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English in Cuba:

From the imperial design to the imperative need!

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The tourists complain that Cuba has not Americanized, as they were led to believe. The great mass of the population talk the Spanish language, and this is an obstacle to visitors from the United States who expected other conditions.

— *Our Islands and Their People as Seen with Camera and Pencil*, by José Olivares. New York: N. D. Thompson Publishing Company, 1899.

The importance of teaching English in all Cuban public schools must not be overlooked, because the Cuban people will never understand the people of the United States until they appreciate our institutions.

— Robert P. Porter, "The future of Cuba," *North American Review*, CLXIII (April 1899), p. 420.

Introduction

That Cuba was meant to be a bilingual, if not an English-speaking, island according to the imperial design of the United States is reflected in the quotes that precede this article. The historical evidence for the role that English was to play in the annexationist objectives of the United States is skillfully presented in a paper by Louis A. Pérez (1982), entitled "The imperial design: Politics and pedagogy in occupied Cuba, 1899-1902".

Yet even before our birth as a nation, the Cuban sense of peoplehood was molded in opposition to what Cuba's greatest patriotic and literary figure, José Martí, called "el coloso del Norte", the United States. In an 1894 essay Martí speaks out against North Americans, as well as Cubans, who favor annexation to the United States, as well as against what he calls the Cuban "yanquimania", the blind imitation of Yankees to the north. From our historical beginning, then, Cubans have been seduced by the wealth and power of the nation to the north, as well as repelled by the United States' attitude toward Cuba, of which Martí says "niega su capacidad, insulta su virtud y desprecia su carácter" ["denies its capac-

ity, insults its virtue and scorns its character"] (Martí 1889: 171). And so English in Cuba has historically been evaluated within the dialectical tension created by the attraction and rejection of the United States.

Cuba has been Spanish-speaking since it was colonized by Spain, and English has played only a very limited role in the lives of some Cuban citizens. But Cuban society has valued English differently, mostly depending on United States-Cuba relations in diverse sociopolitical periods. As we will see, however, the hostility between Cuba and the United States since the 1959 Revolution has created the isolation necessary to break finally the ideological link between English and the United States. Since 1959 English has taken a new meaning in contemporary Cuban society, enabling it to be promoted once again, even though Cuba-United States relations have remained antagonistic.

The promotion of English in post-revolutionary Cuba will be proposed here as a counterexample to the cases presented in Phillipson (1992). English has spread in Cuba despite the absence of what Phillipson has called "linguistic imperialism": Phillipson defines linguistic imperialism as "the dominance of English asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural (material properties) and cultural (ideological properties) inequalities between English and other languages" (1992: 47). This Cuban case study will show that despite the little contact that exists today between Cuba and any of the core English-speaking countries, Cuba has, on its own, decided that English is important in international and scientific communication and could be useful to the nation. As we will see, neither structural nor cultural inequalities between those who speak English and those who don't are evident in the Cuban case. In fact, we will show that in post-revolutionary Cuba none of the variables surrounding the spread of English that indicate linguistic imperialism (according to Phillipson 1992: 315) are evident today.

1. In Cuba there is no structural favoring of English in the education system that can be described as linguisticist. (Linguicism is defined as "ideologies, structures, and practices which are used to legitimate, effectuate, and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources between groups which are defined on the basis of language" - Phillipson 1992: 47.)
2. In Cuba English is not an instrument for economic stratification of a capitalist order.
3. In Cuba there are almost no representatives from the core English-speaking countries active in promoting proficiency in English.

4. In Cuba English instruction is not monolingual.

5. In Cuba the modern sector in which English is favored is not integrated into the Western capitalist order.

This paper will look at the historical development of the role of English in Cuba. In particular, it focuses on the presence of English in Cuba since the 1959 Cuban Revolution, offering yet another interesting example of the spread of English despite strong nationalist sentiments and a socialist political system and economy.

English during the imperialist design phase, 1899-1959

The year 1899 marks the first American intervention in Cuba. It was precisely in that year that J. C. Kelly, a North American engineer, was sent by the Cuban Land and Steamship Company with 160 North Americans to establish La Gloria Colony in northern Camagüey (Cirules 1973). This settlement was part of the imperial design that wanted to Americanize Cuba for annexation. It responded to doubts expressed in an 1899 editorial in *The Manufacturer* of Philadelphia that prompted one of Martí's essays against "la yanquimania":

La única esperanza que pudieramos tener de habilitar a Cuba para la dignidad de Estado sería americanizarla por completo, cubriéndola con gente de nuestra propia raza, y aún queda por lo menos abierta la cuestión de si esta misma raza no degeneraría bajo un sol tropical y bajo las condiciones necesarias de la vida de Cuba. ¿Queremos a Cuba? 1889: 168

[The only hope that we would have of making Cuba fit for the dignity of Statehood would be to Americanize it fully, covering it with people of our own race, and the question is still open whether that race wouldn't degenerate under a tropical sun and the necessary conditions of life in Cuba.]

It was also in 1899 that public schools started to teach English "in all grades for the purpose of its Americanizing effect" (*New York Tribune* 1899). William O. McDowell, the president of the Cuban-American League in New York, predicted that same year that the study of English would lead ultimately to annexation (*New York Times* 1899).

But soon the annexationist tune began to change. Instead of imposing, the United States started to co-opt the Cuban elite, making English a necessary condition to benefit from U.S. interests in the island. By 1900 a teacher's manual prepared by the Superintendent of Education emphasized the importance of teaching English because "the commercial lan-

guage of the future in Cuba will be English ... and by teaching ... English we will give them a better chance to understand us and do business with us" (*Boston Globe* 1900). The Cuban Educational Association started to send Cuban teachers to study in United States universities as early as 1900. That same year Harvard University established a summer course for 1,300 Cuban teachers (Root 1916). By 1901 the Cuban Educational Association had enrolled over 2,500 Cubans in colleges and universities in the United States (Harroun 1899).

