International German language policies - a postcolonial reading

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1.0 Introduction

At first glance, thinking of the German language and its international spread in connection with colonialism may appear far-fetched. After all, research dealing with the global phenomenon of European colonialism between the 18th and 20th century usually does not pay much attention to Germany's role in these tragic events. During that period the most prominent powers were France and England, and consequently, when colonialism is related to language policies, these two countries have received most attention.

Considering the dominant position of English in the world, it appears almost 'natural' that other languages (and the countries in which they are spoken) have been sidelined from post-colonial discussions and critical evaluations of their policies. Especially in the case of German, the underlying structures and concomitant practices have very rarely been subject to postcolonial scrutiny. In fact, the issue of German colonialism has been wrapped in silence:

Instead of going to war [e.g., for colonial conquests] the new Federal Republic of Germany made deals. It was advantageous that in the process of starting to engage the Third World Germany no longer had any colonies. Past calls for the return of old colonies died down and a tactful silence settled on the issue. It surely is no 'accident' that no comprehensive historical research has been conducted on the topic of German colonies (Timm 1981: 7). [1]

Not much has changed: in Germany, postcolonial studies from a German perspective have been largely ignored. The first international conference on Germany's role in colonialism took place only in November 2001 at the Historical Seminar in Oldenburg. In the preface to his book *Deutsche Herrschaft über Afrikaner*, Zimmerer points out that his study of Germany's colonial rule in Namibia (2004) is enjoying its third edition within three years can be taken as "evidence of a slowly increasing interest in German colonial history among a wider public" (Zimmerer 2004: VIII).

Colonialism is usually linked with the imperial phase of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. Nevertheless, this period was a result of a structural dominance that began as far back as the Enlightenment and the on-set of the Industrial Revolution. These events led to numerous discourses of superiority in various disciplines and areas of technological development that formed an imperial grid that has established a power asymmetry between the West and other nations. This framework has been sustained through material practice (classic colonialism), but was essentially developed by specific intellectual predispositions: ideological dominance and epistemological command. However, it is not suggested here that the relationship between dominator and dominated is based on clear-cut power-asymmetry and power relationships. Colonial practice was a complementary process that produced ways of thinking, speaking and acting on both sides that not only had an impact on the colonised, but also permeated the cultures and discourses of the colonialists (Pennycook 1998: 2). This study's major concern is not the role and importance of the 'subaltern', the colonised, but an initial "historisation" and "politicisation" in the areas of German Studies and German as a Foreign Language (DaF) that is generated from a simplified perspective based on Galtung's concept of centre and periphery (Galtung 1980).

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The colonial enterprise is rooted in imperial structures that promote the tacit presumption of an intellectual Western authority over the rest of the world, and the adherence to this authority simultaneously reinforces these structures. This leads to the concept of "colonisation of consciousness" through the global enterprise of Western powers (and Japan [2]) as "the imposition by the dominant power of its own world view, its own cultural norms and values" (Choi, 1997, 350). With regard to more recent techniques of establishing power asymmetry, strategies of neo-colonialism have included cultural dominance, military dominance, and social influence. The critique of neo-colonialism draws on discussions such as globalism, minority discourse, or transculturalism (Brydon, 2000: 7). Overall, imperialism is regarded as a macro-system of dominance, in which colonialism represents the site of "activities" that lead to inequality. Classical colonialism as well as neo-colonialism comprise tangible cohesion of colonial power (e.g., politics); either in the form of an economically and geopolitically driven exploitation from the Centre (here: Western European countries) directed 'towards' the remote colonies (Young 2001: 16-17) - the periphery - or as intellectual activities

resulting in categories and histories on the basis of an "assumed given and fixed structure" (Pennycook 1998: 17) of dominance.

It is in this context that the international role of the German language and its international distribution merits closer attention. Because international leadership emerges not only as a result of geopolitical strategies and engagements, i.e. direct colonial rule and economic exploitation, but also by other methods of spread and penetration, for example through technology, the military, science and culture, the "export" of the German language must be scrutinised and politicised.

Germany's imperial endeavours and colonial activities are a very good example of a 'hidden' dominance. The colonial activities were initially limited to individual and private initiatives. For Bismarck, avoiding the concept of colonies but favouring the idea of "protectorates", it was not the military nor the Prussian bureaucrat who should rule overseas but the entrepreneurial businessmen (Zimmerer 2004: 16-17). These may have had no explicit colonial intentions and only private ambitions, but in combination with government protection or institutions, their capitalist endeavor ought to be viewed as the first stepping stone for an expansionist enterprise [3]. Unlike the British Empire, Germany maintained an "informal empire" (Wehler 1985 (1973): 175) that not only survived the consequences of the defeat in WWI and Versailles but, in the context of its language policies, favoured discourses around the notion of *traditionally* strong positions of the German language and a genuine admiration of German products and culture in Asia or Africa. Since then Germany has presented an argument, especially in its cultural policies, for a renewed emphasis on spreading and supporting the German language in many areas of the world.

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In the following it will be argued, and demonstrated, that a critical, post-colonial reading of international language policies must include German language policies. I will look particularly at German in the context of its international distribution in relation to English and French. English and its distinct position as the globally dominant language mark the current situation, which will be sketched briefly at the beginning. It is followed by a short profile of the French language and its colonial discursive underpinnings as an historical example for a universal language project prior to the contemporary dominance of English, demonstrating the scope and the historical construction of arguments for the superiority of a language. The final section will investigate aspects of German language policy, its global orientation, and accompanying discourses. Despite particular strategies and geographical foci in German language distribution, common ideological features of the propagation of German and English as international languages will be presented, and underlying ideological premises in the rhetoric and the structural and political means of German language policies will be scrutinized.

