

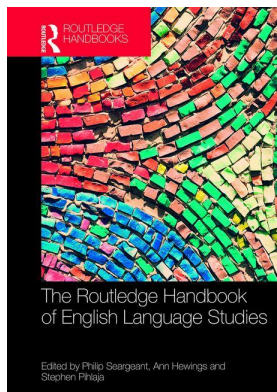
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### English and multilingualism

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# English and multilingualism

## A contested history

*Ofelia García and Angel M. Y. Lin*

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### Introduction

Although people of various origins have always had different ways of using language, it is the ways of speaking of powerful citizens that have been constructed into what are recognized as named languages, and which act as instruments of control over the rest of the population. Acts of naming languages contribute to the ideology that languages are discrete and monolithic, ignoring the complex linguistic practices of all speakers and establishing hierarchies of power and privilege among speakers.

This chapter tells the contested history of what we today name English, as well as what we today call multilingualism. The chapter makes the point that both English and multilingualism are constructed concepts that need to be interrogated. And it proposes that these constructions have served the English-speaking elite well in the past, and continue to do so in the present.

We first tell the story of how English was consolidated into the language of the greatest empire in the world. Our brief history takes the point of view not of 'English,' but of its construction. We explore how bilingualism and multilingualism have been constructed in relationship to English; first in the imperial stage, as a reason for the minoritization of non-white colonized speakers, and today, as ways of ensuring that English keeps its dominance. What has been called in the present the multilingual turn (Conteh and Meier 2014; May 2013) would not exist if it were not for the imperial origins of English, as well as the interest that it continues to hold in the imagination of many. We argue here that it is the economically-driven pursuit of English in today's global and neoliberal economy which has created the interest in multilingualism. And yet, this multilingualism continues to leave out precisely those who are multilingual, minoritized speakers whose language practices differ from those legitimized in dominant societies and schools. We show here that the construction of the English language and multilingualism have been mutually constitutive and have served a purpose of domination and control.

The chapter starts by providing an account of the evolution of this long-standing relationship between English and linguistic diversity. We then focus on the role that colonization has had in the construction of English as the most powerful language in the world,

and of the understandings of multilingualism. We also identify the issues that the position of English and multilingualism raise today, as well as the debates that it has engendered.

In order to localize the arguments we make, we describe the multilingual realities of some Asian regions, focusing on how their multilingualism was erased (or occasionally used) during the colonial period, as English was promoted for domination. By focusing on the Asian context, we propose ways in which our conceptions of language, including English and what we consider multilingualism, would have to change in order to destroy the linguistic hierarchies that continue to operate in the world today.

## Historical perspectives

### *Origins and constructions*

The history of the English language as told in textbooks and historical research has always included the acknowledgement that English was shaped through contact with people who spoke differently. What we have named ‘Old English’ was shaped through interactions between the three Germanic tribes who invaded the British Isles around 450 AD, the Celts who were pushed north and west by the Germanic invaders, and the later invasion, in the 10th century, of Vikings from Scandinavia. When the Norman William the Conqueror defeated King Harold at Hastings in 1066, the Court, the Church and the upper classes started imitating their Norman king’s ways of speaking. But merchants and people other than nobles continued speaking differently, and what we today call ‘Middle English’ was a result of contact between the ways of speaking of nobles and others. Middle English is the name we attach to the language Chaucer used in *The Canterbury Tales* in the late 14th century, reflecting the vernacular of the people, and containing words brought to England by the Anglo-Saxons and words brought by the Normans (Baugh and Cable 2002).

It was the homogenizing effect of the printing press introduced into England in 1476 by William Caxton that started shaping what developed into what we have learned to call Modern English (Blake 1991). Slowly, the many different ways people had of speaking became standardized, as publishers made decisions about preferred style and dialects. As the Kingdom of England, which conquered and included Wales after 1535, started to project itself as a powerful state firstly within the British Isles and then beyond its borders, the construction of English as an entity (Park and Wee 2012) became paramount. Publishers started preferring the dialect spoken by the dominant class in London, where the king resided. Borrowings from Latin and Greek, as well as Italian and German, expanded the English lexicon during the Renaissance. William Shakespeare wrote most of his works between 1590 and 1614, contributing many words. In 1604 Robert Cawdrey published the first simple monolingual dictionary of what is considered Early Modern English. And in 1611 the King James Bible was published, a major text in establishing the important status of the English language.

In 1588 England defeated the Spanish armada, consolidating the might of British maritime power. English was not simply to be used within the original island territory. The plan of the growing power was to acquire the many people and their riches in a complex of territories over which the sun never set. To do so, English as constituted by the ruling class was often seen as the only legitimate way of speaking. In contrast to other European states of the time that established language academies and published prescriptive grammars, it was London booksellers who contacted Samuel Johnson to produce a dictionary. As Johnson (1747) himself wrote in the plan, his purpose was to write a dictionary ‘by which the pronunciation of our language may be fixed, and its attainment facilitated; by which its purity may be

preserved, its use ascertained, and its duration lengthened.’ In Johnson’s mind, the fixing and purity of the English language was important if it were to be used in the growing Empire. The English language was to be, as Johnson said in his plan, ‘varied and compounded, yet not destroyed.’

What we today call ‘English’ is thus a product of the complex historical and political contexts in which it was shaped, containing the voices and accents of diverse speakers. But for English to assume its role in the domination of people who spoke differently in the British Empire, it was necessary not only to standardize it (Algeo and Pyles 2010; Baugh and Cable 2002), but also to construct categories of people who would have access to it. In its imperial role, the language named English became celebrated, whereas the multilingual practices of indigenous colonized populations were stigmatized. To consolidate the power of white English speakers, more was needed than simply attention to the construction of English – a different authoritative form of multilingualism also had to be created which excluded the fluid language practices of many of the indigenous populations with which the English speakers came into contact.

### *English and multilingualism in Empire*

The categorization of populations based on language became one way of producing ‘governable subjects’ (Foucault 2008; Flores 2013) during the growth of the British Empire between the 16th and the 19th century. Linguistically, speakers in the Empire were differently categorized as:

- 1 **English native speakers**, born in the territory of England, white, generally monolingual and with resources. They were valued for speaking ‘standard English’ and were generally school-educated.
- 2 **English dialect speakers**, white English speakers of poor means, born in the territory of England, and generally monolingual. They were stigmatized for speaking ‘dialects of English’ that were perceived as substandard and received poor schooling, if any.
- 3 **Indigenous bilingual populations**, indigenous whites born in Wales, Scotland, or Ireland. They were said to be bilingual or have traces of bilingualism and were minoritized because of this. If educated, they attended only English-medium schools where they mostly experienced failure.
- 4 **Silent populations**, enslaved black and Native American people in the New World who were excluded from learning English and from schooling.
- 5 **Immigrant foreign language-speakers**, white immigrants to the United States. English was imposed and their bilingualism not recognized.
- 6 **Bilingual/multilingual intermediaries**, brown people in the Asian, African, and Pacific colonies who served the white English-speaking masters. They were given access to learning English and English-language schooling to serve as intermediaries between the British state and the people.
- 7 **Indigenous multilingual populations**, brown people in the Asian, African, and Pacific colonies who were not given access to English or schooling during the colonization era.

We describe below how language served to differentiate speakers and provide (or not) access to economic rewards.

The creation of the *English native-speaker*, that is, someone who was white, born in the territory of England, and with economic resources, became an important means of domination

and hierarchization; this was so whether in Wales, Ireland or Scotland, in the North American colonies, or in the Asian, African, and Pacific colonies (Holborow 1999; Pennycook 1995, 1998; Phillipson 1992). These powerful white speakers were the only ones granted the privilege of being perceived as English native speakers, with others who had not been socialized in these prosperous echelons of society branded as *speakers of English 'dialects,'* that were deemed substandard and inferior.

From the 16th through to the 18th century, the Kingdom of England gained control of Wales, Scotland, and Ireland to become the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland (in 1922 the Irish Free State came into being). In the British Isles, bilingualism was not to be tolerated (Kandler et al. 2010), and *English monolingualism* became the only way to truly participate in the dominant society, as many were forced to shift to English.

In contrast to the harsh imposition of the standardized English language on the white indigenous peoples of the British Isles, the indigenous peoples of North America, as well as the enslaved people brought to the British colonies by British slave traders, were excluded from English and were not given access to the English language or to schooling. Enslaved Africans, with rich linguistic repertoires, were mixed by origin so that they would not be able to communicate. Native Americans were simply progressively exterminated or pushed into Indian territories (García 2009; Wiley 1996). The English language became not just standardized, but also racialized. For the white conquered populations of the British Isles, what was constructed as standard English became the only authoritative way to communicate. For black enslaved populations and brown conquered populations, neither their ways of speaking nor their use of the ways of speaking of white Englishmen were legitimized. These black and brown bodies were simply rendered silent in the western sociocultural and sociolinguistic paradigm that considered the English language as constitutive of Empire.

The United States inherited the linguistic practices of the British colonies. Besides the enslavement of Africans, and the conquest of Native Americans, immigration to what became the United States was paramount to its formation as an independent nation state. But as in the British Isles, the imposition of English among white immigrants who spoke other languages became an important national mission after independence. The US founding fathers debated the issue of declaring English as the official language for the new country, but decided that the economic attraction of English was strong enough that no other incentive was needed (Heath 1976). Between 1890 and 1930 sixteen million immigrants (mostly from Germany, Sweden, Ukraine, Finland, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Greece, Russia, and especially Italy) entered the United States. The ways of speaking of these immigrants were constituted as 'foreign languages' and were, in the words of Theodore Roosevelt, not only 'a misfortune but a crime.' Languages other than English were not to be tolerated, and schools played an important role in the imposition of English.

As the British Empire grew in Asia, Africa, and the Pacific over the 19th century, the British came into contact with people with whom they had to maintain a colonial relationship of trade, not simply conquer. The English were constructed as white, powerful, young (Said 1978, for example, tells us that British colonizers were forced to retire at the age of 55 so that they would conserve the myth of powerful young white men), and monolingual speakers of a standardized language; the Others were mostly non-whites, powerless, weak, and speakers of what were not even considered languages. In these Asian, African, and Pacific colonies, speakers were of two types. First, there were those who were at the top of the colonial social class and served their British masters, and who benefited from the British presence. They spoke English to different degrees of ability and with their own accents and also the dominant language(s) in the society in which they lived. The English language gave them access to

participate as second-class citizens in the life of the colony. This more powerful class of colonized people were permitted an *expedient bilingualism or multilingualism* to serve as intermediaries between the English monolinguals and the others. The second type of colonized people did not in any way interact with their British masters, but with the bilingual/multilingual English-speaking more powerful class of the colony. English, for them, remained inaccessible, and they remained speakers of their *own local ways of speaking*, what we might call *indigenous multilingualism*. Without schooling, and without any political or economic power, these speakers did not develop a linguistic consciousness that they spoke any named language; they simply used language to communicate locally. In the colonies, this indigenous multilingualism was constructed as a linguistic jumble associated with confused colonized people, whereas monolingualism was the mark of being the real thing: an intelligent native English speaker; a white powerful colonizer.

Native English speakers did not have to either speak or listen to subjects that were then rendered silent. Instead, the colonized were forced to understand orders in the only language authorized and legitimized. And as this one-way interactional process became socially established, only the speech of those considered native to the British Isles was to be understood and validated. This construction of an entity considered English-only in the mouths of native speakers slowly became one of the most powerful tools of the British Empire (Canagarajah 1999; Holborow 1999; Pennycook 1995, 1998; Phillipson 1992).

The multilingual origins of English were now well out of sight, substituted by a monolingual ethos. At the same time, learned multilingualism had been established as the ability to especially read (not just speak) European languages from different nation states, and, of course, Latin and Greek. This *authoritative literate multilingualism* was perceived as being very different from the *indigenous multilingualism* of the brown and black populations. An authoritative literate multilingualism was thus reserved for white elite Europeans to have access to western cultural capital, its literature and histories. But the ‘indigenous multilingualism’ of the colonized others did not disappear and became even more visible as the Empire crumbled.

### **Key issues and new construction: multilingualism and English in a new world order**

During the 20th century the colonial structure started to give way to other forms of domination in which the legacy of the British Empire, the language named English, and the construction of an authoritative literate multilingualism have continued to play a major role. The Empire lost its geographical center (see Pietikäinen and Kelly-Holmes 2013), but English continued to be used in building hegemonic power relations and as a mechanism of control in local social and political relations. After 700 years of contact with speakers who spoke differently and who had a more extensive linguistic repertoire than that of white English native speakers, the ways of speaking of others started to be ‘heard,’ as former colonies were granted political independence.

The indigenous multilingualism of the periphery started to be recognized. For a short time, mostly during the period of what became known as the Ethnic Revival of the 1960s (Fishman 1985), multilingualism took on another dimension, as it became understood not just as a way to access another elite European culture by elites (as it had been in the past), but also to give voice to those who, as Spivak (1988) says, had not been previously allowed to speak. As the subaltern and oppressed minoritized groups in the world voiced their different belief systems, they also started speaking their indigenous multilingualism. The concept of multilingualism

itself became contested. Now multilingualism was not just in the hands of white elites for whom only the major European languages were valid and important as a mark of high culture, but also in the hands of indigenous groups and regional minorities in nation states, even European ones. Multilingualism thus also needed to be controlled.

The scholarly literature around bilingualism and multilingualism started to expand around this time. Weinreich (1953/1974) and Haugen (1956) published their now famous treatises on bilingualism. And the nascent study of sociolinguistics turned its attention to language planning and language policy issues having to do with how to ‘control’ the multilingualism of the newly independent nations (Fishman 1974; Rubin and Jernudd 1971). It was proposed that languages, as entities, could be shaped through corpus planning, and their standing changed through status planning.

As the multilingualism of indigenous colonial people started to be heard, western scholars started to restrict understandings of bilingualism and multilingualism to fit a linguistic regime that kept indigenous multilingual speakers out of economic opportunities. Much of the now conventional wisdom about bilingualism was produced around this time. Bilingual people were said to use their languages in a diglossic relationship, that is, for different functions or in different spaces (Fishman 1964). And only diglossia was said to ‘save’ bilingualism, that is, maintain two languages intergenerationally.

Lambert (1974), speaking about bilingualism in education, also tried to regiment the use of languages. True bilingualism was ‘additive,’ with the ‘second’ language (L2) added separately to the ‘first’ one (L1). True bilingual education had to keep the two languages isolated. Immersion education was developed during this time, a way to teach students an L2 in ways that would ensure the students’ bilingualism. And if the two languages were not separated in education, bilingualism was said to be ‘subtractive,’ leading to monolingualism. Instances of bilingual performances were interpreted as possible cases of linguistic ‘interference.’ The speech of multilinguals was examined through the lens of monolinguals, identifying borrowings, loan shifts, code-switching (Weinreich 1953/1974), always different from the ways in which monolinguals used language.

Sociolinguistic scholarship had good intentions, but it was constructed with western understandings of language, and as a product of North American and British scholars, it was especially attentive to conserving the power of the English of Empire. Although indigenous multilingual populations had gained political independence, economic dependence had to be assured, and here too language played a part. Language scholars, especially English-speaking ones, developed a canon of understandings about bilingualism (interestingly enough, not multilingualism) that reflected the construction of authoritative literate bilingualism, leaving out the indigenous multilingual practices that were prevalent throughout.

Taking a page from the construction of English and other named languages, conquered, colonized, and oppressed groups all over the world that now enjoyed a measure of independence claimed that they spoke ‘languages,’ not just corrupted dialects, as the colonizers had previously positioned their ways of speaking. They claimed that they spoke two or more languages, languages that were whole, autonomous, and legitimate, and that they used them for different functions, that is, in a diglossic relationship (see Fishman 1964). These minoritized groups contributed to the development of bilingual education programs, where their own fluid language practices were delegitimized, as if what were now recognized as different languages never touched their lips. The concept of additive bilingualism was now deeply established, not only among elite majority speakers, but also among minoritized speakers. Bilingualism and multilingualism was now conceptualized as a series of

autonomous languages that conformed to certain prescriptive norms, a ‘parallel monolingualism,’ in the words of Heller (1999). Cummins (2005) refers to the construction of English/French bilingualism in Canada as ‘the two solitudes.’ Multilingualism had become recognized within institutional education, but not the language practices of indigenous multilingual speakers.

In this new trend toward multilingualism, English could have been the loser. But powerful English speakers slipped in an additional construction. English did not lose its grip on other languages. Instead, it morphed into the primary way to be recognized as bilingual and participate in the global economy. Now multilingualism was not just restricted to the powerful elite to acquire ‘culture,’ or just to minoritized people; it became the essential characteristic of those who needed to work or trade in the global market in a new neoliberal order that supported the free flow of capitalism in ways that benefited transnational corporations and economic elites (Flores 2013). English, as well as the commodification of multilingualism, became the fundamental ingredient for this neoliberal economy.

The new linguistic social order was not solely based on the linguistic imperialism of the British Council and other agents so well described by Phillipson (1992). The new linguistic regime now demanded that the ruling class of the world would *also* need English in order to participate in a neoliberal economy and thus obtain economic, political, and social favors. Multilingualism, understood as another language or languages plus English, became the new regime.

Other European languages, especially German and French, continued to compete in the world market, although with diminished importance. And of course, Asian languages, most importantly Chinese, have taken on great importance in these global markets. But English is still the motor behind the world’s growing multilingualism.

The efforts in the European Union to promote plurilingualism can be interpreted as trying to reserve a space at the table for European languages other than English. The Council of Europe (2000) defines plurilingualism as ‘the ability to use several languages to varying degrees and for distinct purposes.’ This concept promotes the idea that bi/multilingualism is more than additive and that bilingual speakers are more than two monolinguals in one (Grosjean 1982). Plurilingualism indeed liberates bilingual speakers from the monolingual/monoglossic constructions of bilingualism of the 20th century. But the concept of plurilingualism has been constructed with an epistemology that responds to western dominant constructions of named languages, and thus leaves the hierarchies of languages intact. The speaker’s ‘first’ or ‘native’ language is dominant and full, whereas the other linguistic practices are viewed as being the result of partial competence in a second or third named language. In moving toward this more flexible definition of multilingualism, the concept of plurilingualism also opened the floodgates for the triumph of English, for now everyone was encouraged to use it, even if they had ‘partial competence.’

