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Review of *Linguistic Capital and Language Policy in a Globalizing World,* by Joseph Sung-Yul Park and Lionel Wee

Park, Joseph Sung-Yul and Lionel Wee. ***Markets of English: Linguistic Capital and Language Policy in a Globalizing World*****. New York: Routledge/Taylor and Francis, 2012.**

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Here Lionel Wee and Joseph Sung-Yul Park, sociolinguists known for their work on English in Singapore and South Korea, respectively, provide an overview of the development of theories about global English and present their own syncretic candidate for a master theory. This well researched book draws on examples from all over the world. I found it to be very clearly written, although it deploys an analytic vocabulary more complex than usual in composition studies.

The authors allude to the on-going struggle over the global place of English, whether it is to be seen merely as a language that "reproduces imperialistic relations" (3) imposed by colonialism and destructive of local culture; or as a "legitimate language of local expression" (3) undistorted by colonialism; or as a "weapon to strike back at the oppressive global relationships of power" (3). In any case, they affirm that English is a language of unequal power relations, whether in terms of native versus non-native speakers' status, or in terms of economic privilege controlling access to the more prestigious forms of the language.

While analysis of global English as an element of cultural imperialism has produced useful insights, Park and Wee contend that intensified globalization has changed the context for the language's spread. More often today, it is not imposed from the outside by military power, but "embedded into material and symbolic relations on the local level" (5). Moreover, population movements, global media and "language mixing and hybridity" (5) weaken the view that English is the exclusive possession of the countries in which it has historically been the native tongue.

The authors note newly competing notions of why one would learn a language: because it is "a marker of an inherited identity" (14); because it signifies a new sort of identity that may not be available in one's traditional culture; because it is deemed to be economically useful.

These options clearly emphasize the learner's agency. The authors want to go beyond prior work on linguistic imperialism because it tends to ignore individuals' abilities to appropriate English for their own varied purposes (16-17). Similarly, the authors want to go beyond prior work on linguistic human rights, not because they are not sympathetic to the need to defend minority languages from extinction, but because this work has tended to downplay individuals' strategies for accommodating English and other tongues (17-18). The authors are concerned to preserve some notion of agency because they want their work to be able to result in action-oriented pedagogical recommendations (which they give in their last chapter).

Park and Wee use the work of Pierre Bourdieu to develop their own theory. They begin with the concept of "value," useful to analyze English because it encompasses the value of language to a person's identity, the language's (perceived) economic value, and the way these categories of value interact, e.g. to use a certain kind of English implies that one is a certain kind of person, socially and even morally (25-26). American compositionists will recognize here the kind of indignation that sometimes greets public deviations from Standard English, as if these were minor sins.

Bourdieu's concept of the "linguistic market" encourages analysis of how a particular language or form of a language becomes symbolic capital that can be used to acquire other symbolic or material goods (27). He believes that different languages or different varieties of English have no inherent difference in value. This assumption, I note, disagrees with those American compositionists who claim that Standard English is more cognitively sophisticated

than other varieties (a view that, thankfully, seems to have gone out). If languages have no inherent value, it becomes clear that the different values assigned to them derive from the power accrued to their speakers. English becomes a prestige language because English speakers are successful imperialists; so-called Standard English becomes the standard because its speakers are the most powerful people in native-English societies, a concept with which most American compositionists would now agree.

The more "unified" a market is, the more power a particular form of linguistic capital will have. Thus Standard English gains power from the fact that, in the U.S., it is valorized by educational institutions, the government, the military, business and industry, etc. Similarly, the more a particular language is used by these social structures internationally, the more power and prestige it will have; this is how English became the global lingua franca (28).

No market is ever entirely unified, however. "Autonomous" markets may exist simultaneously, though they are never entirely autonomous either. The authors' example is the use of so-called non-Standard forms of language by artists for aesthetic purposes, which are recognized within their social sphere if not in the larger society. My American example: *Huckleberry Finn*. An autonomous market rich in cultural capital may still be relatively disempowered vis-à-vis the larger society if it is weak in economic power. My example: African-American culture. Park and Wee point out that any individual participates in multiple linguistic markets of varying degrees of power, where the linguistic capital that person possesses will be valued differently.

