by the contributors, while pointing to some possible ways forward for the field.

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