2.0 English - an international language *par excellence*

It is essential to recognize and to acknowledge the extraordinary position of English and its various linguistic functions in the world. The search for reasons for this supremacy has resulted in many critical studies that have related its spread and the distribution to the imperialism of England and the United States. Thus scholars like Phillipson (1992) and Pennycook (1994, 1998) have opened up an examination of the role and function of language policies in relation to the colonial past and neo-colonial activities of the West. As another means of domination and structural inequality - Phillipson's concept of *linguicism* - its present status as the globally accepted *lingua franca* raises important issues, such as "What is Standard English?" "Whose standard?", "English versus Englishes", "Who owns English?" etc. [4], reflecting on how much the centre can still dominate the periphery, or whether the periphery can overturn lingual domination and can create new forms of linguistic representation as anti-colonial means.

In an attempt to keep linguistic dominance connected with material benefits and at the same time clear of any dubious and compromising ideological charge, the English language has been described as "natural, neutral and beneficial" (Pennycook 1994: 7) and the 'profit' to learn it is linked to material wealth, professional development, and social and economic prestige. The result today is its international and intra-national gate-keeping position, where the ability to speak and write in English decides the fate of not only refugees but also national employment strategies and structures. Thus language policies influence greatly broad national and international structures and activities, with the potential "to become a substitute for racial policies" (ibid.: 19). All non-English speaking countries' foreign language policies face serious socio-political issues in the endeavour to join the global community, i.e. to learn the English language, but at the same time to retain the national cultural framework, i.e. to refuse the values and norms which the English language transports at the same time. In this light the English language appears truly as the global language *par excellence*, having occupied the discursive as well as the structural-societal space in the world: "an omnipresence in everyday life" (Ammon 1994: 1).

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French - '*Mission civilisatrice*'

This undisputed and incomparable position of English in the world often serves as a point of reference for other languages, especially the other major European languages. The importance of 'one's own' language seems to derive from a comparison with English. For example, Calvet states that

[i]t remains clear, however, that English everywhere exceeds French, not only in the number of native speakers, which is nearly four times larger, but also and above all through the extent of the economic, cultural and political growth of countries speaking English, in particular the United States (Calvet 1998: 189).

In its superiority English has set the standard against which other languages are measured. Ammon in his evaluation of the global position of the German language by its usage on the Internet reassures us that "the stocktaking results contradict all Cassandra-callings regarding the Internet as the grave-digger for the German language. German occupies a proper second rank, following English, but clearly ahead of French" (2000: 285). [5]

So, where is the connection, the basis for the comparison, the common ground on which they are all placed, so that the dominance of English can be used as a determining parameter for one's own position? What position can it hold if it cannot, as outlined before, attain the same structural or functional position?

As indicated above, the central aspect that is pursued here, is the colonial legacy which all these languages share. The postcolonial critique provides a deconstructive moment, linking power structures and power holders of the past with those of the present. Colonialisation contains the *mission civilisatrice* of the nineteenth-century imperial system. It represents a complex system of ideologies which overlap and sustain each other, e.g., reasoning as in positive science, social Darwinism, technological development, progress, and modernity etc. Its aim was not only of an economic or geopolitical nature but rather the creation of an intellectual centre, an epistemic authority thatcould feed, and mostly sell, its ideas to the world.

The French term *mission civilisatrice* suggests a major role for France and its language in the conceptualisation as well as its manifestation of this global enterprise. Initially this concept comprised a different focus with regard to colonialisation and its geographical location. Napoleon Bonaparte, perhaps the most influential political and military figure associated with the French civilising mission, was primarily concerned with Europe. Napoleon III, who turned to more distant locations, started the international expansion. It represented

[a] rapacious policy of imperial expansion, facilitated by technological developments such as the use of quinine and mosquito nets against malaria and the new Gatling and Maxim machine guns, [that] was justified by the invention of the *mission civilisatrice*, whose task was to bring the benefits of French culture, religion, and language to the unenlightened races of the earth, a convenient concept that other imperial powers quickly adopted … (Young 2001: 30)

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The result was a 'global' acceptance of the supremacy of French by others, based on the scope of the geopolitical expansion of the Napoleonic Empire. Interestingly, people viewed the supremacy of French in similar terms as people see English today. As early as the 18th century an answer was sought to the question: "*What has made the French language the universal language of Europe?*" This was the title of an essay competition at the Academy of Berlin in 1782. The first prize went to the Frenchman Rivarol, who in his work *Discours sur l'universalité de la langue française*, "investigated" the causes for the superior and universal status of the French language. Calvet describes the arguments given by Rivarol as follows (1998: 49):

[T]he reasons for this 'universality' were sought in the language itself, in its form: the eminent role of the Académie Française and its dictionary was quoted, the ease of learning and pronouncing French was suggested, as well as its elegance. Above all, its clarity was emphasized, often related to the 'natural' order of its syntax.

But, more importantly, since language was regarded as a projection of one's culture, the French belief in the superiority of their language also implied the supremacy of the French as a people. The brilliance of the French language was simply a result of the genius of its people and the basic characteristics of their personality (Gramont 1969: 288).

4.0 Mission des Wissen' - Germany's *Didactica Magna* [6] from Argentina to West Samoa

From a classical point of view in regard to colonialisation, i.e. the spread of geopolitical and military power, the colonial connection to the French language can be drawn quite easily, but the German language cannot be assessed by the same parameters, being regarded. as a latecomer in the classical notion of colonialism. Due to its slow unification process (1866/1871) and its late acquisition of overseas colonies in the 1890s Germany found itself among the leading European powers rather late. It was in 1897 that Bülow's "Weltpolitik declaration" marked the beginning of Germany's official quest for its own "place in the sun" (Mommsen 1995: 80). But overall, it marked an era in German history which

by many obvious standards (...) was unimpressive ... by most material criteria of imperialist thinking, the German colonial empire was highly unsuccessful (Smith 1978: ix).

