Involuntary Associations

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So linguistic colonialism continues to flourish and expand, even while its political counterpart is dying out. Perhaps the phenomenon we observe in the former colonial lands, particularly in Africa, is only a reflection of a larger linguistic picture, one that tends inevitably toward a single tongue for world-wide use, one in which all men, swallowing their national pride, will be able to communicate directly and practically

Mario Pei, *The Many Hues of English*

[T]he use of English in the world has no immediate connexion with the economic or political supremacy – past or present – of an English-speaking country.

Randolph Quirk, *The Use of English*

**English and Colonialism – Englishes and Postcolonialism?**

Although English has long spread around the world, it is only in recent years that its diverse speakers have come to appreciate the unexpected consequences. One consequence is a perceived convergence, as Pei suggests, and resistance to that convergence derives largely from its identification with the colonialism that he mentions. Nonetheless, there is more to the picture of English worldwide than a dominant colonial tongue, and, while Quirk’s suggestion must seem a little wishful, there are also increasing numbers of researchers, writers, and everyday users who are willing to entertain the idea that English has at least no *necessary* connection with any particular country or group of countries. That willingness might be somewhat less evident among those we usually consider native speakers,
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but their control of the situation is significantly weaker than it might have once seemed. The discourse of World Englishes seeks to re-imagine our understanding of the English language. The difference between error and innovation can no longer be decided through assumptions about the ‘ownership’ of the language. In fact, the language is beginning to be a medium of the expression of identity for more and more people in very different contexts. World English must be pluralized, which is why we think in terms of World Englishes. This book puts examples from these Englishes, in addition to the academic and other discourses that surround them, into dialogue with postcolonial studies, in the belief that while postcolonial studies has obviously had a great deal to say about the English language (and increasingly other colonial languages), much of what it has had to say has either directly concerned or been influenced by literary studies. The dialogue that ensues here extends postcolonial studies beyond literary studies, and brings it into discussions most commonly associated with the study of globalization in particular. In some ways, the dialogue will correct partial misconceptions and misapprehensions in postcolonial studies, with the discourse of World Englishes offering renewal for postcolonial studies. At the same time, the dialogue will also see postcolonial studies’ powerful political and philosophical tools brought into contact with World Englishes, resulting in something that could be characterized as ‘World Englishes: A Postcolonial Perspective’. While it is not entitled ‘World Englishes Studies and Postcolonial Studies’, the book is certainly intended to be a relatively balanced dialogue, despite frequently focusing on issues emerging from postcolonial studies.

The aspiration is for postcolonial studies to be at least as much receiver as giver. Although the potential insights postcolonial studies may give concerning World Englishes are important, the need for renewal in postcolonial studies itself will appear obvious to many critics. For these critics, postcolonial studies has come to seem, even in a period witnessing the ongoing globalization of universities, a narrow set of discourses increasingly communicating within a restricted professional class, and frequently still communicating in the English language. In restricting itself in these ways, postcolonial studies as a discipline has arguably functioned as an extension of a neo-colonial globalization. Unlike the turbulent and dynamic multilingualism of what Robert J.C. Young (2001) calls ‘Tricontinental Marxism’, postcolonial studies can seem set in its Anglophone ways, dutifully reading the latest novels from celebrity novelists from a postcolonial perspective, occasionally prone to angst-ridden self-examination and calls for self-renewal. Despite this, postcolonial studies can look ‘within’ for at least some sources of renewal; central figures from the ‘prehistory’ of postcolonial studies offer us many resources for such a renewal, even if we continue to focus on Anglophone contexts. Writing in and partly about the French language, Jean-Paul Sartre made striking claims about Frantz Fanon’s Les Damnés de la Terre (1961) [The Wretched of the Earth]. Sartre urges us to move beyond the assumption
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of predetermined interlocutors, and even to remove ourselves from the equation entirely, if indeed we happen to be metropolitan Francophones. As Sartre writes to his French readers of Fanon, ‘he speaks of you often, never to you’ (1963, 10). One way of de-centring postcolonial studies, or renewing them, is to challenge their Anglophone basis through a focus on other linguistic contexts, whether other imperial languages like French or, instead, dominated languages. If in our academic work we continue to imply the centrality of the English language, it may not necessarily constitute a form of ongoing imperialism, but it is certainly highly restrictive. Other works in this series, and also other series published by Liverpool University Press and other publishers, continue to develop Francophone postcolonial studies and other comparable fields. It is also necessary to move postcolonial studies beyond the colonial languages, however important they were and continue to be; indigenous cultural production has certainly been neglected in some strands of postcolonial studies. These two possibilities redirect postcolonial studies from its Anglophone focus. This book, by contrast, seeks to move beyond Anglophone postcolonial studies by ‘doubling-down’ on the English language, putting literary contexts alongside broader contexts of cultural meaning, and transforming English into what linguistics has been for decades now calling ‘Englishes’. This is again to challenge our assumptions about, or our predetermined categorization of, users of English. English is frequently used to speak of so-called native English speakers without necessarily speaking to them. Indeed, frequently it is used without any thought whatsoever given to those native speakers. This book seeks to contribute to making postcolonial studies adequate to this increasingly evident context of World Englishes.

The Language Myth and the Heterolingual Address

In his preface to Les Damnés de la Terre, Sartre highlights the nature of Fanon’s address, as if for its reader this in itself were a key point. Of course, however, and despite what I previously implied, Fanon has no single kind of reader, and that is the case in a more far-reaching way than is true of texts in general. Sartre’s point is important for another aspect of this book’s argument, as when writing about the English language, it is all too easy for the so-called native speaker to fall into a particular habit that can derive from the very fact of writing in that language. That is to say, it is tempting to invoke a ‘we’ that experiences the language in superficially varying but fundamentally similar ways. It is tempting, then, to employ what Naoki Sakai calls ‘the homolingual address’. It is the case that the fallacy of this address can function in discourse focused on any content whatsoever, but evidently the nature of writing in English about English, in today’s worldwide linguistic context, makes the homolingual address particularly problematic. While it may be argued that speaking rhetorically is inevitable, one must never simply dismiss challenges
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to rhetorically speaking. Sakai outlines particular desires and assumptions that he acted upon in his writing. He suggests that he communicated as part of a community, ‘for whom reciprocal apprehension [and] transparent communication’ were not straightforward or guaranteed (1997, 4). The community he was indeed attempting to invoke or in fact call into being, ‘did not have to coincide with a linguistic community whose commonness is built around the assumed assurance of immediate and reciprocal apprehension in conversation’ (1997, 4). In the end, then, no necessary response could be assumed, with transference at best an achievement, and the address designed to call the community into being needed to be appropriate to these structural uncertainties. For Sakai, ‘to address myself to such an audience by saying “we” was to reach out to the addressees without either an assurance of immediate apprehension or an expectation of uniform response from them’ (1997, 4). While of course still aiming at communication, his writing assumes an irreducible communicative ‘lack’. Sakai’s address is to be understood as resistant to the homolingual; the address aims at being heterolingual.

The point Sakai makes operates on assumptions more far-reaching than simply the mixed quality of any readership. In seeking to operate in the heterolingual address, we are trying to avoid rhetorical coercion, and the so-called ‘royal we’ needs to be understood as at best something achieved, and no doubt also something temporary. In particular, it is surely obvious that the experience of reading English concerning any topic will vary depending on location, perhaps all the more (as will be seen) when that location is an outcome of histories of colonialism, and particularly when the content of the written English is English itself (although that ‘itself’ is already to assume too much). In short, in attempting to employ the heterolingual address, this book assumes that it cannot in fact assume anything about shared community, assumptions, communication, or anything else that is based on the fact of the reader reading in English. While any reader of any language might always have wildly differing assumptions concerning the topic of an author’s book, to the extent that he or she is an individual reader, the state of World Englishes suggests a far broader linguistic community that quite possibly should not be given the name ‘community’ at all, as well as a greater likelihood of what I will for the moment call disagreement. Telementation (the ‘copying’ of thoughts from person A to person B) is a problematic ideal, and English in its current diversity fully emphasizes its problematic nature.

This point ought to be central to studying and writing about World Englishes, and this claim can be explored through reference to discussion of what Roy Harris has termed ‘the Language Myth’ (1981). Harris argues that the language myth is central in Western culture from Aristotle to Saussure and beyond, but also seems to be a general feature of how we understand the importance of language. The myth is a powerful model of how language is a means of communication, but also how language helps to form community. According to Harris, the language myth ‘in its modern form is a cultural product of post-Renaissance Europe’, which reflects, he argues, ‘the
political psychology of nationalism, and an educational system devoted to standardising the linguistic behaviour of pupils’ (1981, 9). It coincides with the rise of modern nation states, specifically with attempts to defend such states at a point of crisis, and at least one of its effects is to create communities. One thing that is particularly important for this standardizing effect of languages is the technological ability to print languages; of course, historically, at least in Europe, this technology coincided with the creation of modern nations, as explored by Benedict Anderson (2006). The myth itself works through *pattern transference*, in which a determinate thought is transferred from person A to person B. Language operates to communicate that thought from A to B. B, in sharing a linguistic code with A, is able to decode the thought, however it has been communicated, and the thought has thereby been transferred from the isolated mind of one individual to the isolated mind of the other.

The connection between this transference model and language communities is of course striking, and obviously relevant to the study of English, as we will see. This model is all about the reproduction of essentially identical thoughts, working within a fixed language system: ‘Individuals are able to exchange their thoughts by means of words because – and insofar as – they have come to understand and to adhere to a fixed public plan for doing so. The plan is based on recurrent instantiation of invariant items belonging to a set known to all members of the community’ (Harris 1981, 10). As Harris continues, it is the invariance that elevates this system above the troublesome unpredictability of contexts, or indeed the intentions of individual language users. Knowing this fixed system, and knowing the thoughts they wish to communicate, speakers participate in an exchange with listeners equally familiar with the invariant structure. Accordingly, it does not matter who you are, as an individual; to be a part of this fixed system is to be in communication with others in the system. While it is true that all languages are given discursive regularity, that regularity obscures a great deal about the communication that happens ‘within’. In the context of World Englishes, the most important aspect of Harris’s analysis is the role this myth plays in our ideas about cultures and communities. For Harris, the language myth has effects, as is clear from the use of the term ‘myth’. We can think of myth as providing a solution to a contradiction in our thinking, as in structuralist anthropology, and myth is thus comparable to Althusserian ideology, being the formal or imaginary resolution of actual contradiction. For Harris, the language myth operates in exactly this way. We have a contradiction that must be overcome: the contradiction that we are isolated individuals but that somehow this isolation is overcome, that we do share, and that we can be part of a bigger group. Our isolation is characterized as *somatic particularity*, meaning that we are who we are, absolutely unique individuals whose experience is our own, and whose lives cannot be led by others. At the same time, we know that this is highly simplistic, as people do share experiences, and we are not entirely cut off from others; obviously enough, if superficially, this sharing takes place through language. According to the language myth, the transference of thoughts either
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reduces or even cancels the isolation of each individual. According to this model, Harris argues, ‘if only an idea in A’s mind can be copied into B’s mind, by whatever means, then the limitations of somatic particularity have pro tanto been overcome’ (1981, 15). Harris summarizes the effect of the myth: ‘instead of a lot of isolated individuals we end up with what is (significantly) called a community’ (1981, 15). This process is one in which speech communities are formed, the speech community being a concept that transforms the idea of Volk into an only apparently objective aspect of linguistic science (see Hutton 2002). It is readily imaginable that World Englishes represent a challenge to the integrity of such communities.

Harris’s analysis can be extended further, and has been explored and contested in many contexts. For the purposes of this book, his work is relevant in the following ways. First, the language myth leads us to imagine that there must be an ideal or standard version of each language, and that any deviations from this standard language are inferior and unacceptable. This is because such deviations stop us from simply communicating ideas from one individual to another. In other words, deviations and non-standard uses of a language undermine the power of language to make each individual part of a community. This is one idea that we will come back to in relation to English, something that superficially appears irrefutable: if English is being used as a communicative tool by non-native speakers, then it must be used in a standard form, otherwise people using different kinds of English will no longer be able simply to communicate with each other. Second, the language myth also gives this ideal standard form of a language a definite political power. It is possible to associate the standard language with a very specific community, such as a national community. It is even possible to associate the standard language with a category such as ‘race’. When language is associated with a very definite community, then obviously there are people excluded from that community in various ways. From this perspective, languages are conceived as belonging to a people: speaking proper English, whatever that means, is associated with owning English, having English as a form of property. Such an attitude is still evident in ideas about how English is spoken, and who can speak English, and many of these ideas we will encounter later. Third, the language myth implies that the language community has some kind of ‘common mind’. All of the ways of seeing and thinking that are carried along by any language make up some kind of world-view (as in the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis; see Sapir and Mandelbaum 1962). However, even if you speak a given language with great fluency, if it is not your ‘proper’ language, not the language you ‘own’, then you are excluded from the collective understanding that is shared by the community. From this point of view, ‘non-native’ speakers of English might be unable to share in the supposed common understanding shared by British, Americans, Australians, etc. Further, it might be argued that non-native speakers should not even want to share in that common understanding. They have their own languages, their own communities with their own shared understandings, and should use English at most as a mere
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‘communicative’ tool: they should try to minimize the extent to which the world-view that accompanies English affects their own world-views. These ideas are all challenged by the actual facts of English's spread around the world, and also by the idea of World Englishes. Indeed, a challenge to the idea of language ownership is a key aspect of World Englishes studies.

World Englishes Across the Disciplines

The series for which this book was written, 'Postcolonialism Across the Disciplines', aims to interrupt the postcolonial paradigm, and to foreground alternatives to a perceived literary hegemony in postcolonial studies. The other discipline from which the series is to some extent distanced is cultural studies. I will return to literature in a later chapter, to offer a modest defence of the potential still found in postcolonial literary studies. Here, however, I would like to say something concerning cultural studies, as one strand in the study of World Englishes is clearly influenced by certain traditions in cultural studies. That is unsurprising, just as it is unsurprising to find that influence at work in postcolonial studies. Indeed, one of the assumptions of this book is that postcolonial literary studies are fruitfully extended into postcolonial cultural studies. Of course that gesture is not new, being in fact a key driver of cultural studies in its British form, and being extended to a greater or lesser extent in North American, Australian, Inter-Asian, and other versions of cultural studies. This book assumes that it is worth extending this work into further study of World Englishes, and also that this extension is already under way. Of course, much of the disciplinary impetus for the study of World Englishes comes from different (sometimes very different) strands of linguistics, while cultural studies' borrowings from linguistics might seem haphazard and even cavalier. It is clear, however, that increasing attention is being paid to World Englishes from perspectives informed by cultural studies, for example, in versions of Critical Linguistics (e.g., Pennycook 1994; 1998; 2007a). Putting that fact alongside the fundamental aim of this book series, it is vital to understand the nature of the interdisciplinarity we bring to bear on, and that is demanded by, World Englishes. The first thing to be noted is that World Englishes are bound up with institutions of various kinds, such as universities, schools, NGOs, parliaments large and small, and legal systems. Researchers focusing on World Englishes are likewise restricted by and enabled by institutions, which is something that cultural studies insists upon. Institutions are neither simply public nor private, nor in any way simply positive or negative, as Paul Bowman suggests: ‘the prime movers – or indeed, often, the prime blockers, limiters, or resisters – of political contexts are “institutions”’ (2007, 171). Institution and institutions have no necessary meaning or value, in the same way as interruption. It is not necessarily the case that more interruption means better, just as it is not necessarily the case that less institution means better. Individual instances are to be taken in context, and that context is
never saturated. Importantly, the institutional focus of cultural studies is connected to its interdisciplinary status. In his call for cultural studies to embrace anew its operation across the disciplines, Bowman writes that ‘today intervention requires a new interdisciplinarity’ (2007, 177). In certain ways, Bowman is demanding that cultural studies become anti-disciplinary. Being interdisciplinary is being anti-disciplinary, at least in the sense that interdisciplinary cultural studies would cease to be cultural studies at all, operating strategically through other voices, methods, rhetoric, etc. As Bowman goes on to argue, ‘interdisciplinary interventions must necessarily be executed in the language of the other’ (2007, 179). We might only be speaking the language of the other for very limited periods of time, but during that time we must not be reproducing the comfortable and recognizable language of cultural studies; instead we must be ‘monsters of fidelity’. And, as Jacques Derrida’s readings demonstrate, fidelity accompanies transformation, which is the structure of what Derrida calls iterability. Cultural studies needs therefore to stop reading culture in a comfortable, predictable, and indeed programmatic fashion, and so Bowman recommends, ‘the transgression of one’s own familiar style of disciplinary discourse’ (2007, 205). More recently, Toby Miller has written that ‘if the humanities are primarily concerned with explaining how meaning is made, they must consider the wider political economy, and not simply in terms of culture as a reflective or refractive index of it but as part of that economy’ (2012, 107). Putting humanities alongside social science discourses is one small step towards interdisciplinarity, and is the minimum necessary for a book hoping to move postcolonialism across the disciplines.

It is, however, important to retain Bowman’s emphasis on intervening through inhabiting discourses. My discussion of World Englishes covers diverse topics related to the field, and these chapters to some extent inevitably read very differently. However, they also operate in different registers, ‘within’ very different disciplinary formations. This is necessary, I take it, if postcolonialism is to operate (like Bowman’s cultural studies) across, between, and through the disciplines. For example, ‘postcolonialism across the disciplines’ cannot help but prompt thoughts of ‘writing across the disciplines’, and one of the chapters concerns the broad field of composition as it relates to World Englishes. Discussion of global citizenship, meanwhile, operates in another series of discourses again, and the idea of cultural translation cannot distance itself from actual developments in translation studies, developments often highly critical of cultural translation as a concept. Finally, thinking about lexicography demands engagement with and understanding of yet another set of different disciplinary protocols. While this series of engagements may not constitute intervention in the language of the other quite in the way Bowman has in mind, it should be remembered that researchers in linguistics and related fields frequently already imagine themselves to be involved in interruption and intervention, so this book is making connections with these interventions as they imagine themselves to be and it is hoped already do exist; it is also a prescription for them to exist. Indeed, researchers on
World Englishes are also frequently lexicographers, teachers of English as a second or foreign language, British Council employees, and so on. They are necessarily part of the broader political economy, and do not (or should not be able to) imagine themselves separate from its workings, with culture viewed as a mirror of the workings of that economy. Again, it is not surprising at all that the discourses of World Englishes have begun to put cultural studies to work on their object, from which they are yet not at all separate.

Bowman’s comments on cultural studies as a form of **interdiscipline** can be connected with specific ideas in postcolonial studies. Of course it is in some ways inevitable that postcolonial studies tend towards interdisciplinarity. Their objects cover many different fields, and so there must be art history-, anthropology-, philosophy-, and linguistics-oriented forms of postcolonial studies. Yet there is another way in which postcolonial studies has been interdisciplinary, and in fact *must* be interdisciplinary. Homi K. Bhabha argues the following about this necessity of interdisciplinarity:

> To enter into the interdisciplinarity of cultural texts means that we cannot contextualize the emergent cultural form by locating it in terms of some pre-given discursive causality or origin. We must always keep open a supplementary space for the articulation of cultural knowledges that are adjacent and adjunct but not necessarily accumulative, teleological or dialectical. (Bhabha 1994, 163)

As in the work of Edward Said, whose idea of travelling theory Bhabha is developing, this emphasis on interdisciplinarity is not only a question of adequacy to a multifaceted object; interdisciplinarity also in principle resists transcendent critical judgements, judgements that would erase difference in an ever more inclusive total discipline. Disciplines (rather like cultures) may well be effects of efforts at stabilization, but they are no less real for that. Interdisciplinary postcolonialism operates on the assumption that duplicating the procedures of its object is unlikely to prove fruitful. As Bhabha continues to argue, ