Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

The English language, multilingualism, and the politics of location

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Drawing on Pennycook's frameworks for understanding the global role of English, we discuss the paradoxes of English language usage in what Canagarajah terms 'periphery communities' internationally. This analysis is complemented by Canagarajah's work on a 'politics of location', which provides powerful insights into a periphery community's local and global investments in English. This notion is explored with particular reference to Norton's work in South Africa and Pakistan, which suggests that creative responses to the dominance of English, whether through codeswitching, appropriation, or subversion, defy essentialist analysis. We argue further that the notion of a politics of location can provide insights into English language usage not only in periphery communities, but also in center communities as well. In this regard, there is urgent need for the ongoing research of such scholars as Cummins, who has sought to better understand the challenges to bilingualism and multilingualism in center communities.

Keywords: center communities; English; investment; multilingualism; periphery communities; politics of location

Introduction

In an 18-month tour of Europe in 1996–97, Drysdale (2001) set out to investigate the languages of what she calls 'Europe's marginalia,' the 'peripheral people...pushed out to the edges of the continent and its islands' (9). In her journey, she interviewed a wide variety of speakers of minority languages, including the Frisians in the North Sea, the Basques on the Franco–Spanish border, the Walloons in Belgium, and the Macedonians in Eastern Europe. What she concluded, amongst other findings, was that the struggle for the recognition of minority languages was made more complex by the forces of globalization, in general, and the increasing dominance of the English language, in particular. 'The majority of Dutch people are bilingual,' she argues, 'but they are bilingual with the useful English, not with the "useless" language of their own country, Frisian' (394). Drysdale's findings concur with those of many language educators, including Cummins, who is a strong advocate for minority languages in the North American context.

Cummins (1996, 2000, 2001a, 2001b) has found that many social, political, and educational policies stemming from the dominance of English in North America compromise struggles for bilingualism, multilingualism, and the maintenance of minority languages. Consequently, he advocates for an educational framework that will promote multilingualism, enhance equity, and enable minority students to

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succeed in an increasingly globalized world. Similarly, scholars such as Block and Cameron (2002) and Phillipson (1998, 2001) recognize the ever more powerful forces of globalization in English language education. It is timely, therefore, to review the literature on the impact of the global spread of English with a view to enhance our understanding of the relationship between the English language, multilingualism, and social change.

In this article, we begin with an overview of the spread of English internationally and then analyze current debates within the framework offered by Pennycook (2000, 2001), who distinguishes six ideological positions taken with reference to the global spread of English – from what he calls *colonial celebratory* to *postcolonial performativity*. We will then turn to the recent work of Canagarajah (1999) to explore how the notion of a 'politics of location' can provide a particularly productive framework for understanding the impact of the English language in what he calls 'periphery' contexts, focusing, by way of example, on South Africa and Pakistan.[1] We will conclude with the suggestion that a politics of location may apply as much to countries in the 'center,' as to those on the periphery.

The spread of English: frameworks for comparison

Few would dispute the claim that English wields much power and influence globally; however, how this has come to pass is much more contested. Pennycook (1994, 1995, 2001), Phillipson (1992) and Tollefson (2000) argue that the spread of English and its resulting linguistic dominance resulted neither naturally nor by accident; rather, they attribute its spread to the cultural and political agendas of governments and multinationals seeking to maintain power and increase profits. Thus, while the notion of choice pervades discourses surrounding English language spread – whether a country chooses English for business and economic development or whether people choose to embrace Western media and culture – many scholars debate whether global citizens have, effectively, any choice about the role of English in their lives. On one hand, McKay (2002, 24) argues that the spread of English and its consequent inequities are 'brought about both by those who actively promote the language and those who consciously *choose* (italics added) to learn it.' Pennycook (1995) maintains, on the other hand, that the notion of 'choice and the usefulness of English' (37) is a misnomer in debates on the spread of English as they do not take into account the social and political influences and constraints that are enmeshed in its usage. Like Pennycook, Tollefson (1991) recognizes that there is no choice that is independent of the multiple and conflicting contexts in which we live. These contexts may include, among others, a country's educational policies and its political agendas. To claim that the notion of choice is detached from these factors, he claims, does not do justice to the historical and contemporary influence of English globally.

