

The Use of English in Teaching and Research: Linguistic Injustice and Colonialism?

(Ulrich Ammon)

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1. Comments on the Wording of the Topic

- Meant to provoke clarification
- „Linguistic injustice“ to be taken seriously
- „Colonialism“ applied to the present situation is misleading, as are a number of current invectives like, e.g. „English as the *killer language*“

But such exaggerations have the merit of stimulating attempts at finding balanced descriptions of the present situation and realistic solutions to obvious problems

2. A Short Look Back into the History of Languages of Science

Major *international* languages of science so far (rough duration in years):

Sanskrit, Chinese, (Classical) Greek (≈ 600), Latin ($\approx 1,500$), (Classical) Arabic, Italian, Spanish, French (≈ 300), Dutch, German (≈ 100), Russian, Japanese and **English ($\approx 200+?$)**

Concerns raised about the shift from the single *real* lingua franca, Latin, to several national languages (and later *unreal* linguae francae/ lingue franche):

Galileo Galilei changed over to his own Florentine Italian in his revolutionary book “Il Saggiatore” [The Assayer] (1623).

Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) lambasted Galilei’s language shift as a “*crimen laesae humanitatis*”, a crime against humanity and erudition.

The co-editor of the great French *Encyclopedie*, d'Alembert, raised the following fears:

“Notre Langue étant répandue par toute l'Europe, nous avons crû qu'il étoit tems de la substituer à la Langue latine, qui depuis la renaissance des Lettres étoit celle de nos Savans. [...] L'Angleterre nous a donc imité; l'Allemagne, où le Latin sembloit s'être réfugié, commence insensiblement à en perdre l'usage: je ne doute pas qu'elle ne soit bien-tôt suivie par les Suédois, les Danois, & les Russiens. Ainsi, avant la fin du dix-huitieme siecle, un Philosophe qui voudra s'instruire à fond des découvertes de ses prédécesseurs, sera contraint de charger sa mémoire de sept à huit Langues différentes ; & après avoir consumé à les apprendre le tems le plus précieux de sa vie, il mourra avant de commencer à s'instruire.” (“Discours des editeur”, *Encyclopédie*, Tombe I, 1751: 39f.)

In short, the philosopher (or any scientist) will, in future, first have to learn seven or eight languages, which means he will die before he can start his proper work.

During the 19th century a milder version of d'Alembert's fear became true in the form of the three languages French, English, and German which practically every scientist or scholar had to know, though two of them perhaps only passively, in order to keep abreast of the developments in her field.

In 1921, the *British Association for the Advancement of Science* and the *American Association for the Advancement of Science* proposed promoting Esperanto as the global lingua franca of science to the League of Nations, because “[t]he acceptance of any modern national language would confer undue advantages and excite jealousy [...] Therefore an invented language is best.” (*Science* 60 (1416) 1922: 1416 – communication by E.J. Lieberman). This rare gesture of admirable fairness should always be kept in mind. France was the leading spokesman against its acceptance by the Assembly (Germany and Russia were no members), probably because it hoped that French would instead acquire the role – which however, as we know, has been taken by English.

Long-term Socioeconomic History

Feudalism → Capitalism (national → trans-/ international → post-national/ global)

Shift of Science Centers in the Course of the 20th Century

($x \approx y$ 'about same rank of x and y', $x > y$ 'x ranking above y')

From

{English-speaking countries \approx French-speaking countries \approx German-speaking countries}