The construction of a new order for multilingualism in which English, as an autonomous powerful language, was the key instrument was now in full swing. Interestingly enough, the co-construction of English and multilingualism has enabled new understandings of multilingualism, understandings that in some small way open up possibilities to view the language practices of multilinguals from their own indigenous perspective. And yet, the contestation between different understandings of both language and multilingualism is today even fiercer than it has been in the past. The next section discusses how the discourse and study around English and multilingualism have changed, as well as the difficulties involved in transferring these recent theoretical understandings to practice, especially in schools.



## Future directions: changing conceptions of English and multilingualism

As multilingual speakers appropriate English resources, we have started to relinquish the idea that there is but one standardized English. In the 1990s, the work of Kachru (1990, 1992) advanced the idea that English was indeed capable of ‘alchemy’, as he termed it in the title of one of his books. Kachru’s model recognized that English was spoken in three circles – an ‘inner circle,’ that included the United Kingdom and the United States, an ‘outer circle’ that included former colonies and where English was used as a second language, and an ‘expanding circle’ that included nation states with no colonial connection to English, but where English was increasingly spoken as a lingua franca. Kachru’s focus was on indigenized Englishes; thus his work did not focus on multilingualism. Although most important, Kachru’s work and most of the work that followed on World Englishes never faced the fact that the growing multilingualism was a result of a different way in which the power of English was exercised in a neoliberal economy. In the outer and expanding circles the increased contact with English created the conditions for a growing multilingualism, whereas in the inner circle, contact with users of languages other than English constituted a transformed multilingual context. Even as they were first described, the circles no longer held their geographical and historical boundaries for English, for multilingualism was in their midst.

The work on World Englishes was extended by what became the work of proponents of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). ELF continued the work of highlighting the renewed interest in the diversity of English, and questioned the native English norms. Instead of focusing on the code itself, especially in postcolonial contexts, as the early work on World Englishes had done, ELF now looked at how English was used as a social practice in diverse communities (Seidlhofer 2009, 2011; Jenkins 2015). Seidlhofer (2009) was perhaps the first to point out the fluidity of the ELF data, motivated, she said, by the ‘situated negotiation of meaning’ (p. 242). And, paying more attention to what concerns us in this chapter, Jenkins (2015) called for a repositioning of English and multilingualism in ELF; that is, as Jenkins argued, the fact that ELF cannot be treated in isolation since it is a multilingual practice.

There is, however, much tension between those who see themselves as scholars of ‘English,’ and those who see themselves as ‘multilingual’ scholars. The tension emerges from the fact that minority critical multilingual scholars, especially from the former Asian colonies, have increasingly questioned the concept of named language in an effort to give scholarly credence to their own fluid language practices (see, for example, Khubchandani 1997). In a highly critical book, Makoni and Pennycook (2007) call for the ‘disinvention’ of named languages which, they claim, have been instruments of colonial oppression. Taking up the old idea proposed by Bakhtin (1981) that linguistic practices are heteroglossic, the concept of additive bilingualism is also increasingly giving way to that of dynamic bilingualism (García 2009). Languages are not simply piled up as wholes in speakers’ consciousness, but their repertoires are recognized as mobile (Blommaert 2010).

Speakers’ fluid linguistic practices, what we previously called *indigenous multilingualism*, have always been historically present (Canagarajah and Liyanage 2012). This use of language is not new; rather what is new is the critical sociolinguistic scholarship that has called attention to the imperialistic reasons for preserving the focus on a named language like English and the authoritative literate multilingualism of the past, instead of acknowledging multilingual speakers’ fluid language practices.

These fluid multilingual practices have been identified by many different names with slightly different meanings – polylinguaging/polylingual languaging (Jørgensen 2008),

metrolingualism (Otsuji and Pennycook 2010), translingual practices (Canagarajah 2013), and translanguaging (Blackledge and Creese 2010; García 2009; García and Wei 2014; Otheguy et al. 2015).

Interestingly enough, translanguaging had its origin in the British Isles, in Wales, where Cen Williams (1994) first introduced *trawsiethu* as a bilingual approach to the teaching of Welsh-English bilinguals where both languages were used simultaneously, one for input and another for output. Over time, translanguaging was extended to refer to both the fluid language practices of multilingual people, as well as the leveraging of those practices for education purposes around this more inclusive vision of multilingualism (see, for example, Blackledge and Creese 2010; García 2009; García and Wei 2014; Hornberger and Link 2012). Rather than reify named languages, translanguaging makes the point that multilingual speakers have a unitary language repertoire in which their linguistic knowledge is not partitioned along the understandings of named languages in society.

