

The political History of Syria and the Teaching of Foreign Languages

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□ ABSTRACT □

Although Syria was once occupied by Turkey and colonised by France, there is no presence of the Turkish language in the Syrian educational system, and the presence of the French language is so weak if compared to the presence of the English language though both are part of the Syrian educational system. Many researchers like Kaplan (1966), Phillipson (1992), Said (1993), and Pennycook (1998) have shown that the strength and weakness of the presence of the learning of languages in a country may indirectly refer to a conflict between the countries of these languages. In other words and to be specific, this may reflect the historical and political conflict between Britain and the USA from one side and France from the other side in which each power is trying to become the strongest in the world. However, the increasing role of the English language in the educational system of Syria could be threatening to the cultural identity of Syrian learners. This is, according to many researches, because the spread of English carries intentions of linguistic imperialism and as a result cultural imperialism—something that learners of English should be aware of.

Key Words: target language, linguistic imperialism, cultural imperialism, colonialism, cultural identity

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التاريخ السياسي لسوريا و النوايا الحقيقية وراء تدريس اللغات الأجنبية و بالأخص اللغة الإنكليزية

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□ ملخص □

على الرغم من أن سوريا قد تم احتلالها من قبل المستبد التركي و فيما بعد المستعمر الفرنسي غير أن وجود كل من اللغتين التركية و الفرنسية يعتبر ضعيفاً إذا ما قورن بوجود اللغة الإنكليزية مع أن كلاً من اللغتين الفرنسية و الإنكليزية تعتبران جزءاً من النظام التعليمي السوري. إن العديد من الباحثين مثل كابلان (1966) و فيليبسون (1992) و سعيد (1993) و بينيكوك (1998) قد أشاروا إلى أن القوة و الضعف في أي وجود لتعلم اللغات في بلد ما قد يشير بشكل غير مباشر إلى صراع بين بلدان تلك اللغات. بمعنى آخر و لكي نكون أكثر تخصيصاً فإن هذا قد يشير إلى الصراع التاريخي و السياسي بين بريطانيا و الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية من جانب و فرنسا من جانب آخر بحيث أن كلاً من الجانبين يحاول أن يكون القوة المسيطرة الأكبر في العالم. غير أن الدور المتزايد للغة الإنكليزية في النظام التعليمي السوري قد يشكل تهديداً للهوية الثقافية لتعلمي اللغة الإنكليزية السوريين. حيث أن العديد من الأبحاث قد أظهرت أن انتشار اللغة الإنكليزية يحمل في طياته نوايا لهيمنة لغوية قد تؤدي لهيمنة ثقافية مما يستدعي حذر متعلمي تلك اللغة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اللغة الهدف - الهيمنة اللغوية - الهيمنة الثقافية - الاستعمار - الهوية الثقافية

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1.1 Introduction

While so many languages have died or are on their way to disappear, other languages are spreading so quickly all over the world. Is this something natural or are there reasons behind the disappearance of some languages and the spread of others? Does it mean that some languages are replacing some other languages?

The role of the English language is increasing day after day to the extent that the number of the non-native speakers of English is far greater than that of its native speakers. According to statistics, 375 million people speak English as their first language, while 375 millions speak English as their second language, and 750 millions speak English as a foreign language with a total of 1.5 billions. This makes it the second most spoken language in the world after Mandarin with a total of 1026 millions (see Ethnologue 2013, 17th Edition). As a result, English is on the way to become the mother language of so many people in different countries of the world apart from England, the USA, Australia, and a good part of Canada. I believe that such a spread is really dangerous because language has its role in shaping peoples' cultural identity.

In the following study, I intend to prove that occupation and colonisation are not only the main reasons behind the spread of some languages especially the English language. In other words, Syria was occupied by Turkey for four hundred years and then by France for about 26 years, but the Turkish language has no presence in the Syrian educational system. Also, the role of French in Syria is not as important as it is in the other countries previously colonised by France. Now, English is marginalising the role of the French language in spite of all the efforts that the French councils put in Syria.