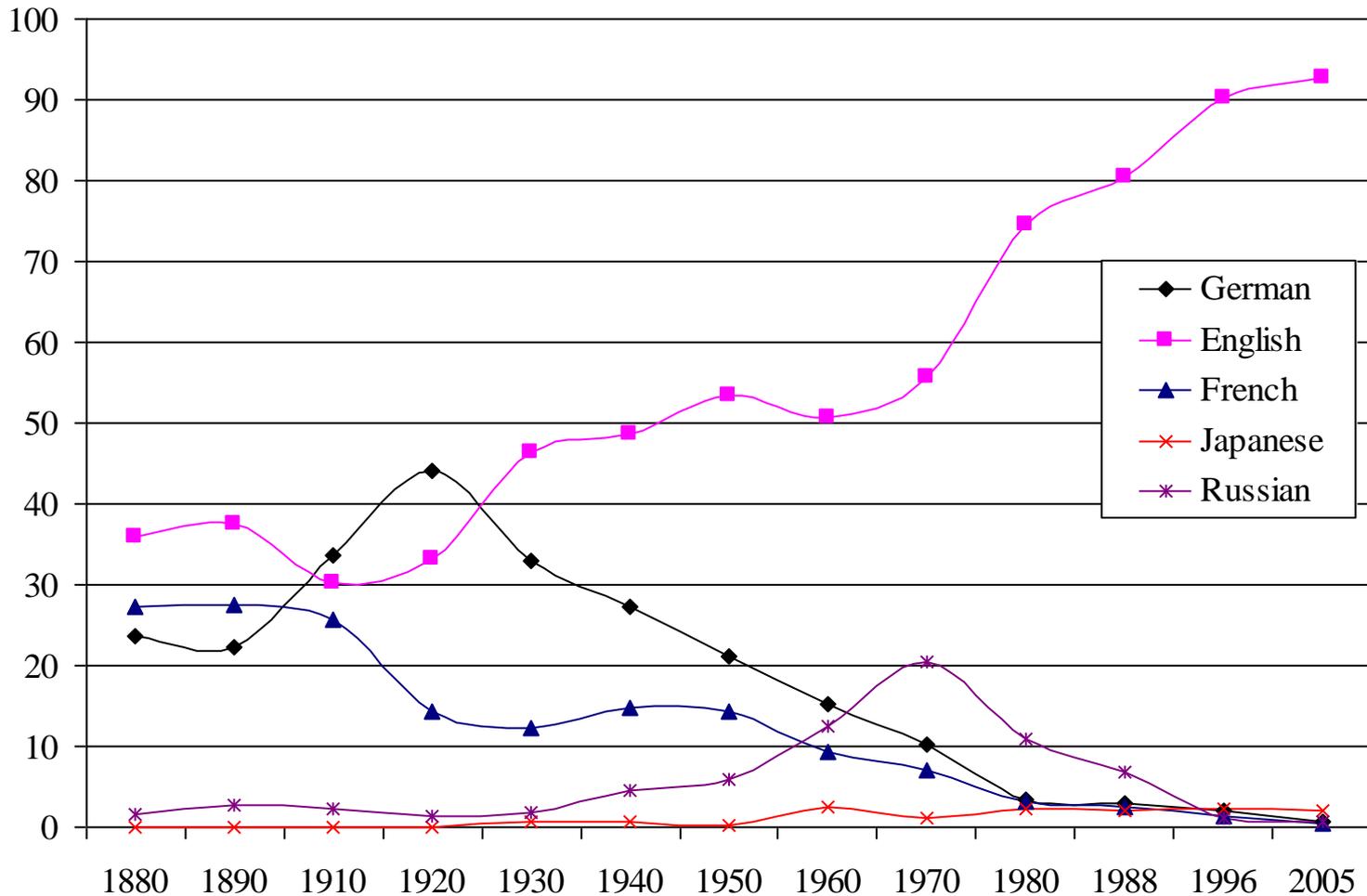
To

{(Inner-circle) Anglophone countries: USA, Britain, Canada, Australia, Ireland, New Zealand} >