It is true, on the political level, that colonialism in Germany was not a major issue until the late 1880's, at least for those in positions of power (Berghahn 1994: 269). For the newly established German nation the focus remained Europe - as it still does today. Many historians refer to the famous statement by Bismarck in 1888, when he replied to proposals to send a German military expedition to restore order in East Africa:

Your map of Africa is certainly very beautiful, but my map of Africa lies in Europe. Here lies Russia and there lies France, and we are in the middle. That is my map of Europe (Berghahn 1994 or Craig 1978).

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The discourse on German colonialism usually concludes with the end of World War I, the time when Germany, as the defeated nation together with Austria, had to hand over all its overseas possessions to the Entente powers, as documented in the Treaty of Versailles in 1919.

But this historical glance misses a deeper colonial current that not only supports an imperial imbalance in eco-political structures but also forms an underlying intellectual worldview, preceding political action. Gott (2002) places the German colonial disposition under the discursive umbrella of *Victorian humanitarianism* and provides a quote by Bismarck that is not usually found in German history books:

In extending invitations to this Conference [Berlin West African Conference 1884-85], the Imperial Government [of Germany] was guided by the conviction that all the Governments invited shared the desire to promote the civilization of the natives of Africa by opening the interior of that continent to commerce, by furnishing the means of instructions to its inhabitants, by encouraging missions and enterprises calculated to diffuse useful knowledge, and by preparing the way to the abolition of slavery, and especially of the slave trade (Gott 2002: 27).

The epistemic center of the West propagated its humanitarian principles to promote and disperse its concept of civilisation, joining the anti-slavery bandwagon and at the same time sustaining a finer form of dependency. For example, in the area of science Pyenson (1999: 427) argues:

Europeans believed that their vision of rational exploitation of nature had made them masters of the world. Colonies and satrapies deserved subordinate status until they could assimilate the norms of European science.

Another important aspect of assimilation is Germany's specific concept of cultural policy (*Kulturpolitik*). Overlack (1996: 5) points out that the *Reich*'s expansionism since the early 1880s was based on "the idea of promoting (...) cultural influence as a preliminary to its economic and political expansion." *Kultur* had become a powerful ideological tool that had formed and sustained a particular worldview, subordinating the "external world to a position of secondary importance to the world of *Geist* where true freedom was to be found" (ibid.: 6). Germans and their products were seen as a manifestation and expression of this spirit. As "*Kulturgeräte*" they became important ideological vehicles with which to liberate the world (ibid.) [7]. At times liberation meant to use the cultural tools, e.g., administrators and educators, to erect structures and to "cure" the colonised, turning their insides into Germans with just their outsides remaining unchanged (see Gründer 1999: 210).

Overlack (1996: 8) concludes "that the economic expansion, the maintenance of German values and learning and the securing of humanity's cultural progress were concepts which could not be separated." Education programs focussed on processes of social discipline through which the colonised should learn to accept their 'own' position on the lowest end of the social scale, securing the stability of the general social structure in the colonies (Zimmerer 2004: 11).

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The concept of colonialism/imperalism needs to be broad in order to encompass the establishment of

dominance and asymmetric power. It is tightly linked with the core imperial concept of a *European mission civilisatrice* to bring the benefits of one's own culture, religion, and language to the less developed peoples of the earth. Especially in the area of technology and science Germany ranked among the leading nations. The importance of scientific leadership is that "[i]t produces a rational objective system that is beyond dispute. Science holds out this promise of riches and the betterment for all in the global economy" (Scantlebury 2002: 234). Thus, it sustains the discourse of *intellectual authority* that, as stated before, "is virtually indistinguishable from certain ideas it dignifies as true, and from traditions, perceptions, and judgments it forms, transmits, reproduces" (Said 1978: 19-20).

Nina Berman's (1997: 18) analysis of Germany's colonial position in Orientalism and its effects on literature (Karl May) employs a broadened concept of colonialism that goes beyond "the physical presence of a European power as in armies, administration etc." (ibid.: 18), integrating forms of economic and political interdependencies between Germany and other countries, interdependencies in the form of cultural discourse that produced epistemological and technological dependencies parallel to economic and political dominance.

Around the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century Germany could be seen as an "ultimate reference" in the world of science among Britain, France, and the United States, i.e. it was one of the few dominating countries in the world (Macleod 2000: 4). Science and expansionism formed a peculiar dialectic relationship because the

colonial expansion, with its investment in geophysics, meteorology, and astronomy, was vital to the process of the exact science in Europe; and (…) in any case, European imperialism underwrote the global exercise within which the exact sciences flourished [8] (and without which they could not have benefitted so quickly, or so well) (ibid.).

The effects of this expansion were diverse, but certainly two major aspects are of great consequence in the context of language policies. In his study Pyenson (1985) shows Germany's global orientation in sciences that launched a network of important institutional strongholds. But the spread of German sciences also meant an expansion of the region in which German came to play a major role. In 1898 the Tokyo-based "Journal for the German Language" (*Zeitschrift für die Deutsche Sprache*] regarded Germany as the most advanced nation in science, and consequently the best among the science students were usually sent to Germany to learn the language (Ammon 1999b: 15). Half a century later, Savory, a British biologist, wrote in 1953: "Indeed at one time it was almost true to say that language of science was the language of Heidelberg and Göttingen (…) advice (…) was commonly given to young scientists, given with every desire to be helpful. It was that they should learn to read German" (quot. in Ammon: ibid.). And for China, Pyenson (1985: 293) concludes that

[a] German thread winds through the tapestry of twentieth-century China. In Shanghai, the Tung-Chi University is now a focus of attention for the government of the Federal Republic of Germany, the fourth regime in seventy years to take interest in sending German science to China.

It appears that over time this thread has turned into a thick rope, building cultural capital [9] with the consequence, that, for example, in China the Tung-Chi University is one of the very few major universities for the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) to promote the German language and to which to send their German lecturers (Mitschian 1993: 255). One must not overlook the interest and constantly propagated necessity to obtain Western knowledge, technology, and science on the Chinese side. It was mostly pragmatic reasons, particularly fear of Western military control of China, which spurred the Chinese leadership to learn about Western technologies and skills.

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Nevertheless, we can see that the "gentle expansion" enabled Germany to create cultural capital through a rather informal structure of imperialism, un-orchestrated or un-synchronized. It was prepared to provide its form of 'epistemological colonialism' with resources and space, and later on with state protection and armed forces, if necessary. This is the genealogy behind today's perception of Germany's former traditional position (Neuner 1997: 5), which through an artificial ahistorical and apolitical view allows us to lament its decline.

All in all, one can say that the beginning of the global dominance of German science marked also the introduction of German as a foreign language (Ammon 1999: 15). German not only served as the carrier of scientific knowledge, but in its interrelation with German nationalism and as a herald of its culture it became an integral part of Germany's socio-political expansion. Wilhelm Scherer, one of Germany's leading philologists in the 19th century, saw the "science" of linguistics and literature (*Wissenschaft der Sprache*) in its role as "the light which illuminates darkness" as an integral part of Germany's global expansion (Almgren 1997: 74) [10].

4.1 Europe - Germany's gateway to the world

More precise and revealing is Germany's engagement in Europe. For Germany, Europe has always been the centre of attention in many areas, not so much out of choice but for historical conditions. The fragile European alliances and Germany's central location in Europe caused 'internal' political struggles in Germany to be of the greatest importance for Europe. Matters of German power consolidation have always been dangerous balancing acts among its European neighbours, as the process of Germany's unification (1866/1871) and re-unification (1989) demonstrated. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that Germany's language policies have been first and foremost directed towards Europe, reflecting the government's primary commitment to this part of the world.

4.2 The position of German in Europe

Overall, German learned as a foreign language holds third position in the whole of Europe and second position in Western Europe, the European Union - a ranking that the German government and other official organizations like to maintain. The numbers of native speakers of the main official languages of the EU are distributed as follows: (Lo Bianco 2001: 14):

Deutsch	24%
Français	16%
English	16%
Italiano	16%
Español	11%

And for foreign languages learners:

Deutsch	8%
Français	12%
English	31%
Italiano	2%
Español	4%

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But the "European enterprise" is not confined to the EU and its members as it also includes a strong involvement in Eastern Europe. This region represents an important market and has been a major force for the positive development of German as a foreign language after 1945. Gerhard Neuner (1997) refers to the political development of the end of the Cold War, the socio-political development in Eastern Europe as well as the re-unification of Germany as the main reasons for the rising demand for German in Eastern Europe. Apart from the political heritage of a strong position of the German language and its culture in the East, i.e. the role of the GDR for the former communist states, Neuner (1997: 7) also mentions the advantageous geographical location of a unified Germany, which meant a shift from the "eastern fringe" (*östliche Randlage*) into the *heart of Europe.* [11]

Germany's regional interests exemplify very clearly the close link between language policies and economic-political commitment. Neuner (1997: 8) estimates the total number of learners of German at around 20 million worldwide, of whom he allocates two thirds to Eastern Europe. [12] This attractive new market triggered a whole range of new strategies of cultural politics, ranging from the establishment of new Goethe-Institutes, the integration of lecture posts from GDR times, to the creation of new DAAD lecture posts as well as the huge new tutorial program run by the Robert Bosch Foundation. These efforts, however, have to be seen in the general political economic context, helping Central and Eastern Europe "on their way to EU accession" and fulfil the "Copenhagen Criteria" [13] (*Bureau* 2000: 216-217). Language policies, thus, appear as another form of investment to secure the leading role for Germany in Europe and, in their economic relevance, to gain global importance.

4.3 Germany's particular need for a neutral and ahistorical language policy

There is, as briefly mentioned above, a particular aspect of a powerful united Germany in Europe that is closely connected to the "old historical memory and intense resentment and wariness of a dominating Germany" (Neuner 1997: 7). Witte, who was the director of the *Kulturabteilung* in the German Foreign Office until 1992, elaborates this point as follows:

… there should be no doubt that the foreign cultural policy of the united Germany has nothing to do with serving a political desire for domination (*Dienst eines politischen Herrschaftsanspruchs*). If there is a political message implied in our endeavour to promote the German language in Central and Eastern Europe it is the following: we do not want to force the German language on others, but follow the demand of people and

governments of those countries to help them to expand and restructure the teaching of German (Witte 1991: 363).

The impression is therefore conveyed that the government is simply trying to meet pre-existing demands, and that its policies do not present any continuation of an imperial past. Its "ahistorical" and "apolitical" character underlies the arguments for a language policy, similar to the arguments for the distribution of the English language, that are associated with arguments of economic betterment and intellectual-professional opportunities, but they reject all socio-political responsibilities.