In order to address this diversity in perspective and to productively discuss English and its spread in global communities, there is a need for a framework within which to locate our analysis of contemporary debates. To this end, we draw on Pennycook's (2000, 2001) work in which he identifies six frameworks for understanding the global role of English. At one end of the ideological spectrum, the framework *colonial celebratory* is associated with a position that celebrates the global spread of English as it is seen as a useful tool for all people. A second framework, *laissez-faire liberalism*, concentrates specifically on the notion of choice whereby people are seen to be able to make their own decisions about whether or not to learn

English. The third framework, *linguistic imperialism*, refers to Phillipson's (1992) seminal book of the same name in which he argues that English leads to the (re)colonization and homogenization of minorities, while the fourth framework, Skutnabb-Kangas' (2000, 2001) *language ecology and language rights*, sees the adoption and modification of human rights principles to encompass language rights and the survival of minority languages. The fifth framework of *linguistic hybridity* refers to the belief that there are many types of Englishes which can coexist as 'World Englishes' (WEs) – all of which are amenable to teaching. Finally, the framework of *postcolonial performativity* sees English as part of a postcolonial problematic in which resistance and appropriation are integral to local/global relationships. The application of these six frameworks for this analysis allows for a more nuanced socio-political understanding of English language usage in periphery communities – research which remains under explored (cf. Canagarajah 2002c). In the next section, we will begin our discussion through the analysis of English language usage and policy in Singapore. Through the frameworks of colonial celebratory and laissez-faire liberalism, we argue that linguistic policy correlating language ability with economic potential, as well as failing to take into account the interconnectedness of language and identity, loses sight of the larger social and political structures which mediate such relationships.

Colonial celebratory and laissez-faire liberalism: the example of Singapore

In her 2001 article, Rubdy outlines the 'Speak Good English' movement devised by the Singapore government in response to the decline of 'good' English in its population.[2] The prevalence of Singlish (i.e. Singaporean English) was believed to be degrading national identity, economic prosperity, and international competitiveness (cf. Singapore attack on 'Singlish' 2001; Srilal 1999). Due to Singaporeans' struggle to communicate between ethnic groups, the Singapore government believed that a move toward standard English would increase social cohesion and halt the reproduction of 'incorrect' English in younger generations. Furthermore, the move was fueled by the belief that an increase in non-standard English usage was interfering with Singapore's potential for national economic prosperity as well as with its ability to compete with countries that spoke standard English. Adopting standard English was believed to be the only way to simultaneously consolidate the economic objectives of the government and meet the inter-ethnic communication needs of the community while ensuring that individuals had equal access to the invaluable knowledge capital English could provide.

Singapore's pragmatic view of English is best understood with reference to Pennycook's (2000, 2001) framework of laissez-faire liberalism, where the functional uses of English are emphasized with little critical analysis of either the political implications of the language or its dominance. At the same time, the Singapore government's belief that English brings with it extensive benefits for the community reflects its more conservative colonial celebratory ideology. Pennycook's critique of the colonial celebratory framework questions the assumption that knowledge of English will result in benefits for all. Baker (2001), Cummins (2000) and Tollefson (2000), among others, argue convincingly that inequitable social and political relations are not simply rooted in linguistic ability or in the perceived lack thereof. In regards to the economic benefits of English proficiency, Tollefson (2000, 11) argues that it would be difficult 'to differentiate the role of language in determining

income from other factors that also play a role, such as age, sex, occupation, and level of education' (cf. Mason 2004). More generally, May (2001) draws attention to structural disadvantages faced by English-speaking minorities in the USA, pointing out that social and economic benefits continue to elude many African Americans and Hispanics, native-born or otherwise (cf. Pendakur and Pendakur 2004). Such research suggests that the Singapore government, in promoting standard English, is overoptimistic in its expectations of what a language policy can achieve.