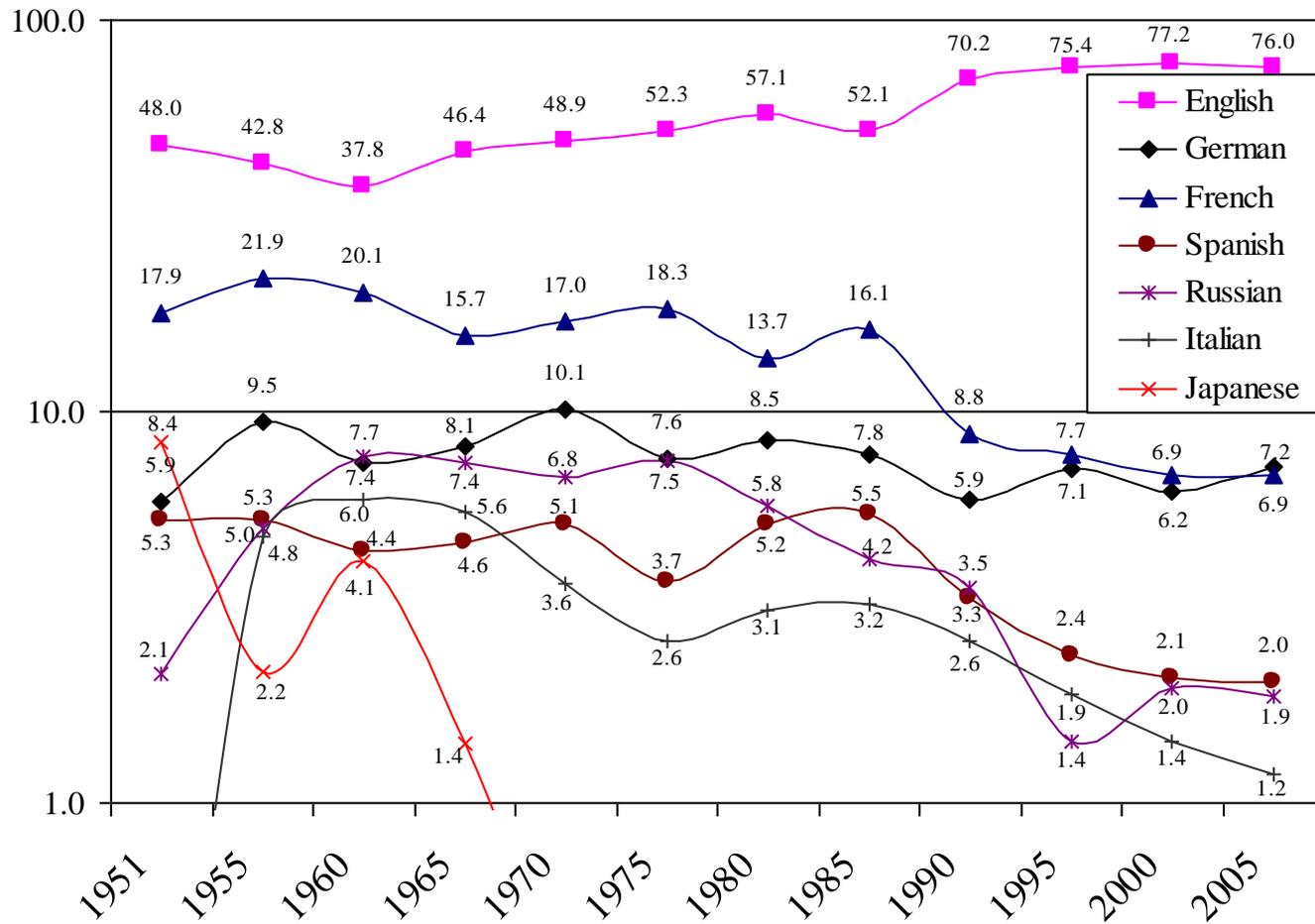
{French-speaking countries, German-, Italian-, Spanish-, Russian, Japanese-, Chinese-, ...}

3. Data Indicating the Indispensability of English at Today's Universities

(Focusing on research – since teaching has been dealt with in other presentations)



Share of languages in publications of the natural sciences worldwide 1880-2005



Share of languages in publications of the social sciences worldwide 1951-2005 (abscissa logarithmic)

The Humanities as „Refuge“ for Other Languages

„Niche Subjects“ even for international communication,
e.g. for German (based on 6 studies):

