

World without Boundaries: For Richer and for Poorer

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Among notable legacies of the second half of the 20th century is the expanding global economic interdependence of nations. Globalization of capital is a complex development with profound economic, political social, and cultural implications on the relationship between individuals and nations. People around the world are linked today by a plethora of brand products. American household names like Coca-Cola, Gillette, IBM, McDonald's, Colgate, Marlboro, and Microsoft are known the world over as are also non-American brands like Seiko, Bic, Panasonic, Sony, Honda, Nestlé, Shell, including the recent merger Daimler-Chrysler. Today, the line between what is domestic and what is foreign has become blurred. This sweeping change can be observed in individuals, but it is also increasingly evident in entire societies in different parts of the world. A number of questions arise: are individual cultures being threatened by the great cultural and economic power of the leading industrial nations, especially the USA? Is the American economic incursion and cultural influence homogenizing world cultures and at the same time thrusting the English language into a global language of communication?

For much of the world, the focal point of this struggle between national values and economic progress is the ubiquitous American corporation whose growing presence in the global marketplace has been labeled as "Coca-Colanization" or "McDonalidization" of the world. The global availability of certain American goods and ideas has not only influenced local cultures, but also created unusual partnerships. Despite possible concerns or reservations, when American companies set their sights on a foreign country to locate a business, usually for no other reasons than to make money, investments by such corporations are seldom turned down.

English as a Global Language

Among the most impressive developments which have taken place in the second half of the 20th century is that so many countries, to a greater or lesser extent, have become involved with each other. At the same time, the spectacular advance of English across the face of the globe, (spurred on by global investments, and technological innovations such as transportation, the internet, computers, faxes, modems etc.) is a phenomenon without parallel in the history of language. Because of the expanding and growing interdependence, never has there been a more urgent need for a common language of communication among the nations of the world.

The notion that a *lingua franca*, an artificial universal language, might be needed for the whole world dates back to the 19th century, but especially, to the mid-

1940s after the founding in 1945 of the United Nations, the international organization for political action.¹ Since that time, many international bodies have come into being—the World Bank, UNESCO, UNICEF, the WHO, the IAEA, and more recently the WTO, NAFTA and GAT. Never before have so many countries (over 180, in the case of the UN) been represented at a single international forum. When the UN was established, English, French, Spanish, Russian and Chinese were designated official languages to conduct the organization's business. Today, there is an effort in the UN to reduce the number of working languages.

The recent establishment of the European Union only exacerbates the language question. There is considerable pressure also on this 15-nation body to expedite communication in official multinational transactions. The choice of language in which to conduct meetings has always been one of the most sensitive issues facing an international planning committee. The ideal situation is one, of course, where all participants at a multinational meeting use a single language. A failure to do so commits them to expensive multi-way translation facilities and to an army of interpreters. (Half of the organization's budget can be spent on translation services alone.) Only machine translation could, perhaps, eliminate the need for a global language. And there is a strong possibility that sometime in the future computers might assist to communicate directly using the person's first language. To date, however, the translation software has been rather limited in its ability to handle idiomatic, stylistic, and several other linguistic features. For example, the phrase, "Out of sight, out of mind" has been rendered as "invisible fool." The need for post-editing is critical, and computer translation still requires human intervention.

The hope to establish a *lingua franca* seems to be slowly becoming a reality as general competence in English grows. Today, we are rapidly approaching the possibility that English might, indeed, fill that role. Though speakers of French, Spanish, or Russian may be reluctant to admit it, English is establishing itself as the unofficial language of the international community. In light of the rising popularity of English, several factors become self evident: A language does not rise to global stature because of some inherent linguistic aspect, the size of its vocabulary, its great literary heritage, or because it is associated with a great culture. Also, it has little to do with the number of people who speak it. No language is, by itself, either better or worse than another. Latin, as we all know, remained the international language of scholarship, study and prayer for a millennium because of the powerful influence of Roman Catholicism. Since language has no independent existence without those people who speak it, no language can elevate itself to become a medium of international communication. A language does gain international stature mainly on the basis of the political power of its people—especially their economic and military power. When the people succeed in the international arena, their language succeeds.²