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5.0 Language policies and beyond

In the following section the issue of the neutrality of language policies and their concrete applications will be examined. The statistics provided by the Goethe-Institut, the cultural institutes of the German government, can provide some insight (Goethe-Institut, 1998). For example, the number of events organised as part of the 'pedagogical coordination' work (*pädagogische Verbindungsarbeit*) at the institutes (which includes lectures, exhibitions, school projects …), outside the institutes (e.g., in schools such as reading competitions) or in society at large (such as concerts or film festivals) shows a considerable rise between 1996 and 1997 (196-197):

Year	Worldwide	Central/Southeastern Europe	Eastern Europe
1996	3,180	539	225
1997	3,646	642	446

The increase by 100% in eastern Europe, together with the rise in central and southeastern Europe, accounts for almost the total increase worldwide.

Another very important aspect is revealed in the nature of these events. The majority deals with language instruction and methodology, cultural studies (*Landeskunde*), and literature, accounting for altogether 2,514 events in 1997 (2,351 in 1996); on the other hand, the number of activities under the rubric "educational policy" (*Bildungspolitik*) skyrocketed from 12 events in 1996 to 181 events in 1997. Of course, one should bear in mind that "educational policy" has a far wider range of meaning than the word itself suggests.

For example, the former director of the European Council in Strasbourg for education, culture, and sports, Stobart, alludes to the comprehensive nature of "educational policy." In one statement, he refers to the *new* educational policies in the wake of the opening of the East. They encompass the new laws concerning education, new curricula, expansion of the language market and development of modern foreign languages, as well as support for new professionals to secure a democratic development in these countries, such as journalists, lawyers or judges (Stobart 1993: 45-47).

The distribution of scholarships awarded parallels the figures cited above. Among the top fifteen countries having received research scholarships were nine countries from the two high-focus areas of Eastern Europe. In 1997 the budget was allocated as follows (Goethe-Institut 1998: 199): worldwide: DM 6.598.000, Eastern Europe: DM 2.488.550, and 'the rest of the world': DM 4.109.450. This means that Eastern Europe received almost 40% of the total budget. Keeping in mind the population figures involved in this distribution, the disbursement of these scholarships appears to be a calculated, and 'concentrated', investment. Interestingly, Wallerstein points out that

"at least 95 percent of all scholars and all scholarship from the period between 1850 and 1914, and probably even to 1945, originate[d] in five countries: France, Great Britain, the Germanies, the Italies, and the United States. There is a smattering elsewhere …" (Mignolo 2000: 288).

The policy underlying the awarding of scholarships represents a crucial link between language and culture distribution and politics, establishing a socio-economic hegemony of its prestigious educational institutions and their ideas. It cemented the notion of modernity firmly in the Western doxa to the extent that conceptualisations of globalisation and post-modernity are still mostly embedded in experiences of the West, characterized and framed by a particular articulation of its languages (English, French, German, Italian) and institutions.

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In order to be able to evaluate - and ultimately reject - the notion that Germany's language policies are neutral it is essential to consider the broader context. These policies include

training and research, for natives and non-natives, in the 'mother-country'; scholarships for longer and shorter periods, courses, specialists' visits; the production and promotion of textbooks, audiovisual materials, etc.; library services and gifts of books; the supply of teachers overseas and experts in curriculum development, advisory work, and in-service training; and cultural manifestations. (Phillipson 1992: 35)

The economic support, the strong presence in foreign countries, the political influence (usually connected with funding and industrial activities, such as contracts, cooperation programs etc.) and a scholarship policy to "invite" foreign scholars and researchers etc. contribute to an important network of functions, building a system of "knowledge monopoly," controlling its production, distribution and application.

The *Bildungspolitik*'s focus on Europe does not weaken the argument for a global orientation and motivation of German politics, sustained by such means as strong support for German language teaching and learning. This has been made quite clear by the statement of the German government about the value of the European engagement in its brochure *Facts about Germany* (German Federal Press and Information Bureau 2000, 219):

Euroland with a population of more than 300 million accounts for 19.4 percent of the world GDP and 18.6 percent of world trade. The United States of America, by comparison, accounts for 19.6 percent of world GDP and 16.6 percent of world trade; Japan accounts for 7.7 percent and 8.2 percent respectively.

In the light of the arguments and issues presented above, the following aspects seem problematic:

Firstly, the disassociation of teaching from political reform disguises the issue of the expansion of interests and allows the dominant country, the donor or helper, to present its language polices (and not only those) as an integral part of new educational policies and means to transfer essential parts of its own culture (e.g., education system and its laws) abroad.

Secondly, the claim of a pre-existing "natural demand" is misleading and false. It deliberately overlooks the fact that there is an overarching economic-political imbalance which enables the dominant country to "meet" demands, sustain the demand, and create new demand.

Thirdly, the sending of teaching personnel draws on and sustains "epistemological colonialism", inasmuch as it has successfully disguised "traces of a systematic program - much less an 'orchestration' for German cultural diffusion" (Pyenson, 1985: 302) while creating a fertile, *traditional* ground for current language and cultural policies abroad, whether in Europe or worldwide.

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In this context it is quite revealing that Neuner (Neuner 1997, 5), as one of the leading experts in GFL, expresses his concern about the decreasing number of learners of German in South Africa and Asia, in reference to its *traditional* strong position. The word 'traditional' is significant as it not only obscures any further ideological investment in language distribution but also demonstrates an uncritical attitude toward the role and function of language policy and its colonial legacies. This attitude appears to be prevalent among teachers of German as a foreign language and their departments.

Particularly in the context of developmental policies the apolitical approach only obfuscates and idealizes the concept of language export. As early as 1986 Sow argued that language teaching, especially through the paradigm of intercultural communication in *Germanistik*, is based on a hegemonic notion of 'social change', with the objective of sustaining the old colonial dependencies (Sow 1986: 32-33). [14] After the 'liberation' of the colonies and their release into independence and the abolishment of direct colonial rule this objective can only be indirectly pursued. As a result, uncritical teaching as a cultural-political activity can serve to permeate strategies of development and the diffusion of knowledge, values and norms of the epistemic centres of the West. Based on the notion of economic interest and capitalist exploitation Sow (1986: 33), quoting Kodjo, emphasizes:

A relationship should be obvious between the economic intentions of the centre and corresponding cultural structures on the periphery. From this perspective the economic centre also becomes the centre of culture and civilisation, and the economic periphery turns into a periphery of culture and civilisation. [15]

6.0 Where English and German meet

6.1 English and its "promised goods"

The arguments in support of the global spread of English resemble those raised in support of the formation of a European nation state. The same emphatic statements accompany the push for one universal language as part of the globalisation process and the desired aim of a monolingual nation construct. The gateway to better life echoes the

"positive image [of monolingualism] as a harbinger of modernity and democracy, with the homogeneity of language and culture ensuring political liberty and equal access to educational and social achievement for all [global] citizens" (Smolicz 2000: 164).

The consequence of such a language policy is a formation of structural inequality and asymmetry on the basis of language, leading to unequal division and distribution of power and resources - a form of cultural imperialism which Phillipson (1992) called *linguicism*. The forms of linguicism may vary and range from the inferiorisation of other languages, degraded or fragile multilingualism, linguistic disarmament of the non-English speakers, subtractive bilingualism, and lingual homelessness (Phillipson 2000). If we relate these possible results of EIL (English as an International Language) to the whole process of globalisation under Western dominance and translate them accordingly, the dimensions and the dramatic impact of an uncritical and unbalanced implementation of this policy become apparent. Precisely under these circumstances the role of the ELT teacher has to be critically investigated and analysed, as "teaching is never innocent. Every pedagogy is imbricated in ideology, in a set of tacit assumptions about what is real, what is good, what is possible, and how power ought to be distributed" (Pennycook 1994: 167).

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For English, several issues play a major part in its distribution. The British Council simply welcomes the spread of English with "bland optimism [and] claims the process is inevitable and unstoppable, a question of merely apprehending the facts and participating (...) in this most positive of worlds..." (Holborow 1999: 53). It turns a blind eye towards the political and problematic historical issues, covering over the true historical and political traces and ideological dimensions (ibid.: 54). The following characteristics and functions are commonly advanced in favour of the distribution and teaching of English in the world. English is

- · the language for global communication,
- · the language of science and technology,
- · the language of global business,
- · a language of rationalism,
- · a neutral language (ahistorical, apolitical),
- · a general educational help (Phillipson, 1992: 280-283).

These functions are related to a list of "promised goods" for English: "[s]cience, technology, modernity, efficiency, rationality, progress, and great civilisation" (ibid.: 284).

Language distribution becomes a self-referential discourse where the language represents simultaneously the means and product of a language policy underlying the structures of dominance and the belief in betterment and progress, democracy and world peace. It is exactly at this point where teachers and their practices converge with the discourse of dominance, where colonial legacies echo into the present, and where present and history intersect. Consequently, the teaching practices of a western foreign language "cannot be reduced to a set of disconnected techniques but rather must be seen as part of larger cultural, discursive or ideological orders" (Pennycook 1994: 167).

6.2 German and "its promised goods"

As seen in the example of English, language policy as part of a broader program of foreign cultural policy has to appear neutral but at the same time beneficial. An outline of the content and function of Germany's cultural program is stated in the above-mentioned *Facts about Germany* (207-208):

Cultural policy is one of the main elements of German policy. Its tasks include

- · presenting culture in Germany to the outside world as part of European culture;

- · promoting a knowledge and the spread of the German language all over the world as the key to German culture;

- · fostering co-operation in education and science in particular in the form of cultural and scientific exchange;

- · conveying to other countries a comprehensive and self-critical image of the Federal Republic

which reflects the diversity of democratic opinion in the country;

· nurturing international cultural dialogue and art, cultural and personal exchange;

· promoting international encounters through youth and sports exchange;

· making use of and developing the media on the basis of international co-operation.

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The aim of this foreign cultural policy is not just to provide information on our culture and country, but also to kindle dialogue, exchange, and co-operation between people and between cultures. It is also intended to foster understanding between both countries and individuals, to promote a cosmopolitan outlook and a worldly view of things, and, in the long term, to spawn credibility, reliability and an indispensable network for political and economic co-operation (...) Foreign cultural policy turns up partners and friends for Germany and is thus a direct means of furthering our vital interests.

One can only speculate about what these 'vital interests' may be, but these humanitarian visions of co-operation, dialogue, and equality - in their denial of the present conditions of inequality - obscure not only the historical dimensions but also the on-going political and economic structures. "Dialogue" has been developed into a core element of German language policies and its general cultural politics. Particularly for the promotion of the German language it has become a major springboard to overcome the shadows of the Third Reich and earlier expansion. Consequently, the international promotion of German wraps itself in the mantle of a soothing historical conscience and cleansed political motivation. Structurally and functionally the operation of language policies is directly connected to a country's foreign cultural politics by promoting collaboration between the participating countries. Twenty years ago Sow (Sow 1986: 17-18) demanded a politicisation of the structures of dependency because "in reality the propagated intercultural communication signifies a unilateral mediation and transmission of cultural goods". [16] The omission of a critical historic-political reflection allows the continuation of the deep-seated feeling of a European superiority that lingers beneath popularised notions of "exotic magic" of other cultures and the growing belief in a "multicultural world" (Demel 1992).