I believe that Britain and the USA as two of the greatest powers of the world are no longer using the military forces for supporting their hegemony and imperialism all over the world; the English language is the new weapon that has proved its ability in spreading the beliefs, the norms and the rules of the imperialist, i.e. linguistic imperialism is a new form of imperialism that leads to cultural imperialism. After proving that linguistic and cultural imperialism are facts, I will try to show their impact on the educational system and specifically what concerns the teaching of foreign languages including the English language in Syria. This is because the educational system has its great role in shaping the minds of our new generation.

1.2 Historical background

The following historical background might be rather long and contain so many details, but I found it really important. The present comes as a result of the events of the past. The teaching of foreign languages in the past and the present is very much related to the political issues that have taken place in the region. So, the following section (1.2.1) will show why the teaching of the English language predominates in Syria and not the teaching of Turkish, German, Russian or even French although French is part of the educational system and Russian is on its way to become a part of the educational system of Syria .

1.2.1 The Turkish Occupation and the Turkish Language

The period between the seventh century and the thirteenth century was a period of power for the Arab world. Arabic was the language of religion, science, trade and communication. This was the case even after the coming of the Turkish occupation (the Ottomans) that lasted from the sixteenth century till the beginning of the twentieth century.

The Ottoman occupation that brought the Turkish language with it was the first foreign occupation after the period of the Prophet Muhammad. Though the Ottoman state lasted for four centuries, the effect of the Turkish language on the Arabic language was far less than that of the Arabic language on the Turkish language (see Ayubi, 1995). To know the reason behind the weak influence of the Turkish language on the Arabic language, it is better, I think, to know what sort of state the Ottoman armies had established.

The Arab people who were under occupation were not happy at all with such occupation especially because the private properties were not safe at all. The Ottoman Sultan used to give his soldiers lands instead of salaries. So, real owners of these lands hated such a system that was based on "utilisation" rights and not on "ownership" rights' (Ayubi, 1995: 67). As a result, the real owners of the lands became slaves to the Turkish soldiers. This led to poverty and suffering on the Arabs' side—something that made most of the Arabs at that time hate the Turkish state including its culture and language as a result.

Instead of going to schools, children used to go to *Al-Kuttab* which is a kind of informal school where children learn and memorize the Holy Koran. This was done by the help of *al-sheikh*, the religious man in Islamic terms, which led to strengthening the Arabic language of those children.

The Turkish state was an Islamic one for many reasons, which paved the way for more respect of Arabic as it is the language of the Holy Kuran. On the other hand, the Turkish Empire was not culturally strong for it was established on the 'heels of the Seljuks and other Turkish dynasties that had overrun the region since the eleventh century' (Ayubi, 1995: 66). Here, a weak Turkish culture means a weak Turkish language because the two are highly attached to each other (see Chandler, 1994). Also, the Abbasids' Arabic culture was so influential to the extent that the Turkish Empire had imitated so many of its policies and the armies were an example. Another reason behind the decision to make their empire an Islamic one is that they wanted to reach to a more homogeneous society. Here, all Muslims with their good Arabic had a better chance to reach to 'higher offices' as Ayubi (1995: 69) puts it; and as a result the role of other religions like Christianity was marginalised. The main reason to make the Ottoman Empire an Islamic one was just to give the Sultan an ultimate power as an Islamic (caliph) imitating the role of al-caliph (the way they used to call the ruler after the death of the Prophet Muhammad):

[B]y the turn of the eighteen century, [they] strengthen their claims to absolute authority by increasingly underscoring their religious role as the spiritual leaders (caliphs) of the community...

(Ayubi, 1995:70)

Peoples' state was getting worse. They were so much exploited by the Ottoman leaders. They were isolated from everything new that might take place in other places of the world like Europe. Ignorance and poverty were everywhere which means that the Turkish power, culture and language did not bring with them prosperity or scientific development for the people of the Arab region.

