

GLOBAL ENGLISH AND PUBLISHING TRENDS AT THE TURN OF THE 20TH CENTURY

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The paper analyses three important social and cultural trends that reinforced reading in English in non-English-speaking countries. First, English became the lingua franca of academia, and the simultaneous explosive growth of tertiary education increased the number of English speakers globally. Second, English became the language of popular culture and, as such, now dominates global bestseller production. Third, due to the growth of Amazon and other online retailers of electronic and printed books, books in English became readily available in most non-English-speaking countries. The paper will show that in Anglo-Saxon book markets, ebooks have a different cultural role than in continental Europe and other non-English-speaking countries. In the former, ebooks are becoming a mainstream medium for reading fiction. Contrastingly, in the latter, they seem to be predominantly the domain of bilingual readers, and mainstream book markets in local languages remain heavily dominated by printed books. As a result, in contemporary book cultures, printed books and e-books coexist in a kind of dual economy. In Anglo-Saxon markets, this coexistence takes place inside the same linguistic ecosystem, while in non-English-speaking countries, for the time being, the chasm between print and digital bears a strong linguistic mark and consequently represents a new cultural phenomenon. There seem to be cognitive differences between on-paper and onscreen reading; therefore, the paper concludes with the observation that, behind this dual economy, a deeper cultural schism might be hidden, putting the academic exploration of publishing studies and the book market at the centre of a new research paradigm.

KEYWORDS: *global English, books, e-books, book market, publishing studies, publishing field, onscreen reading, reading.*

GLOBAL ENGLISH AND THE SPREAD OF TERTIARY EDUCATION

One self-evident truth about book publishing is that the number of people who are capable of reading in a given language is one determinant of the size of the book market in that particular language. As emphasised by John Thompson, “Language barriers tend to define the outer limits of publishing fields, since the content of the books are accessible to only those who have linguistic capacities to read them”.¹ This feature of book markets puts publishers of English books in a privileged position because, thanks to the British expansion in the early modern period, a publisher in English had a linguistic region that extended from the British Isles to North America and from Australia and New Zealand to India and South Africa—in effect, a linguistic region that stretched across the globe.² Even more so, after the Second World War (WW2), English became the lingua franca of scholarship, business and diplomacy. Today, as a consequence, English is not only the native language of approximately 400 million people but is also the second or foreign language of another 1.2 billion. By 2010, one fifth of the world’s population was using English with more than rudimentary skill.³

The very fact that those involved in business, scholarship and diplomacy have at least a tertiary education indicates the connection between the growth of global English and the changes in academic instruction and scientific communication in the last 60 years. Before WW2, the majority of scientific publications in Europe were published in German and French. However, by the middle of the 1950s, there was an explosive growth of scientific literature, with papers in English comprising half the total output, and only 40% of production remained in German, French and Russian. By the 1980s, English constituted about 70% of international scientific publications, and a decade later, this number increased to 90%.⁴ In the 1990s, English as the academic lingua franca was given additional impetus as some universities in the non-English-speaking world began to teach components of their master classes in English. To my knowledge, no statistical data on this shift are available; nevertheless, the anecdotal evidence indicates that lecturing in English was pioneered by Scandinavian universities and was rather quickly replicated in Central and Eastern Europe.

Such spread of English as the first global foreign language has been fuelled not only by the adoption of English as the lingua franca of academia but also by the explosive growth of tertiary education after the 1960s. At the start of the twentieth century, less than 20% of European youth attended secondary school, and in 1900 in the United Kingdom (UK), only 0.9% of the age cohort attended univer-

sity. In 1938, less than 2% of youth in Italy, Germany, the UK, France, the United States (US) and Japan were enrolled in university degrees. Two decades later, in the 1950s, in most of these countries, approximately 3% of the population comprised university students. This modest growth followed an explosion: According to UNESCO data, between 1970 and 2000, there was a 300% increase in the number of university students and university teachers.⁵ Rapid growth continued during the first decade of the new millennium: In 2010, in the EU 27, there were 19.8 million students, which is equivalent to 62.7% of all persons aged 20 to 24 years, and 5 million births per year.⁶ At the time that this paper was written, there was no research on whether the growth of global English and the increased enrollment in tertiary education were causal, correlational or merely parallel processes. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to assume that, in the last fifty years, the number of tertiary-educated people was increasing globally and that most learned English as a component of their study requirements. In other words, the growth of tertiary education could be seen as indicator of the expansion of global English.