There is a second, and perhaps more important, issue at stake. By uncritically advocating the adoption of standard English as a national benchmark and by delegitimizing Singlish, the Singapore government underestimates the connection between language and identity. Indeed, the rejection of Singlish as a recognized and accepted variation of English references wider debates on who 'counts' as an English speaker (see Norton 1997). Kubota (2004) advocates for the need to bring this important issue to the forefront to address 'linguistic and cultural norms and standards...built upon particular worldviews that determine who are legitimate native speakers of English, what constitutes the legitimate form of English, etc., which have been internalized locally by non-Anglophone people' (47–8). In the particular case of Singapore, Rubdy (2001) links this need for legitimation to the recognition that Singlish is intrinsically tied to a local culture and knowledge – in effect, a Singapore national identity (cf. Gupta 2003). As Pennycook (1994) states, 'Singaporean identity is a discursive construct constantly mediated through English, while English is also a particular construction constantly mediated through the discourses of Singapore' (256). Rubdy (2001) therefore situates the government's desire for national unification through English standardization in direct conflict with Singlish speakers' fears that this move will, instead, lead to national division.[3] Modiano (2001) anticipates that linguistic policies and practices such as those in Singapore will result in a loss of both linguistic and cultural identity. Thus, it is clear that the Singapore government's colonial celebratory and laissez-faire liberalism policies on adopting English standardization remain problematic; however, an analysis of linguistic imperialism, presented next, may offer more insight into such policies.

From linguistic imperialism to language rights

In his seminal book, *Linguistic imperialism*, Phillipson (1992) investigates the spread of English language education internationally. In his analysis, he argues that its spread is a deliberate effort by Western powers to both create and sustain economic and political dominance while concealing 'the fact that the use of English serves the interests of some much better than others' (Phillipson 2000, 89). While detailed in his analysis and argumentation of policy, Phillipson's earlier (1992) framework of linguistic imperialism has been criticized for failing to connect linguistic issues to diverse social and political contexts (Canagarajah 1999; Pennycook 2000, 2001). Specifically, in focusing on the global implications of the spread of English, Phillipson is charged with neglecting the local contexts of English in multilingual communities. According to Heller and Martin-Jones (2001b, 7), these multilingual communities result 'from a number of different social, economic, and political processes germane to understanding the world around us today;' however, Phillipson does not seem to take into consideration how and why English is taken up by a particular group. Reflecting this critique, his most recent reworkings (2001) of his

theories on linguistic imperialism, therefore, now incorporate not only global, but also local uses of English. This addition responds to Canagarajah's (1993, 1999, 2000) call for micro-societal perspectives of English as an international language. In the same reworking, Phillipson discusses the issue of human rights in language education. While he presents this theory as another counter-response to English language dominance, it raises questions that beg further examination.

Phillipson (2001) calls for the need to enforce language rights which, among other things, uphold the right for all people to be educated in their 'mother tongue' and the language of their 'territory.'[4] Pennycook (1998b, 2000, 2001), however, draws attention to the subjective nature of defining terminologies and determining linguistic human rights. There is a fear that language rights endeavors may inevitably end up 'asserting not only a particular political vision but also a particular vision of culture, life, existence and subjectivity' (Pennycook 1998b, 78). For example, in his support of linguistic human rights, Phillipson (1998) discusses the supranational legislative involvement of the United Nations and the development of regional charters; however, the question arises as to whether norms set at and by such levels will accurately reflect the needs and desires of all nations.

What exactly is a 'right' and whose context are we referring to when we speak of rights? Could an attempt to devise collective human rights result, instead, in the essentialization of the communities purported to benefit from this framework? As May (2001, 8) explains, 'Advocates of linguistic human rights tend to assume the identity of linguistic minority groups as given, the collective aims of linguistic minority groups as uniform, and the notion of collective rights as unproblematic.' For this reason, in order for a language rights framework to be successful in its implementation, it is imperative that it avoid reductionism and take into account the diverse voices of the community and people it seeks to enable.

In general, the frameworks of linguistic imperialism and language ecology and language rights are significant in that they address global power inequities. However, by imagining 'no ways by which English can be learned and then used to empower the local communities, or to further their own cultural, social, and educational interests' (Canagarajah 1999, 41–2), they remain somewhat abstract. Thus, the contribution of a linguistic hybridity framework becomes all the more attractive.

