



Capital and the Hegemony of English in a Capitalist World-System

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- 'Please send me a pot of the best sort of chaw'.

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5 points

[1] Historical transition to a capitalist mode of production.

[2] English 'free-rider' mechanism as this applies to capital accumulation and circulation of capital in a capitalist world-system.

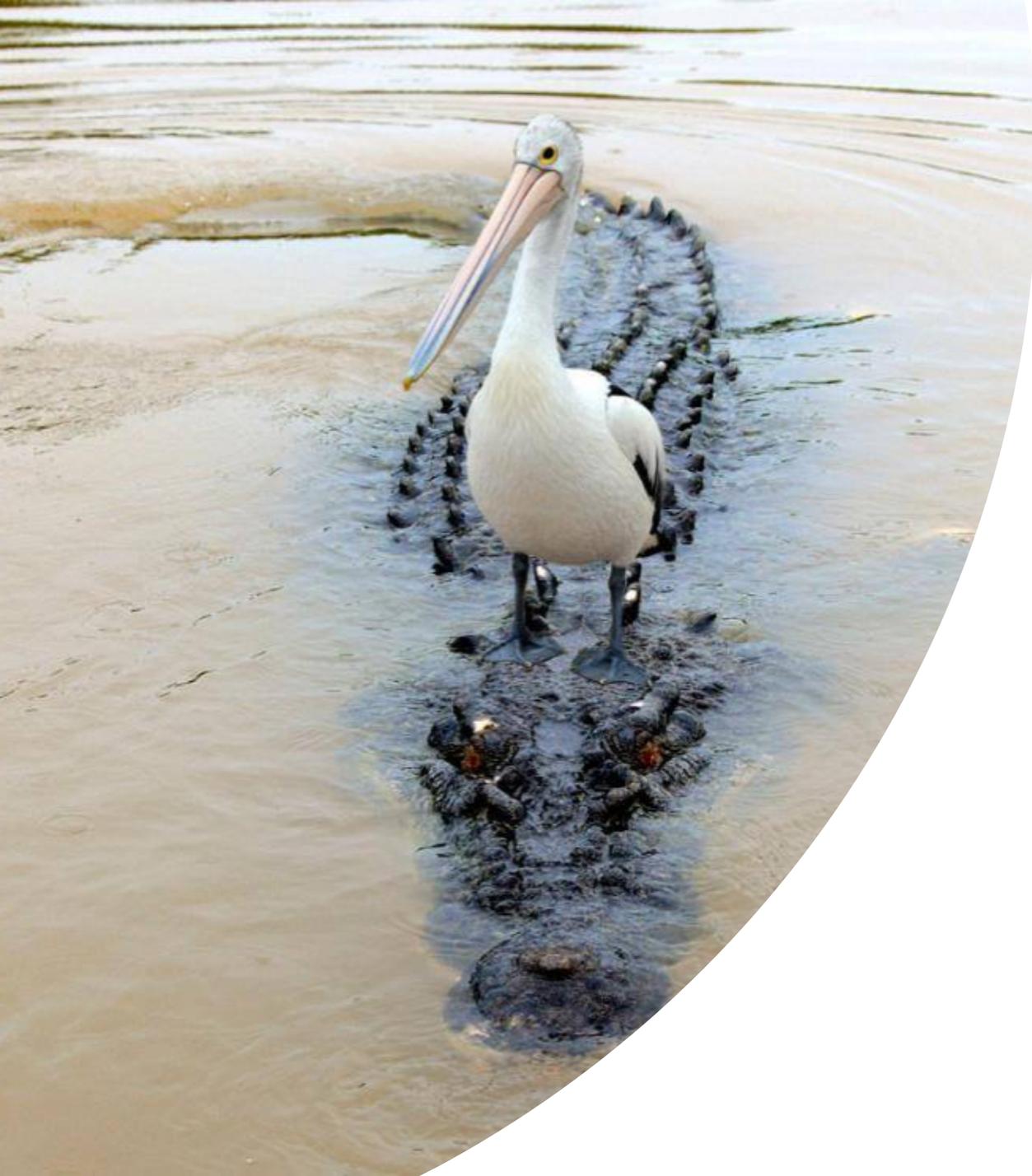
[3] British and American world-economies and what made them hegemonies in the world-system.