In the assessment of the export of the German language historical-political implications and motivations are usually left out and leave these policies in a strangely remote, artificial and sterile vacuum. There are many examples of historical and ideological muteness hidden underneath the illusionary concepts of "dialogue" and "intercultural encounter." For example, after the reunification and the collapse of the East European bloc, Witte said:

Now, after the walls and ideological trenches have collapsed, the German language has suddenly acquired a new role for the people in the process of political and social change in these countries. After years of intellectual isolation it provides them with access to a highly developed, also neighbouring, country of culture, industry and technology and its people, mediates knowledge of political, economic and social structures of a free democracy and furthermore, enables a better understanding, even the possibility of building bridges among the peoples of an integrating Europe (Witte 1991: 362-363). [17]

This view forms a tacit and common ideological platform from which "dialogue" is constructed, and language learning is kept ahistorical and apolitical in order to ignore discussions of power relations and other macro-contextual conditions. How can "dialogue," as a democratic space of equality, work in a situation of asymmetry of power and position? As one of the key concepts in German cultural and political life - and especially in Germanic studies, German as a foreign language, and linguistics - it leaves these disciplines distorted and quite remote from reality.

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Another example demonstrates how technology transfer is increasingly replacing the issue of cultural encounter, bridging, and transfer in political discussions. What underlies this argument is once again a "civilising mission" in the name of of progress and technology. Mitschian (1993: 274), a critic of the Eurocentric perspectives, falls into the same trap and replaces the old imperial discourse by a technological one, when he expresses the hope that German in combination with computer classes can actually overcome deficits in the area of "technical socialisation" of foreign students. It just sounds like another form of a "civilising mission."

Similarly to EIL, the overall goals of the distribution and the teaching of German as a foreign language are placed within the same discourses of science, technology, modernity, efficiency, rationality, progress, and

great civilisation. However, financial interests prevail, and contemporary language policies are transformed into entrepreneurial enterprises, emphasising a business orientation and the economic target of fulfilling a demand. The propagandists for German, in some advertisements for German on the Internet, show the same functions as stated earlier for English:

· Most commonly used language in Europe.

· Second biggest Internet market in the world.

· The closest relative to English.

· Access to the country with some of the largest trade fairs in the world.

· Access to "research" and development of high-tech products.

· Access to the "field of scientific publications".

· It prepares you "to function productively on behalf of a multinational employer" in connection with Europe.

· It enhances your career pathway.

· It makes you professionally different and competitive. [18]

From a neo-Marxist view Holborow (1999: 69) suspects an "imperial soothing" behind these economically framed language strategies embedded in an ahistorical and apolitical discourse of modernization. Liberals espousing an open-market attitude can easily apply the rule of the market for language policies because they are assured of success, considering the prominent position that Germany occupies in the EU. Thus, their anticipation comes as no surprise. "The market prospects for German are good because there is a broad demand and need for it" (Burkert 1997: 33). The result is a commercial enterprise of language export with an emphasis on efficiency and market position, exposing it to the economic forces of the global market and effectively preventing symmetrical models of dialogue and cooperation, but re-introducing former colonial inequality and neo-colonial perspectives.

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In conclusion, it is imperative to realize that language policies can never be treated as an ahistorical, apolitical and neutral activity as they present the means as well as the product of the imperial framework - a framework of inequality. Western language policies, including German, are entirely wedded to their general global concerns and formed by their particular historic moments. A critical historical review of their distribution and implementation discloses hidden references to the old colonial agenda - the *mission civilisatrice*. The colonial enterprise of Germany might be evaluated as having been a failure, but in comparison to other leading powers the "informal empire" of the sciences, technology, and knowledge have planted seeds whose fruits Germany has continued to harvest.

Adjectives such as 'traditional', 'common-sensical' or 'natural' need to be thoroughly investigated to disclose how much these terms indicate advantages and status generated by former imperial politics and formal as well as informal colonial activities.

The basic conditions for a politicisation are the exploration of social-theoretical concepts in German Studies/DaF, the disclosure of structures of consciousness and expectations of the addressees [but also of those of the 'sender'!], the articulation of their needs, a methodical approach to an understanding of specific issues in this discipline, and last but not least the initiation of new processes of formations of consciousness" (Sow 1986: 181). [19]

The professions involved in knowledge distribution, incorporating cultural activities, merit particular attention. They are not restricted to Britain and the United States but must also include Germany, especially with regard to the discourses and practices prevailing in the area of teaching/learning German as a foreign language abroad.

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Anmerkungen

[1] "Statt Krieg zu führen, machte der neue Staat, die Bundesrepublik, Geschäfte. Und es war beim Entree in die dritte Welt für die Deutschen ein Vorteil, daß man keine Kolonien mehr hatte. Das jahrelange Rufen nach Rückgabe der alten Kolonien war verhallt, und ein dezentes Schweigen breitete sich aus. Es ist sicherlich kein Zufall, daß in der Bundesrepublik bis heute keine umfassende Arbeit über die Geschichte der deutschen Kolonien vorliegt" (Translation of German passages by the author).

[2] According to Chungmoo Choi, at least in the Asian context the "Japanese imperialism reproduced the fictionality of the European discourse (…) a pastiche of the European Enlightenment" (Choi 1997: 355).