Linguistic hybridity and World Englishes (WEs)

Bamgbose (2001) discusses English language ideology within the framework of WEs. The WE discourse bases its framework on the notion that there exists (and should exist) multiple Englishes – e.g. Canadian English, Indian English, etc. – a framework also referred to as linguistic hybridity (cf. Pennycook 2000, 2001). In contrast to the English hierarchy described in Singapore (cf. Rubdy 2001), linguistic hybridity and WE recognizes each variety of English as equally valid and its speakers as equally legitimate. Critics argue, however, that the mere recognition of a language is insufficient in the quest for legitimacy: 'That languages are hybrid doesn't mean that certain codes don't function as the linguistic capital (with a clear hierarchy of valued registers, dialects, and discourses) to obtain social and educational rewards' (Canagarajah 2002b, 135). Instead, authority stems from legitimation and institutionalization of a language at a systemic level (Canagarajah 1999; May 1998, 2001). Consequently, although theoretically, the linguistic hybridity framework attempts to serve as a means to validate varieties of English which have

thus far been unable to gain acceptance on a wider scale, contradictions arising from the process of legitimizing languages through this framework remain contentious. The need to bridge structural inequities between English in local and global contexts is increasingly urgent.

The final framework, postcolonial performativity, attempts to address the contradictory notion of English as a double-edge sword – as a simultaneous instrument for liberation and continued oppression (cf. Canagarajah 1999; Norton and Kamal 2003; Pennycook 1994, 1998a; Rubdy 2001). In the next section, we will discuss research conducted in South Africa and Pakistan to illustrate how some periphery communities are appropriating and recreating English as a counter discourse in the renegotiation of local and global identities.

Toward postcolonial performativity

Heller and Martin-Jones (2001a) argue convincingly that in order to have a more nuanced understanding of the way power positions those in the periphery and how power shapes social realities, 'relations of power must be understood in the context of historical processes such as colonialism, postcolonialism and neo-colonialism, globalization, and nationalist and minority rights movements' (3). In response to this need, Pennycook offers us the framework of postcolonial performativity which seeks to understand these complexities historically and through non-essentialist discourses. Pennycook (1994) documents, for example, how Singaporeans began to resist the way in which English was used to position them both globally and locally. He labels this specific resistance 'writing back,' and describes how Singaporean writers use forms of writing that both reflect and bridge the gap between new, popular ways of English expression and traditional, canonical English literary traditions as a means to resist historically colonial discourses. Through the writing of counter discursive prose, plays, and poetry, Singlish speakers/writers have found ways to merge their diverse identities into authoritative voices which express their critical attitudes toward English while simultaneously redefining what it means to be a citizen in present-day Singapore's multicultural and multilingual society. Pennycook argues, however, that resisting English is not without its contradictions: 'How does one establish a relationship to the languages and cultures of the colonizers when they represent both colonial oppression and the possibilities for anti-colonial struggle?' (Pennycook 1998a, 213). A resolution to this struggle rests neither in the complete rejection of English nor in the uncritical embracing of English; discourses of domination and oppression do not preclude discourses of resistance. It is the strategic use of English as a counter discourse or the 'writing back' of English that illustrates how 'language is as much a *site* as it is a *means* for struggle' (Pennycook 1994, 267).[5] For insight into this paradox, we turn to the work of Canagarajah.

The English language and the politics of location

While Pennycook's (2000, 2001) frameworks constitute a potentially productive heuristic, we have found Canagarajah's (1999) work on the politics of location a particularly powerful lens through which to explore the English language as both a site and a means for struggle. Canagarajah makes the case that much research on the spread of English has been undertaken by scholars working in center communities and that there has been insufficient attention to research by those located in the

periphery (cf. Canagarajah 2002a, 2002c). In order to build a more complex understanding of the role English plays in periphery communities, Canagarajah (2000) argues for 'micro-social analysis' that underscores 'the everyday strategies of linguistic negotiation of the local people' (123). Drawing on the work of postcolonial scholars, such as hooks (1989, 1990) and Said (1979, 1993), he argues that a particular politics of location provides for a different understanding of the spread of English than that which is dominant in western academia. Canagarajah emphasizes that dichotomizing perspectives that frame debates for and against English, or for and against the vernacular, oversimplify local and global contexts. He makes the case that people can engage favorably with both English and the vernacular and that people in marginalized communities have the human agency to critically examine their options and devise ideological alternatives that promote their own empowerment. He supports his claims through his own global positioning as a periphery scholar and through his locally grounded research in Sri Lankan classrooms.