There was a policy at the Turkish part called Turkification that aimed to use the Turkish and only the Turkish language, which was unpopular among most of the Arabs at that time, everywhere including schools in 'Great Syria' and the other parts of the Ottoman Empire. Arabs' reaction towards such a movement was so negative. They asked for both linguistic and cultural equalities. When all their efforts ended up with failure, Arabs in the Asian part of the Arab World revolted under the leadership of Al-Sharif Husain of Mecca and in cooperation with France and Britain against the Ottoman Empire in 1916 (see

Sulieman, 1994 and *Palestine Facts*, 2015). At the same time while the Arab Revolution was taking place, there was an agreement between France and Britain to divide 'Great Syria' and Iraq into territories colonised by them. This agreement is called Sykes-Picot agreement. So, after the liberation from the Ottoman occupation, Arabs of Great Syria and Iraq found themselves under the colonisation of both France and Britain as the following:

- The great Syria was divided into Syria, Palestine, Jordan and Lebanon.
- Syria and Lebanon were under the French colonisation.
- Iraq, Jordan and Palestine were under the British colonisation.

(see *The Avalon Project: The Sykes-Picot Agreement*, 2015 and see also Ayubi, 1995)

In 1920, Syria became a colony of France. This colonisation lasted for 26 years and ended in 1946 (see *Encyclopedia: History of Syria*, 2015).

I have mentioned this historical background just to reach to the following findings: Syria was occupied for four hundred years by Turkey and Turkish was imposed on the Arabs in Syria to learn, but is Turkish a foreign or even a second language in Syria nowadays? You can rarely find anyone who might be interested in learning Turkish unless s/he has some Turkish origins and in this case s/he is a native speaker of Turkish or can be considered as a bilingual in both Arabic and Turkish. We might have cases like this in Syria, but those are considered to be minorities and can be found in certain cities in Syria. However, two years before the beginning of the Syrian crisis in 2011, the Syrian-Turkish relationship improved to the extent that Syrian and Turkish citizens no longer needed a visa to move between both countries. This raised the Syrians' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to learn Turkish—a motivation that soon faded out after the very negative role of Turkey towards the Syrian crisis by financially supporting and logistically facilitating the entrance of thousands of terrorists to Syria through its borders.

Someone might say that Turkey's presence was an occupation rather than a colonisation. This is true, but Turkey was a very strong power and a wealthy empire. Turkish was supposed to be a dominating language because it was imposed on the Arabs, but Arabs refused it and kept their Arabic language as their first language without giving the opportunity to any other language to replace it or even to be equal to it. This was the case of Turkish, but the case of French was different.

1.2.2 The French Colonisation and the French Language

After winning the First World War, France found that Syria, in addition to the other Arab countries, was so immature to govern itself; so the solution was to help the Syrians become strong enough and to recover from the ignorance that was the result of the Turkish occupation. In other words, they wanted to improve the economic, political, social and cultural situation of the Syrian people in order to be able to achieve the self-governed state. These were the *good intentions* of the French colonisation as Pennycook (1998) puts it.

The real intentions of the European colonisation in the Arab World and the other regions of the world have been discussed by so many critics like Said (1993), Fanon (1986), Pennycook (1994 and 1998), Phillipson (1992) and others. However, before discussing these intentions, I would rather talk about the influence of the French colonisation on Syria after the end of the colonisation in 1946, namely the educational system.

I prefer to talk about the educational system because it is very much related to the topic of my study. The school courses and even the university system follow the French system of education including its exam system. Moreover, French was one of the four foreign languages which used to be taught in the schools and universities of Syria. The

other three languages were English, German and Russian. Eventually, French and English have remained as the two major foreign languages and German and Russian were dropped from the educational system of schools except from some of the northern cities like Al-Rqqa, Al-Hassaka and DierAzzour. There is a branch of the French Council that can be found at almost every city in Syria and the best example is the French Council in Lattakia, the city where I came from, though such a city is very small if compared with the other big cities in Syria. In cooperation with the French Council, the Cultural Centre provides courses in teaching French with very low costs, and the teachers are native speakers of French until shortly after the beginning of the Syrian crisis in 2011. Also, there are so many students who got scholarships at the universities of France to continue their higher studies.

