The third article is ‘English-medium teaching in European higher education' from *Language Teaching* by James A. Coleman. The article seeks to examine the role of English in higher education in Europe by detailing the global context in which it became more popular, the reasons for its expansion as well as the potential effects of the trend. Coleman argues that globalisation has largely turned higher education into a business and for that reason universities across Europe are increasingly adopting English as a global language of education. He sees this as having potentially detrimental consequences to a number of groups, languages and institutions.

The article draws on a range of published work as its data. It includes quantitative surveys on the number of European higher education institutions that offer English-medium courses but notes that ‘there exists no comprehensive, reliable and wholly contemporary survey' of the trend (Coleman, 2006: 7).

The article as a whole presents many valuable and interesting arguments, particularly as regards the reasons for the growth of English in higher education, but the sections detailing the effects of these changes are slightly less coherent.

The article makes a strong case for the growth of English in higher education being the result of globalization and the increasing needs for institutions to function in a more market-like manner. The observations on the potential emergence of disglossic societies that ‘adopt one language for identity and culture and another language for utilitarian communication’ (Coleman, 2006, 11) as well the potential for English as a Lingua Franca to develop as a variety separate from other standard Englishes are similarly thought-provoking.

The main failing of the article is the section detailing the potential impacts of the spread of English in higher education and the subsequent conclusion. These portions do list some enlightening points related to European language policy and associated cultural issues, but their slightly polemic nature and somewhat puzzling focus on North American English and academic style detract from the overall quality of the study.

The author devotes little time to the possibility of tangible benefits resulting from this process which is slightly strange as the overall tone of the article suggests that the adoption of English as a common language is an inevitability. Coleman offers no proposals as to how the negative effects of the change can be mitigated. For example, he questions the future of different European academic discourse traditions but makes no suggestions as to the feasibility of their being expressed in English or a broadening of traditional notions of what constitutes appropriate academic style.
Data quoted by the author states that 1% of programmes in non-English speaking Europe are delivered in English, though the author does state that said information is not wholly reliable and that percentage is almost certain to have risen since the data was collected (2001/2) (Coleman, 2006: 6). To state the obvious, this is not an enormous amount, but Coleman nonetheless raises the possibility that ‘the Englishization of European HE [higher education] means an impoverished learning experience’ for L1 English students as their opportunities to study abroad in a foreign language are thus reduced (Coleman, 2006: 9-10), which seems to be an exaggeration. This section also includes a series of rhetorical questions that come across as out of place in an academic journal.

It is also at this point in the article that the author first introduces the quite separate notion of North American English and academic style. Coleman apparently views North American English as a serious threat in its own right as ‘it is abundantly clear that the phonology, lexis, syntax and orthography or British English are all too permeable to transatlantic influence’ (Coleman, 2006: 11). In so doing, he almost shifts the focus to British English being the entity under threat which contrasts sharply with the main idea of the article as a whole. He also raises the current dominance of North American research in SLA in this section, a topic not clearly related to the other content.

Additionally, there are several points in the article in which the author seems to make uncited propositions without appearing to offer any explicit evidence. One instance of this is the claim that ‘there is already evidence that students in English-speaking countries on SOCRATES-ERASMUS exchanges socialize more with other foreign students than with native speakers’ (Coleman, 2006: 11). Another incidence is the opinion that the European Year of Langues ‘is still seen by sceptics as a failed attempt to mask the failure of English dominance’ but those commentators are not indentified, nor is a reference provided (Coleman, 2006: 9).

While the final sections do take away from the overall quality of the article, they do not invalidate the worthwhile and clearly presented ideas and research that precede them.

References