Canagarajah's (1993, 1999) research in Sri Lanka highlights the complex investments that students have in English and how they negotiate their ambivalent relationship to the language. While potential social and economic benefits contribute to the focus on English education, the subjects in his Sri Lankan studies made clear that they would mediate the terms under which this education would occur rather than have these terms determined by their western texts and the ethnocentric ideologies pervading them. Through e-mail correspondence, verbal asides, and drawings scribbled into their textbooks, students consciously used English to subvert the English language. In this periphery community, conflicts between the recognition of subordinate positioning, the implications of English with respect to the students' identity as Tamils, and the possibilities of advancement (educationally, economically, etc.) all converged. As Canagarajah (1999) explains:

> The question confronting the students is not *whether* English should be learned, but *how*. They will neither refuse to learn English nor acquire it unconditionally in the terms dictated by the centre. They will appropriate the language in their own terms, according to their needs, values, and aspirations. (175–6)

The power of this framework can be further illustrated by examining two other periphery countries, South Africa and Pakistan, where Norton has conducted research on the English language and social change (Kamal and Norton 2002; Norton and Kamal 2003; Norton and Starfield 1997; Norton Peirce 1989; Norton Peirce and Ridge 1997; Norton Peirce and Stein 1995).

English and the politics of location in South Africa

Momentous social and political events in South Africa over the past 15 years are reflected in its changing linguistic landscape. As South Africans brought apartheid to its knees in the early 1990s, they also struggled to achieve equitable postapartheid language policies and practices. Today, South Africa, with a population of approximately 44 million people, has an unprecedented 11 official languages. Apart from English and Afrikaans, which were the official languages in apartheid South Africa, there are nine Bantu languages with official status, including four from the Nguni cluster and three from the Sotho cluster. Notwithstanding this diversity, English is the medium of instruction in most secondary schools and tertiary institutions and is the dominant language of science, business, and the media.

What is significant about the integration of English in South African society, however, is the way in which educators and language planners have creatively sought to validate diversity while appropriating English. Norton Peirce (1989) documents, for example, the struggle for People's English, which began even before apartheid was dismantled. She notes that the struggle for People's English is not a struggle for a particular type of English, such as Singlish or Indian English, but rather a struggle to claim ownership of the language in ways that enhance rather than compromise possibilities for societal change. Central issues for proponents of People's English concern how English is to be taught in schools, who has access to the language, and how English is implicated in power relations dominant in South Africa. In this regard, assessment practices have been identified as a particularly important site of struggle. Norton Peirce and Stein (1995), for example, describe student responses to alternative language assessment practices for secondary school graduates, noting the complex and contradictory ways in which tests of English proficiency engage the identities of English language learners. At the tertiary level, Norton and Starfield (1997) identify the diverse ways in which English language learners at South African universities can be given enhanced opportunities to demonstrate their command of course content.

More recently, the Multiliteracies Project in South Africa (Newfield and Stein 2000) provides a particularly striking example of the ways in which South Africans engage with the English language in creative and empowering ways. Newfield and Stein describe how they incorporated the multiliteracies framework of the New London Group (1996) into their MA program in English Education at Wits University in Johannesburg. The multiliteracies framework is based on the premise that increasing cultural and linguistic diversity in the world necessitates a broader view of literacy than traditionally assumed and that a multiliteracies approach to pedagogy fosters the critical engagement necessary for students to design their own social futures. In the implementation of this project at Wits University, both native English speakers and English language learners had the opportunity to consider how the multiliteracies framework could validate the diversity of literacies in South Africa, whether oral or written, urban or rural, performative or electronic. One student, for example, developed a workbook on oral storytelling practices for Tsonga-speaking children in which students had to compare and contrast different English translations of a well-known Tsonga oral narrative.

Thus, in the same way that Tamils in Canagarajah's (1999) study have appropriated English 'to dynamically negotiate meaning, identity, and status in contextually suitable and socially strategic ways' (76), South Africans of diverse linguistic histories, given their particular politics of location, have sought to appropriate English while simultaneously validating the diversity of speakers, genres, and multimodalities in the society.