From my reading of both Pennycook (1998) and Phillipson (1992) though their focus is on the spread of English and not French, I can infer that the intentions of France as a colonizer is to spread its language all over the world in order to make French the first dominant language in the world and marginalize the roles of the other languages especially international languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, Russian, and Spanish. These international languages in addition to the French language have all become international because they have all been strongly connected with invasion. Phillipson (1992: 31) finds out that invaders found that spreading their languages was a part of enlarging and supporting their empires and that mastering the language of the invader will bring the good for its speakers as he puts it:

The present distribution throughout the world of the major international languages Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish is evidence of conquest and occupation, followed by adoption of the invader's language because of the benefits that accrue to speakers of the language when the dominant language has been imposed. Language spread invariably occurs in conjunction with forces such as religion or trade, which are seen by some extra-linguistic, but the significance of the language as a tool for unification has long been recognized.

Now, a question will be raised. Why does France put so many efforts and spend a great amount of money on spreading French? One of the answers is the *good intentions* as the French (the coloniser) claim for they seek to civilise the Other (the non-western people) and reach to mutual understanding and friendship. All this can be achieved by the medium of the French language. But, this was proved to be nothing but claims. This is mainly because it brought distinctions among the people of the world according to their colours and languages. They reached an understanding, but it was only one-sided understanding, for the 'Others' became able to acquire the European cultures while those of Europe did not bother themselves with understanding that the cultures of the Others might contain elements which help their people to live and survive on their own (see Wardhaugh, 1987 and Pennycook, 1998).

Another answer is that France as a post-coloniser power wants to make out of French a *lingua franca*. But, another question will be raised here. Is French a *lingua franca*? I think that my Syrian context will provide the answer too. *Lingua franca* is a term that can be applied to the 'dominant international languages which happened to be the former colonial languages'. It is also defined as 'a language that is used for communication between different groups of people, each speaking a different language' (Phillipson, 1992: 41). According to such definitions, French is a *lingua franca*, but it is a second *lingua franca* if compared with English (see Moura, 2000). Does it mean that there is a conflict between

the two languages? I think yes, there is conflict between the two languages which is a background of the conflict between the two cultures.

1.3 The Conflict between English and French

The conflict between French and English is not a conflict for spreading the language only. It is a conflict that aims to dominate the educational systems all over the world. In other words, the winner will have a great effect on shaping the educational systems and as a result on reshaping the cultures of as many countries as possible. This will bring so many political and economic benefits to the winner. So, I believe that there is no place for the good intentions here.

In Syria, both English and French are considered to be foreign languages. They are both taught at schools as foreign languages. In other words, they are not imposed on the students to be the languages of education. Nonetheless, if compared with English, French takes the second rank in schools, universities and even as the medium of communication with the foreigners no matter what their nationalities might be. According to Canagarajah (1999), Phillipson (1992) and Pennycook (1998), French is supposed to be a second language in Syria because Syria is in the post-colonial period and has recently got its independence (from the French military forces). Syria is supposed to be one of the francophone members (the French speaking countries), but it is not in spite of all the efforts that France puts to increase the number of its francophone members which are more than 77 countries (see the AOMF: *Partners and Networks*, 2014).

Before almost forty years till now, most of the students who had or have to choose either French or English at preparatory school and later at elementary school in the past or at university now prefer English to French. Before realising the importance of English or even that there is a conflict between the two languages, as a fifth grade pupil at elementary school, I did not think twice to choose English. This was the case of all my classmates in 1990. Out of ten pupils only one pupil chose French. We all agreed that French was an ugly and boring language. Now, I believe that what made the English language sound lovely to the other children and to me is that we used to hear it frequently on the Syrian TV. Though it was rather difficult for us as children to read the Arabic subtitles written at the bottom of the screen while watching the British or the American TV programmes, we were able to sit and watch such attractive programmes that made the language attractive too. From my childhood memory, I can hardly remember any French programmes. This was a part of the domination of English that Tomlinson (1991: 1) talks about, in which he considers 'the television itself as a focus of domination'. But, does that mean that there is a hidden conflict between the two languages and cultures: the English and the French cultures?