But the authors must deal with the objection to Bourdieu that he focuses so exclusively on macrostructures of power that he seems to make social change impossible (32). They believe Bourdieu really has already dealt with it via his concept of "habitus," which emphasizes

practices, not static structures. This perspective helpfully emphasizes local contexts and individual adaptations. "Habitus" refers to the ways we have learned to do language that feel natural to us (34), but that are available to introspection and willful alteration. The authors like this perspective because it suggests that their pedagogical recommendations can be implemented.

What aspects of language practice can be examined subjectively? They are:

- "Language ideologies" (37), that is, the "rationalizations and justifications" through which users "attribute social meaning to linguistic forms" (37), thus constructing individual identities and larger communities (38).
- "Indexicality" (38), the way a particular language usage points to a particular social context, such as a regional accent tying one to a particular geographic region.
- "Interdiscursivity" (39), examining when a discourse is used in a new social context and gets accepted there, thus increasing the varieties of indexicality of that particular discourse.

The first topic in Park and Wee's review of global English theories is the "Three Circles" model of "World Englishes" developed by Braj Kachru. While this model has rightly been influential, the authors contend that it associates varieties of English too rigidly with national boundaries, neglects local variations, and implicitly valorizes Inner Circle varieties because failing to analyze unequal power relations as they affect global English (18-19). Park and Wee reframe the "Three Circles" as indicative of how English is valued—that is, of ideologies of English, and especially of the privileging of so-called Standard English.

In evaluating a particular user's or community's relationship to English, three factors are considered: "allegiance" points to how a language choice indicates "loyalty towards the social group associated with that language" (71). "Competence" relates to linguistic fluency, but the

authors point out that this is often measured by how users are judged according to the other two factors. The third is "authenticity," which "refers to the perception that a speaker bears particular racial, ethnic, or other background attributes stereotypically understood to be essentialized markers of membership in a specific group" (71).

In more unified markets, these three factors combine to create a highly "essentialist" cultural model (72), promoting linguistic homogeneity as defining national identity , assuming stable links between language and individual identity, and stigmatizing appropriations by people who don't meet the predetermined criteria for authenticity. In contrast, an "artful performance" model values deviation from norms. This model obtains in more autonomous markets, such as global rap music (72).

The authors' primary example of a unified market for English is the US, an Inner Circle country in which the normative user of Standard English is White and monolingual, leading to agitation against other languages, including an "English Only" movement, and prejudice even against those who speak Standard English with a non-standard accent (73). One shows one's allegiance to the US by mastering Standard English competently, though if one does not bear all the markers of authenticity (e.g. is not White), even great competence and allegiance may be called into question.

In an Expanding Circle country, the three factors will come into play in the opposite way, typically essentializing the native tongue and holding English at a distance. The authors' example is South Korea, which is a unified market for Korean. Here allegiance to the Korean language is considered to be a crucial marker of loyalty to the nation. The ability to speak good Korean is deemed authentic in those who are ethnically Korean. I observed in South Korea that Korean Americans were expected to be able to speak Korean, no matter how they were raised—

e.g. my daughters!—while White people were expected to be unable to advance beyond the most rudimentary level in the language. Hence here, although English is sought for practical purposes, there is an ideology of deprecating one's competence in English so as not to threaten one's allegiance to Korean or to appear as a race traitor (repudiating one's authentic ethnicity) (74-75).

In an Outer Circle country, the market is not unified. English typically is an official language, but it may be no one's native tongue or it may be one native tongue among several. The authors' example is Singapore, which recognizes four official languages. Malay, Mandarin, and Tamil are native tongues of the nation's Malay, Chinese, and Indian citizens respectively (and so provide essentialized markers of membership in these communities), but all citizens are also expected to be competent in English and being so is not seen as threatening their allegiance to their native-tongue communities. However, no one is an "authentic" speaker of English in this market, occasioning on-going anxiety about whether "good English" is being spoken (74).