From a historical perspective, prior to the middle of the 18th century, hardly any one understood, read, or learned English outside the British Isles. Yet Lord Chester-

field could already speak of "the rapid progress which our language has lately made, and still continues to make, all over Europe."³ By the middle of the 19th century, English was increasingly recognized as a world language. In 1851, Jacob Grimm, the German author and philologist, gave a lecture at the Berlin Academy *Über den Ursprung der Sprache* ("On the Origin of Language") in which he emphasized the structural characteristics and the expressive power of the English language:

"Of all the modern languages, no one has acquired such great strength and vigor as the English. It has derived a veritable power of expression, such as perhaps never stood at the command of any other language of men. In truth the English language, which by no mere accident has produced the greatest and most predominant poet of modern times, as distinguished from the ancient classical poetry (I can only mean Shakespeare), may with all right be called a world-language; and, like the English people, appears destined hereafter to prevail with a sway more extensive even than its present over the portions of the globe. For in wealth, good sense, and closeness of structure no other of languages at this day spoken deserves to be compared with it—not even our German."⁴

Only some 50 years after Jacob Grimm's prophetic words, Britain became the world's leading industrial and trading center. The 19th century British political imperialism had transplanted English around the globe as a "language on which the sun never sets." During the 20th century, the English language was maintained and advanced, primarily, through the economic power of the United States. Today, at the start of the 21st Century, American commercial success and cultural influences around the world are "Americanizing" the English language itself from Africa to Britain. "It's a kind of linguistic badge," says Bill Bryson, the scholar on the history of English who listened to teenagers speak with American accents in the Netherlands recently. American vernacular and idiom flourish everywhere through education, business, Hollywood, and the Internet.

Language and Culture

Currently, there is concern among some nations that the growing global economic interdependence and flow of information will lead to erosion or loss of cultural identity, values and norms. The fears are not without merit, since even the term "culture" is now interpreted differently by persons from diverse walks of life and with different training and experience. To anthropologists, culture represents and contains all of the guiding rules for appropriate behavior which individuals learn while being members of the same group or community. Culture is what individuals need to know to be able to function as members of a community and to interact with individuals from cultural backgrounds different from their own.⁵ Thus cultural differences between people are made on the basis of their origin in history. Traditionally, culture has been regarded as a clearly defined, relatively stable national characteristic. Metaphorically speaking, the world is laid out as a mosaic

whose various inlays represent different cultures. In this view, culture and local community are one and the same.

Recent descriptions of culture and identity cannot be adequately explained by the traditional understanding of culture. Culture is viewed today as a much more dynamic system similar to a moving stream constantly altering old relationships and creating new linkages and associations. Not only ways of life are affected by change in a certain place, but also whole regions are subject to change in meaning for more and more people. Migrants, young people, Internet users, artists, and scientists are defined by loosely held communities which are connected through social, professional, and spiritual interests.

From an anthropological perspective, language is a key component of culture. Language is the primary medium for transmitting much of culture. Children learning their native language are also learning their own culture, a process referred to as *enculturation*. In the context of present day concerns, regarding the loss of cultural identity, some nations fear that exposure to American cultural iconography and language will lead to *enculturation* and significant psychological and social consequences for both children and adults. The influence of the English language is so enormous that along with a variety of cultural imports, English language has even affected the syntax of other speakers of languages. Based on a study by Magnus Ljung of Stockholm University, over half of all Swedes are now creating plurals of nouns by adding -s, after the English model, rather than by adding -ar, -or, or -er, according to Swedish rules of grammar.⁶

English has also become a rich source of loan-words for use by other languages. Nations which readily borrow words regard the practice as "enriching" their language; those opposed to the process denounce loan-words as linguistic "pollution" or "destruction" of their native tongue. Alarmed by the increasing encroachment of English, the French, for example, prohibit by law the use of English words in official dealings even though the English term might be in popular use already: e.g., for e-mail *courrier électronique*; for computer *ordinateur*.