From the point of view of publishing studies, such a conclusion has important consequences because the overwhelming majority of book readers are secondary and tertiary educated. For example, according to the Reading at Risk study, in the US, the most important factor determining reading habits is educational attainment, as “only 14 percent of those with only primary education read novels, short stories, poetry or plays, whereas those with graduate education are five times more likely to read literary works”.⁷ Similarly, although less statistically exact than its American counterpart, the Eurostat research on cultural participation found that, in the EU 27, “education remains the most determining socio-demographic factor having impact on cultural participation” as the number of those with high education who read at least one book in the last 12 months more than doubled the number of those with low education who read at least one book in the same time period.⁸

In this regard, we can assume that in non-English-speaking countries, the growth of tertiary education fuelled not only the demand for books in local lan-

1 THOMPSON, John. *Books in the Digital Age*. Cambridge, 2005, p. 41.

2 Ibidem.

3 For more on this, see: MONTGOMERY, Scott L. *Does Science Need a Global Language?* Chicago, 2013, loc. 297.

4 For more on this, see *ibidem*, loc. 297.

5 For more on this, see: WOLF, Alison. *Does Education Matter? Myths about Education and Eco-*

nomic Growth. London, 2002, loc. 1721.

6 Eurostat. Available at: <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Education_statis>. Retrieved on March 15, 2014.

7 *Reading at Risk: A Survey of Literary Reading in America*. Research Division Report 46. Washington, 2002, 12.

8 *Eurostat Cultural Statistic*. Luxembourg, 2007, p. 162.

guages but also the demand for books in English. In other words, in the non-English-speaking world in the last 40 years, the number of those who were predestined to be book readers and were, at the same time, capable of reading in English was rapidly growing due to the expansion of tertiary education and the special role that English played in this development.

BOOKS, POPULAR CULTURE AND GLOBAL ENGLISH

However, the growth of academic education was not the only recent immense English language-related global cultural change. In the last 40 years, English also became the dominant language of global popular culture, the most obvious case being the music industry and the most clear-cut and measurable example being the Eurovision Song Contest. As of 1999, all countries can choose the language of the song they perform, and, since that time, with the exception of Serbia, all winning songs have been in English, although the performers have come from Sweden, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Turkey, Ukraine, Greece, Finland, Russia, Norway, Germany and Azerbaijan.⁹ Similarly, in the film industry, all 50 films that achieved the highest worldwide box office gross sales were shot in English and predominantly produced by US studios.¹⁰

From the point of view of publishing studies, this global linguistic Anglicisation (or better, Americanisation) of popular culture matters because, with the introduction of mass-market paperbacks after WW2 (first in the UK and the US and later in continental Europe), books started to become part of both popular culture and cultural industry—that is, they began to change from a medium that was predominantly for the elites into one that was primarily for mass entertainment. Such changed role of books is most clearly evident in the financial success of their top-selling segment. The *Harry Potter* series, for example, sold 450 million copies between 1997 and 2007. If we assume that the average price of a sold copy was around 10 USD, the global turnover of the series almost doubles the worldwide gross of *Avatar*, which is, to date, the most lucrative film in history. What is more, among the top 20 highest-grossing films are two *Harry Potter* movies, which made an old-fashioned literary hero into one of the most important revenue generators of the global cultural industry at the turn of the millennium. *Harry Potter*'s success is more a rule than an exception: of top 20 highest grossing franchises and film series, no. 1, no. 2, and no.4 are based on books. Self evidently, all were written in English.¹¹

With regard to the research on global English and its impact on book industries, what matters is that the books that generate the most publicity and income are almost always the first to become available in English. Although the list of the

most sold books and book series in the second half of the twentieth century¹² is less linguistically homogenous than the monocultural and monolingual lists of the highest-grossing films, there were only two non-English authors (Stieg Larson and Carlos Ruiz Zafon) on the list of books that sold more than 20 million copies after 1999, and they would hardly have achieved these numbers had these publications not been translated into English. Although English bestsellers are almost instantly translated into a variety of languages, the impact of English originals on the book markets in non-English-speaking countries is evidenced by the fact that they appear, from time to time, on bestseller lists in non-English-speaking countries.¹³

IMPACT OF RANGE OF CHOICE, AVAILABILITY AND PRICING POLICY ON GLOBAL ENGLISH

Nevertheless, it is not only bestsellers that make English language books attractive for those who read and speak English as a second language. What also matters is the much wider choice range of books in English in comparison to those in other languages. On Amazon.com in March 2014, in the category of literature and fiction, there were more than 3 million titles in English, almost a million in arts and photography, 4.5 million in the reference category and so forth. The overall number of available books in English was more than 18 million in comparison to 2 million titles in German and French, 1 million in Spanish, 800,000 in Russian and half a million in Chinese and Italian.¹⁴ These differences in the number of titles available on Amazon correspond with the statistics on annual title production—that is, in the last four years, the UK book industry published approximately 160,000 titles yearly,¹⁵ and this figure was around 350,000 for the US book industry.¹⁶ In

9 See: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eurovision_song_contest>.

10 See: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_highest-grossing_films>.

11 This shift in the cultural role of books triggered significant structural changes in the publishing industry. As the sales and print runs of books began to grow, once small and family-owned publishing businesses became parts of, or turned into, media conglomerates. Such processes began in Anglo-Saxon book industries in the sixties and seventies and spread rather quickly to continental Europe and Asia. For more on these processes and on the current state of affairs of world book publishing, see, for

example, Thompson, 2010, p. 102–112; Feather, 1996, p. 206–2014; de Bellaigue, 2004, p. 3–12; Wischenbart, 2013.

12 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_best-selling_books

13 For more on this, see Gregorin et al., 2013; Kovač and Wischenbart, 2010.

14 Retrieved from *Amazon.com* on March 11, 2014.

15 *The UK Book Publishing Industry*, 2012.

16 http://www.bowker.com/en-US/aboutus/press_room/2012/pr_06052012.shtml, retrieved on March 17, 2014.

sum, this almost doubles the combined annual non-English production of the EU 25 publishing industries (i.e., without including the UK and Ireland), which was around 300,000 titles.¹⁷ In brief, a German or Russian who is capable of reading English could choose from among 10 times more book titles than his or her compatriot who is able to read only his or her mother tongue. For an English speaking Slovenian or Lithuanian, this range of choice increases 100 times as publishing industries in both countries produce between 3,000 and 5,000 new titles yearly.

This wider choice of printed and electronic books in English compared to the number of printed and electronic books available in the languages of continental Europe would not matter a great deal if, thanks to global online retailers, all these books in English were not readily available and, in many cases, cheaper than their continental competitors. Ever since Amazon's launch on July 16, 1995, it has sold its products in a variety of countries; one of the very first purchases, for example, came from the European Southern Observatory in Chile.¹⁸ While living in a provincial town in South-Eastern Europe, the author of this paper made his first purchase on Amazon in the summer of 1997, which was two years after its launch. When checking all the orders he has made since that time, he was rather surprised to discover that, regardless of his moderate middle-class income, he had spent around 15,000 US dollars on Amazon between 1997 and 2014. Even worse, his annual purchases almost tripled after he bought a Kindle and started to read ebooks. According to his self-observation, this was the result of a logical mixture of the joy of his new toy (i.e., the Kindle) and the lost anchor regarding the number of monthly book purchases due to the intangibility and much lower prices of ebooks.