Although Circular No. 5 of May 20, 1901 officially established English in elementary public schools in the island, in reality the implementation consisted of offering two half-hour classes a week in fourth and fifth grades and three half-hour classes a week in the sixth grade. This arrangement was changed in 1904 through Circular No. 13 of the 14th of October, which officially reduced the allotted time of English in elementary school grades to two half-hours a week. By 1914 English was discontinued in the lower grades, although it was maintained in the seventh and eighth grades (Pujol 1949).

Although the U.S. Imperial Design was losing steam, the relationship between English speaking ability and participation in the Cuban economy became firmly established during these first twenty years. This English imperialist ideology was frankly expressed by the protagonist in one of Cuba's most important novels of Realism, *Los Inmorales* (1919) by Carlos Loveira: "To know English is to have a guarantee of never being without a job" (quoted in Pérez 1993).

In the 1920s numerous educational reforms were instituted by the then Secretary of Education, Dr. José B. Alemán. All of the reforms included English as a requirement in the curriculum. In 1922 English was put back in the elementary curriculum. In 1927 Alemán established the *Escuelas Primarias Superiores*, equivalent to junior high schools in the United States. Although a passing grade was not required in English, it was taught for forty-five minutes daily in the seventh and eighth grades. The Entrance Exam needed for secondary schools and professional schools required English. And a daily three-year or two-year English course was included in the curricula of the academic secondary schools and the vocational and commercial secondary schools respectively. Another reform instituted by Alemán included the establishment in 1929 of Special English Centers for Adults, where classes consisted of forty-five minutes to an hour of daily English instruction (Pujol 1949).

That English instruction was paramount in Cuba during this period is evidenced by the fact that between 1921 and 1936 there were fifteen Eng-

lish textbooks published in Cuba by Cuban authors (*Bibliografía cubana* 1921-1936, 1978).

In 1925 when the Schools of Engineering and Architecture were established in the University of Havana, a Department of Modern Languages was added to the two schools. For the first time in Cuban history, both Technical English and Technical French were offered at the tertiary level as requirements of the curricula of the Schools of Engineering and Architecture.

The 1930s brought further expansion of English in Cuba, especially for professionals. In 1934 the School of Science of the University of Havana made English mandatory for a degree in Diplomacy. Also at the University of Havana the School of Medicine made Technical English mandatory during the fourth year in 1939. And during the same period the School for Teachers and for Kindergarten Teachers required a two-year English course (Pujol 1949).

The 1940s and 1950s saw the greatest spread of English in Cuban society, especially among the Cuban middle class and elite. Private bilingual schools, some secular and others Catholic or Protestant, became firmly established as the Cuban middle class tried to ensure that their children would learn English. Some of these schools offered most subjects at the elementary level in English, except for Spanish Language Arts, Cuban Geography, and Cuban History. Others had a morning session in either English or Spanish and an afternoon session in the other language. At the secondary level, some offered only an all English curriculum leading to a United States High School degree, whereas others gave the option of an all Spanish curriculum leading to a Cuban Bachillerato, or an all English High School degree, or both. For example, a 1957 English language advertisement appearing in *Diario de la Marina*, Cuba's largest daily at the time, gave this description of the Merici Academy: "Founded in 1941 by the American Ursuline Nuns ... The morning session is in English, the afternoon session in Spanish. The High School is accredited and affiliated with the Catholic University in Washington."

English became fashionable among the Cuban middle class. In 1942 the Instituto Cultural Cubano-Americano was founded, and it established the Abraham Lincoln Language School for adults in Havana. It was also during this period that the Havana Business Academy expanded, offering to adults not only English language, but also English stenography, typing and bookkeeping (Hunter 1988).

It is important to realize, however, that not all these private efforts in English language instruction were in the hands of North Americans. An

important Cuban linguist and pedagogue, Leonardo Sorzano Jorin, was most influential during this period, publishing many of the English language books that were used in Cuba from 1921 on. In 1941 Sorzano Jorin instituted a four-year university degree program in English as part of the Escuela de Verano at the University of Havana. Summer courses over a four-year period were given on English Phonetics, English Grammar, Literature written in English, and Methodology of Teaching English. And Sorzano Jorin's efforts on behalf of English were also influential in the establishment of the Colegio Nacional de Profesores de Inglés in 1946. The Colegio offered lectures and courses in English. It also published a journal entitled *The Teacher* (Hunter 1988).

Following this trend of interest in English, the University of Havana established the "Instituto de Idiomas Juan M. Dihigo" in 1947. For the first time, it became possible to specialize in any of five modern languages at the university level during the regular session. The course of study consisted first of a two-year course in either English, French, German, Italian, or Russian, followed by a four year teacher-training course. The largest enrollment was in English, followed by French, and in reality the Institute only fully implemented courses of study in those two languages (Pujol 1949).

The number of U.S. citizens who lived in Cuba also grew in the 1940s and 1950s. Most, however, lived in isolated communities that maintained "separate and segregated social clubs, hospitals and clinics, churches, schools and private police" (Pérez 1993: 7). By the mid-1950s there were approximately 10,000 permanent residents in Cuba who were U.S. citizens. In addition, 300,000 U.S. tourists came to Cuba annually during this period (Pérez 1993).

Since 1899 *The Havana Post* had been published in Cuba in English for United States residents in Cuba. *The Havana Post* was owned by North Americans and by 1959, the year it ceased publication, its distribution had reached 8,000 daily issues. The increased numbers of United States residents in the 1940s also spurred the publication of *The Havana Herald*. By 1959 *The Havana Herald* was printing 8,000 daily issues.

The presence of the English language press in Cuba was accompanied by a wide distribution of many English language magazines. For example, *Life* and *Reader's Digest* in English were broadly distributed and read in Cuba. The distribution of the English language press and publications ceased with the United States embargo after 1959.

The close relationship between privileged North Americans and Cubans in the period prior to the Revolution only created greater ambiva-

lence toward the United States and its language on the part of Cubans. Louis Pérez (1993) summarizes this sentiment:

[E]ven the most ardent and faithful defenders of North American ways were themselves susceptible to occasional appeals of anti-Yankee sentiment ... if for no other purpose than to protest the exclusivity of their patrons. Subordination spawned a set of complex relationships. That Cuban elites were beneficiary to U.S. hegemony does not mean that they were entirely reconciled to and untroubled by their dependent status. Under the proper circumstances, they too could get caught up in a "nationalist moment", as a function of their social insecurity and economic uncertainty (1993: 21).

And Pérez adds that it was precisely the growing sentiment of defending Cuban interests against those of the United States that made it possible for the Cuban revolution to triumph in 1959.

Clearly during this entire period English had all the characteristics of "linguistic imperialism" suggested by Phillipson (1992). It was promoted by United States interests through a well-financed English language teaching industry. And English served to preserve the social stratification that favored the Cuban elite, able to educate their children in private bilingual schools or in the United States. English, for example, created differences among those entering the University of Havana, as the following testimony of someone who studied Engineering in the 1940s shows:

Para los que no habíamos estudiado en escuelas bilingües o en el extranjero nos costó mucho esfuerzo personal aprobar el único curso de inglés que recibimos en la Universidad que duró sólo los dos primeros semestres de la carrera ... Desde primer año me vi obligado a utilizar el libro de Matemática en inglés - era el único existente. En segundo año aumentaron las asignaturas en las que me veía obligado a recurrir al inglés y ya en tercer año todas las asignaturas había que estudiarlas por libros en inglés. (quoted in Corona 1985: 13)

[For those of us who hadn't studied in bilingual schools or abroad, it was very difficult to pass the only English course that we took at the University which was offered only during the first two semesters of study ... From the first year I had to use the Math book written in English - it was the only one available. In the second year there were many more subjects for which English was required, and by the third year all subjects had to be studied through books in English.]

As we will see, one of the first dilemmas faced by the Cuban Revolution was how to eliminate the role of English in creating social differences without bringing about its complete demise. A more just role for English had to be found in forging the new society. The next section of this paper

illustrates how post-revolutionary Cuban society has been able to separate the English language from United States ideology and find a new role for English that has made it possible, despite its societal absence, to spread English ability among Cuban professionals.

English in post-revolutionary Cuba: Promoting an imperative need

The defense of Cuban national interests against those of the United States lends strength to the Revolution and is manifested in the most important chant of Cubans during the early 1960s: "Cuba sí, Yanquis no." And yet, from the very beginning, there was an effort to try to separate the English language from the imperialist policies of the United States in Cuba. The most significant overt act in support of this new tendency occurred during the nationalization in 1961 of the Abraham Lincoln Language School, a school that, having been founded by the Instituto Cultural Cubano-Americano, had close ties with the United States embassy. During the nationalization, the statue of Theodore Roosevelt was removed. However, Castro himself emphasized that Lincoln's name would stay "to show the world that the Cuban government is not against the American people, only against American imperialism" (from testimony of Marta Santo Tomás, quoted in Hunter 1988: 58). And as we will see, although other foreign languages, especially Russian, have been promoted during certain periods in post-revolutionary Cuba, it is English that has always been most popular.

One can identify three different periods in the attitude expressed toward the role of English in post-revolutionary Cuba:

1. Breaking the link between English and United States imperialism. Tolerating English as the language of fraternal cooperation: 1959–1970
2. Tolerating English for professionalization along with the promotion of Russian: 1970–1985
3. Promoting English as the language of international communication and scientific activity: 1985–present

Breaking the link between English and United States imperialism.

Tolerating English as the language of fraternal cooperation: 1959–1970

Very early in the post-revolutionary period, Fidel Castro himself posed an important question: "¿Inglés, para qué?" ["English, what for?"]. Did

English have a role in a Cuban society that was free of United States interests? Castro attacked United States involvement in Cuban education and society:

Introdujeron sus ideas en los textos escolares para tergiversar nuestra historia. Mediante el control de los medios de comunicación masiva, ridiculizaron a nuestro pueblo, impusieron los esquemas del llamado "modo de vida americano" y desataron una campaña de embrutecimiento colectivo, a través de la colonización del gusto estético. (1968: 26)

[They introduced their ideas in school texts in order to change our history. Through control of massive means of communication, they ridiculed our people, they imposed the ways of the so called "American way of life" and they promoted a campaign of collective ignorance, through the colonization of our aesthetic taste.]

The English of the United States was silenced after the exodus of North Americans, the exclusion of their businesses and interests, and the departure of much of the Cuban bilingual elite. The United States responded by instituting the embargo on Cuba that remains in place today.

The space created by the absence of United States English is perhaps best understood in the context of the film industry. From 1955 to 1959 there were a total of 2,435 films shown in Cuba. Of these, 1,454 (or sixty percent) were in English, and 1,232 (or fifty-one percent) were produced in the United States (Guía Cinematográfica, 1960). Foreign films have always been shown in Cuba with subtitles, and thus it is clear that moviegoers before the Revolution were exposed to the English language. However, of the 858 films shown in Cuba between 1961 and 1965, only 14 (or less than two percent) were in English, and 6 (or less than one percent) were from the United States (Cinematoteca de Cuba 1970). English in Cuba almost disappeared during this era, and English took a step backward as it renegotiated a new role for itself in the transformed Cuban society.

The question ¿Inglés para qué? was quickly answered as Cuba took on a new world position independent of the United States where the need for foreign languages, including English, only became greater. In 1960 the Instituto Cubano de Amistad con los Pueblos was established, bringing visitors to Cuba from all over the world who were in need of translation services. Foremost among the visitors were the Russians and others from the Socialist bloc who provided technical and economic assistance. But also among the visitors there were speakers of different foreign languages who often used English to communicate among themselves and with Cubans. Included among these visitors there were also people from the Anglophone Caribbean and Anglophone Africa. As contact with the

"inner" circle of English speakers virtually stopped, the "outer" circle of English speakers made its appearance (for a discussion on the inner and outer circles, see Kachru 1985). Although proficiency in Russian was starting to become important for the Cuban economy, Cuba started becoming aware that the realm of English went beyond the United States borders. English was not abandoned. Instead, English started to take a new role as the language of fraternal cooperation. This role is best summarized by Antich (1975):

By means of the English language we can learn directly about the struggles and ideals, the scientific and technical problems and solutions, the thoughts and deeds of many countries in Asia and Africa, as well as about our English-speaking neighbors such as Jamaica, Trinidad-Tobago, Barbados, Guyana, and the progressive movements in the United States. English has thus become a language of fraternal cooperation among peoples who speak the most diverse tongues.

English was increasingly used during this period to share the socialist message with the world. In 1966 a weekly summary of *Granma*, the Cuban daily, started to appear in both English and French mostly for international distribution. And the English language issues of *Spunik*, a Russian magazine similar to *Reader's Digest*, as well as *The UNESCO Courier*, were distributed in Cuba during this time.

In 1961, the same year of the nationalization of all private schools including the bilingual schools, the Instituto de Idiomas Máximo Gorki was established in Havana. Originally Máximo Gorki offered scholarships to students who had completed the eighth grade, inviting them to follow a three-year course of study that would enable them to become Russian teachers at the intermediate and secondary levels. However, after two years, Máximo Gorki also started to train teachers of English, French and German. In 1962, the Instituto de Idiomas Extranjeros Pablo Lafargue opened in Havana to train translators and interpreters rather than teachers. A three-year intensive language course was given to students who had completed the ninth grade. As in Máximo Gorki, the curriculum in Pablo Lafargue originally included only the study of Russian. But by 1963 the curriculum was expanded to include the study of English, French, and German. Although both Máximo Gorki and Pablo Lafargue were located in Havana, Language Institutes to train both foreign language teachers and translators were later established in the provincial cities of Santa Clara, Camagüey, and Santiago de Cuba (Corona 1993a, 1993b).

After the nationalization of schools in 1961, English disappeared from the elementary curriculum. However, from 1961 to 1967 it became a re-

quired subject in intermediate schools, where it was taught three hours a week, and in secondary schools, where it was taught four hours a week.

At the university level, the University Reform of December 10th, 1962, made foreign languages a required subject in all university majors. For the following fields English was made compulsory in 1962, a policy that has continued to the present day: Medicine, Veterinary Medicine, Biological Sciences, Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics, Agronomy, Electrical and Chemical Engineering, and Architecture (Corona 1993b: 8).

The same University Reform of 1962 established the Major in Foreign Languages and Literatures at the University of Havana in six languages: English, French, Russian, German, Italian and Arabic. In reality, only the first four majors were implemented.

Clearly this early era was characterized by an affirmation of Cuban identity and the Spanish language, a distancing from English as the language of the imperialist designs of the United States, and a recognition that to forge a new society, foreign languages, including English, were needed. In junior high schools, high schools, adult schools and universities, foreign languages, including English, became an important part of the curriculum. But clearly the role of English had been redefined. Instead of creating economic differences, English would become a tool for all Cubans. Instead of English occupying the sole role in Cuban society, other languages started competing with English for primacy. Instead of English being linked to United States ideology, it was to become a tool for fraternal cooperation with other countries.

Tolerating English for professionalization along with the promotion of Russian: 1970-1985

By 1970 many aspects of Cuban society, including its educational system, had been transformed. Illiteracy had been conquered and the entire population had access to a free and equal educational system (*La Educación en Cuba* 1976; MacDonald 1985). The greatest educational concern now focused on how to educate professionals for an increasingly technological society. Languages became an important agenda for this purpose, and this is perhaps best expressed by Corona (1985):

En Cuba para poder desarrollarse como un profesional integral, participante activo de la construcción de la nueva sociedad, los idiomas extranjeros resultan un imperativo.

[In Cuba in order to grow as a whole professional, an active participant in the construction of the new society, foreign languages are very much needed.]

With greater access to higher levels of education, however, came the problem of resources. And this problem became especially evident during this period in the teaching of English. Although English continued to be required at the intermediate and secondary levels, the English profession had been debilitated by the absence of North Americans and much of the Cuban bilingual elite. And although the Language Institutes of the 1960s were set up precisely to address this need, these instructors, who only had an intermediate education, were no longer adequate to teach the increasingly educated Cuban population. Cuba now had to find a way of continuing to provide English language instruction to an increasingly schooled population, with a shrinking number of English teachers and restricted access to the "inner" circle of English.

Also by 1970 the new Cuban society had stripped English of its capitalist value for individuals. And it had succeeded in translating school material into Spanish and regaining for Spanish its appropriate role in Cuban society. But at the same time, Cuba increasingly recognized the value of English, along with Russian, for the new Cuban society. (For a most informative discussion of the value of language, see Coulmas 1992.) Cuba now had to find a way of spreading English through schooling and throughout the entire population at a time when English was of little utilitarian use to individuals and almost absent societally.

Cuba was then faced with a monumental task, that of trying to teach English to more people who were better educated at a time when English had almost disappeared from Cuban society. Cuba responded to this challenge by doing three things that seemed contradictory. One, it expanded the pool of English language teachers by professionalizing the language profession. Two, it reduced the definition of English ability for the population at large to reading skills and continued restricting instruction only to secondary and tertiary level. Three, it reduced the number of people who were interested in studying English by also promoting Russian. By focusing on the increased professionalization of language specialists, Cuba was able to expand and improve its language professional pool, including that of English, while at the same time reducing the demand for English by limiting it to reading ability and making it compete with Russian and other languages that had immediate utility and were supported and subsidized by other governments.

The greater professionalization of language specialists is evidenced throughout this period in many ways. The Language Institutes of the 1960s that trained teachers with just an intermediate education were phased out during this period. Instead, Teacher Training Colleges, also

known as Pedagogical Institutes and requiring a secondary education for admission, started including as part of their curriculum the education of foreign language teachers for elementary and secondary schools. The growth of these Teacher Training Colleges or Pedagogical Institutes was phenomenal. There were four in the 1960s (in Havana, Las Villas, Camagüey, and Santiago de Cuba), eight by 1976 and thirteen by 1986. All these Pedagogical Institutes train foreign language teachers, as well as teachers of other subjects. In addition, a Pedagogical Institute specializing in the training of foreign language teachers and translators was established in Havana in 1976. It also adopted the name of Pablo Lafargue, although it is better known as ISPLE (Instituto Superior Pedagógico de Lenguas Extranjeras).

Also in response to the greater professionalization of the language profession, the University of Havana established its School of Modern Languages in 1972, making it possible to educate translators and interpreters at the university level in English, French, Russian, and German.

Opportunities for graduate work in Cuba also became available during this period. And significantly, the first Masters in Engineering, established in 1972 at what was to be known as Instituto Superior Politécnico José Antonio Echeverría (ISPJAE), included as a most important aspect the teaching of English. The new masters degree was a Canadian-Cuban project involving funds from the Canadian University Service Overseas and the Canadian International Development Agency. Students had to listen to lectures, take notes, discuss, and read and write papers in English. But since the new Cuban society would not tolerate differences created by English language proficiency, an important part of the masters program included courses in English. It was during this period and for this purpose that Adrienne Hunter, a Canadian who became an important figure in the Cuban English language profession, introduced ESP courses (English for Specific Purposes) and the communicative approach to language teaching. This Canadian-Cuban project (1972-1979) is significant because it remains the only English teaching experience funded by a government of a developed English-speaking country in post-revolutionary Cuba (Hunter 1988).

In 1976 Law 1281/74 established a Ph.D. course of study for university professors and professionals. Until that time, most professionals went to Eastern Europe, and especially to the former Soviet Union, to obtain Ph.D. degrees. Proficiency in a foreign language became a requirement for the Cuban Ph.D. Degree.

Increasingly during this period Russian became a viable language in Cuban society. Through exchange programs with the now defunct

CMEA, Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, many Cubans had studied in the former Soviet Union and now spoke Russian. In 1974 Radio Rebelde started broadcasting daily Russian language lessons. The Instituto de Idioma Ruso A. S. Pushkin of Moscow opened a subsidiary in Havana in 1977.

In 1967 an option of teaching either English or Russian had been given for intermediate and secondary schools. But Russian was only introduced on an experimental basis in a very few schools during this period. In the mid-1970s Resolution 185 established that 30 percent of the students in seventh through twelfth grade would study Russian, while 70 percent would study English (Hunter 1988: 60). In reality, however, except for military senior high schools, English continued to be taught in most intermediate and secondary schools throughout the 1970s and early 1980s. By 1985, 83 percent of all intermediate and secondary schools had English as the foreign language, whereas Russian was taught in only 17 percent of the schools (Corona 1993b: 6).

The greater language diversity in the bilingualism of Cubans during this period also made it possible to establish the first professional translation service in Havana. In 1975 ESTI, Equipo de Servicios de Traductores e Intérpretes, started providing simultaneous and consecutive interpretation, translation, typing, and electronic services in seventeen languages: Spanish, English, French, Russian, Arabic, German, Portuguese, Italian, Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese, Czech, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Polish, Romanian, and Serbo-Croatian.

The growth of Higher Education in Cuba during this period led to the establishment of an independent Ministry of Higher Education in 1976. And it was this Ministry that designed the A Plan of Study in Cuban Higher Education. According to the A Plan (in effect from 1977 to 1982), each department or school within the university had to select the most useful foreign language for their specialization and make it a degree requirement. Russian was required for majors in Mechanical Engineering, Mining, Geology, Economics, Military majors, Psychology, and Philosophy. These areas favored Russian because bibliography was available in these languages, Russian teachers provided technical assistance, and fellowships for study abroad were available. Despite the absence of native English speakers in Cuba or of any other kind of support from any of the developed English-speaking countries, English was required in Electrical and Chemical Engineering, Biological Sciences, Chemistry, Physics, Medicine, Veterinary Medicine, Agronomy, and Architecture. A four-semester English course meeting three hours a week for a total of

forty-eight hours a semester was required for these majors. Six semesters of English also became a requirement for those majoring in Humanities or Social Sciences. Each course met six hours a week for a total of ninety-six hours. Only those studying Law or Literature had an option of taking Russian, English, or French in the former case, and English or French in the latter (Corona 1992).

In 1982 The Ministry of Higher Education established its B Plan, expanding even further the required hours of foreign language instruction, including English. Under the B Plan (1982-1990) the 192 hours of English language instruction (four semesters of 48 hours of instruction each) was increased to either 224 or 256 hours for most degrees. For the first time an English language teaching series that had been developed completely by Cuban English teachers was used at the tertiary level. The series, titled "Training in Effective Reading", focused on teaching ESP (English for Specific Purposes) (Corona 1992).

Under the B Plan, English language instruction for Medicine was increased to five years with a total of 665 hours of instruction. The aim was to develop not only receptive skills among those studying to be Medical Doctors, but also the productive skills of speaking and writing.

By the mid-1980s English in Cuba had to renegotiate yet another role for itself. In 1984 the Cuban Ministry of Higher Education declared before the Cuban Parliament that foreign language teaching efforts were inefficient. And surprisingly it indicated that especially English teaching efforts were not receiving adequate attention. Resolution Number 15 of the Cuban Parliament (Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular) adopted in December 1984 states:

Que el Ministerio de Educación y el Ministerio de Educación Superior adopte las medidas para fortalecer la enseñanza de idiomas extranjeros en los diferentes niveles de educación, especialmente el idioma inglés.

[That the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education take measures to strengthen the teaching of foreign languages at the different levels of education, especially the English language.]

English was again recognized as the most useful foreign language for international communication, although at that time Russian kept its importance in some fields at the tertiary level. But by then English in Cuba had been displaced from Cuban society except among English language professionals. Even at the tertiary level English was no longer needed to be successful, although reading proficiency was recognized as an important asset of a Cuban professional. But as the importance of English had shrunk in Cuban society, the spread of English had become rampant in

the world (Fishman—Cooper—Conrad 1977). Cuban society emerged from this period acknowledging that it faced yet another task with regard to the English language. Cuba now had to determine how to promote even further the English reading ability of its scientists. But beyond reading ability for its citizenry, the English language skill promoted in Cuban intermediate, secondary, and tertiary institutions since 1959, Cuba now had to figure out how to promote English oral communicative skills despite its societal absence to improve its possibilities in the tourism industry, in the scientific world, and in the international market.

As we will see, since 1985 English in Cuba has gone beyond its traditional post-revolutionary role as the language of professionals. Beyond its role in scientific activity and technology, the increased tourism to Cuba and joint commercial ventures with other countries have demanded that English in Cuba be recognized for its role in international communication.

Promoting English as the language of international communication and scientific activity: 1985—present

With the recommendation made at the Cuban Parliament in December 1984, the promotion of English became an *explicit* policy of the ministries of education in Cuba. In 1986 a report submitted to the Third Congress of the Cuban Communist Party had the following negative evaluation of foreign language teaching efforts:

A pesar de que ha mejorado, todavía es insuficiente la creación de hábitos y habilidades en los estudiantes de la educación superior, cuyo dominio de las lenguas extranjeras es pobre y su desarrollo cultural integral no es satisfactorio. (quoted in Corona 1988: 2)

[Even though it has improved, the development of habits and skills in students in higher education is lacking; the students' command of foreign languages is poor and their integral cultural development is not satisfactory.]

These efforts to improve the quality of foreign language teaching responded to the importance of foreign languages in the top-priority lines of development in the country; namely, tourism, biotechnology and the pharmaceutical industry, and joint commercial ventures. But with the crumbling of the former Soviet Union and of the Eastern European Communist world the need for Russian receded, and as we will see, today English again reigns supreme as the language of international communication, as well as science and technology.

It is perhaps the recent growth of the tourism industry that has had the most effect on the attitude of Cubans toward English in the recent past. Tourism to Cuba almost disappeared between 1960 and the 1970s. But in the mid-1980s tourism made a comeback. In 1991 424,010 tourists visited Cuba. This showed a growth of 80,000 tourists from 1990. The tourist industry is expected to grow to over one million a year by 1995 (Alvarez—Ferroli 1992). The greatest number of tourists come from Canada, and thus English has become imperative in the tourist industry. Despite the North American absence and even when tourists come from diverse countries, English is most often the language used in communicating with tourists. English reading ability is not the only English skill needed by Cubans today.

The words of the Instituto Nacional del Turismo (1990) on the importance of foreign languages in the industry are instructive in this regard:

Para los trabajadores del turismo el dominio de idiomas extranjeros es un instrumento de trabajo indispensable, un elemento indicativo de su profesionalidad y uno de los componentes importantes del buen servicio que debemos ofrecer a los turistas que nos visitan.

[For workers in the tourism industry, speaking foreign languages is an essential work tool, an element which indicates their professionalism, and an important component of the good service that we must offer tourists who visit us.]

Beyond tourism, the interest in biotechnology and the pharmaceutical industry have spurred the learning of English. In 1988 Decree 146/88 stipulated that proficiency in a foreign language, and especially English was required for researchers. The expansion of scientific exchange programs has made English language proficiency mandatory for all Cuban scientists.

Since the crumbling of the Soviet Union, Cuba has encouraged the development of joint commercial ventures involving the Cuban government and foreign private enterprises. English has played a most important role in developing these commercial links between Cuba and enterprises in the Anglophone Caribbean, Canada, and Great Britain. To promote English language proficiency, courses in Business English have proliferated in the last three years.

Slowly English has made a comeback into Cuban social life. During the 1960s, for example, English had disappeared even from the musical scene, with the exception of those who sang out for civil rights such as Pete Seeger, Barbara Dane, and Lena Horne. By the 1980s, however, Madonna, Michael Jackson, Olivia Newton-John, and "heavy metal"

were heard over Cuban radio and television, along with Cuban *son* and *salsa*. In 1985 an English-language radio station of news and music, Radio Taino, was established for English-speaking tourists in Cuba.

The imperative need for English is now clear in Cuban society. But before turning to how English learning among Cubans is promoted at present, it is important to point out that enrollment in English at *all levels* of the educational system has *always* surpassed that of Russian. It is precisely this fact that makes the Cuban case interesting, for despite promotion of Russian and the absence of English societally, English is perceived as important enough that more Cubans have always opted to study English rather than Russian, and Cuban society has always implicitly recognized the importance of English over Russian. Whereas the study of Russian, German, and even French was subsidized by the governments of the former Soviet Union, East Germany, and France, which provided books, journals and even scholarships to go abroad, English has had no such support. In fact, up to the present, it has been impossible for English language professionals to study English in any of the core English-speaking countries. Many Cubans have done post graduate work in English in the Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries. And yet, more Cubans have always studied English than Russian.

At the intermediate and secondary level, we have already seen that Resolution 185 in the mid-1970s required Russian in 30 percent of schools and English in 70 percent. Despite explicit promotion of Russian during this period, Cuban society implicitly recognized that English was needed at least three times more than Russian. This Resolution also recognized the fact that even during this period there were more teachers able to teach English than Russian.