Taking up the translanguaging of US Latinx English-Spanish bilinguals, Otheguy et al. (2015) argue that the language repertoire of these US Latinx is not simply made up of separate and partitioned English language and Spanish language, although this might be the societal understanding. Instead, their linguistic repertoire is made up of features that they actively select from a unitary repertoire to serve them well in the communicative situation at hand. That is, speakers, and especially multilingual speakers, are constantly activating certain features, while suppressing others, in an effort to choose the best ‘hints’ to interact with the appropriate audience. That is to say, for multilinguals linguistic knowledge is not partitioned internally along the understandings of named languages in society. Translanguaging moves the linguistic agency and power from the nation state that starts with imposing a standardized way of speaking two or more languages to the multilingual speaker who becomes the agent of their linguistic repertoire.

Translanguaging classrooms disrupt the hierarchization that often exists in language education programs, where named languages, and especially English in today’s many English-medium programmes, are given greater value than local language practices. And yet, translanguaging pedagogical practices have not been able to free themselves from the goals of monolingualism or authoritative literate multilingualism that are demanded in schools. For example, the translanguaging pedagogy developed in the United States through the work of CUNY-NYSIEB (Celic and Seltzer 2012; García and Kleyn 2016) and in García et al. (2017) also focuses on the acquisition of whole named languages, and especially English, in order to leverage the translanguaging of multilingual students. It is indeed a struggle to get schools to construct spaces where a transformative translanguaging pedagogy can free up speakers’ tongues, so as to focus not on linguistic conventions, but on their power over language. Whether translanguaging pedagogy can break the cycle of promoting English, even in the midst of a multilingual turn, remains to be seen.

It is possible that translanguaging could become simply an instrument of power to ensure that there are appropriate interactions of trade and business between people who speak differently, giving English the advantage. This would generate even more interest in multilingualism with English, rather than that of minoritized people from the periphery. Flores (2013) has cautioned that if not monitored closely, this new flexibility surrounding English could become a way of having more adaptable workers, able to adjust to the changing economic conditions of today. It is important to realize that our new and positive construction of multilingualism could not have occurred without the rise of a deterritorialized English, that is an English that is spoken everywhere, in deregulated markets that need able and multilingual bodies to carry out the work of a neoliberal economy.

In the recent past, language education programmes have been transformed. For example, viewing foreign language programmes as insufficient, Content and Language Integrated Learning programmes have been developed, where the language is used as the medium of instruction for one to a couple of periods of day. Bilingual education (BE) and multilingual education (MLE) programmes have also proliferated. But despite efforts to include languages other than English, educational programmes that include English are the ones that are popular and that people desire (Piller and Takahashi 2006). In fact, in many nation states where minority groups first used BE to gain more political and economic control (for example, in the Basque Country after the death of Franco and the new constitution of the Spanish state), it is English that is promoting the transformation of bilingual programmes into multilingual programmes, now adding English to Euskara (Basque) and Spanish (see especially Cenoz 2009). And multilingual education, especially in Asia, continues to proliferate, with English always included. This is the case, for example, in Kazakhstan, which has fully embraced a trilingual model for their citizens in Kazakh, Russian and English.

In the field of English-language composition, translanguaging, analogous to translanguaging but reserved for writing in English, has gained much ground since the 2011 College English manifesto (Horner et al. 2011). The 2011 manifesto encouraged the field of writing and composition studies to leverage the different ways in which people use language in writing English. The greater recognition of language diversity and difference has meant that concepts of standard English and correctness have started to be debunked. In this way, English composition and rhetoric scholars are working against the hegemonic ideals of language and the assumptions held against those who are not ‘native English’ speakers, while at the same time they are supporting multilingualism as an important resource.

The greater interest in multilingualism today has altered the ways in which we view it, and yet, the new study of multilingualism has also been created in and through English, ensuring that English and its speakers reserve an important role in shaping understandings of language and multilingualism that will benefit them. The number of journals in English dedicated to the study of multilingualism, in all its aspects, is significant and growing. The most respected journals in the field are all in English, issued by top UK or US global publishers, and seldom have articles in languages other than English. The major conferences on multilingual issues all over the world take place in English, with very few papers delivered in languages other than English, despite international locations. The great growth of multilingual universities throughout the globe has to do precisely with English and the transmission of western knowledge to all (see, for example, van der Walt 2011).

The move in society and education toward more bilingual or multilingual education programmes is important, for it is a way to give different people and their belief systems and cultural practices the attention they deserve. But it is essential to also point out, as we did before, that many bilingual and multilingual programmes throughout the world have been fueled solely by the interest in English, and advance notions of multilingualism that benefit only elites. This has resulted in more social and economic inequities. Often, only those who are capable of paying private tuition fees for well-resourced school programmes have access to an adequate education that includes not only English, but also the histories, mindsets and cultures of the English-speaking world. Thus, many bilingual and multilingual education programmes are instruments of western propaganda, working against the local conditions in which education takes place (García 2009).