Purists of all languages, who lament the "Anglo-Saxon" intrusion into their languages and TV programs, should be reminded that over centuries, English itself has liberally borrowed words from other languages, including the word computer, which, incidentally, derives from Latin, the mother-language of French. Unlike the discriminating French, who make such a fuss about preserving the purity of their language, Germans adopt foreign words, especially English, with great ease, and often simply Germanize words like *Globalisierung* and *Demokratisierung*. In their inimitable way they even make up English-sounding terms like *ein handy* for cellular phone; *teenies* for adolescents, *gécancelet* for canceled.

The international relations minister of the Parti Québécois, Louise Beaudoin, the party's most passionate separatists, is terribly upset. There is a big problem, she laments: the business language of the world has become English. To add insult to injury, Air France is making its pilots speak English to air traffic controllers at Charles

de Gaulle Airport in Paris. In fact, in the interest of safety, the air traffic controller language of the world has become English. "The problem—I wish it were not so"—says Louise Beaudoin, "is that Coca-Colonization cannot be stopped."⁷

Switzerland, well known for its multilingual population, has four official languages: German (spoken by majority of Swiss), French, Italian, and Romansh. Yet, in the recent past, English has been gaining ground through films, music, business, and the Internet in the Swiss culture. "In Switzerland, English is beginning to become the language linking German and French speakers,"⁸ warned the former French Culture Minister, Jack Lang, in a recent op-ed piece in a Swiss paper, and he urged his readers to reject linguistic McDonaldization.

English words are everywhere, indeed. Germans speak of *die Teenagers* and *das Baby*. Italian women coat their faces with *col-cream*, Russians land planes at the *airport*, Ukrainians go to a *business meetink*, and Spanish put a *sueter* on to keep warm... On occasion, English words are taken just as they are, but with a special tweak. As euphemisms, they serve to express local needs, often in quite striking ways. In the vernacular of the Serbs, "a nylon hotel is a brothel, while a nylon beach is the place where nudists frolic."⁹ According to German researchers, the 100 words that best characterize the 20th century, and which invaded their language in the past 100 years are: beat, bikini, comics, computer image, design, sex, jeans, pop, star, stress, and sex appeal...; words like hotel, passenger, cigarette, sport, golf, weekend, jeans are understood and are, more or less, universally adopted. "English is now so widely established that it can no longer be thought of as 'owned' by any single nation," says David Crystal.¹⁰

What is a Global Language?

No language may lay claim to global status unless it functions in countries around the world as a complement to the person's mother tongue, or "first language". Historically, because of the pioneering voyages to the Americas and Asia, English had been introduced in every continent and in the islands of the Atlantic, Indian, and Pacific oceans. Pushed by the growing global economic interdependence, English has been gaining ground as a global language, not only on historical grounds, but also for economic, political and socio-cultural reasons, as already mentioned above.

Even though different countries have reacted in different ways to foreign influences, English has, indeed, become the most studied and emulated language in the world today. "English is the *lingua franca*, and everybody has to learn to speak it," says Sigrid Schopper-Grabe, a German researcher into language use. In Germany, the study of English is compulsory starting at the age of 11; where it is not compulsory, 90% of schoolchildren take classes anyway. In Sweden, 96% of young people have sufficient command of English to hold a conversation, showed a study prepared for the 15-member European Union last year.¹¹ Today, English is studied and

taught as a foreign language in over 100 countries. There are more Chinese people learning English than the total population of the United States. The teaching of English is worth billions of dollars a year globally.¹² Even if English has no function within the society, it is learned at school as a foreign language for purposes of international trade, diplomacy, and educational advancement. In Germany, Eastern Europe, Spain, China, Brazil, and Egypt, it is the most popular foreign language in schools, and is gradually displacing other languages. For example, in 1996, in Algeria—a former French colony—English has replaced French as the dominant foreign language in schools. Internationally, the English language is becoming part of the working terminology in many fields.¹³ The computer software industry, especially, is one of the strongest recent promoters of the English language, simply because a great number of terms associated with computers are not easily translated into other languages. “Software” is a universal word, and there is no way to click on a computer mouse except to *anklicken* in German, *cliquer* in French, or *cliquear* in Spanish.