This interest in English over Russian is also manifested through enrollment figures at all school levels. In the Language Schools for adults, enrollment figures for English have always been higher than those for Russian. For example, in the year of highest Russian enrollment, 1976-1977, the enrollment figures were: 17,510 for English, 7,863 for Russian, 7,268 for French, 1,765 for German and 1,615 for other languages (Corona 1993: 11).

The Pedagogical Institutes also trained many Russian teachers in the 1970s. But Table 1 makes evident that there have been four times the number of graduates in English than in Russian.

At the tertiary level, there has always been more interest in majoring in English than in any other language, including Russian. For example, the numbers of students graduating in each of the languages at the School

Table 1. Graduates of pedagogical institutes per major: 1976-1992

Major	Graduates
English	9072
Russian	2330
French	392

Source: Ministerio de Educación 1993.

of Modern Languages in the University of Havana in the period 1966-1991 were as follows: 815 for English, 637 for Russian, 403 for French, and 172 for German (Ministerio de Educación 1993).

This interest of Cubans to learn English rather than other foreign languages is supported by the English promotion policies that have been adopted since 1985. At the intermediate and secondary level, English became once again the only compulsory foreign language in 1986. The need for English language teachers has only increased during this time. In 1990 a Report to the Ministry of Education confirmed that there were 4,350 English teachers at the intermediate and secondary levels. Seven hundred of those English teachers did not have the appropriate degree requirements to be English language teachers. The need for qualified English language teachers is also made evident by the increased English enrollment at the Pedagogical Institutes. By 1988 Russian teachers, in less demand in Cuban society, were being retrained as teachers of other foreign languages, mainly English (Hunter 1988: 60).

The same enrollment trend, increasingly favoring English while Russian disappears, is obvious if we examine the enrollment in Language Schools for adults presented in Table 2.

As we had seen, English had the highest enrollment of all languages in 1976. Since then, enrollment in English classes has almost doubled. English is the only language that has had increased enrollment. Enrollment

Table 2. Enrollment in adult language schools per language: 1976-1993

Year	English	Russian	French	German	Others
1976-77	17510	7863	7268	1765	1615
1981-82	13505	4514	4424	815	1195
1990-91	20130	541	2179	681	1462
1992-93	31123	51	2816	589	803

Source: Ministerio de Educación 1993.

in French and German has been cut approximately three times, whereas enrollment in Russian has been cut over fifteen hundred times.

That the English language is becoming very important to the Cuban economy is also shown by the rapid growth of the adult language schools in this period. By 1993 there were 91 language schools for adults. And since these schools respond mostly to the great need for English in the tourism industry, the schools are located all over the island. Only fifteen such schools are found in Havana.

By 1990, the enrollment in the English major at the School of Modern Languages in the University of Havana was almost six times that of Russian: 573 for English, 112 for Russian, 107 for French, and 120 for German (Ministerio de Educación 1993).

The strength of English in present-day Cuba is also reflected in the extension of English language majors to other universities in the island besides the University of Havana. An English major was established at the University of Oriente and the University Central de las Villas in 1989-90, and at the University of Matanzas and the Instituto Superior Técnico de Holguin in 1990-91.

Likewise the number of University majors requiring English increased rapidly during this period, while those requiring Russian disappeared, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. *Majors in institutions of higher education requiring English or Russian: 1982-1991*

Year	English	Russian
1982-1983	52%	48%
1985-1986	62%	38%
1986-1987	81%	19%
1990-1991	100%	0%

Source: Programa de Desarrollo de las Lenguas Extranjeras, Ministry of Higher Education, April 1990.

The absence of majors requiring Russian in 1990 shown above is one result of the C Plan instituted by the Ministry of Higher Education in 1990. Besides requiring English for all majors, Plan C increased the time allotted to English in some programs and radically changed the approach used in teaching English. From a reading-only approach, an initial one-semester course taught using a communicative approach was proposed for all majors. And this semester was followed not by simple ESP courses but by a program of English Across the Curriculum.

During the mid-1980s it became obvious to Cuban English professionals that teaching approaches used elsewhere, and even in Cuba in the past, were not appropriate. The situation of Cuba was unique. It had no representatives from core English-speaking countries. Only Cuban bilinguals taught English, using Spanish readily to give meaning. Interest in English did not respond to a Capitalist order of economic stratification. In fact, it was precisely the success of post-revolutionary Cuba in dismissing English language imperialism that made it difficult to promote it again. For example, as stated previously, all university texts had been translated into Spanish or written by Cubans; thus English was no longer needed for a tertiary education. The greatest challenge during this period then became how to promote a language which was solely a requirement at the tertiary level rather than having immediate utility. The English Across the Curriculum Program that became known as the *Programa Director* provided the answer to this challenge.

The Programa Director appealed to the social responsibility of all university instructors by asking them to create the need for English language proficiency within their courses. Instructors were asked to assign bibliography in their respective fields in English. In addition, manuals and other materials in the technical fields were not translated into Spanish, but given to students as problems that had to be solved in teams with the assistance of English monitors (Corona 1988, 1993a).

A survey conducted by Corona in 1992 (Corona 1993a) with 3121 university students has clearly established that English proficiency is widespread among Cuban professionals. Over three-fourths of fifth-year university students feel qualified to work with English bibliography. In some majors such as Microbiology, Biochemistry, and Data Processing, all fifth-year students report being capable of reading English bibliography. The percentage of students able to use English bibliography declines as follows in the other fields: 87 percent in Biology, 86 percent in Art History, 82 percent in Pharmacy, 78 percent in Chemical Engineering, 74 percent in Veterinary Medicine, and 72 percent in Chemistry. Only Mechanical Engineering emerged as a field in which there is considerably less English language proficiency among students. Fifty-nine percent of students in Mechanical Engineering reported being able to handle English bibliography. The same survey, however, revealed that the ability of Cuban professionals to use English language bibliography is much greater than their actual need to use English language bibliography during their studies. Fifth-year students in the different fields report using English language bibliography systematically as follows: 83 percent of those in

Data processing, 50 percent in Biochemistry, 44 percent in Microbiology, 33 percent in Chemical Engineering, 29 percent in Biology, 24 percent in Veterinary, 22 percent in Chemistry, 14 percent in Art History, and 13 percent in Mechanical Engineering. These findings are significant because they suggest that even in a society where English use is limited, English reading ability spreads naturally among professionals. Despite the absence of any systematic use for English, Cuban professionals, and especially those in the scientific and technical fields, have developed English reading ability and feel confident using it.

