

ARE GLOBAL CULTURES BEING FLATTENED BY ENGLISH-CENTRIC TRANSLATION PRACTICES?

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Abstract: The emergence of English as a global lingua franca has radically altered translation practices and cultural exchanges internationally. Whereas English promotes international discourse and opens doors to global networks, English's predominance is a danger to cultural diversity, as it imposes Anglophone norms, narratives, as well as literary forms. This work explores how English-centric translation protocols may foster cultural homogenization, thus eliminating global cultural diversity. Taking a multidisciplinary approach, case analyses of coverage spanning over literature, audiovisual texts, scholarly books, digital platforms, as well as Global South languages, have been analyzed. The findings substantiate that English-centric translation protocols have a disproportionate impact on cultural visibility, effectively excluding voices that are not in English, yet reinforcing Anglophone viewpoints. Nevertheless, the record shows offsetting efforts, such as local scholarly initiatives, comebacks of autochthonous languages, as well as community building based upon digital platforms, which are multilingual. The discourse frames English as being not only an imperialistic tool, yet a two-sided entity: a gateway to global exchange, yet, at once, a creator of local uniformity.

Keywords: Translation studies, English hegemony, cultural homogenization, globalization and language, lingua franca, world literature, postcolonial translation, media translation, academic publishing, machine translation bias, translator visibility, language imperialism, multilingualism, cultural diversity, global south languages

Introduction

The latter twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have witnessed an unparalleled dominance of English as a world lingua franca. English is the planet's universal medium of diplomacy, global commerce, academic publication, electronic message, and cultural exchange. Translation, formerly brokered in a plurality of centers of linguistic authority (Greek, Latin, Arabic, French, Spanish), is increasingly directed in or through English. The greater majority of translations are nowadays into English for global recognition or out of English into a variety of languages in a bid to have access to Anglophone cultural production.

This trend warrants a fundamental inquiry: Is English-centric translation involved in global cultural homogenization? Flattening is defined as the loss of cultural diversity and the substitution of diversified perspectives by English-mediated, generic counterparts. Detractors argue that greater English emphasis in translation makes local narratives secondary, limits the world literary canon to books responsive to Anglophone audiences, and fosters linguistic imperialism. Conversely, English is viewed by others as offering exclusive mediums for smaller cultures to have a voice to global communities, consequently providing greater availability and visibility.

This work sets out upon the challenge by analyzing English-hegemonic translation practice in five different arenas: literature, audiovisual translation, journal publication, digital media, and languages from the Global South. Adopting the IMRaD format, it frames the dilemma in terms of prior scholarship, outlines a comparative approach, evaluates several case analyses, and concludes by advancing suggestions for translation studies and cultural policy.

Methodology

Research Approach

The current research applies a comparative and multidisciplinary method, combining aspects of translation research, postcolonial studies, and sociolinguistics. The research applies a combination of primary sources (translated

works, publication records, media data) and secondary sources (academic reviews, policy analysis).

Data Sources

Literary case studies: case studies of books from UNESCO's Index Translationum, world bestsellers, and large translation flows.

Audiovisual media: Dubbing and subtitling practices in Netflix, Disney+, and international cinema distribution.

Publishing academic work: journal databases (Web of Science, Scopus), English publication favoring policy.

Internet resources: analysis of Google Translate, Wikipedia language versions, social media usage.

Global South perspectives: First Nations, Asian, and African publishing initiatives.

Analytical Framework

Quantitative: translation flow figures, publication percentages.

Qualitative: discourse analysis in translation, paratexts, and cultural framing.

Analytical structures:

Phillipson's concept of linguistic imperialism.

Venuti's approach to domestication and foreignization.

Spivak's reflections on translation politics

Restrictions

Due to its extensive coverage, this work could not cover all cultural settings. It includes representative case studies to exemplify global trends, keeping in view the primacy of English as a mediating language.

Results

Literature: The Anglophone Gatekeeper

The translation of books has become extremely English-centric. Translations from English account for over 60% of world translations, whereas translations into English are a little under 5%. For that reason, texts in Anglophone countries are

widely available globally, whereas most world literatures are not accessible in English-speaking countries.