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the French have noticed that the role of the French language in the world is not the same as it was before. They found out that the role of French had declined. This was mainly because of the spread of English that was getting wider as a result of the rise of the United States of America as the centre of power in the world. So, English was supported by two strong powers in the world: Britain and the United States of America. Though the two languages presented themselves as the medium of education in the world, English and for many reasons was more adopted by people in different places in the world than French. This is because English was less demanding than French. In other words, English was not restricted to only one culture or ethnic group. While, on the other hand, French was more attached to the French culture trying to keep its

rules and standards as they were used in France and consequently setting more rigorous targets for the learners (see Wardhaugh, 1987).

La Francophonie which has been developed by the French is the only way out for them to bring back the role of the French language as it was before. Though the French claim that their ultimate goal is to ‘unite French-speaking people everywhere and to promote French in the world’ (Wardhaugh, 1987: 150) and to lift up these countries into a better education and life, *La Francophonie* emerged mainly because of the conflict with the English language as Wardhaugh (1987: 149) puts it:

The French have developed *la Francophonie*, loose alliance of francophone nations, in order to try to safeguard French influence in the world and to arrest any further decline of their language and culture. Through *la Francophonie* they seek to maintain the purity of the language, to promote its continued use as a world language and to provide an effective opposition to English.

The negative reaction of the French people towards the English language in France is the best example of the conflict between the two languages. Byram, Esarye-Sarries, Taylor and Allatt (1990) were trying in a study to find out how students’ attitudes towards the people of the language might affect positively or negatively their attitudes towards learning the language. So many students complained about the bad treatment of the French people when using English to communicate with them in France. Here is an example of what one of the students says:

All he wanted to do was see who they were ‘cause they were English, they were different and sort of he started talking as we walked past ‘cause we were lost and told us where the hostel was and took us back to the hostel, all helpful. Just if you talk to them not if you sort of shout at them in a loud voice and try and get over in English they ignore you but if you try to talk to them in French they’ll help you as much as they can.

(Byram, *et al.*, 1991: 108)

Unfortunately or luckily, it was too late for the French language to retain its role back again for English has become the language of technology, science, computer, business, banking, tourism, politics and education. Moreover, the tendency among the young generation to learn and master English is increasing day after day (see Wardhaugh 1987 and Phillipson 1992).

As a result, in the conflict between French and English that Phillipson (1992) and Wardhaugh (1987) talk about, I can infer that the English language has won over French *par excellence* and the positive attitude of most of the Syrians whether parents or children towards English is the best example. Most parents encourage their children to learn the English language and master it. This is mainly because they are aware of the important role that English plays in so many fields. They believe that mastering English provides better job opportunities and that such a language takes the place of so many other languages. In other words, if somebody masters English s/he can communicate with so many people from different nationalities. Not any other language can play such a role even the French language:

English has a dominant role *internally*, occupying space that other languages could possibly fill. English is also the key external link, in politics, commerce, science, technology, military alliances, entertainment, and tourism. The relationship between English and other languages is unequal one, and this has important consequences in almost all spheres of life.

(Phillipson, 1992: 30)

Though Syria is a post-colonial country of France, the interest in English is increasing day after day. The number of private institutes that teach English is increasing, the number of students at universities studying English literature and translation is increasing and exceeds 20000 at only Tishreen University, and the awareness of fields such ESP, EOP, EAP, EGP is also increasing. For example, a small city like Lattakia has at least seven private institutes that receive hundreds of English language learners each month. In the Higher Institute of Languages at Tishreen University, the ratio of English language learners to French language learners is 360 to 76 in the summer term of the Academic year 2014, and 453 to 102 in the winter term of the same academic year. At the faculty of civil engineering in the second term of the academic year 2014/2015, the ratio of English to French concerning students who took the general language exam (L1) is 296:6. At the same Faculty, when it comes to the ratio of students who took the exams of English or French for specific purposes (L3), the numbers are similar to some extent: 273 to 6. I do not believe that such an increase in all of what I have mentioned above is completely an innocent one: it could be partly linguistic imperialism.