From its beginnings, Amazon based its price strategy on the belief that lower prices lead to more customer visits, and more customer visits increase the volume of sales¹⁹; in short, turnover is more important than margins. In the words of another ebook analyst, Amazon traditionally does “the splashiest discounting they possibly ever can”²⁰, and when selling ebooks, the company uses “loss-leader discounting” as an “important tool to build that marketplace”.²¹ As a consequence, in 2013, for example, the average price of the top 10 Kindle bestsellers in English almost halved the prices of bestsellers in local languages in German, Spanish and French stores where, due to fixed price legislation, pricing was determined by the publishers and not by Amazon.²²

INDICATORS OF GLOBAL ENGLISH

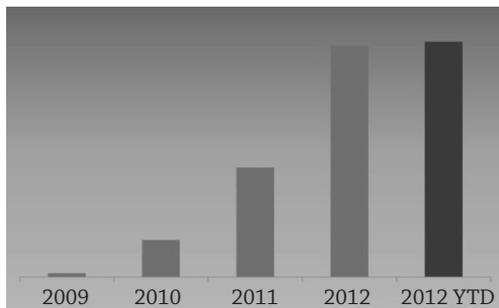
To summarize, we detected at least three important social trends that reinforced reading in English in non-English-speaking countries: English became

the lingua franca of academia, and at the same time, there was an explosive growth in tertiary education, which led to an increase in the number of English speakers globally. English also became the language of popular culture and, as such, dominates global bestseller production. Finally, owing to the growth of Amazon, other online retailers and the spread of ebooks, books in English became readily available in most non-English-speaking countries.

But is there any way to measure the growth of English reading with more accuracy? Unfortunately, in March 2014, when this paper was written, predominantly anecdotal evidence as supplied above was available on online English book sales and English reading in the non-English-speaking world. That is, there were no hard data on the number of continental Europeans, Chinese or Indians purchasing printed and electronic books in English via the Internet. The only data that Amazon revealed up until that point was an indication that in non-English-speaking countries, the sale of ebooks in English was increasing almost exponentially and that Kindle owners bought more books in comparison to other Amazon customers. However, Amazon did not provide any numbers (see graph below showing the growth of ebook sales in non-English-speaking countries up to August 2013).²³

In brief, Amazon's graph on the growth of Kindle sales reveals the same purchasing behaviour that is observed in the personal order history of the author of this paper; however, what remains unanswered is whether there were one, a thousand or a million such book readers and buyers in non-English-speaking countries.

On the other hand, thanks to the UK Publishers Association, the data on the export of English books are much more accurate. As seen in the table below, the world-



GRAPH 1. Kindle sales in non-English-speaking countries

17 For more on European book production, see: http://fep-fee.eu/IMG/pdf/european_book_publishing_statistics_2012.pdf.

18 STONE, Brad. *The Everything Store: Jeff Bezos and the Age of Amazon*. New York, 2013, p. 38.

19 Ibidem, p. 126.

20 SHATZKIN, Mike. *The Shatzkin Files: The Most Powerful Trends in Publishing*. New York, 2013, loc. 2252. Available at <www.idealog.com>.

21 Ibidem, loc. 2285.

22 WISCHENBART et al. *The Global eBook Report: A Report on Market Trends and Developments*. Wien, 2013, loc. 3555.

23 Presentation by Russ Grandinetti, Vice President for Kindle Content, Amazon at Frankfurt Publishers Launch on October 7, 2013, available at <http://www.publisherslaunch.com/2013-2014/launch-frankfurt/presentations/>.

wide export of British publishers has been steadily increasing by more than 2% annually in the last three years, with a small decline in the EU 27.²⁴ However, this decline is smaller than the overall decrease in the EU 27 publishers' revenues from 23.75 billion in 2008 to 23.5 billion in 2010 and 22.5 billion in 2012 (a reduction of approximately 4%).²⁵