English has a few challengers, but no equals. Neither Spanish nor Arabic, both international languages, enjoy such global dominance. In the recent past, only Russian, though forcibly imposed upon the countries of the former Soviet Union, held such a status. Though a past contender, today, Russian is itself being invaded by English. Germany and Japan, based on their economic strength, have achieved considerable commercial global presence, English, however, abounds also throughout their cultures. Dr. Millan, a member of the Spanish *The Academia Real*, says: “If you want to do business, you have to speak English. You might be dealing with Russians, or with Germans, but you will be speaking in English.”¹⁴

As much as some die-hard cultural chauvinists might resent the fact, English has become the language of international communication. Rather than oppose the trend, history provides us ample justification and cause for celebration of such a development. What would our world be like today, for example, if we hadn’t embraced common numerical symbols? The adoption of the Hindu-Arabic numbering system not only laid the very foundation for the development of Western science, but also spurred civilizations to new heights of achievement. Surely, we would question any support of a movement for the preservation of Roman numerals in place of the Arabic symbols. Would we have been better off if we had surrendered a common calendar and a standard way of measuring time in favor of a 10 hour day and a decimal week as advanced by the architects of the French Revolution?

Nonetheless, the paramount question of concern remains: would a world in which English dominated as a second language force all other languages out of existence? Highly unlikely. In a cultural context, the roots of a language of a people go too deep to be threatened by widespread bilingualism. Sweden, for example, with its economic impact out of all proportion to its relatively small population, exploits any language that promotes commerce. Consequently, Sweden’s economic success has advanced its culture, not stifled it. Linguistic protectionism, to be sure,

is not the answer. Any society that does not recognize the value of teaching English as a second language will, sooner or later, find itself at a serious competitive disadvantage.

The following examples illustrate that English has, indeed, become the most global of languages. In some remote areas of Europe, one can find graffiti saying: “HEAVY METAL IS LAW!” or “HOOLIGANS KINGS OF THE NORTH!”¹⁵ The difficulty in assessing the extent to which English is spoken around the world depends not only on the number of speakers, but also on whether a person is speaking English or something that only resembles it. In his book, *If God Wanted us to Travel*, David Brenner compiled a few of such examples: A shop in Mallorca, in hopes of attracting English speaking customers, posted a sign: “English well talking,” and “Here speaking American.” A sign outside a Hong Kong dress shop states: “Ladies may have a fit upstairs.” In a Yugoslavian hotel a note to the guests: “The flattening of underwear with pleasure is the job of chambermaid.” An office sign of a doctor in Rome declares: “Specialist in women and other diseases.” A sign in a Norwegian cocktail lounge states: “Ladies are requested not to have children in the bar.” A notice in a Tokyo hotel: “Is forbidden to steal hotel towel please. If you are not person to do such thing is please not to read notice.” An instruction booklet on the use of the air conditioner in a Japanese hotel states: “Coolers and Heaters: If you want just condition of cool in your room, please control yourself.” It appears that manufactured goods are regarded to be more exciting if they bear writing in English even when, as is often the case, the message makes very little or no sense at all. A merchandising company proclaims on t-shirts: “Too fast to live, too young to happy.” Such typically vacuous slogans on clothing more and more infiltrate the English speaking world.

The mauling of the English language, as illustrated by the above examples, is not surprising at all. What is astonishing, however, is the degree to which English is accepted around the world considering the difficulty of the language itself. Anyone who had to learn English as a second language, as I did, without the benefit of anesthesia, will tell you: it is a trip! The experience still gives me occasional night sweats. The spelling is beyond any reasonable hope of mastery, and the language is thoroughly illogical, especially in some idiomatic expressions. For instance: how can quite a lot and quite a few mean the same thing; a wise man is just the opposite of a wise guy; we call the people from Poland, “Poles,” then, by analogy and reasonable logic, the people from Holland, I insist, should be called “Holes.” And, how is it possible to have noses that run and feet that smell.