German studies, (classical) archeology, musicology,
philosophy, theology

Reasons for different degrees of anglicisation:

- a) Globally versus nationally relevant topics
- b) Higher versus lower degree of specialization
- c) Necessary accessibility for customers
- d) Translateability into a foreign language (English)
- e) Identity of object language and meta language

Absorption of German bibliographical scientific data banks by anglosaxon competitors

All German abstract services in Biologie were substituted by *Biological Abstracts* in the wake of WWI

Chemisches Zentralblatt (since 1830)

⊂ *Chemical Abstracts* (1969)

Physikalische Berichte (since 1845)

→ *Physics Briefs* (1979)

⊂ *Physics Abstracts* (1995)

Zentralblatt für Mathematik (...) und ihre Grenzgebiete/Mathematics Abstracts

→ *Mathematical Reviews* [not yet (?) absorbed]

German or French scientists are hardly able anymore to publish in their own languages, not even in journals of their countries

Examples of journals having shifted names and language of publication from German to English

- *Archiv für Kreislaufforschung* → *Basic Research in Cardiology*
- *Zeitschrift für Kinderheilkunde* → *European Journal of Pediatrics*
- *Österreichische Botanische Zeitschrift* → *Plant Systematics and Evolution*
- *Archiv für Verdauungskrankheiten* → *Digestion*
- *Radiologische Rundschau* → *Diagnostic Imaging*
- *Zeitschrift für Tierpsychologie* → *Ethology*

Similarly French Journals, e.g. the *Institut Pasteur* in Paris shifted its three *Annales* to English in 1989.

Nationality of Nobel Prize Winners in Science (Physics, Chemistry, Medicine - Percent)

	Germany Austria Switzerland	USA Britain Canada Ireland	France Belgium Netherlands	Other Countries	Total Number
1901-1920	34.7	16.7	30.6	18.1	70
1921-1940	35.2	39.6	13.3	12.0	68
1941-1960	12.6	67.1	1.0	19.4	88
1961-1980	8.8	71.9	7.3	12.3	126
1981-2000	15.4	62.0	7.5	15.1	126
2001-2010	9.7	62.2	6.1	21.9	76

Aspects of Linguistic Justice

(Theoretical foundation in

Van Parijs, Philippe (2011) *Linguistic Justice – for Europe and for the World*. New York: Oxford University Press.

(2007a) Tackling the Anglophones' free ride: fair linguistic cooperation with a global lingua franca. *AILA Review* 20: 72-87.

Basic problem:

The anglosaxon countries have a „free ride“ to the common good of a common language (lingua franca)

- How did they acquire it?
- Could they be brought to make compensations?
- Should they, or do they shoulder extra loads?

Britain spread its language through colonialism:

- especially in the settler colonies (USA, Australia)
- to a lesser extent in the exploitation colonies (e.g. India), with the erstwhile colonial administrative language becoming the official language of the independent countries (e.g. India)

Crucial for the spread as the global lingua franca:
one of the settler colonies became world power
(cf. e.g. Robert Phillipson „Linguistic Imperialism“)

But other colonial powers have also spread their language: Spain, Portugal, France, to a much lesser extent the Netherlands or Germany (Suriname, Namibia)

Similarly, though mostly less far reaching has been extension of territory and language spread into neighbouring areas:

- England to Wales, Scotland, Ireland
- similarly France, Spain, Germany, Italy
- conspicuously Russia, also through political dominance of the Soviet Union and COMECON

Specific Reasons for the Rise of English for Scientific Communication

- The Word Wars and the Destruction of German and French Resources, Nazism, Brain Drain
- (French-led) Rejection of the US- and British Proposal to the League of Nations to consider Esperanto as the global scientific lingua franca
- Continued Economic Superiority of the USA or the Anglophone countries altogether
- Abolition of the Language Requirements at US-universities
- Reduction of foreign language learning in Anglophone countries

The present situation is marked by huge differences in economic resources - and in spending for R&D

E.g. in 2011:

Germany, Austria, German-speaking Switzerland (64% of the latter): 82.6 US \$

USA, Britain, English-speaking Canada (77% of the latter), Australia: 478.3 US \$

Proportion of 1 : 5.

