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This paper sets the scene for the research presented in the rest of this IJMS issue. It begins with a discussion of Globalization in which the phenomenon of the Internet is located. The argument is that, no matter how disputed aspects of Globalization may be, greater interaction is indisputable, with inevitable consequences for language practice. The second section considers the spread of English in the world and recounts the history of the Internet and its genesis in the English-speaking world. Then, in a review of the literature, the case is made that despite the initial assumptions by some that the Internet would serve to strengthen English as the international language par excellence, current research seems to be showing that matters are evolving in a far more nuanced manner. Thus, although it is true that English was the main medium of the early Internet, it is increasingly the case that the Internet is now a communication space for other language communities, both 'big' (e.g. German, French Japanese and Spanish) and 'small' (e.g. Catalan). These conclusions in the recent literature are confirmed by the findings of the present research project, reported in the four other papers.

Vaig a un 'chat' amb el Jordi
(I'm going to a chat with Jordi)

The language is Catalan, but the location is somewhere in North London in 1999. My at-the-time 16-year-old son is announcing to his parents that he is going on-line to a chatroom to 'talk' to his childhood friend from Barcelona (and therefore will be tying up the telephone line for a considerable period of time!). Two years after moving to London from Barcelona, Adrià is still able to maintain contact with his friends in Barcelona more extensively and cheaply than would have been the case just a decade earlier. And, in so doing, he is also helping to maintain and strengthen the use of Catalan on the Internet, thus adding to statistics

that lead an increasing number of researchers to question the assumption made by many, some ten years ago, that English would be *the* language of the Internet.

This anecdote is one illustration of the varied experiences that led us to the question of whether or not we can still speak of English as *the* language of the Internet. This paper sets the scene for that discussion. I begin with a discussion of Globalization and situate the phenomenon of the Internet within it, discussing whether, no matter how disputed aspects of Globalization may be, greater inter-action is indisputable. I then move on to consider the spread of English in the world and recount the history of the Internet. These preliminaries aside, I make the case that despite the initial assumptions by some that the Internet would serve to strengthen English as the international language *par excellence*, research seems to be showing that matters are evolving in a far more nuanced manner. Thus, although it is the case that English had a headstart in Internet use over other languages, it is also the case that the Internet has made it possible for other languages, both 'big' (e.g. German, French Japanese and Spanish) and 'small' (e.g. Catalan), not only to survive but to increase their numbers of users.[1] This is confirmed by the findings of the present research project, reported in the four other papers.

In addition, even within the borders of nation-states where English is the official language, the Internet is not an exclusively English mediated phenomenon. To make this point, I examine the case of Spanish speakers in the United States, who, in increasing numbers, are going on-line in Spanish rather than, or in addition to, English. I then close this paper with some thoughts about present and future research into Globalization, the spread of English and the Internet.

1. Globalization

Globalization is surely one of the most commonly used and misused terms in the world today whenever people talk or write about politics, economics, the environ-ment, music or just their day-to-day lives. For different groups the word has different resonance. For the international jet set, Globalization means that their business and leisure activities know no borders. For those who work in offices or factories around the world, Globalization might simply mean that they constantly exchange e-mails with colleagues located on different continents and that decisions taken in central headquarters, far away in kilometres but within immediate reach electronically, have a direct effect on their lives. For teenagers in the economically privileged parts of the world, it might be MTV, with its dominant discourse of consumerism, which is most representative of Globalization. However, for the majority of the planet's inhabitants, particularly in sub Saharan Africa and some

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[1] Here I use the term 'users' to mean anyone who engages in language-mediated activities in a particular language. This means the obvious cases of individuals who speak, read, listen to and write a language on a day-to-day basis in more traditional settings such as face-to-face conversa-tions and educational facilities. However, it also applies to students who visit websites in their attempts to better their communication skills, individuals who visit websites in search of information and individuals who engage in 'conversations' in chat rooms.

parts of South America and Asia, Globalization may mean economic conditions associated with worsening life circumstances rather than changes associated with having access to the kind of technologies that make possible instant communication and watching television.