Incredible as it may seem, today, no other language is heard more often in more countries, and over a wider area of the globe, than English. According to Bill Bryson, English is spoken as the official language in forty-four countries against twenty-seven for French and twenty for Spanish. English is the official language in roughly a third of the world, i.e., it is used by some 1.6 billion people.¹⁶ It is estimated that nearly half of all business deals in Europe are conducted in English. Two thirds of

all scientific papers, reports *The Economist*, are published in English, and more than 70% of the world's mail is written and addressed in English, says Lincoln Barnett in *The Treasure of Our Tongue*. According to a *Wall Street Journal* survey, some 78 million people in more than 100 countries watch CNN; the MTV network boasts of more than 200 million viewers. The long-term implications of such wide spread use of the English language are enormous. A global language can emerge only once, and once established, it would take events of world-shattering proportions to replace it.

Yet, despite much evidence to suggest that this global language will be English, it will still take some time to reach that lofty goal. As remarkable as the global spread of English has been, some two thirds of the world population does not yet use it. There is still a very limited presence of English, for example, in many countries of the former Soviet Union and China.

Spread of Global Product

The relentless drive into the global marketplace led also to the unprecedented global expansion of advertising agencies in the 1980s. They finally proved that cultural diversity is of little relevance in the battle for the global consumer. The international area director for the Grey Advertising Agency, Norman Vale, declared: "A lie has been perpetuated for years and years; the lie is that people are different. Yes, there are differences among cultures, but a headache is a headache," and aspirin is aspirin.¹⁷ According to J.K. Fairbank, "The dream of supplying a billion Chinese with a Coke a week, a tape a week, or anything a week has been a part of the American business culture since the nineteenth century, indeed, the inspiration for political careers, quick fortunes, and even wars.¹⁸

To illustrate the magnitude of the potential: Coca-Cola, as one of the most recognizable brand names ever, sells nearly half of all soft drinks consumed in the world.¹⁹ The slogan, "The Pause that Refreshes," that a generation of Americans already has grown up with, is now repeated 560 million times a day in over 160 countries. The availability of global products in various countries means that masses of people, though separated by great distances, find that "their tastes in consumer products have converged," notes Robert Goizueta, chairman of Coca-Cola Co.²⁰ The seduction of the exotic imagery of music videos foster the illusion of being connected to cultural currents sweeping across the world. Globalized goods markets, worldwide media structures and population migrations accelerate the process of cultural exchange, and influence not only the life style in many regions of the world, but also long held cultural traditions.

Among some of the most daunting problems faced by American global advertising agencies, in spite of our linguistically diverse population, has been the insufficient number of competent American interpreters in a variety of languages.²¹ In Japan, Coke is promoted with the slogan "I feel Coke and sound special." When Coca-Cola returned to China in 1979, it discovered that Mao's simplification of

Chinese characters had turned the literal meaning of Coca-Cola into "Bite the Wax Tadpole." To fix the problem, they used four Mandarin characters which changed the slogan to read: "Can Happy, Mouth Happy."²² (Obviously, an unqualified improvement...) Numerous similar translation anomalies abound in languages of cultures where Americans conduct business.

The subtle differences in taste across cultures present another challenge. A *Wall Street Journal* article observed that "The opulent bouquet in the perfume ad for New York market must be replaced with a single exquisite rose if the ad is to work its magic in Rome."²³ Though aging celebrities might successfully sell Polident across the globe, don't even think of selling shampoo with ads designed for "the over-40 woman" in Spain. She will simply refuse to identify herself by purchasing the product. Today, global ads for many household products and even luxury items are being promoted around the world. The rising population of affluent Asian career women have wardrobes filled with Christian Dior and Nina Ricci. Most of these women pamper their skin with products from Estée Lauder, wear Bruno Magli shoes, Channel No. 5, and jewelry from Tiffany. Tiffany, whose biggest rival is Cartier, sells only one third of the roughly \$1.5 billion annual sales of its competitor. Cartier's leading markets are Italy, Hong Kong, the Far East, France, the United States, and Japan, in that order.

Globalization Forces

Today, the unprecedented global promotion and flow of goods reach vast geographic regions in a variety of ways and across all barriers. The forces of globalization, as a phenomenon, are more easily detected than understood in their long-term future effect on the nations of the world through the creation of a single, integrated world market. Much attention in societies has been given to the economic impact of this developing trend, but the accompanying political and sociocultural consequences on societies are rather more difficult to estimate or to predict.