1.4 Linguistic and Cultural Imperialism

1.4.1 Linguistic Imperialism

Ansre (1979) defined the phenomenon of linguistic imperialism as

The phenomenon in which the minds and lives of the speakers of a language are dominated by another language to the point where they believe that they can and should use only that foreign language when it comes to transactions dealing with the more advanced aspects of life such as education, philosophy, literature, governments, the administration of justice, etc.

(cited in Phillipson, 1992: 56)

Not everything mentioned above can be applied to the Syrian context, but the way in which the educational system is becoming day after day more affected by the American and the British educational system is an example especially in terms of the multiple choice exam questions that have started to be applied in most of the faculties in the Syrian universities. English has become the bread of so many people including myself. English is now equal to the British pound and the American dollar whose values are increasing so fast because they are related to the economy and power of these two strong countries. In other words, to master English is the best way to make money. Starting with this point, each educational system that gives English the priority in learning will be doubted as Canagarajah (1999: 3) puts it:

But, in the post modern world, education has lost its innocence. The realisation that education may involve the propagation of knowledges and ideologies held by dominant social groups has inspired a critical orientation to pedagogical paradigms.

After getting rid of the French imperialism and its effects, Syria is now under the threat of linguistic imperialism. Its case found a place on the pages of Kachru (1986), Phillipson (1992) and Canagarajah (1999) though Syria is not specifically mentioned in any of these books. Using Kachru's terms (1986), I can argue that Syria is related to the 'expanding circle' for it was first colonised by France and not Britain and now becomes under the 'neo-imperialist thrusts of English-speaking centre communities' (Canagarajah, 1999: 4). On the other hand, Phillipson (1992) and Canagarajah (1999) gave the term *periphery* to the non-native communities of English where English has become the first dominant language or even to the communities where not 'many speakers in the periphery use English as the first or dominant language' (Canagarajah, 1999: 4). It is very much

important to make clear that the term *periphery* is not a linguistic one. Rather, it is a *colonialistic* one used in the colonial ages to imply that the west is the centre and the rest of the world is the periphery (see Said, 1993). I think this is to some extent the case in Syria as Arabic is still the dominating language of education, commerce and so many other fields, but at the same time the role of English is increasing day after day.

One of the important things to mention is that the accent whether British or American is highly appreciated in the Syrian context. Furthermore, when I ask my students why they want to study in the UK or the USA, most of the answers are similar to this sample answer: 'to master English and to grasp the British accent. I want to speak English in the same way as the British people do. This will help me get better job opportunities and make money'. In this case, learning and mastering a language which is highly connected to imperialism and colonialism will be for utilitarian purposes or it could be for an innocent purpose like the person's desire for knowledge and has nothing to do with imperialism or colonialism. This to some extent does not agree with Fanon (1986) who related learning the language of the coloniser by the colonised to an inferiority complex in which the colonised becomes more similar to the colonisers by mastering their language. However, Fanon's theory of inferiority complex might find its place in the Syrian context especially between the young who see 'us' in a negative way when compared with the Europeans—something that can be clearly noticed in the ELT classroom. The teacher of English will be highly appreciated by his/her students if s/he speaks English with either British or the American accents. Students do not only ask the teacher of English to master the British or the American accents, but they also want the teacher to be a representative of the cultures of these two accents. This is mainly because language and culture are inseparable. In other words, teaching a language can not be free from teaching the culture of the society where the language is spoken and here is the dilemma.

Due to a history of chronic problems and being occupied and colonised for over a century, people of the Arab region including Syria have started to feel that their own cultural identity is weak or uncertain. At the same time, the western cultures specifically the American and the British ones have started to be presented strongly and in a very attractive way through the media especially the TV and the cinema, and here the role of Hollywood can not be ignored. Tens of colourful and beautifully presented English language textbooks that are updated every couple of years are used to present these two cultures in a very attractive way. On TV, the cinema, and in the ELT textbooks, people look beautiful and happy living in very comfortable modern houses and neighbourhoods. They study in prestigious universities and work in highly equipped offices. All this looks so attractive to the frustrated English language learner who might live in regions that suffer from wars, political tensions, poverty and/or underdevelopment. This might be a real threat to the learner's cultural identity and might push him/her to adopt the target culture which may pave the way to cultural imperialism.