Within the research community, a wealth of literature has been produced on the topic of Globalization and with this literature has come a multitude of definitions, many related to economic relations. The definitions that are most revealing for the present research are those which refer to the spatial connections that Globalization encourages:

> Globalization can be taken to refer to those spatio-temporal processes of change which underpin a transformation in the organization of human affairs by linking together and expanding human activity across regions and continents. Without reference to such expansive spatial connections, there can be no clear or coherent formulation of the term. (Held, McGrew, Goldblatt and Perraton, 1999: 15)

> [Globalization is] the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa. (Giddens 1990: 64)

With the flows and networks of closer social relations and connections, the fear of homogenisation has surfaced. Scholars adopting the stance that Globalization will mean one world culture generally believe that homogenising forces will eventually leave everyone in the world living, thinking and acting in very similar ways. For example, George Ritzer (1996, 1998) envisages the eventual homogenisation of the means of consumption around the world, what he calls *McDonaldization*, that is 'the principles of the fast-food restaurant [which] are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as the rest of the world' (Ritzer, 1996: 1). Ritzer's work bridges economic Globalization to cultural Globalization as he effectively argues that consumption and consumerism are central tenets of late modern culture. Along similar lines, Benjamin Barber (1995) argues that we are heading towards a single global culture, which he calls 'McWorld', defined as 'an entertainment shopping experience that brings together malls, multiplex movie theatres, theme parks, spectator sports arenas, fast food chains (with their endless movie tie-ins) and television (with its burgeoning shopping networks) into a single vast enterprise …' (Barber 1995: 97).

However, not all scholars would agree that Globalization leads necessarily to homogenisation. Nederveen Pieterse (1995) introduces into the discussion the concept of *hybridization*, understood as the natural mingling and mixing which goes on when the global meets the local. Elsewhere, Roland Robertson (1995) translates the Japanese term *glocalization* (Robertson, 1995), which he takes from the business context where it means marketing goods and services on global basis by catering to local particularities. Robertson re-invents the term for the context which interests him- cultures in contact- and uses it to signify what he calls the 'interpenetrating' of the 'particular' and the 'universal' (Robertson, 1995: 30). Both Pieterse and Robertson make the point that Globalization entails a synergetic

relationship between the global and the local as opposed to the dominance of the former over the latter. It is evidence of this synergetic relationship with regard to language use that this present research is trying to track. Is there the equivalent linguistic glocalization, with English and lesser used languages increasingly used as alternatives to national languages?

Where one locates the origin of globalising forces influences one's expectations about language practice. Some scholars (Schiller, 1985; Latouche, 1996; Ritzer, 1998) see Globalization as hegemonically Western, and above all an extension of American imperialism (e.g. Schiller 1985, Ritzer 1998), Latouche (1996) writes about the "Westernization of the world" and the progressive "worldwide standardization of lifestyles" (Latouche 1996: 3). For Latouche, fundamental Western ideology and culture, best exemplified in the United States, are becoming the norm around the world as there is convergence in all aspects of people's lives, from how they dress to how they eat, from their entertainment preferences to their work habits and from architecture to their attitudes towards personal freedom, gender, race, religion and science. Spread of English is an expected part of this creeping uniformity.

However, other scholars would disagree with the view that Globalization is merely US imperialism by other means. Writing in the early nineties, Giddens acknow-ledges that '[t]he first phase of Globalization was plainly governed, primarily, by the expansion of the West, and institutions which originated in the West' (Giddens 1994: 96); however, he goes on to state:

> Although still dominated by Western power, Globalization today can no longer be
> spoken of only as a matter of one-way imperialism … now, increasingly, … there
> is no obvious 'direction' to Globalization at all, as its ramifications are ever-
> present. …' (Giddens, 1994: 96).

Elsewhere, (Robertson, 1992 and Friedman, 1994) express similar views, that effectively it is unhelpful to frame the discussion in terms of Western dominance over "the rest". The question then arises whether this multipolarity extends to language or whether even where Western power is diluted, the principal language of that power is still used as the lingua franca of globalising groups.

Arising from such debates about Western hegemony and the relative strength of the local is the question of whether or not Globalization is seen as a generally positive or generally negative phenomenon. On the positive side, there are scholars, such as Kenichi Ohmae (1990, 1995), who not only argue that global market forces and transactional corporations run the world today and that the nation state and labour unions have become obsolete as structures of social organisation, but that these developments are a mark of progress. More typical of scholars, however, is a more sceptical and even negative stance. Eric Hobsbawm (1994) and Paul Smith (1997) make the point that Globalization is really the traditional capitalism of economic imperialism and international hierarchies, which has been transformed by the use of new technologies and a clearer than ever distinction between industrially-based

and service-based economies. Elsewhere, Gray (1998) discusses the results of this combination of the old philosophy and new means. He sees the new globalized economy in the form of the Washington Consensus[2] as fundamentally destructive, leading above all to the dismantling of the welfare state, which so characterised the economically advanced countries in the world over the second half of the twentieth century. Meanwhile, Ritzer (1996, 1998) is equally dystopic as he believes that the process of *McDonaldization* cited above will lead the citizens of the world to a soulless and "disenchanted" existence where experiences which were previously authentic to individuals, have become commodified and over-rationalised.