Benjamin Barber's *Jihad vs. MacWorld*, one among a number of recent publications on this topic, speculates about the effects on societies and possible outcomes resulting from globalized markets. The issue is multifaceted, complex and involves complicated dynamics which are simply beyond adequate treatment in this brief presentation. Nonetheless, here are, in greatly simplified terms, two of Barber's projected likely scenarios: Societies with unique and easily distinguishable cultures stand to lose their individual identity if they are inundated by commercial products and media available to the rest of the people of the world.²⁴ If everyone from Hoboken to Hong Kong eats Big Macs, wears jeans, works with Microsoft Windows and watches MTV and CNN, cultural diversity of the world might be seriously threatened. Furthermore, if the global products and ideas all originate in the West, then globalization will simply be regarded as another form of Americanization or westernization of the world.

His second speculation, bearing more dire consequences, envisions the future world splitting into various ethnic enclaves and intercultural conflict. The only way to insure and to preserve cultural identity would be to isolate oneself completely from outside influences. This thesis, about cultures as new causes of conflict, is more ominous and foreboding if we consider the disturbing picture of discord and the long list of ethnic and religious clashes in a number of geographical parts of the globe today. Most of the recent bloody battles in Algeria, the Balkans, Rwanda, as well as the Middle East are, and have been, either internal disputes or ethnically or religiously inspired. "Ironically," says Benjamin Barber, "a world that is coming together pop culturally and commercially is a world whose discrete sub national ethnic and religious and racial parts are also far more in evidence, in no small part as a reaction to globalization."²⁵

The homogenization scenario, mentioned above, suggests that the global expansion of western patterns of life and the consumption of imported goods in and of itself has a standardizing influence. It also assumes that people all over the world passively give in to all foreign influences, eagerly accommodate multinational companies on their territory, and welcome and adopt the moral practices as projected by the heroes in American television. Cultural change, however, is really not a zero-sum game, but involves a multitude of forces as well as complex socio-cultural dynamics. Economic globalization, as we know it, has not resulted in "cultural unity," but it has advanced technical standardization. The emerging trend seems to indicate that different societies deal differently with outside influences. The spectrum of responses, in this regard, ranges from resistance on the one hand, to creative appropriation and even uncritical acceptance on the other.

Recent defensive measures by a number of nations clearly indicate that the cultural norms in societies are, indeed, being challenged by the increasing intrusion of global market forces. For example, in 1993 Indonesian authorities cracked down on the use of English in advertising in response to the increased pace of "westernization" which had "raised concerns about the erosion of local cultural identity." Lee Kuan Yew, the prime minister of Singapore, addressing his Parliament, warned: "If we go with the West, then we will have all the maladies, the malignancies of the Western society."²⁶ Such blunt expressions are not without sympathetic resonance around the world as local customs are believed to be compromised or assaulted.

After the collapse of the Soviet Empire, and the invasion of large cities by foreign businesses, Moscow authorities became concerned about losing their "Russianness." In 1993, city fathers adopted a law that required all stores and businesses to display signs in Russian. This action had forced McDonald's, Pizza Hut, Benetton, and other English-language businesses to put up signs not only in Russian, but also to make them bigger and more prominent. At about the same time, Russia was, literally, mobbed by missionaries recruiting members into their various faiths. Alarmed by this onslaught, the Duma passed legislation which seriously lim-

ited such practice. As if to drive home the point, a huge sign appeared on the side of a building in the middle of Moscow proclaiming: Россия была, есть, и будет православна. (Russia was, is, and will be Orthodox).

In an ironic twist, in Lithuania, after proclaiming independence from the Soviet Union, every sign in Russian was torn down, and all the paperwork in government agencies was changed from Russian into Lithuanian, the restored official state language. Estonia, whose Russian population is 40% and who only speaks Russian, passed a law that requires a language test for Estonian citizenship. In France, the longtime French minister of culture, Jack Lang, besides adopting restrictive legislation against the use of the English language, advocated limiting importation of foreign goods, especially U.S. equipment and software. As *Le Monde* reporter Michel Colonna d'Istria asked, "What will our collective consciousness be tomorrow if the horizon of our Gameboy is conceived in Tokyo, if the games are played in English in a McDonald's?"²⁷