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[3] Pyenson relates 'innocent' scientific work to the imperial interests of their countries as follows:

In one of the characteristic features of imperialist expansion, scientists and technicians travel from a metropolitan center to colonial outposts. Most come for practical reasons. - Anthropologists arrive to identify the local power structure; geographers and geologists chart the new land and seek its mineral wealth; meteorologists and agronomists establish where cash crops can best be planted; medical men seek the origins of local diseases that menace native workers and foreign overlords; engineers erect port facilities and supervise construction of inland transportation networks. It is not difficult to see, then, how colonial situations may in time come to harbor independent researchers in anthropology, pathology, and applied mechanics, natural history, agriculture, physiology, pathology, and applied mechanics." Pyenson, L. (1985). *Cultural Imperialism and Exact Sciences: German Expansion Overseas 1900-1930.* New York, Berne, Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang.

[4] Graddol, D. and Ulrike H. Meinhof (1999). English in a changing world - L'anglais dans un monde changeant. *AILA Review 13*, Oxford. - Kachru, B.B. (1986). *The Alchemy of English.* Oxford et al.: Pergamon Institute of English. - Platt, J., Heidi Weber and Ho Mian Lian (1984). *The New Englishes.* London et al.: Routledge and Kegan Paul. - Smith, E. (1983) ed. *Readings in English as an International Language*. Oxford et al.: Pergamon Press.

[5] "Die Befunde widersprechen allen Kassandrarufen vom Internet als Totengräber der deutschen Sprache. Deutsch nimmt einen stattlichen zweiten Platz ein nach dem Englischen, deutlich vor dem Französischen". Ammon, U. (2000: 285)

[6] In the *Didactica Magna* of Comenius, one can find, according to Martin Carnoy (1974), the origin of the expansionist view of the European civilisation - one might call it "la mission civilisatrice epistemologique" - in which he outlined how to teach everybody everything, as well as presenting "a blueprint for assembly line production of knowledge." Carnoy, M. (1974). *Education as Cultural Imperialism.* New York, Longman.

[7] Overlack refers to the Baghdad Railway project, which "was seen as 'a saving cultural undertaking … for the Osmanid Imperial state, a 'peaceful world-policy based on steam'" (Overlack, :6).

[8] As did the "inexact sciences" such as anthropology, ethnology, archeology, or social history etc.

[9] This refers to a quote by Habermas, who, on his tour through China, remarked: "I don't think it is polite rhetoric when Chinese colleagues emphasise their preference [*Neigung*] for German culture. This cultural capital should not be gambled away" (Manus, 2001, 27).

[10] "Die Leuchte, die das Dunkel erhellt, ist die Wissenschaft der Sprache."

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[11] Interestingly, or quite tellingly, here he is using the slogan, which has been promoted in political, social, cultural as well as economic and internationally oriented discourses.

[12] In the journal "Goethe-Institut intern", Goll mentions the figure of 18 million students at schools "demonstrating the emphasis on the integration of the German language in official school curricula" and refers also to a few million of students at universities as well as many more adults at other institutions (1998, 14).

[13] These criteria include a certain juridical framework to secure democracy, stability and constitutional rule, market strength to allow competition within the EU and "the ability to integrate the duties and goals arising from EU membership" (German Federal Press and Information Bureau, 2000).

[14] She writes: "Dabei erhebt sich die Frage, ob zur "Entwicklung" exogen verholfen werden kann oder ob nicht der Idee des ‚sozialen Wandels' eine versteckte Absicht zugrundeliegt, die die Abhängigkeitsbeziehungen subtiler zu verfestigen beabsichtigt." (32-33)

[15] "…Durch diese Anpassung werden die Entwicklungsstrategien auf die Modelle des Zentrums zugeschnitten. Es soll (…) eine Korrelation zwischen Wirtschaftsabsichten des Zentrums und entsprechender Kulturgestaltung in der Peripherie gesehen werden. Unter diesem Aspekt wird das Wirtschaftszentrum zugleich ein Kultur- und Zivilisationszentrum und die Wirtschaftsperipherie eine Kultur- und Zivilisationsperipherie." (Kodjo quot., 33) [No reference for Kodjo in the bibliography]

[16] "Ohne Problematisierung der Abhängigkeitsbeziehungen ist keine "Beziehbarkeit" möglich, weil es sich bei der proklamierten interkulturellen Kommunikation in Wirklichkeit um die Vermittlung und Übertragung von Kulturgütern, die sich unilinear vollziehen, handelt."

[17] "Jetzt, wo Mauern und ideologische Gräben weggefallen sind, fällt der deutschen Sprache im Zuge des Prozesses politischen und gesellschaftlichen Wandels in diesen Ländern plötzlich eine neue Rolle für die Menschen zu: nach Jahren geistiger Isolation eröffnet sie ihnen den Zugang zu einem hochentwickelten, zudem eng benachbarten Kultur-, Industrie- und Technologieland und dessen Bürgern, vermittelt Kenntnisse über politische, wirtschaftliche und soziale Strukturen einer freien Demokratie und schafft darüber hinaus besseres Verstehen, ja die Möglichkeit des Brückenschlags zwischen den Völkern in einem zusammenwachsenden Europa."

[18] For the originals see www.goethe.de/i/eniazeh.htm and www.serve.com/shea/whygermn.htm.

[19] "Die Grundvoraussetzung(en) der Politisierungsthese (sind) die Erarbeitung der gesellschaftstheoretischen Grundlagen des Germanistikstudiums" (Gueye), das Eruieren der Bewusstseinsstrukturen und Erwartungen der betroffenen Adressaten, das Artikulieren von deren Bedürfnissen, eine methodische Entfaltung des Vestehens an spezifischen Gegenständen des Faches und nicht zuletzt ein In-Gang-Setzen neuerer Prozesse der Bewußtseins-Bildung."

[Zurück zur Leitseite]