Whether Globalization means homogenisation or not, or Americanisation or not, or a dystopic future for the world or not, it remains the dominant framework for current discussions and analyses of social phenomena. And the two social phenomena that intersect and are the focus of this issue of MOST- language use and Internet use- cannot be discussed, researched or analysed without taking into account the contrasting views on Globalization outlined above. Indeed, as I have started to indicate, there is an obvious parallel between global/local tension running across the views summarised above and the competition between English and other languages as media for the Internet. I will have more to say about this below. First, however, I discuss the relationship between Globalization and the spread of English, the origins of the Internet and how English came to be considered 'the language of the Internet' during the mid-nineties.

2. Globalization and the spread of English

The English language is widely accepted as the medium that makes possible what Giddens refers to as 'the intensification of worldwide social relations'. It is the medium that makes possible the kind of economic and social changes described by authors like Gray, Ritzer, Ohmae, Barber and Latouche. English is the language of the World Bank, as it imposes the Washington Consensus around the world, and it is the language of global consumerism and the celebrity culture, emanating from Hollywood and the music and fashion worlds, which are taking hold in more and more contexts around the world. It is the language spoken when diplomats from different linguistic backgrounds gather in the corridors of the United Nations in New York or the European parliament in Brussels. However, there is little fine grained research which assesses how far it is becoming the language of *all* communication taking place across language borders.

Some scholars, most notably Robert Phillipson and Tove Skutnabb-Kangas (for example see Phillipson 1992, 2003; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000), fear that English is becoming the dominant language of international communities devoted to political, commercial, cultural and academic endeavours. They warn of the death of other

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[2] Washington Consensus is a much used (and often scorned) expression often used synonymously with "neoliberalism" and "Globalization" in world trade contexts. John Williamson originally coined the phrase in 1990.

languages (what Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (2001) have termed 'linguicide') in the wake of globalized and globalizing English. The statistics offered by these scholars, as well as others (e.g. Crystal, 2001), do suggest that there is an evolution towards fewer and fewer languages the world, but whether or not this is occurring as a side effect of the process which Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (1999) have termed 'Englishization', is not yet shown. Joseph (2002) and Wright (2003) believe that the cause and effect relationship is not as clear cut as some claim.

In recent work, Phillipson himself has suggested that Englishization might not extend to the Internet. As he puts it:

> Labelling English as the world's lingua franca, or as 'the' language of the Internet, is wishful thinking. Many languages are used as lingua francas, and many languages are used on the Internet, including demographically small ones. The status of English may well be challenged in the future. (Phillipson, 2003: 71)

Although Phillipson does not provide empirical evidence of how the Internet facilitates the survival of languages other than English, a few authors are beginning to do so and I shall return to this below. Before doing this, however, I would like to consider the history of the Internet, as aspects of its origins and development are highly relevant to how language use is developing on the medium.

3. The rise of the Internet

Along with prominent social theorists and sociologists such as Ulrich Beck (e.g. 2000), Alain Touraine (e.g. 1997) and Anthony Giddens (2000), Manuel Castells (1998, 2000) has written at length about the changes undergone in the advanced industrialised nations of the world over the past three decades. Crucially, during this period of time we have moved from industrial societies to post-industrial societies, or what Castells terms 'informational societies'. Industrial societies were the outcome of intellectual and technological revolutions of the late 18th and 19th centuries, respectively, which led to advances in the production of material goods. By contrast, the third great intellectual and technological revolution has taken us to a 'social organization in which information generation, processing and trans-mission become fundamental sources of production and power because of new technological conditions emerging in this historical period' (Castells, 2000: 21). The lynchpin of this revolution has been the advent of advanced information technology. As Castells notes, technological advances in the post world war era, leading to the inventions of transistors (1947) and integrated circuits (1957), paved the way for the invention in 1971 of the microprocessor or the computer chip, the basis of computers and information technology, which has yet to find its limits as regards the capacity for storage and access of information.