Despite expressed concerns by some national authorities, individual cultures seem to appropriate those influences and adopt those lifestyles which they like, find useful, and which enhance their quality of life. McDonald's, the super-symbol of homogenization, appears to be accepted in different parts of the world on those bases. Some 30 million people in 100 countries visit a McDonald restaurant every day. From this perspective, one just might assume that the fast-food chain could be influencing their way of life. The American sociologist, George Ritzer, was even inspired by this proposition to write a book, "The McDonaldization of Society," in which he addresses the issue of influence, standardization of taste, eating habits, reasonable pricing, etc.,—all aspects so characteristic of the fast-food chain, wherever it might be located. In reality, people do not respond to or accept McDonald's the same way in different communities around the world.

East Asians, for example, are among a number of nations who reject the notion that everyone is looking for fast service and a chance to eat on the run. Comparative cultural case studies reveal that on foreign soil, the U.S. fast-food chain is viewed only briefly as a slice of the American culture, at least until the novelty wears off. Even McDonald's sees itself as a multinational company which makes an effort not only to adjust the choice of product to suit the natives' palate, but also to accommodate local traditions. In Israel, for example, McDonald's offers kosher hamburgers, and in India it serves vegetable McNuggets and a *Mutton Maharaja Mac*.

Despite formidable inroads by multinational corporations and their products into many parts of the world, globalization is far from being really global. Transnational business ventures have settled mostly in the industrial centers and some regions of the underdeveloped world. Today, there are still many more people outside the global market place, and "the ranks of the window-shoppers and the jobless are growing faster than the global army of the employed."²⁸ Nonetheless, globalization is slowly transforming the quality of everyday life in many parts of the globe and the nature of relationships among nations throughout the world.

Globalization and Cultural Diversity

The sweeping global changes have brought about dramatic increases in population mobility and cultural exchange. The calming influence of common identities disappears in a global society only to be exchanged by a multitude of forces which compete with each other. Today, even in such once culturally monolithic bastions as Germany, one in every nine children born are sons and daughters of intercultural partnerships. New communities, whether comprised of Latinos or Afro-Germans, are slowly but permanently changing the face of Germany and other nations. Global culture, says Richard Wilk, professor of anthropology at Indiana University, represents a "structure of common differences." Within this culture, we need to define cultural peculiarities so that we might understand each other and achieve mutual recognition. It is clear, we do not live in a society without borders, but in many parallel, overlapping worlds replete with contradictions.

Before the Soviet Union disintegrated, it was made up of 104 officially recognized ethnic groups. What was once "one country" is now 15 countries and could possibly split along ethnic lines into as many as 60 or 70 separate nations in the future. While the USSR was disintegrating, Europe was in the process of coalescing into a single 15 member European Economic Community with a total population of 370 million. The "United States of Europe," as it is often referred to today, is well on its way to a political union with a common foreign and defense policy, as well as a monetary system based on a single European Union currency, the euro. It is becoming quite evident that the free market forces dictate a universal approach to the economic life of nations. The emerging pattern is that global manufacturers, financial institutions, and merchandise retailers, and more and more industries will operate in a single worldwide marketplace.

In conclusion, today, despite the growing economic cooperation, global culture is far from all-embracing. For the majority of the people, globalism still remains more of a potential to be reached than a present day reality. There are simply too many barriers, concerns, and points of disagreement for a clear resolution of the competing forces. At the time when the growing economic, political, and cultural interdependence transforms socio-cultural realities of many regions of the world, there still remain, paradoxically, cultural idiosyncrasies which are becoming more sharply defined, in some instances for the first time, in response to globalization pressures. What seems beyond question is that no nation or society can afford any longer to isolate itself from outside influences.

Globalization, though far from welcomed in many parts around the world, and far from promising a harmonious and a perfect world of the future, might bring more opportunities to more people than any sweeping evolutionary change in our past collective human experience. And because the forces of globalization can not be turned back, or stopped, societies must accept the realities of a shrinking inter-

dependent world. The challenges of the world of tomorrow are already here today: we must promote global understanding, acceptance, and cooperation, and cultivate strategies for living in unity among a more ethnically diverse and culturally disparate world community. Whatever the future might bring, we, Americans, are a step ahead of many in the world, and not only because we already live, to a large extent, in an ethnically and culturally diverse society, but also because we, mercifully, will not have to learn the English language.