The spread of the own language has a number of less evident advantages besides the obvious free ride in language learning and use (e.g. translation costs), like:

- the prestige which status and preference of the own language convey to the native speakers
- the appearance of their superior verbal skills (though the opposite conclusion would be more logical in the case of the use of a foreign versus the native tongue)
- the huge revenue through the language industry.

Other countries keep trying to capture a share of it, by trying to promote their own language – and, understandably, envy Britain.

It seems fair that the Anglosaxon countries pay a compensation for their huge, not only economic language advantages.

But gauging the adequate size is difficult and enforcing it seems impossible – since the non-Anglophone countries need English.

Within the EU, shortening the UK's EU rebate seems a suitable starting point.

5. Drawbacks of Some Tempting Approaches to Reining in English, Especially as a Language Science

- Translation of outstanding works
(to incent continued publication in the language and to water others' mouths to study the language – which, however, may seem to be even more superfluous)
- Requiring comprehensive skills in the language for studying or working in the country
- Requiring teaching in the otherwise local language in the English-taught programs
(both may keep away the hoped-for foreign students or scientists)

5. Will the Maintenance of International Languages be Possible in the Emerging „Global Diglossia“ (e.g. French, Spanish, German etc. Together with Global English)?

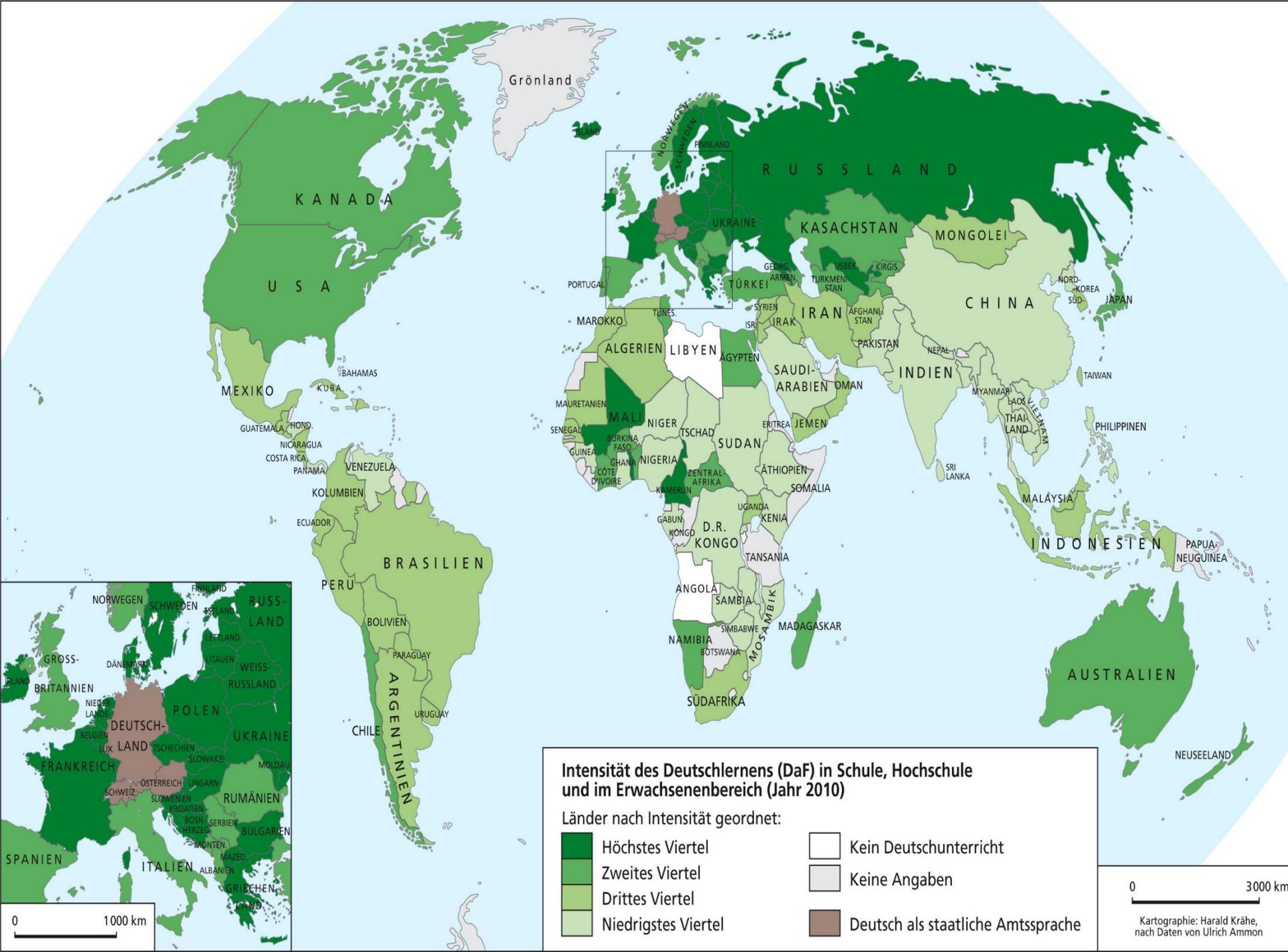
Is the trend irreversibly towards
„global diglossia“ ?