Although no phenomenon now seems more indicative of the move away from the national than the Internet, it was conceived, ironically, as a way of ensuring US national defence in the case of Soviet attack at the height of the Cold War. Its

inventors made every node of equal importance in the network so that attack on one area would not disable the whole network. It is this feature of the Internet that has made it infinitely extensible, non-hierarchical and adoptable.

Its growth and internationalisation have been exponential. The first international link up between computers (University College London to Arpanet the US academic network) only happened in 1973. The rate of connection grew quickly after satellite technology was introduced in 1975. This brought down the cost of international telephone calls and improved the quality of contact. At first the Internet was used for sharing computer processing and sending data. The first email and chat group systems were developed in the 1970s among a small group of scientists in four American universities (UCLA, University of California in Santa Barbara, Stanford and University of Utah). By the mid-1970s, Apple computers had been launched and the era of the personal computer was born. By September 2002, NUA Internet surveys were suggesting that there could be as many as 605.600.000 people with access to the Internet as emailers.[3]

In 1990-1991, Tim Berners-Lee of the European institute for high energy physics, CERN, devised a hypertext system which allowed information to be shared over the Net. In 1992, this was released for general use as the World Wide Web. This gave access to information without the need to be in personal contact with the provider, who was able to post information without there being a specified recipient. Thus the Internet has two major functions: it allows the publication and dissemination of data on the World Wide Web without direct contact; it allows interaction among users on a person to person basis through email and chatrooms.[4] A further function as an international market place is also rapidly developing. The interesting question is whether the language of these exchanges is predominantly English as was predicted in the early days of the technology.

4. Is English really *the* language of the Internet?

Mark Warschauer (2002, 2003) sets his discussion of linguistic pluralism and social inclusion on the Internet alongside a quote from Anatoly Voronov (cited in Crystal, 1997), the director of a Russian Internet provider:

It is just incredible when I hear people talking about how open the Web is. It is the ultimate act of intellectual colonialism. The product comes from America so we either must adapt to English or stop using it. That is the right of any business. But if you are talking about a technology that is supposed to open the world to hundreds of millions of people you are joking. This just makes the world into new sorts of haves and have-nots. (Crystal, 1997: 108).

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[3] See http://www.nua.com/surveys/how_many_online/. Their methodology has been to take an average from a number of different surveys.
[4] For a comprehensive and readable history of the genesis of the Internet see Naughton (1999)

Warschauer goes on to suggest that Voronov perhaps jumped the gun in his assessment that English was effectively *the* language of the Internet. Drawing on the work of Alain Touraine (1994) and Manuel Castells (1997), Warschauer suggests that the on-going construction of self-identity is the grand project of the post-industrial era (or as Anthony Giddens would have termed it, late Modernity). Part and parcel of the on-going construction of self-identity are the language practices which individuals engage in. Over the last several years, Warschauer has collected case studies from around the world, which show how Internet use intersects with identity construction. For our purposes here, his cases provide us with a barometer for the extent to which English is or is not *the* language of the Internet.

One context about which Warschauer has written extensively (Warschauer and Donaghy, 1997; Warschauer, 1998, 2002, 2003.) is Hawaii. From the 1970s onwards, there was a revival of interest in the Hawaiian language, then in danger of extinction. Problems such as the isolation of Hawaiian-speaking communities, the lack of teaching materials in Hawaiian and the general lack of interest among ethnic Hawaiians to recover their language made matters difficult. However with the Internet, it has been possible to set up websites, chat lines and an Hawaiian language e-mail system, all of which have made Hawaiian both a practical tool to get things done and most important, a medium of identity construction as a growing number of Hawaiians subscribe to this initiative. Nevertheless, there is still a long road to travel before Hawaiian becomes a major language of Internet use in Hawaii.

A second context examined by Warschauer is Egypt. The situation described here is typical of what happens in the early days of Internet use. Warschauer observes that because the Internet was introduced primarily via two communities with a long tradition of internationalisation in Egypt, namely education and business, the most natural first language of the Internet was English. Indeed, based on a survey of Internet use among Egyptian professionals, Warschauer, Refaat and Zohry (2000) observe that over 70% of participants made exclusive use of English for their work-related communications. However, since use of English throughout the population as a whole is very limited, (Warschauer (2003) observes that just 3% of the population actually speak English) the behaviour observed was clearly typical only for a tiny elite minority. Moreover, English language use was mainly confined to trans-national communication. When the same professional group communicated among itself, some 50% of communication took place in Egyptian Arabic (Warschauer *et al* 2000). Warschauer *et al* noted that this occurred where difficulties reproducing Arabic characters were overcome by using a Romanised version. Warschauer makes the point that English is more widely used on the Internet compared with Arabic for the following reasons:

