

Is English Language Publishing Killing Publishing in Other Languages?

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Publisher

Hong Kong University Press

- The rise and fall of the *lingua franca*.
- Will Chinese achieve global standing?
- The durability of both national and sub-national languages.

- Language policy of Hong Kong University Press
- a bilingual publisher on the frontier of the two most important language zones
- on the front line of the competition between English and other languages.

Market Size

- First copy costs
- Incurred before the work is replicated
- Incurred whatever form the work is to be disseminated.
- Large part of the total costs of publishing

Market Size

- The economics of a publication are dependent on how many copies it is forecast will be sold.
- When the sales forecast has been reached, the first copy costs (and of course all other costs) need to have been recovered.
- So the sales forecast indicates over how many copies we can spread the first copy costs and hope that they will all be recovered

- For some categories of book the conventional price is high
 - each copy can carry a large share of the first copy costs.
 - so we can plan on selling a small number of books and still expect to recover those initial costs.
- For other categories of books the conventional price level is low,
 - each one can only carry a small part of the first copy costs
 - so we need to sell a large number of copies in order that we can recover the initial costs.
- Academic and scientific books are conventionally high priced
 - so they can recover their costs even though their initial costs may be high and their potential sales quite low.

Hong Kong University Press

–25% of titles in Chinese

–75% of titles in English

Hong Kong University Press Publishing Categories

	Popular	Professional	Academic
Chinese		x	
English	x	x	x

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Chinese		x	
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Popular Publishing

HKUP

- In English only
- Chinese books low priced, face increasing Mainland competition

Generally

- People choose to read in their first language.
- General books tend to be country-specific

Hong Kong University Press Publishing Categories

	Popular	Professional	Academic
Chinese		x	
English	x	x	x

Professional Publishing

HKUP

- Publishes mainly in Chinese
- Prices generally somewhat higher than for popular books

Generally

- People prefer to read in their first language
- Such books tend to be country-specific

Hong Kong University Press Publishing Categories

	Popular	Professional	Academic
Chinese		x	
English	x	x	x

Academic Books

- Mainland inaccessible for Chinese books, other markets for academic books in Chinese very small
- Need global (or at least US) market, hence in English.
- Similar choice being made by publishers in most countries – domestic academic markets too small to be viable.

Other Models

- E.g. France, Italy, Japan, South Korea
- No sharp divide between academic literature and other serious writing
- Similarly no sharp divide between academics and intellectuals
- Increasing role of English parallels the advance of the Anglo-American model of the university

Does the dominance of English matter?

In the sciences

- Great advantage of a lingua franca
- But obstacles for non-native speakers
- On balance, beneficial

Does the dominance of English matter?

In the humanities and social sciences

- Excludes many with direct knowledge of the culture
- Bias from the Centre
- The right to study one's country in one's native language

Domination of the research agenda

- Academic publishing dominated by Anglo-American publishers
- Their concern is the Anglo-American market
- Ideas and topics have to be of interest to scholars there
- This excludes important work on local or regional topics
- Effect reinforced by institutional incentives

Summary

- English language publishing is not taking over the world.
- It is taking over academic publishing, because of the benefits of a lingua franca and the adoption of the Anglo-American model of the research university
- Beneficial in the sciences, to the contrary in the humanities and social sciences.

Conclusion

English language academic publishing is driving out other languages and at the same time globalizing and homogenizing the research agenda.