Keeping in mind the fact that the data supplied by the UK Publishers Association do not cover Amazon.co.uk and the Book Depository exports of printed books, we can assume that, in continental Europe, when compared with the overall sales of books in local languages, the sales of books printed in English were steadily gaining their market share and, as evidenced by Amazon's graph, there was an explosive sale of ebooks in English. These data could, therefore, be seen as proof that the social forces that turned English into a global lingua franca are indeed starting to change reading habits in non-English-speaking countries in such a way that the number of bilingual book readers is growing.

In other words, we know that there is an elephant in the room; what we do not know is how big it is.

TABLE 1. Global Book Exports of British Publishers

Area	2012	2011	2010	2009	2011/12	2010/11	2009/10
	Exports	Exports	Exports	Exports	%	%	%
	£ sterling	£ sterling	£ sterling	£ sterling	Change	Change	Change
UK World Total	1,783,383,649	1,740,325,336	1,700,151,784	1,667,452,952	2.5	2.4	2.0
European Union 27	785,993,024	787,218,893	787,934,466	811,717,486	-0.2	-0.1	-2.9
W EUROPE (exc EU 27)	66,973,888	70,245,274	64,669,634	65,637,226	-4.7	8.6	-1.5
EASTERN EUROPE (exc EU 27)	28,860,081	31,389,638	27,479,159	28,436,463	-8.1	14.2	-3.4
NORTH AMERICA	235,093,710	219,651,936	221,204,277	201,331,722	7.0	-0.7	9.9
OTHER AMERICA	45,718,407	45,859,868	45,110,948	39,291,032	-0.3	1.7	14.8
M EAST & N AFRICA (exc EU27)	110,746,761	113,579,484	108,781,412	102,513,367	-2.5	4.4	6.1
SUB SAHARAN AFRICA	96,265,504	104,581,147	96,710,243	89,886,353	-8.0	8.1	7.6
ASIA & OCEANIA	413,732,274	367,799,096	348,261,645	328,639,303	12.5	5.6	6.0

THE BIRTH OF THE DUAL PUBLISHING ECONOMY AND A SHIFT IN THE CULTURAL PARADIGM

What does this mean for European book markets and reading habits? As shown in the Global Ebook Report, the size of the digital book market for books in local languages was much smaller in continental Europe than in the UK and the US. In the first half of 2013, more than 20% of the book market in the UK and the US was digital, while only 3% of the sales of French and Spanish publishers, 5% of the sales of German publishers and 2% of the sales of Italian publishers came from ebooks. Till 2014, all remaining European publishers made less than 1% of their income from ebooks.²⁶ Combined with the data on the sales of ebooks in English, these numbers indicate that, in continental Europe in 2013, two types of book markets existed—on the one hand, an immense number of local book markets in different languages with various categories and niches that are still predominantly dominated by printed books and, on the other, the growing digital book market, which is predominantly in English and has a much wider choice range. In summary, in Anglo-Saxon book markets, digital books play a different cultural role than in continental Europe and other non-English-speaking countries. In the US and UK trade book markets, ebooks are becoming mainstream, whilst in continental Europe, ebooks seem to be predominantly the domain of bilingual readers as book markets in local languages remain heavily dominated by printed books.

Such differences between Anglo-Saxon and other book markets are not new. From the invention of paperbacks onwards, the continental and Anglo-Saxon book industries differed in regard to book formats, distribution and sales channels and pricing and marketing policies. From this point of view, the trends described in this paper represent a continuation of a long history of differences among global book cultures. However, what is new is the rapid spread of global English and the invention of ebooks and online book sales, which allowed the Anglo-Saxon book markets to almost unintentionally extend beyond their traditional retail and linguistic limits.