> First, no single standard Arabic-language computing has emerged yet, so Web producers are often forced to convert Arabic-language content into slow-loading images if they want to guarantee that their content can be read in Arabic. This lack of a common standard also discourages Arabic-language e-mail. In addition,

> the Internet first rose in Egypt in the very sectors that operate in English, such as the information technology industry and international businesses. Finally, the early adopters of the Internet in Egypt were mostly people who, owing to their schooling and work experience, write, compute, type, and keyboard better in English than they do in Arabic, and using English online thus comes naturally to them. (Warschauer, 2003: 101)

Our research shows, however, that the software situation is developing rapidly and the constraints observed by Warschauer are being overcome in a number of ways[5]. We can expect the difficulties experienced by Chinese and Arabic users to be lessened on the pattern of the solutions found for users of Japanese or Korean The technological problems which held these language groups back from full participation have been ironed out and software for their different alphabets developed which arguably give them some advantages.[6]

However, as the Ukrainian participants in the research reminded us, those who have no knowledge of English at all are still disadvantaged since, to get to the web page in one's own language, the user has to know the Roman alphabet in order to be able to type in and read web addresses.

Singapore is another context explored by Warschauer. The situation both differs from and resembles those in Hawaii and Egypt, albeit for different reasons. In the previous two examples, there was a sense that local languages needed to be defended against English. In Singapore too the competition between English and Malay, Mandarin and Tamil, the other official languages of Singaporeans seems to be resulting in the spread of English. Phyllis Ghim-Lian Chew explains the acceptance of English as follows:

> [T]he early dominance of English came about not so much as a result of linguistic imperialism, but through a conscious decision on the part of learners and populace, after careful consideration of world trends and local conditions. The implementation of a national education system with English as the medium of instruction came about through a "bottom up" rather than "top-down" process and was attained relatively easily- without strong controversy or bloodshed. (Chew, 1999: 40)[7]

However there is an interesting development which sees the standard challenged by a local variant of English, *Singlish*. Singlish, has developed divergently to the point where, as Warschauer points out, it has immense value as an identity marker. In his study of this context, Warschauer discovers that the Internet has become a way of using and promoting Singlish, since it is a medium that escapes the efforts by education and government leaders who wish to see the demise of the language.

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[5] See the paper by Peel this issue

[6] See the paper by Gerrard and Nakamura this issue. Software has been developed which guesses the Kanji character required from prompts and thus allows for speedy typing where the first suggestion is correct.

[7] Chew goes on to argue that the dominance of English does not mean that Singaporeans have renounced all sense of identity connected to Malay, Mandarin and Tamil, all of which continue to be used in a number of domains.

Thus, like Hawaii, the Internet has proved the medium for a language of identity. At the same time there are similarities with Egypt, as the Internet has been another medium where English is used in preference to the other official languages. Here, however, the elite medium is extending vertically into the population in this case.

Finally, we come to the case of India, which again offers a very different perspective from the other examples. India is by most estimations a technological powerhouse, as regards the production and export of hardware and software. However, because of the relatively high cost of computer technology for personal and professional use, Internet use is still very low. As regards the language/identity question, Warschauer notes that India does retain English as one of the media of pan Indian communication. However, the number of Indians who could accurately be qualified as English speakers is perhaps as low as 5% of the population (Crystal, 1997) and Hindi is the only language that approaches the status of a truly national language, with some 50% of the population speaking it. Other prominent languages include Tamil and Bengali.

Until recently, technological problems with the reproduction of scripts (paralleling problems with languages such as Japanese and Arabic), coupled with the fact that the English speaking elite was also the class with access to computers, have meant that English has become the *de facto* language of the Internet. However, Warschauer reports that a number of Indian organisations are now making concerted efforts to make cheap computer technology available to more people while at the same time sorting out the technical problems of moving from one language with one script to another language with a different script. The end result would be speakers of different Indian languages communicating with one another using their respective language as opposed to opting for English as a common language. This is made possible by the use of software products that are programmed to convert one language script to another automatically. As Warschauer explains:

> [A] writer of Tamil (but a speaker of Hindi) can write a Hindi-language message in the Tamil script and have it automatically converted to Hindi script to be read by someone in a Hindi-speaking region of the country. These conversions can even be performed instantaneously using synchronous communication software so that one's own script appears on one's screen while the other script appears instantly on the correspondent's screen. (Warschauer, 2003: 103)[8]

In this case, the existence of a first rate technology industry and the will to make computers available to more people have meant that a significant though still relatively small number of citizens are now able to use the Internet in their local languages. However, just how far this extension of the Internet use via languages other than English will go is impossible to say at this point in time.