Next, Park and Wee consider the approach to English as a lingua franca, a.k.a. ELF, which claims that there is an emerging variety of English that is intelligible internationally, and that this new variety should be taught in place of the Inner Circle variety. The authors charge this approach with naiveté about how users of non-standard forms are stigmatized. Moreover, they point out that so far, efforts to describe the core linguistic features of ELF have failed, and they contend that these efforts must fail because ELF is essentially a form of language practice that emerges in and for specific communicative situations and may never be the same twice (19-20).

Park and Wee like the work of Alastair Pennycook and others who understand how people appropriate English locally and use it to perform new identities in defiance of unequal global structures of power. Pennycook focuses on performativity that occurs in autonomous markets where appropriations of English are not only not constrained by factors of allegiance,

competence and authenticity, but often explicitly subvert those values. His primary example is "raplish" (84-85), a form of English that he sees as being employed by rappers worldwide. I take this to mean not that they are all using exactly the same English but that their relationship to English is similar in that they feel free to mix and match it with local cultural and linguistic expressions. Freedom to adapt raplish is enhanced by its association with African American experience, a "resistance vernacular" (86) that can be used to assert the viewpoints of other marginalized groups as well.

No one thinks a user of raplish is betraying his/her allegiance to another language. No one judges the user's competence either in terms of Standard English or some putatively standardized vocabulary of rap (no such standard exists). A raplish user's ability is not judged by authenticity criteria either, e.g. people who are not of African descent can use African American Vernacular elements in raplish without criticism. "Authentic" uses of raplish are those that express the users' own personal situations of resistance to domination, whatever they may be (90-91).

Park and Wee critique Pennycook, however, for not taking into account that no autonomous market is entirely autonomous, and hip hop especially not so, given that hip hop performers are performing for money and have to deal with the constraints imposed on them by the larger commercial culture, which is part of a unified market for a more standard language form.

Finally, the authors critique Pennycook for recommending that raplish be incorporated into school curricula in order to spread its subversive power against the dominant Standard English. Citing what happened when a minority language in Indonesia was incorporated into the school curriculum, they argue that doing so tends to denature the minority language or autonomous-market variety of English, causing it to lose its subversive power (98-100).

I am surprised that the authors do not point out that Pennycook fails to exploit the full potential of the artful performance perspective precisely because he focuses on a form of English that is literally performed for money. I'd be interested in a more abstract application of the concept, e.g. to look at people performing the identity of successful academics—what language do they use and how much freedom is there to incorporate variant forms?

Park and Wee contest the view of the English language as an entity, with clearly defined boundaries. They trace this concept to "modernist conceptions of nationhood" (104), whereby a language is associated with a geographical location and presumed to have boundaries as clearly defined as national borders. Additionally, the English-entity is presumed to have a stable internal structure and unchanging rules for correct usage: this is how a "standard" form of the language is established, but once established, it is seen as timeless (107-108).

This stable, timeless structure is removed from practice. It can be thoroughly known only by experts. Experts encourage the conceptualization of language as an entity by producing actual entities that claim to contain it, such as grammar books and dictionaries. Users are thereby disqualified as judges of their own language practices. They even come to feel anxiety about whether they are using language "correctly" (109). Experts exacerbate this anxiety by enforcing "verbal hygiene" (118).

Furthermore, if language is an entity, it can be owned. As English spreads globally, the countries where it was originally the dominant native tongue can no longer claim to own it, but the same theoretical error is committed if we speak of Outer Circle countries or any other social grouping (e.g. the global rap culture) as "owning" their own varieties of English. Problem: any talk of ownership still posits an entity to be owned (110-112).