[4] How diverse realizations of English in the world – local vernaculars, outer- and expanding-circle Englishes, translanguaging, ELF etc. – fit into this schema.

[5] The future of centre Englishes in the periphery.

1. Mobile capital

- **Mobile capital** leads to ‘the possibility of commercial communications transcending the immediate neighbourhood’ (Marx & Engels, 1998 [1845/6]: 75).
- **1650-1750:** the creation of banks, national debts, paper money, speculation in stocks and shares, and the development of finance in general.
- **Capital’s hue:** This was *effected* by the nation that had advanced by 1763 (Treaty of Paris) to become the new hegemonic power: England.
- The ‘**court-based**’ **English of England** was able to act as a ‘**free rider**’ on capital (Olson, 1965), and by means of capital’s global spread to lay the footings for the **linguistic structuration** of the capitalist world-system in English.



2. Free riding

‘the action or practice of benefiting (or seeking to benefit) in some way from the effort, sacrifice, financial outlay, etc., of others, without making a similar contribution’ (Olsen, 1965, cited in Fontaine, 2014: 361)

The components of capital: M-C-M¹

M is Money, **C** is the Commodity, and **M¹** is the 'surplus value' accrued in the sale (Marx, 1976 [1867]: 251)

M^E-C^E-M^{1E} is the general formula for the 'free riding' of English on capital.

In money-dealing or financial capital (**M-M¹**) the free riding of English is **M^E-M^{1E}**.

English acts as a *transactional lingua franca*.

1600-1850: dominant form is **M^E-C^E-M^{1E}**.

Post 1850: algorithm shifts towards **M^E-M^{1E}**.

3. Britain and US as world hegemons

Britain as it became after 1701, had an **informal empire** in addition to a **formal empire**, and these together constituted the **British world-economy** (Gallagher & Robinson, 1953; Wallerstein, 2000 [1974]; Cain & Hopkins, 2002).

Informal empire refers to ports, hinterlands, territories and zones which lay outside Britain's formal possessions, but which were from the seventeenth century directly or indirectly incorporated into British global capital networks of investment and trade.

The one constant was **the movement of British capital**, not only through the formal colonies in India and Asia, but also through other parts of the world, such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Japan.

The American Century 1919-2019

The **American century** begins around 1919 and is consolidated from 1944 with the **Bretton Woods** agreement.

Further consolidated again after 1991 with the **collapse of the Soviet Union**.

US world-economy mostly an **informal empire** although it has also had acquisitional and colonizing tendencies (e.g. Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Panama, the Philippines, Japan, South Korea etc).

Autocentrism

The **'internalization' of US corporate practices** within the organizational domains of giant business corporations (TNCs) and the world's global governance institutions (e.g. Coca Cola, McDonalds, Goldman Sachs, Apple etc.; IMF, the World Bank, WTO, US Federal Reserve etc.) (Arrighi, 2010)

Advanced structural power of the US in **economic and cultural production**, in **global credit** (IMF, WB, Federal Reserve) and **security institutions** (NATO, Asian security pacts), in military reach (air, land and sea), and in control over the **global knowledge base** (technological knowledge over social knowledge; empirical knowledge over theoretical knowledge; paywalled knowledge over free knowledge) (Strange, 1989)

4. World realizations of English

Vernacular inner-circle Englishes, outer- and expanding-circle Englishes, translanguaged, translingual and superdiverse Englishes, ELF etc.

Peripheries in the centre and peripheries external to the centre.

Language can be assigned value: **exchange value** and **use value**.

Commodification

01

When English appears to have ***exchange value***, primacy is given to **standard forms**.

02

When English appears to have ***use value***, primacy is given to **non-standard forms**.

03

In translanguaging, superdiversity, translingual practice and ELF, **use value is emphasized over exchange value**.

5. The future?

Structural crisis of the historical world-system.

Centres of world power more diffuse and the US global system more unstable.

Too many nations able to become exporters of capital in their own right.

Spaces for accumulation have contracted.

But US still has **global edge**.

Edge

Military-industrial production, finance and knowledge.

US oversight of IMF, World Bank, WTO and Federal Reserve is undiminished.

Close parasitic/symbiotic relationship of global capital with US dollars and with English.

Likely that **Anglo-American standard** will remain **default *lingua franca*** and **transcendental signified** for global communication in English, most particularly in **the written form**.



THANK YOU! 😊



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