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[8] However, the problems with machine translation for anything but the most concrete language (see Schwatzl 2001) should make us sceptical of this claim.

From the four cases discussed by Warschauer, it seems that Anatoly Voronov probably did jump the gun when he predicted that English would the language of the Internet to the exclusion of all others and that it would be necessary to be literate in English in order to participate in the new world social economic and technological order. All four cases provide an example of the reassertion of local language and cultural practices taking place on the Internet. Of course, the respective situations of Hawaiian, Egyptian Arabic, Singlish and the different languages of India, are certainly not directly comparable due to their multiple historical and socio-cultural contexts. There is, however, a common strand: English never quite became 100% dominant and now the tide is changing as more languages come on line.

5. The United States and English: the inverse in operation?

Thus far, I have examined cases where different languages are seen to be in competition with English over Internet superiority as regards websites and interactional use. In these cases English is framed to great extent as an outside language which has taken over because of its status as the most widely used international language. But what of contexts where English is the national language and other languages are the 'outsiders'? Perhaps the best example of such a situation is the United States, where Spanish in particular is becoming a fully-fledged working language in an increasing number of states.

In two recent Cyberatlas publications, Greenspan (2002) and Saunders (2002) report on the uses of the Internet among the different ethnic groups in the US. They state that in the United States, white Americans account for roughly 90% of Internet users, while recent census information indicates that they represent just over 70% of the total population. Meanwhile, Spanish-speaking Latinos, who now make up about 15% of the total population, account for 7.2% of Internet users and African Americans, now 14% of the total population, are 7.4% of Internet users. However, the ethnic group reporting most Internet use per capita is that composed of English speaking Asians. Research carried out as part of the **Pew Internet and American Life Project** found that almost 75% of this group have gone online at some time in their lives compared to 58% of white adults, 50% of Spanish-speaking Latino adults and 43% of African-American adults. Asian Americans are also leaders as regards intensity of use, with 70% of them normally going online each day. Nevertheless, the majority of this use seems to be in English and therefore is not increasing the use of other languages on the Internet.

A case of increasing use of a language other than English, however, is to be found among Spanish-speaking Latino (hereafter, SSLs) users. SSLs are the American ethnic group with the greatest increase in Internet use over the past several years, having risen from 6.6% to 7.2%. Greenspan (2002) discusses the increase in the number of SSLs using the Internet as well as the number who do so in Spanish rather than English. She cites a survey carried out by the Rostow Research Group in late 2001. The survey was based on telephone interviews with 600 Spanish-

surnamed Internet users in Los Angeles, New York, Miami, San Francisco, Chicago and San Antonio. To qualify as participants in the study, individuals had to meet three criteria. First, they had to identify themselves as Spanish speaking. Second, they had to claim to speak Spanish at home at least some of the time and they had to have used the Internet at some time in the 30 days prior to the survey.

As regards use of the Internet, the Rostow Research Group found that over the period July 2000-Autumn 2001, the number of respondents claiming to use the Internet at least once per month increased from 38% to 49.6%. More importantly, the survey showed that 55% of the Spanish speakers consulted used Spanish during their time on line and 45% used English. This is quite a shift compared to a similar survey conducted half a year earlier by the same group when 39% of the respondents claimed that they used Spanish when online while 61% claimed that they used English.

Thus, in the case of SSLs, we may be seeing a trend towards the strengthening of Spanish on the Internet. We might speculate about the extent to which this use is tied to the same kinds of identity issues that Warschauer found in his case studies of Hawaii, Egypt and Singapore. However, we can be sure that it means the maintenance of virtual communities of Spanish speakers who have migrated to North America from different parts of the Spanish speaking world.