All this indicates that, in contemporary book cultures, printed books and ebooks coexist in a kind of dual economy. In the Anglo-Saxon markets, this coexistence takes place inside the same linguistic ecosystem. However, in non-Eng-

24 For more on this, see BIS Value of UK Book Exports 2009–2012.

25 For more on this, see: <http://fep-fee.eu/IMG/pdf/european_book_publishing_statistics_2012.pdf>.

26 WISCHENBART et al. *The Global eBook Report: A Report on Market Trends and Developments*. Wien, 2013.

lish-speaking countries, for the time being, the rupture between print and digital publications bears a strong linguistic mark and, as such, represents a new cultural phenomenon. This rupture gains an additional dimension as there appear to be cognitive differences between on-paper and onscreen reading. As DeStefano and LeFevre (2007)²⁷ conclude, the hypertext structure impairs reading comprehension performance. In addition, as stated by Mangen, Walgermo and Bronnack, “the theoretical and pedagogical implications of ongoing digitization for reading and reading comprehension are complex and multifaced and a number of fundamental and research questions remain at best partially addressed”. One of the most important questions seems to be “to what extent might comprehension of linear, narrative and non-narrative texts differ when texts are displayed on a screen as compared to printed on paper?”²⁸

All this leads us to the conclusion that behind this dual economy, a broader cultural schism might be hidden, putting the academic exploration of publishing studies and the book market at the centre of a new research paradigm.

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GLOBALIOJI ANGLŲ KALBA IR LEIDYBOS TENDENCIJOS XX IR XXI AMŽIŲ SANDŪROJE

Miha Kovač

Santrauka

Straipsnyje nagrinėjamos trys svarbios socialinės ir kultūrinės kryptys, sustiprinusios skaitymą anglų kalba ne angliškai kalbančiose šalyse. Visų pirma, anglų kalba tapo akademinės bendruomenės *lingua franca*, o dėl tuo pačiu metu įvykusio aukštojo mokslo sprogimo visame pasaulyje padidėjo kalbančiųjų anglų kalba skaičius. Antra, anglų kalba tapo populiarios kultūros kalba ir šiuo metu dominuoja pasaulinėje bestselerių leidyboje. Trečia, dėl spartaus *Amazon* ir kitų elektroninių ir spausdintinių knygų leidyba ir prekyba internetu užsiimančių mažmenininkų augimo anglų kalba tapo lengvai prieinama daugelyje ne angliškai kalbančių šalių. Straipsnyje įrodoma, kad anglosaksų knygų rinkose skaitmeninėms knygoms tenka skirtingas vaidmuo nei kontinentinėje Europoje ir kitose ne angliškai kalbančiose šalyse. Pirmuoju atveju skaitmeninės knygos tampa pagrindine grožinės literatūros skaitymo priemone. Priešingai, antruoju atveju jos sudaro didžiąją dvikalbių skaitytojų domeno dalį, o pagrindinėse vietos kalba leidžiamų knygų rinkose vis dar viešpatauja spausdintinės knygos. Šių procesų rezultatas akivaizdus – šiuolaikinėse knygų kultūrose spausdintinės ir skaitmeninės knygos gyvuoja greta, tarsi sukurdamos dvilypę ekonomiką. Anglosaksų rinkose šis sambūvis vyksta toje pačioje lingvistinėje ekosistemoje, tačiau ne angliškai kalbančiųjų šalyse šiuo metu skirtumas tarp spausdintinių ir skaitmeninių knygų pažymėtas ryškiu lingvistiniu ženklu ir todėl turėtų būti suvokiamas kaip naujas kultūros reiškinys. Spausdintinių ir skaitmeninių knygų skaitymą apibūdina kognityviniai skirtumai. Atsižvelgiant į šiuos pokyčius, straipsnis baigiamas išvada, kad už šios dvilypės ekonomikos slypi gilesnis kultūrinis skilimas. Tai reiškia, kad akademinis leidybos studijų ir knygų rinkos tyrimas atsideria naujos paradigmos centre.

Įteikta 2014 m. kovo mėn.

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28 Ibidem.