English and the politics of location in Pakistan

Like South Africa, Pakistan is a country that seeks to interact productively with the international community while seeking to maintain its independence and integrity. It is a predominantly Muslim country of approximately 130 million people who speak a variety of languages including Punjabi (46%), Pushto (13%), Sindhi (12%) and Saraiki (10%). The official language, Urdu, is strongly associated with Muslim nationalism, although it is spoken as a mother tongue by only 7% of the population,

the *muhajirs*, who migrated to Pakistan from northern India (Mumtaz and Mitha 1996). English is used alongside Urdu for official business and in some parts of the education system and is described as 'the language of the elite and upwardly mobile' (Mumtaz and Mitha 1996, 14).

In a study conducted in Pakistan, Norton and Kamal (Kamal and Norton 2002; Norton and Kamal 2003) investigated the investments of a group of Karachi middle-school students in the English language. As part of a local social action project, the students at model elementary chose to teach English language and literacy to a group of Afghan refugee children in a local orphanage. In the context of the middle-school students' involvement in this community-building project, they were asked to reflect on their perceptions of literacy and the English language as well as on their hopes for the future. These students saw the development of literacy, competence in English, and technological advancement as desirable and interdependent. With only a few exceptions, they demonstrated little ambivalence toward the English language and perceived it as an important tool for social, economic, and political advancement both within Pakistan as well as in the international community. In relation to their own English language literacy, the students were asked, 'In what language do you prefer expressing your thoughts and opinions?' In response, one student marked 'Urdu,' five marked 'English,' and the remaining 66 marked 'Both Urdu and English.' Students explained that the use of both Urdu and English enabled them to meet institutional expectations, improve communication between themselves and other bilingual students, and negotiate social relationships and personal identity.

We can relate the phenomenon of student codeswitching in Pakistan to Canagarajah's (2001) reflections on his Tamil students in Sri Lanka when he theorizes that 'codeswitching practices of students and teachers in classrooms ... can give us insights into ways in which students and teachers negotiate dominant ideologies, while at the same time affirming their own desired identities and values' (195). Many theorists in Heller and Martin-Jones' (2001b) edited collection further connect the action of codeswitching to multilingualism and bilingual identities. Specifically, like Canagarajah, Heller and Martin-Jones (2001a, 10) see it as a form of resistance to linguistic and cultural dominance: '*Code selection*, or *codeswitching*, becomes particularly prominent in strategies for the management of multilingualism or for the exploitation of multilingualism in the service of the construction or contestation of symbolic domination.' Ramanathan's (2003, 2005) research in India, which addresses the English–Vernacular divide, also provides evidence of the role of codeswitching as a form of resistance in Indian classrooms. She illustrates, for example, how teachers drew upon and integrated vernacular resources in their English teaching to explain concepts in accessible terms to students, thereby exploiting multilingualism in the interests of greater access to the discourses of power.

Like the Tamils in Canagarajah's study, Norton and Kamal (2003) note that Pakistanis have struggled for international connection and recognition and have used English to reach out to international media, connect with the diaspora community, and communicate with hotlines and electronic mail. Pakistanis, like Tamils, have a powerful neighbor, India, which is not sympathetic to its interests; it has another neighbor, Afghanistan, which has been politically unstable for decades; and it has a government that has been struggling for legitimacy in a sceptical international community. Under these conditions, English provides Pakistanis with the opportunity to remain socially, economically, and politically connected not only to the

English-dominant North America and UK, but to the wider international community as well. In addition, like the Tamils in Canagarajah's study who maintained their Saivitian identity while learning English, the middle-school students in model elementary did not associate English with religious practices dominant in the West and had no difficulty acquiring English while maintaining their identity as Muslims. Much like the South African research, the research in Pakistan suggests that the appropriation of English does not necessarily compromise identities structured on the grounds of linguistic or religious affiliation. Creative responses to the dominance of English, whether through codeswitching, appropriation, or subversion, defy essentialist analyses of the spread of English in periphery contexts. What is important to understand is how investments in English are structured by a given politics of location.