As our assumptions about multilingualism are transformed, the imperial role of English needs to be continually questioned, as well as its role in shaping this new multilingual turn. As Foucault (1971) said, we must take up the real political task in a society, which is

to criticize the workings of institutions which appear to be both neutral and independent; to criticize them in such manner that the political violence which has always exercised itself obscurely through them will be unmasked, so that one can fight them.

(n.p.)

To highlight how the constitution of English and multilingualism has happened, we conclude by focusing on the case of Asia.

### **A case study: English and multilingualism in Asia**

South Asia, Southeast Asia and East Asia have been described as having the greatest concentration of ‘outer-circle’ English using societies, where English is at least a second or official language with important intranational uses (Kachru 1990). These consist of mainly the former British colonies (e.g. India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Myanmar, and Hong Kong). The impact of Anglo colonization by the British Empire on the use of English in these regions has been significant and is well documented, but until recently the rich multilingual practices of the region had not been recognized.

#### *Fluid multilingualism in pre-colonial times*

Canagarajah and Liyanage (2012) have uncovered historical evidence of the vibrant, fluid multilingual practices in pre-colonial South Asian communities before constraining language ideologies and policies were introduced by the British colonizers. They say:

Diversity, in all its multifaceted forms meshed in with thousands of years of sociopolitical history, is at the heart of the Indian subcontinent ... People who grew up in multilinguistic societies in this part of the world developed multiple memberships, both linguistic and otherwise, and their memberships overlapped and interlocked in amicable and productive ways to create fluid and hybrid identities.

(Canagarajah and Liyanage, p. 52)

Indian scholars have pointed out that Anglo-European colonizers brought with them modernist constructs such as essentialist linguistic identity and the homogeneous speech community and used them in lands such as India to categorize people for purposes of taxation, administrative convenience, and political control, with damaging, divisive results for post-colonial peoples (Khubchandani 1997). A key impact of colonization was the introduction of linguistic hierarchies with English often placed at the top. This dominant position of English lingers on in the postcolonial era.

#### *English and hierarchical multilingualism in postcolonial Asian societies*

Colonization has had the damaging effect of essentializing multilingual language practices and identities, forcing what are fuzzy, dynamic, and fluid practices into separate language and identity categories with tight, discrete boundaries. In postcolonial societies in Asia, the sociopolitical elite were often the bilingual elite in former colonies and they often also followed in the footsteps of their former colonial masters in creating solid identity and language boundaries in their desire for modernist nation-building and management of

internal diversity. For example, Rubdy (2005) calls the language policy that has evolved in post-independence Singapore one of 'pragmatic multilingualism', which is actually dominated by English:

Singapore's multilingual model, neatly fits the nation's population into four major ethnic blocs, comprising the Chinese, Malay, Indian and 'Others', with Mandarin, Malay, Tamil and English as the respective official languages representing them. However, in effect, English has clearly been the dominant language ever since Singapore's independence in 1965, followed closely by Mandarin among the Chinese community, as a consequence of the success of the pro-Mandarin campaigns launched annually.

(p. 56)

Note that this kind of multilingualism is state-defined and state-governed. The designated 'heritage language' of a schoolchild is often not a familiar home language but an official standardized language (e.g. standard Mandarin Chinese rather than a Chinese 'dialect'). The local variety of English ('Singlish') is also frowned upon by the official and educational authorities even though it is likely to be the most familiar kind of English to many Singaporeans. Commenting on the change in the sociolinguistic ecology of Singapore in the past six decades since independence, Cavallaro and Ng (2014: 33) write:

While Singapore's language policy approach can be associated with positive outcomes, such as Singapore's economic success, there are also negative consequences, including an increasingly reduced multilingualism, official rejection of local creativity in English and communicative dislocation within families and across generations.

Likewise, in postcolonial Hong Kong, due to the dominant discourses of the global importance of English coupled with the continued colonial practice of having English as the medium of higher education, hierarchical multilingualism was firmly installed in both the institutions and subjectivities of people. Since the early colonial days, vernacular or Chinese-medium (CMI) education, which is usually practiced as Cantonese for speaking and Modern Standard Chinese for writing, received little government support. By 1911, the government was providing an English-medium (EMI) education up to university level for children largely from well-to-do families, and a CMI primary education for children from less well-to-do families (Irving 1914). In 1935, a British education inspector, Edmund Burney, visited Hong Kong and completed the famous Burney (1935) Report, in which he criticized the Hong Kong government for neglecting vernacular education. However, government resources continued to be channeled mainly into English-medium schools, cultivating a Westernized, English-conversant elite among the local Chinese population (Lin and Man 2009).