Would that mean the end of any real (not only token) international languages – except English?

Today some six or eight languages are still studied worldwide and used internationally.

Would their continued promotion be futile
(end of *Instituts français*, *Goethe-Institute* etc.)

Would such diglossia mean low prestige of the local language within its own country and spreading the global language within families?



Intensität des Deutschlernens (DaF) in Schule, Hochschule und im Erwachsenenbereich (Jahr 2010)

Länder nach Intensität geordnet:

 Höchstes Viertel	 Kein Deutschunterricht
 Zweites Viertel	 Keine Angaben
 Drittes Viertel	 Deutsch als staatliche Amtssprache
 Niedrigstes Viertel	

0 1000 km

0 3000 km

Kartographie: Harald Krähe, nach Daten von Ulrich Ammon

HOCHSCHULEN

Publikationen, Graduierungen, Stipendien,
Kongresse, Lehrveranstaltungen, Internationalität

→ **OBERSTUFE**
Hochschulreife

bestmögliche Vorbereitung
auf das Hochschulstudium

→ **GRUNDSCHULE**

bestmögliche
Vorbereitung auf den
Übergang zum
Gymnasium / zu einer
weiterführenden Schule

bestmögliche Vorbereitung
auf die Grundschule

→ **VORSCHULE**
Kindertagesbetreuung

bestmögliche Vorbereitung
auf Vorschule und Kita
primäre Sozialisationserfahrungen
Märchen, Lieder, Lyrik, Internet

→ **Erziehung in der
FAMILIE**

Trickle-Down Modell of the Spread of English in a Non-Anglophone
Country (following Heino Jückstock (VDS) and Lucie Eschricht)

Would such a language situation really be widely acceptable to the citizens of a truly „postnational“, global society, or would they feel inescapably „colonialized“?

Is there a feasible technical alternative, especially functioning machine interpretation (not only translation)?

A few additional and completed titles (comprehensive list in Ammon 2015)

- Ammon, Ulrich (1998) *Ist Deutsch noch internationale Wissenschaftssprache? Englisch auch für die Lehre an den deutschsprachigen Hochschulen*. Berlin/ New York: de Gruyter.
- Ammon, Ulrich (2015) *Die Stellung der deutschen Sprache in der Welt*, Kap. G. Berlin/ München/ Boston, 519-698.
- Ammon, Ulrich / McConnell, Grant (2002) *English as an Academic Language in Europe. A Survey of its Use in Teaching*. Frankfurt a. M.: Lang.
- Phillipson, Robert (1992) *Linguistic Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.