

Global English: 21st century linguistic and cultural trends

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For the past five decades we have been witness to a historically new and unique situation: the linguistic integration of the world around English as the sole remaining global lingua franca. In the first part of my presentation I will show that this dominant position will not lead to an English linguistic monoculture on a global scale. English has become an internally very heterogeneous language, and for the vast majority of regular users (ESL, EFL, ELF) English is part of multilingual repertoires. English is and will remain a **pluricentric global language for a multilingual world**. In a second step, I will discuss changing hierarchies within the Global-English constellation of varieties. As for Standard English, corpus-based findings show a transition from a bi-polar constellation, with British and US standards functioning as globally relevant “super-varieties,” to a unipolar one focussed around North American norms. However, this trend towards homogenisation is more than offset by a growing public visibility of many non-standard varieties. Using illustrations from African American Vernacular English, Jamaican Creole and Nigerian Pidgin, I will show that varieties that are still highly stigmatised in their vernacular home-bases have become “hot commodities” in the changing *ethnoscapes* and *mediascapes* (Appadurai) of cultural globalisation. My conclusion is that the global spread of English provides manifold opportunities for genuine human progress – but only if the power of English is “domesticated” by the development of intelligent multilingual practices and language planning measures.