6. Onwards

As I observed above, the Russian Internet provider Anatoloy Voronov seemed convinced less than a decade ago that the web was the 'the ultimate act of intellectual imperialism' and that it would primarily be an American and English language affair. At the time, Voronov was doing little more than giving voice to a generalised opinion. If English had already become the language of global communication, then it only seemed logical that it would be *the* language of the Internet. This belief was backed by early statistics about websites and Internet use. For example, a survey of websites carried out by Babel in 1997 (www.isoc.org:8030/palamres.en.html) suggested that over 80% of the websites in the world were in English. Of the rest of the languages represented in the study, the second was German with 4% (see Crystal, 2001, for a discussion). Elsewhere, early measures of online households showed that initially the Internet was principally a North American affair and, by extension, an English language affair.

However, the situation has since changed. As regards websites, Carvin (2001, cited in Warschauer, 2003) reports the following numbers for web pages by language:

Table 1: Web pages by language

Language	Webpages	% of total
English	214,250,996	68.39
Japanese	18,335,739	5.85
German	18,069,744	5.77
Chinese	12,113,803	3.87
French	9,262,663	2.96
Spanish	7,573,064	2.42
Russian	5,900,956	1.88
Italian	4,883,497	1.56
Portuguese	4,291,237	1.37
Korean	4,046,530	1.29
Dutch	3,161,844	1.01
Others		3.63

Adapted from Carvin (2001, cited in Warschauer, 2003: 97)

And in a later survey of online populations, published in September 2002, Global Reach found that the tendency toward greater linguistic diversity on the Internet continued. The following table shows their findings.

Table 2: Total online population of September 2002: 619 million

Language	% of total
English	36.5
Chinese	10.9
Japanese	9.7
Spanish	7.2
German	6.7
Korean	4.5
Italian	3.8
French	3.5
Portuguese	3.0
Russian	2.9
Dutch	2.0
Others	9.3
TOTAL	100.0

Based on: Global Reach (global-reach.biz/globstats/refs.php3), 30 Sept., 2002

Several things seem to be going on here. First, there is the obvious point that the predictions that English would dominate the Internet have proven overly pessimistic and that there is increasingly greater diversity. This is a slow process and the number of English language sites is still by far the largest. However, the sources cited in this paper attest to diversification, as do the contributions to this issue of MOST. Nevertheless, greater diversity does not necessarily mean that all languages are equal: bigger is still better in the pecking order of world languages as much of the proportional weight wrested away from English has been in favour of a few major national languages. Thus Japanese, German, Chinese, French, Spanish, Russian and other languages of the economically advantaged nations of the world, have managed to establish a strong presence on the Internet, in some cases (e.g. France) via concerted efforts by nation-state governments. Still, the languages of smaller nation-states, such as Iceland and Estonia, as well as languages classified as 'minority' in nation-states around the world, have also managed to maintain their presence as viable media of communication and in some cases have moved from positions of weakness to positions of relative strength within their communities. This is the case of Hawaiian, discussed above, although the achievements of Hawaiian speakers in the US are relatively modest next to more high profile examples such as Catalan and Basque speakers in Spain, where local governments with proactive language policies have assured a high proportion of web-sites per capita (Warschauer, 2003).

In addition, there are the cases of languages with millions of speakers such as Hindi and Arabic, which are struggling to gain a stable position as languages of the Internet, and which various indicators, including the research reported in this issue of the MOST Journal, suggest may soon make progress in this direction, as technical difficulties are overcome.

Finally the case of Singlish throws up issues of what constitutes a *language* of the Internet or language, full stop, for that matter. How would one count the various forms of English around the world, many of which are classified as creoles? Would they all be called English? Are there new fusion contact languages? Does the Internet encourage literacy in languages that do not have written forms elsewhere?

I opened this paper with a discussion of Globalization as a way of situating the Internet as an eminently global phenomenon. The Internet is a means of disseminating information, a medium for exchange and a market place. As it develops it is clear that global does not equate with English only.

Nevertheless, although the proportions of websites in English and interactions in English are going down, two key questions remain unanswered. First, is there a point at which the proportions will stabilise or is the process likely to be ongoing? Second, even if there is a lot of Internet activity in languages other than English, what proportion of this activity involves users who only work monolingually, in a language other than English? Is the Internet a medium for bilinguals, with many Internet users habitually working in both English and another language? And if this

is so, what will the consequences be for languages? Do the informality of the medium and the bilingualism of users make codeswitching and new convergent forms more likely? Answers to these questions are needed and would allow us to begin to judge whether there are any indications of the language change that Wright (this volume) predicts will accompany the spread of the Internet.

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