
Reviewed by VINITI VAISH
Center for Research in Pedagogy and Practice
National Institute of Education, Singapore
E-mail: vvaish@nie.edu.sg

This interdisciplinary book is a collection of papers read at the GNEL, the ‘Gesellschaft für neue Englisch-sprachige Literaturen’ (Society for the Study of the New English Literatures) & MAVEN (Major Varieties of English) conference, June 2001 in Freiburg.

The first section, ‘Resisting (IN) English: Globalization and its Counter-Discourses,’ is the power center of this book with some of the best essays. Skutnabb-Kangas’ piece, in which she argues for the relationship between linguistics and biodiversity, is a forceful polemical essay. Pennycook looks at the interaction between global and local forces in the spread of English, where by ‘local’ he means popular culture. His analysis of ‘Naya Zindagi’ (he acknowledges that it should be Nayi Zindagi) Jamaican-style rap, sung by British men of South Asian background, is refreshing. His pedagogical question of whether popular culture should be used as a curriculum site to engage youth merits serious thought. Toolan gives a rational, though unconvincing, argument that global English can unwittingly be an agent of reform and fairness. In fact, Muhleisen’s essay shows how unfair scientific literature is in favoring English and makes a plea for more translations. Far more credible arguments are presented by Muhlhäuser, who believes that by replacing a small local language, English caused environmental deterioration and by Alexander, who reinforces Phillipson’s (1992) point about English and linguistic imperialism. Like a lot of postcolonial theorizing, Lysandrou and Lysandrou’s text is dense and maintains that the globalization of English has elements of progress and regress. Price’s inclusion of vocabulary from varieties of English in

Language Policy (2005) 4: 207–209
DOI 10.1007/s10993-005-5962-6
the Oxford English Dictionary is an important step in giving these varieties status. In a similar vein, Seidhofer and Jenkins argue that non-native speakers’ phonetic features that do not cause misinterpretation should not be considered errors.

‘The Caribbean and the African Diaspora in North America and Britain,’ which is the next section, highlights the following issues: should Caribbean creoles have official status as they do in Haiti (by Devonish), what are the linguistic and psychological implications of decolonization, and should creoles be valorized and used in the classroom to teach English (by Simmons–McDonald)? The articles by Darroch and Meyer delve into religion in post-colonial literature both concluding that if we refrain from ‘othering’ (Said, 1978) and do not look at Christianity through an English-speaking imagination, we will see a unique African identity. Tournay’s essay is a traditional piece of literary criticism showing that in Caryl Phillips’ novel, A State of Independence, Phillips uses post-colonial discourse to reveal the central character’s ‘contaminated identity.’ Thus the central character, Bertram Francis, returns home to experience the ‘hybridity’ in his own character, where by hybridity is meant that moment when colonial discourse exhibits traces of the ‘Other.’

The next section, ‘English and English-Language Writing in Africa,’ is valuable for sociolinguists who study developing countries. Kamwangamalu’s title, ‘2 + 9 = 1’, refers to the two languages, English and Afrikaans, plus the nine major African languages in the South African school system leading to unilingualism in one language: English. Kembo-Sure discusses the tension between English and Kiswahili in Kenya and Mafu between English and Swahili in Tanzania. In both countries, the authors see English language policy as creating unequal stratifications thus connecting the colonial and post-colonial. Deuber and Oloko’s article is unique in that it analyses the use of Nigerian pidgin in transcripts from radio broadcasts and shows how its use carries serious content, not merely humor. The remaining articles in this section by Ramsey-Kurz, Samin, Chiavetta and Frank are literary criticism. They raise issues of identity, culture, race and the encroachment of Anglophone literacy on African life in the language and use of major African dramatists and novelists. I was fascinated by the points of contact between Africa and India: in particular, the use of three languages in the school system and the shared British policy of educating only a few in English so as to create a buffer between them and the masses.

The essay representing India by Premila Paul is disappointing in its simplicity. The Indo Anglian writers analysed, except for Roy, are