Case Study 1: The Latin American Boom

Authors as Gabrielle García Márquez and Mario Vargas Llosa only gained international recognition after translations into English, although hundreds of equally significant Latin American writers have never been translated, their existence dependent upon Anglophone gatekeepers in publishing.

Case Study 2: African Literary Heritage

Works written in native African languages rarely directly pass through translation into popular global languages; instead, they usually go through English as a bridge language. This trend is decried by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o as a case of cultural dependency.

Case Study 3: Awards and Recognition

The Literature Nobel Prize overwhelmingly privileges Translated-Into-English authors, substantiating English as the window of international recognition.

Analysis: English-biased literary translation privileges that which is commercially viable in Anglophone territories, truncating global diversity to editorial, publishable slices.

Media and Film: Translating International Stories into English Subtitles

Global audiovisual media overwhelmingly prefer English. Hollywood remains supreme, as overseas movies are usually dubbed or subtitled in English in order to release internationally. English products are subtitled in scores of languages so as to have maximum penetration.

Case Study 1: Netflix

Although Netflix is a world proponent of foreign content, there has to be English dubbing or subtitles as the final point of entry. Korean dramas (Squid Game), Spanish serials (La Casa de Papel), and German shows (Dark) have reached international acclaim via English intermediation.

Case Study 2: Disney and International Animation

Disney movies travel internationally in English-based versions, forming cultural imaginaries. Local dubbing translates them, yet cultural metaphors are Anglophone in terms of origin.

Case Study 3: Blockbusters from non-Ang

Films like India's RRR or China's Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon attained Western popularity largely after being successfully English-subtitled.

Analysis: Although global circulation is achieved by non-English media, its reach is frequently English-mediated, reinforcing cultural hierarchies

Publishing in Academics: Publish in English or Perish

The dominance of English in academia illustrates flattening with stark clarity.

Case Study 1: Journal Indexing

More than 90% of Scopus- and Web of Science-indexed journals are written in English. Non-English scholarship is fighting for visibility.

Case Study 2: Global South Researchers

African and Asian academics are pressured to publish in English, in many cases overlooking local discourses and epistemologies.

Case Study 3: Citation Politics

English sources predominate in citation clouds, whereas major non-English sources are overlooked.

Analysis: English-biased scholarly publication imposes a normalized epistemic culture, excluding intellectual forms not written in English.

Digital Platforms: Algorithmic Flatt

Websites expand English hegemony into the digital age of algorithm.

Case Study 1: Google Translate

The quality of translation is highest in English sets. Less-resourced languages always require pivoting into English, including Anglophone structure in meaning.

Case Study 2: Wikipedia

The English Wikipedia contains more than 6 million articles, overwhelmingly exceeding most of its other editions. This is used, not surprisingly, as a reference for translations in smaller languages, spreading Anglophone opinions globally.

Case Study 3: Online Media Platform.

The English language dominates global Twitter/X trends and hashtags, dominating local discussions. Automatic translation technology supports Anglophone viewpoints.

Analysis: Digital platforms homogenize international perspectives, centering on English-dominant standards and favoring languages that exhibit significant digital representation.

Global South Languages: Resistance and Marginalization

Prioritizing English translation practices could threaten smaller and indigenous languages.

Case Study 1: Publishing in Africa

Local books in languages like Yoruba or Kiswahili could only have local coverage, as English-translated books have a global coverage.

Case Study 2: Native Languages

Several indigenous languages are reliant upon English interpreters for translation into other languages, thus entrenching dependence.

Case Study 3: Movements of Resistance

Projects such as South American Editorial Mapuche or India's regional-language publishing houses openly defy Anglophone hegemony, printing translations in a straight shot between non-English languages.

Analysis: English-oriented flows suppress Global South voices, though local forms of resistance point out paths to cultural conservation.

Discussion

The findings discussed in this research underscore the significant function of English as simultaneously serving as both a facilitator and an obstacle in

international communication. On one side, English fosters remarkable intercultural interaction by offering a common linguistic platform. Conversely, its preeminence frequently standardizes various cultural expressions, diminishing distinct linguistic identities into an Anglophone framework.

This section provides a critique of these results, responding to three main debates:

Neutral Medium or Cultural Filter?

