

Re: Anyone conversant in English (was: Tagalog) here?

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- *From:* phoglund@xxxxxx
 - *Date:* 18 Apr 2007 15:28:20 -0700
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On Apr 18, 9:05 pm, "Jens S. Larsen" <jens_s_lar...@xxxxxxxx> wrote:

phogl...@xxxxxx:

Jens S. Larsen wrote:

It's not monolingual.

Internet is certainly plurilingual, but de facto, the Anglophone part of it is more "international" than the rest of it.

If you call it imperial in stead of international, you can drop the quotation marks.

Well, here on Vulcan we avoid emotionally loaded expressions. :)

Why would any great number of native English-speakers go to international forums? Most of them live in big countries anyway, and they have to be influenced before puberty in order to make any considerable impact.

English-language forums as such are widely perceived as "international forums" and tend to be "invaded" by international visitors such as you and me.

Why wouldn't that standardize our English rather than de-standardize that of the natives?

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I don't say it won't work both ways.

After all, different people have different ways of abusing English. Besides, visitors from other speech communities normally invade English language forums only if there are no comparable forums in their own language

I don't really think so. There is this cargo cult aspect to English as such – people who have learnt English want to try and use it, because the very fact of using it feels thrilling and interesting.

The continuous exposure will inevitable influence usage among those non–auxiliary speakers too.

When they finally put themselves under that influence, won't that raise their linguistic awareness too?

Why should they? They will doubtlessly find many of the non–native solecisms and malapropisms amusing and adopt them into their own English – to start with as jokes, but eventually many such "jokes" will persist and become mainstream usage.

How many jokes of that kind are common enough across languages to make an lasting impact on English?

Even now, English has incorporated ungrammatical expressions from the pidgin or interlanguage of non–native speakers. "Long time no see", for instance.

You don't think the examples of Hebrew and Irish are forerunners of the future standard of global language planning?

I don't think global language planning is enforceable. Which aspects of the "examples of Hebrew and Irish" do you refer to actually? Would you mind to elaborate?

Well, mostly their existence. Language has the forms its speakers want it to have. It's well known that words are arbitrary: There is no

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relation between word form and word meaning. But language change is arbitrary too. It has to work with what's there beforehand, but apart from that, people are free to do with it what they want. So, if they want to sound cool, who do they imitate? Non-Americans imitate American English, but who do the Americans imitate? Hint: Where does "cool" in that sense come from?

I am afraid I cannot follow your reasoning.

You know, sociolinguistic surveys have been conducted on this. At least in Denmark, it's characteristic that monolinguals are much more prone to agree to a statement like "It would be better if we all spoke only English" than ESL-speakers are. When the goal is within reach, people begin to hesitate.

In my experience, people proficient only in English in addition to their native language are the most enthusiastic about the possibility of an exclusively Anglophone world. But I readily admit that I don't have any data. Have you incidentally got a link to that survey?

This is a poster that presents it, made for the occasion of the "open day" of Copenhagen University two years ago:
<humaniorafestival.dk/phd-2005/jacobthoegersen.pdf>.

OK, I'll have a look at it.

(I assume you read Danish.)

Of course I do – I have actually even seriously attempted to speak it, more than ten years ago. I attended a course of Danish for Swedish-speakers.

I don't say it explains everything, but I do think that one language for everybody is not a miracle solution. Latin American countries have fought great, often destructive wars among themselves despite the fact that they all speak the same language (with the exception of Brazil, of course).

Sure, but how many of them speak a language _they feel they own_? I

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believe that's the important aspect in this connection.

The same aspect would be very valid in an Anglophone world. The Irish and the Latin Americans might feel uncomfortable about speaking English (much of the English–language literature of Ireland is actually about this discomfort) but relatively few Irish take the trouble of returning to Irish, and AFAIK even fewer Latin–Americans learn Quechua, Aymara or Mapuche for cultural–nationalist reasons.

Peter was right, you really are a misanthrope, though not for the reasons he indicated.

Why? I don't think a little geopolitical realism is misanthropy.

You're foreseeing both that English takes over and that it destroys itself in the process — you really have to pick your pessimism about the human race, you can't have it both ways!

I am not saying things MUST take this course. But at the same time I tend to think that this is a very probable future.

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