Against the concept of language-as-entity, the authors propose language-as-practice. Rather than being a pre-existing, stable, timeless structure, English (like any other language) emerges only in use. Academic experts therefore do not have the power to regulate it, nor can it be said to be owned by any group. English is not something we have, it's something we do.

Nevertheless, there are still standards for how English is to be used, but these are flexible and they evolve over time. No one claims that they are timeless. When you first start to do language, you have to abide by the standards (I'd say "conventions" or even "customs" would be a better word) that are already in place, but once you are a user, you can help change them. The evolution of language is thus analogous to how artistic styles evolve. At any given time, certain kinds of painting are considered to be "good," but we know that these judgments change and we even expect them to do so.

Moreover, "good" should be differentiated into "internal goods," that is, the pleasure or identity underwriting that one obtains from engaging in a practice—such as the pleasure of creating a painting that pleases you; and "external goods," that is, the social advantages your practice may gain for you, such as the money for which you can sell the painting or the prestige which you get from being praised by art critics. The authors note that these two types of goods are not always neatly separable (121-122). I would add, however, that sometimes they clearly are, as when an artist feels bad about herself because she knows she is creating inferior art, art that does not please her, so that she can please the inferior taste of the mass market that will pay her for it.

English must be regarded as an entity, in order to be turned into a commodity, that is, an entity with economic value (though the authors acknowledge that languages have other forms of value, social, personal, etc.). This value is established by indexicality, that is, by the attributes

assigned to people who speak English "well"—or not; and by interdiscursivity, that is, by the "circulation" (125) of English across different contexts of discourse—I would say, across different discourse communities where English is used. Both of these sources of value develop in use, as more different people use English in more different social locations.

To the extent that indexicality contributes to the commodification of anything (be it a language or an expensive wristwatch), it does so by treating personal identity as something that can be treated as an entity, with stereotyped characteristics. The authors do not believe that personal identity actually is an entity; rather it is constructed in performance just like language is. But it is treated as an entity in order to sell commodities. The market logic is: acquire the commodity and you acquire the identity with which it is associated.

Potentially, the indexicality of English is virtually limitless, that is, it can be associated with a limitless variety of identities; and the interdiscursivity of English is virtually limitless, that is, it can be performed in a limitless variety of social locations. Of the available identities associated with a language, the particular interdiscursive location will tend to determine which identity(s) are meaningful there, but the other identities do not go away; "they reside in the background, as the excess of the indexical field" (138). This situation is exciting for the authors, for it points to the potential for change, undertheorized in Bourdieu. The habitus can change because these other identities are available to be accessed as social conditions propel change or even as human agents make conscious choices.

To understand how to access the change potential in the excess of the indexical field, we must understand how English comes to be a valued commodity in a wide variety of markets (the more markets, the more potential identities with which the language may be associated). English

must have some commensurability across markets or it could not be a global language. How does the English "commodity" acquire commensurability?

In almost all social situations, some language or other must be used. And once a language is chosen, this choice inevitably privileges those who are competent in the language and disadvantages those who are not. To conceal this inherent inequality, claims are made of "language neutrality" (144). When the claim is for "intragroup neutrality," what's meant is that all members of the group are presumed to have equal access to the language. Such claims work only if "iconization" happens, e.g. that all members of a group are assumed to be competent in the group's language purely by virtue of their group membership—it is virtually genetic. Iconization obscures the different kinds of access different group members may have to the group language (depending on age or education level, for example), and requires "erasure" of other complicating factors, such as the lurking indexical meanings of English as associated with colonialism and elite native social classes.

Relevant to the status of global English is its persistent claim of "intergroup neutrality," that is, that "it does not endow any particular group with economic or political advantages—or, it provides equal economic and political advantages to everyone" (147). This must hold true across the widest possible geographical areas and social-class lines. The more mobile the language, the more successful its bid to be global.