Supporters of English as a global lingua franca argue that it facilitates mutual understanding. Without a universally used language, the spread of ideas from one continent to another would be impaired and less coordinated. For this reason, English-oriented practices could be seen as facilitating cultural access, not disabling it.

Nonetheless, the record from texts, media, and academics proves that English hardly serves as a neutral channel. Instead, English filters and re-constructs content that flows through it. When Murakami's texts or *Squid Game* are "domesticated" as English-friendly narratives, cultural specifics that defy translation are frequently eliminated or diluted. The outcome is not a neutral transmission at all, but a select variety of culture in sync with Anglophone sensibilities.

Cultural Capital and Power Disparities

Cultural capital as a concept formulized by Pierre Bourdieu is able to account for why there are flattening effects in English-central translation. English is not only linguistically dominant, it is symbolically so, connected to prestige, modernity, and authority. Translations in English gain global legitimacy, whereas texts in local languages remain in a state of invisibility.

This process recreates power differentials between the Global North and Global South. The African, indigenous, and minority languages are marginalized, not because these languages are poor in cultural content, but because these languages are not translation-visible in English-mediated commerce. Consequently,

cultures are not proportionally represented, and linguistic pluralization is threatened.

Resistance and Hybrid Practices

Despite these obstacles, cultural homogenization is not absolute or inescapable. Translators, publishers, and authors resist English hegemony by:

Retention of untranslatable terms (like *hygge*, *ubuntu*, *karma*), which are absorbed as cultural loans in English instead of being reduced.

Fostering reverse translation streams, in which work avoids English and travels straight from one non-Anglophone culture to another (Chinese–Arabic, Spanish–French interactions). Celebrating multilingual journals, as SciELO or African multilingual journals, in opposition to Anglophone dominance. Hybrid practices muddy the oversimplified account further. Many global cultural goods are now operating in multilingual settings, where English intersects with local languages rather than replacing them. K-pop is a case in point; it has English lyrics yet keeps Korean as its main linguistic and cultural reference point, and so enforces a hybrid identity over a homogenized one.

5.4 The Accessibility vs. Authenticity Paradox

The main contradiction presented in this work is the tension between authenticity and accessibility. Translation procedures that favor English, by default, increase cultures' accessibility to overseas populations. The enhanced accessibility, however, very often comes at a cost of authenticity, as cultural subtlety is very often weakened in favor of greater comprehension. This dilemma poses ethical queries for translators and cultural brokers: Should there be an overriding interest for accessibility enhancement or cultural uniqueness preservation? Whereas there is no absolute response, what is revealed in this case is that a unilateral stress upon accessibility would jeopardize the cultural diversity that translation intends to foster.

Conclusion

The ascent of English as a world lingua franca has caused translation to evolve from a broker of meaning to a possible agent of cultural homogenization.

The results of this research are that translation operations based on English are not only transmitting meaning, but also reconstruct, select, and increasingly simplify cultural displays in an effort to align themselves with Anglophone prototypes. This trend carries the potential to shrink global cultures' rich diversity to a monolithic, English-brokered conception of reality. In texts, writers from outside English cultures only gain world readers when their texts are translated into English, often Westernized in terms of stylistics. In television and films, subtitling and English dubbing make cultural points of reference "universal" but less legitimate. In scholarly writing, English dominance in publishing favors a few epistemologies over others. In online platforms, machine translation based on English datasets continues these forms of imbalance, reinforcing Anglophone hegemony. But still, there exists research pointing out resistance and resilience as well. Local terms used in cultures which cannot be translated, multilingual publication projects, and cultural products in hybrid forms such as K-pop demonstrate local identities continuing to assert their presence against English dominance. Rather than viewing English as a monolithic bulldozer, a contested space might better define English: a tool of empowerment as well as suppression, accessibility as well as erasure. Finally, this inquiry ceases not to ask if translation practices favoring English obliterate cultural diversity—they frequently do—but how cultures may reduce such erasure when English is used as a bonding tool. This entails translators, publishers, policymakers, and digital developers attending to relations of power in translation and employing methodologies favoring cultural particularities as well as transnational accessibility. Assessment of prospective translation need no longer bother over how much it homogenizes, but how effectively it preserves diversity of voices in a globalized planet.

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