The politics of location in center communities

In the periphery communities of Sri Lanka, South Africa, and Pakistan, we discussed the extent to which Canagarajah's (1999) notion of a politics of location helps to explain how the English language is implicated in a periphery community's local and global investments. Taking Canagarajah's cue, then, this theory may assist us in situating English in multilingual center communities as well. Our review of literature suggests that while English can be appropriated without the necessary loss of local languages in periphery contexts, the politics of location may find the maintenance of minority languages more challenging in center communities. In the Australian context, for example, while Clyne (1998) would argue that Australia can act as a model of a successful multilingual society, May (1998) notes that government policies and practices have failed to validate many community languages at the systemic level.[6] Lotherington (2003), on the basis of her research with minority Asian communities in Melbourne, further argues that literacy within Australian society lies firmly entrenched in the English language. While languages other than English (LOTES) are promoted in the school context, she notes that the social and economic pressures that exist in the wider society militate against the maintenance of minority languages.

This tendency is not unique to Australia. In the Canadian and US contexts, there have been a number of creative responses to the dominance of English, but they have often been fraught with controversy. Heritage language programs, for example, which provide first language education to language minority students in the form of after-school and weekend supplemental programs, are often considered 'add-on' programs and suffer from a lack of recognition (Corson 1999, 2001; Cummins 2001b). Bilingual and immersion programs, while offering greater potential to provide language minority students with what Swain and Johnson (1997, 2) describe as 'linguistic choice and cultural pluralism,' frequently have a mixed reception. In his writings, Corson (1999, 2001) outlines the gap between language policy and its implementation, arguing that this disparity is associated, to a large extent, with an underlying agenda of assimilation and monolingualism. Similarly, Cummins (2000) observes that conditions for the conservation of minority languages are inadequate. He argues that success will only come as a result of the implementation of policy at the systemic level and that this can only occur through democratic engagement in collaborative dialog between dominant and subordinate communities at political, educational, and community levels (cf. Mitchell 2001). Accordingly, additional research is needed to

examine how the politics of location in center communities might present unique challenges to the development of bilingualism and multilingualism.

Conclusion

In this article, we have outlined some of the central debates in the global spread of English in both periphery and center communities. While Pennycook's (2000, 2001) frameworks for understanding the global role of English proved useful in helping us better understand the dynamic interrelationship between language, politics, and social relations, we found Canagarajah's (1999) work on the politics of location a useful complement in the particular context of periphery communities. The notion of a politics of location provides for a more nuanced understanding of the seemingly contradictory discourse of English in which English is frequently viewed as either beneficial or detrimental to periphery communities. This notion highlights the linguistic, economic, and political struggles facing those on the periphery and the many creative ways in which English is negotiated in the context of both local and global investments. Finally, we extended Canagarajah's theory to the analysis of English in center communities, arguing that the politics of location in center communities might present challenges to the development of multilingualism that are distinct from those of periphery communities. In this regard, the ongoing work of Cummins and other advocates of multilingualism assume increasing importance.

Notes

1. The term 'center communities' refers to 'the technologically advanced communities of the West which, at least in part, sustain their material dominance by keeping less developed communities in periphery status,' while periphery communities are 'communities where English is of postcolonial currency, such as Barbados, India, Malaysia, and Nigeria' (Canagarajah 1999, 4).
2. For further details regarding the 'Speak Good English Movement' (SGEM), please refer to the official website: http://www.goodenglish.org.sg/SGEM/
3. On various internet web blogs created and mediated by Singaporeans (see, for example, *Singapore Ink* n.d. or *Singapore Watch* n.d.), the notion of national identity in regards to the Singlish language debate was one theme of discussion amongst bloggers; however, other posts also alluded to issues of linguistic and cultural imperialism.
4. These are the labels used in language rights discourses. We have placed the terminologies in quotations to indicate that while we use these labels, we recognize the controversies that surround them. For a more detailed discussion regarding language rights, see Skutnabb-Kangas (2000, 2001, 2002).
5. See also Pennycook (2003) for an examination of the use of English as a counter discourse in the performing and renegotiation of racial identities through Asian rap and hip-hop.
6. However, Corson (2001) discusses the complexities of such legitimation in the Australian context as due not only to the sheer number of community and regional languages (standard and 'non-standard' varieties) currently in use, but also to the vast geographical distribution of speakers of each of these languages (107–8).

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