After the 1997 handover of sovereignty to China, Hong Kong installed a linguistic streaming policy in 1998, allowing only 114 secondary schools (about 25% of the total) to offer EMI while maintaining an EMI policy in most of the universities. This led to huge parental pressure demanding the reversal of the policy. In 2010 the government implemented the fine-tuned medium of instruction (MOI) policy, allowing secondary schools some flexibility in choosing their MOI (e.g. schools can choose to teach up to 25% of their curriculum in EMI). In recent years, there has been rising parental preference for English-medium education not only in former Anglo colonies such as Hong Kong or

Singapore, but also in other ‘expanding-circle’ societies such as mainland China, Japan, and South Korea, where English has traditionally been taught as a foreign language.

*Rising popularity of International Schools and English-medium education in Asian societies: Self-imposed linguistic colonialism*

The past decade has seen the rising aspirations of parents in many Asian societies for their children to acquire international education as a marker of global citizenship. For example, many mainland Chinese students leave their familiar sociocultural environments to pursue English-medium higher education in Hong Kong, Japan, Australia, or New Zealand (Ma and Li 2018). English is part and parcel of this dream of internationalization. Interestingly, international education in the form of English-medium international schools in one’s home country has created the ‘migrant experience’ for otherwise local students. For example, local students in Hong Kong experience the marginalization of Chinese in the English-dominant culture of international schools, where speaking any language other than English is frowned upon by teachers and administrators. While becoming native-like in English, they have lost out on the opportunity to develop high levels of Chinese literacy (Li 2017). This strange ‘bubble’ – international schools in one’s hometown – is paradoxically pursued by parents who can afford these expensive international schools in their own homeland. White native-speakerism is also rampant as can be witnessed in the advertising strategies of many international schools and English-language teaching institutes in Asia, where white teachers are advertised as superior teachers of English.

*English as a Lingua Franca in Asia and recognition of multilingualism*

There is, however, room for optimism as researchers begin to document the actual interactions among Asians. This closer look has meant that Asian multilingual varieties of English are emerging and gaining currency in everyday working life, even though they might not be officially recognized by the national authorities. For example, there is the building of the Asian Corpus of English, which is a corpus of naturally occurring spoken English used as a lingua franca among Asians, primarily from East and Southeast Asian societies (Kirkpatrick 2014). This work allows researchers to advocate for more ecologically sound principles for the teaching of English in Asia, and a more egalitarian kind of multilingualism. Kirkpatrick (2014) advocates against upholding the concept of native speaker or native culture in English teaching, and argues for using local multilingual teachers with teaching and assessment that is relevant to the Asian contexts. It is those who are well-versed in the multilingual context of Asia who make the most appropriate teachers of English for Asian contexts. They can provide both role and linguistic models for the students (Kirkpatrick 2014; Oda 2014).

**Conclusion**

This chapter privileges the diverse linguistic practices of people in interactions of power and domination, rather than the standardized language of empires and powerful nation states that is named English. We have described how, throughout the history of English/British and then American world rule, English was constructed as being spoken by monolingual white native speakers who were superior to multilingual subjects. We have also discussed how in today’s neoliberal economy of global competition, it is now English that promotes

the multilingualism of many. But the struggles over the power and legitimacy of English and its speakers, whether monolingual or multilingual, continue, as highlighted in the history of the Asian context. Focusing on speakers' linguistic practices, and not named languages, disrupts the hegemony of English-language studies. It is hoped that this chapter starts to replace the hierarchical multilingualism in which English is always paramount with a more egalitarian one.

### Further reading

- Alcón, E. and M. P. Safont Jordá (2012) *Multilingualism and English. The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*. Malden: John Wiley and Sons. This book argues that the spread of English has given rise to new English varieties, but also multilingualism.
- Jenkins, J. (2015) 'Repositioning English and multilingualism in English as Lingua Franca', *Englishes in Practice* 2 (3): 49–85. This article foregrounds multilingualism in ELF studies.
- Khubchandani, L. M. (1997) *Revisualizing Boundaries: A Plurilingual Ethos*. Thousand Oaks: Sage. This book reveals the fluidity in multilingual interactions, especially in the Indian subcontinent.
- Kachru, B. B. (1990) *The Alchemy of English. The Spread, Functions, and Models of Non-Native Englishes*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press. This book proposed the legitimation of new varieties of English.
- Pennycook, A. (2006) *Global Englishes and Transcultural Flows*. Abingdon: Routledge. This book explores the relationship between the spread of English in globalization and the reuses of cultural forms in disparate contexts.

### Related topics

- English and colonialism
- World Englishes: disciplinary debates and future directions
- Literacy in English: literacies in Englishes.

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