For the medical field, English ability has become of paramount importance. Responding to this need, ASTE, the Advanced Studies for Teachers of English, was created in 1989. The purpose of ASTE was to improve the English language skills and teaching methodology of those teaching in medical colleges.

Today, while Cuban society seems to have a handle on how to promote English reading skills among its professionals, oral ability to communicate remains the greatest challenge. On the one hand, English continues to be absent from the primary school curriculum, where Spanish is valued as the national language. One reason for this absence is that elite bilingual schools in Cuba are still in the memory of many, who are fearful that English speaking ability would bring Cuban children closer to United States culture. Yet, in the last five years, there has been enormous growth in private English lessons for children in the homes of many, often without governmental sanction. On the other hand, the number of English-speaking interlocutors is simply not large enough to provide the societal context that would support English oral skills.

While opportunities to hear and speak English in Cuba have grown, they remain rare. For example, English is increasingly heard in films shown in Cuba today. In 1990 there were premiers of 68 films, 22 of which were in English (32 percent) and 21 from the United States (30 percent). Although the proportion of English language films vs. other language films is considerably smaller than it was between 1955 and 1959 (cf. 32 percent in 1990 vs. 60 percent between 1955 and 1959), it is dramatically greater than it was between 1961 and 1965 (cf. 32 percent in 1990 vs. less than 2 percent between 1962 and 1965). English has also made its way to television. In 1992 Cuban television showed a total of 131 films, and 81 percent of them were in English. And the satellite antennas that have become a familiar sight in Havana bring into Cuban living rooms television programming from the United States.

Despite the continued United States embargo, there is evidence that the English language ability of Cubans is expanding and improving, espe-

cially in the last five years. To meet this greater societal need for English, the Cuban English language profession has continued to grow and develop.

In 1989, GELL, the Group of English Language Specialists, was created. The group, which includes not only linguists and teachers, but also translators, tourist guides and researchers, had eight hundred members in 1992 and eleven regional affiliates: La Habana, Las Villas, Cienfuegos, Sancti Spiritus, Camagüey, Santiago de Cuba, Ciego de Avila, Holguin, Las Tunas, Varadero, and Florida (in the province of Camagüey). GELL has established nine resource centers in different parts of the island. And 250 people participated in its first annual convention in Havana in 1992. GELL estimates that there are 8000 English instructors and 2000 English translators in Cuba today.

While the United States has remained absent from efforts to promote English among Cuban professionals, the Anglophone Caribbean, Canada, and Great Britain have assumed a role in this respect. During the early 1980s an Exchange Program with the University of Guyana was instituted to develop further the English language skills and teaching methodology of Cuban English educators. For five years twenty Cuban English teachers were sent to Guyana every school year for a semester. The Canadians have been supportive of English language teaching efforts in Cuba. For example, since 1990 many Canadian universities have exchange programs with Cuban universities. In 1993 the newly formed GELL held its second annual convention jointly with the First Symposium on Canadian Studies in Havana. And Great Britain has started to show some support of English language teaching efforts in Cuba. In the 1990s, three Cuban English instructors from ASTE received scholarships from the Institute for Applied Language Studies to study English in Medical Science for six weeks in Edinburgh. Donations of English language books have been received from British publishing houses and from the British Embassy in Cuba. And most recently it was the British Embassy in Havana which acted as intermediary between GELL, the Cuban English Instructors, and TESOL, the association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, by paying the \$100 affiliation fee on behalf of GELL to TESOL. Significantly, the membership was initially rejected on the grounds that although TESOL was an international organization, it had been incorporated in the District of Columbia, United States. TESOL claimed that it was "subject to the American Trading with the Enemy Act and its implementing regulations, which prohibit TESOL from accepting funds from and paying out funds to Cambodia, Cuba,

Vietnam, and North Korea (as 'prohibited countries') as well as persons residing in those countries" (TESOL Matters 1993).² The Cuban English language profession remains mostly isolated from other English specialists as a result of the United States embargo.

But the 1990s have also seen an increase in scientific and academic exchanges with the United States. For example, since 1987 City University of New York has had an academic exchange program with Cuban institutions. English, of course, has played a most important role in this academic exchange, although ours (Corona and García) is the very first collaboration we know of related to English in Cuba.

This present period is characterized by the overt promotion of English among Cubans as an important economic asset of Cuban society. Cuba has joined other countries in recognizing the value of English as the language of international communication and scientific activity, despite the objections of the United States government.

Conclusion

The presence of English in post-revolutionary Cuba today attests to the growing spread of English in the world. Despite the absence of English speakers in Cuba and the promotion and subsidy of languages other than English, English has maintained its position as the most useful foreign language in Cuba. From a language spoken by the Cuban elite linked to United States interests in the island, English ability has come to be heralded as a social responsibility of all Cubans. English in Cuba is now seen as a potential national resource in maintaining a first-class scientific establishment and in communicating with the rest of the world. The challenge to the Cuban educational system will be how to continue to spread English to all Cubans and how to expand the functions of English to encompass not only reading, but also speaking, despite its societal absence. English language professionals in Cuba are assiduously working to make English a resource that is available to all, incapable of producing differences among Cuban citizens, but capable of making a difference in Cuban society.

Notes

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2. TESOL has now obtained permission to have affiliates in Cuba, as well as individual members. However, there are still restrictions on monetary awards. (Personal communication, Teresa O'Donnell, TESOL Central Office).

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