1.4.2 Cultural Imperialism

It is claimed that language and culture are very much attached to each other (see Chandler, 1994). This might be true to some extent and what Edward Sapir (1929) claimed and then Benjamin Lee Whorf (1940 and 1956) came to support and extend in his hypothesis which is called the *Sapir-Whorf hypothesis* or the *Whorfian hypothesis*. This hypothesis is built on the following statement 'the structure of a language influences how its speakers view the world' (Wardhaugh, 1992: 218). In his definition of culture that might be affected by the structure of its language, Wardhaugh says that culture is 'the "the

know-how" that a person must possess to get through the task of daily living' (Wardhaugh, 1992:217). Therefore, Wardhaugh stated clearly that by the term *culture* he does not exactly refer to the *high culture* that he considers as 'the appreciation of music, literature, the arts, and so on' (Wardhaugh, 1992: 217). However, I prefer to gather the two different dimensions when it comes to *culture*, and I will try to justify my point of view latter on in my research. Fanon (1986: 17) considers that the culture and its language are very much interrelated. He goes further to say that mastering a language will lead to adopting its culture:

To speak means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization.

By depending on the *Whorfian hypothesis* and Fanon (1986) and by gathering the two dimensions of *culture*, I can clarify how the British and the Americans *justify* their spreading of their language. By spreading their language, they want to shape the way the *Others* (non-western people) think (see *Other*, Wikipedia, December 2011). By doing this, they help the people of the third world, who suffer from a 'lacking in language, culture and intellect' (Pennycook, 1998: 50), understand their developed culture and this will lead to an end to the ages of ignorance that those people have gone through. This is what Pennycook (1998) referred to when he was trying to explain the relationship between the colonizer represented by the British colonisation and the colonised represented by the people of Asia and Africa. While language is very much attached to culture, culture is very much attached to the British colonizer. Thus, to spread the culture of this developed nation, it is important to spread its English. As a result, the very fast development in the field of ELT is a part of the colonizer's policy for where 'the empire spread, so too did English' (Pennycook, 1998: 20). By using English as the medium of education and by acquiring it, the inferior people of the third world will become able to understand the sophisticated culture of the superior British coloniser. This inequality between the cultures will bring also inequalities between the languages: the language of the coloniser and the language of the colonised.

Kaplan (1966) goes further to claim that the people of the Other cultures and languages like the Semitic, the Oriental, the Romance and the Russian have illogical circuitous thought patterns while the English thought patterns are logical and linear. This is why ELT teachers find difficulties in teaching students of Other cultures and languages how to write directly without turning and turning around the same point. Discourses are different among different cultures and languages, and this is something normal I think. But, stating that other's rhetorical patterns are indirect and illogical while the English rhetorical patterns are direct and logical should be doubted. I believe that there are colonial and imperialistic intentions behind making the cultural constructions fixed. In other words, they also want to create the rhetorical patterns of the Self and the rhetorical patterns of the Other:

This tendency to ascribe fixed (and often, though not always, negative) characteristics by dint of membership to a certain culture can be explained in terms of the colonial construction of the Other.

(Pennycook, 1998: 188)

What is worth mentioning is that we, the people of the other cultures and languages find that there is a lot of repetition in the English writing. I think it is really ironic for what they believe to be direct, linear and supporting to the main argument is a mere repetition

and endless turning round the same point for us, the people of the other cultures and languages:

I was listening to a student discussing some of her frustrations at trying to learn to write in English: why is it, she wanted to know, that English writing always went round and round and round, with its introductions, conclusions, topic sentences and the like, while Chinese was written in a straight, clear line?