Moreover, choosing to use a mobile language accentuates the individual's ability to be mobile in accord with "Neoliberalism," which claims that free markets, liberating individual entrepreneurial skills, best conduce to human happiness (157). This ideology's emphasis on self-actualization encourages liberating oneself from any traditional allegiances that would tend to pre-shape one's identity. This would include allegiance to a native language that constitutes an

important aspect of one's ethnic identity (e.g. Korean, in Korea) but (supposedly) possesses only intragroup neutrality. Rather, one should turn to global English, (supposedly) intergroup neutral and a neutral medium of communication for science, technology and business. Thus it seems that "to speak English is to shed the suffocating restriction of essential identity and to discover and develop one's true self—the entrepreneurial self that can maximally profit from the free market" (161).

Park and Wee call this the "false promise" of English (161). It is false not only because access to English is unequally distributed, but also because even if you acquire competence, other factors limit the value of English competence across global markets—the language is not universally convertible and commensurable, as claimed. These factors include your geographical location, race, gender, social class, and deployment of other indexical features of value in the particular market where you are trying to cash in on your English. Catherine Prendergast's work on English in Slovakia illustrates something of this false promise.

Can the unjust global power of English be reduced? Park and Wee make recommendations for education, acknowledging that it is not the only site where the hegemony of global English is promulgated but arguing that it is a powerful one. They reject "accommodation-oriented policies" (167) that leave the current linguistic market unchallenged by aiming only to increase access to Standard English. They also reject policies that aim to valorize other varieties of English only within autonomous markets, because language users manifestly need language that can be used in the unified global market.

This global unified market, though powerful, has no one power base; that is, there is no one authority that could be challenged to interrupt Standard English's hegemony. Resisters cannot, in effect, cut off the head of the beast. However, the authors argue that this diffusion of

authority actually creates good conditions for challenging it, since they can occur anywhere and everywhere.

Pedagogical recommendation #1: Standard English is often defined as the variant spoken by the "best" people, such as famous writers, prestige university graduates, and even royalty (172). Teachers can aim to decouple language standards from stereotyped social identities. Teachers can help students see that standards in English develop over time, in practice, and everyone who uses the language, whether high-status or not, perforce contributes to the development of its standards. What was once "incorrect" can become "correct" because many people use the "incorrect" locution, not just perceived elites.

Pedagogical recommendation #2: Teachers can attack the very notion of stable (stereotyped) social identities by showing that they are socially constructed. "Note that this does not mean dismissing all static categories as fantasy" (174). Rather than attempting to set them aside, one can try to cultivate some critical distance on them. The authors disavow any claim to detached objectivity that could immediately induce "a radically 'enlightened' understanding" of social roles' discursive construction (175). But they argue that the philosophical practice of "bracketing" can be useful (175), in which by extreme mental effort, one suspends the operations of familiar ways of organizing daily experience, including assigning people to social categories. Temporarily suspending one's belief, for example, in the superiority of the native speaker would "lead [teacher and students] to greater awareness of its socially constructed nature, and subsequently help them question its status as a natural identity upon which they can rest their ideas of the meaning or value of English in the world" (176).

Pedagogical recommendation 3#: Teachers can approach the study of the English language like a Wiki: collaboratively, open-endedly, and democratically. This counters the

notion that “correct” English is dictated by an authority who possesses an unchanging entity-language that cannot be challenged by non-experts. Teachers can invite students to contribute examples of English in use, whether Standard or not, for classroom discussion and comparison.

Pedagogical recommendation #4: Teachers can employ “construction grammars” to analyze instances of language use (180). A construction grammar aims simply to describe the relationship between linguistic form and intended meaning. Note that this approach still means that errors can be found, if a phrase is unintelligible. Rather than learning traditional grammar rules, then, students will learn “partially pre-assembled patterns” or “ready-made units appropriate for a particular situation” (182).

Park and Wee hope that these pedagogical interventions will empower language learners to see themselves as agents of change. They do not need to bow to the current authority of global Standard English but can—and indeed, perforce will—change it by their own practices. I found provocative ideas here.