Notes

1. David Crystal, *English as a Global Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 21.
2. *Ibid.* p. 5.
3. Helmut Gneuss, *English Language Scholarship: A Survey and Bibliography from the Beginnings to the End of the Nineteenth Century* (Binghamton: Medieval & Renaissance Text & Studies, 1996), p. 64.
4. *Ibid.* p. 64, 65.
5. Orlando L. Taylor, *Nature of Communication Disorders in Culturally And Linguistically Diverse Populations* (San Diego: College-Hill Press, 1986), p. 48.
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Concerning the Speaker

Dr. Walter Karpnich, Professor of German and Russian, was educated in the United States and in Europe. Upon graduating with a BS in Education in 1966, he was awarded a Teaching Assistantship in German at Temple University. After completing the Master's degree in Liberal Arts and Sciences, he was instructor in German at Temple and also pursued graduate work at Bryn Mawr College. He continued graduate studies at the Ukrainian Free University, Munich, Germany, and in 1973 earned the Ph.D. degree in Germanic and Slavic literatures. As Assistant Professor, he taught undergraduate and graduate courses in German and Russian at Temple until 1975.

In the fall of 1975, he joined the Department of Foreign Languages at Wilkes College. Promoted to Associate Professor in 1982, and to full Professor in 1992, his teaching schedule included German and Russian languages, literatures, cultures, pedagogy, and English as a Second Language courses. From 1985 to 1990, he chaired the Department of Languages and Literatures, and from 1990 headed the Foreign Languages and Literatures Department until January 2000, when it was combined into the Humanities Department. Since 1986, he coordinates the Wilkes Study Abroad Program and administers the awarding of The Peking Chef Scholarship for International Understanding.

His scholarly interests are in the areas of language, literature, culture, and pedagogy. He has actively participated in professional organizations—the MLA, PMLA, AAASS, AATG, GSA, AATSEEL, The Ukrainian Academy of Arts and Sciences in the U.S., The Shevchenko Society, and others. He has chaired and organized numerous conferences, including some on our campus. His articles have been published in the *Mitteilungen*, *The Ukrainian Quarterly*, *Literary Currents* After WW II, *Narodna Volya*, *Svoboda*, and *The Modern Language Journal*.

Concerning the Lecture

The premise of the Final Word Lecture is that the lecturer has only six months to live and would like to sum up a career of teaching and scholarship for colleagues, students, and friends. While the selected professor is, in fact, healthy, the hypothesized death adds urgency and focus to the lecture. The idea is borrowed from the University of Michigan's "Last Lecture."

The Final Word Lecture is given on the evening of Wilkes University's Faculty Recognition Day, at which faculty are lauded for their achievements as teachers and scholars. A number of awards, including the Carpenter Award for teaching, are announced at this annual event.

The Final Word lecturer is chosen by a committee of Wilkes professors and receives a \$1,000 award through the generosity of an anonymous donor. At a subsequent time, and at the donor's discretion, the title of the award and lecture series will be changed to include the donor's name.

Previous winners were:

- 1993 James L. Merryman
Reinventing Humanity for Survival in the Twenty-first Century:
Salvaging Our Best through Prehistory and Multiculturalism
- 1994 Dennis P. Hupchick
Nation or *Millet*? Contrasting Western European and Islamic
Political Cultures in the Balkans
- 1995 Donald R. Brand
Multiculturalism Revisited
- 1996 No lecture given
- 1997 Jane M. Elmes-Crahall
Rhetorical Savvy and Political Civility
- 1998 Patricia Siplon
Scholar, Witness or Activist: The Lessons and Dilemmas of an
AIDS Research Agenda
- 1999 William Terzaghi
Cornucopia or Pandora's box? The Promise and Perils of
Cloning, Genetic Engineering, and Bioinformatics.
- 2000 Umid R. Nejb
Civility of Discourse and Integrative Curriculum: The Over-
looked Duo of Academe