(Pennycook, 1998: 161)

Young (1990) quotes Fanon who found out that 'Europe is literally the creation of the third world' (cited in Pennycook, 1998: 18). In other words, one of the reasons behind the great developments in Britain and the other developed countries of the West is these underdeveloped countries. Moreover, civilisation is not a thing that can be related only to the Europeans and Pennycook's quote and comment on Blaut (1993) is the best example:

Thus, he suggests, 'no characteristic of Europe's environment, Europe's people, or Europe's culture, at any time prior to 1492, can be convincingly shown to have had anything to do with the fact that Europe developed while other civilisations did not do so' (p. 135). Rather, it was the economic boost brought about by colonialism as well as the benefits brought by greater trade and movement of ideas, cultures and technologies that brought Europe's rapid development into a global economic and political power.

(Pennycook, 1998: 49)

One should not deny that while Europe was under the ignorance of the Medieval centuries, people of the other parts of the world and specifically peoples of Asia were very much developed if compared to those of Europe:

It should, again, be obvious to virtually everyone that we cannot go on talking about just the Western tradition, as if the West Asia that developed mathematics and monotheism and the East Asia that invented printing and gunpowder and that increasingly finances our debt-ridden economy can or should be ignored.

(Dasenbrock, 1992: 35)

In spite of what I have mentioned above, both Britain and the USA are great powers and represent very strong and influential cultures. Also, science and technology are highly developed there. However, this does not mean that science and technology can not be understood unless one masters English or that English should be the medium of education in the countries where technology is less developed than it is in both Britain and the USA. Nonetheless, understanding technology and other fields of knowledge is not the problem here. The real problem is that the specialists of some of languages especially Arabic are less hardworking than those of English. The weakness of Arabic is because it has started to become a language of consumers while English has started to become a language of knowledge producers. In addition, the lack of momentum in the act of translation and the almost total absence of the effort to coin new words to express the new concepts in all the fields of knowledge increase the need of the Syrians for English to keep updated in the fields of science, technology, economy...etc. But, I still believe that learners of English have to be careful.

When learning English or any other language, non-native speakers of English need to be updated with everything new in the field of knowledge and to communicate with those who speak English whether natives or non-natives and not to become distorted copies of the British and the American people. In others words, learners of English do not need to shape their minds to cope with the British or the American cultures.

Moreover, if learning English is a fact that cannot be avoided, it is better to use it to create an awareness of the other cultures including the target culture whether British or American. In other words, while achieving linguistic competence of the English language, it is better to develop *cross-cultural* competence (understanding other cultures of the world) instead of developing only *intercultural* competence (understanding the target cultures, i.e., the British and the American cultures). Also, learners of English should understand the target culture without adopting it.

I have argued above that I will deal with *Culture* as a term with its two dimensions: the first one represented by the media and arts and the other one represented by knowing how to get through the tasks of the daily life. This is mainly because the media and the other forms of art are considered to have a great role in introducing people of the other cultures to the target culture. This will lead to an introduction or presuppositions about the daily life of the people of the target culture (see Cortazzi and Jin, 1999). As a result, this might attract them to learn the target language which is English in this study.

On the other hand, as I have mentioned before, learning English is not only a desire and attraction. It is a job and those who master it enjoy its benefits. It has its role in the markets, economy, politics and education, in the food and even in the everyday life of the people of the periphery. This is the idea that Canagarajah tried to emphasise while questioning the following:

How does English compete for dominance with other languages in the streets, markets, homes, schools, and villages of periphery communities? How does English infiltrate the hearts and minds of the people there?

(Canagarajah, 1999: 41-42)

So many questions will be raised again: what shall we, the people of the periphery, do to resist such dominance and change it into a mutual understanding? In other words, how could we get the benefit of mastering English without being slaves to this language? How could we achieve *intercultural competence* and then *cross-cultural competence*? I think the answer will come from ELT itself which was proved to be doubted. It was Pennycook (1994 and 1998), Phillipson (1992) and Canagarajah (1999) who put so many suspicions around ELT for they do not consider the ELT as only a branch of Applied Linguistics. On the contrary, they find out that ELT and colonialism are highly related to each other. In other words, they consider that ELT and spreading the English language are one of the means for asserting the British and American hegemony all over the world. But, I believe that the resistance of such hegemony could come from the ELT itself and the classroom—something that I intend to discuss on a separate paper.

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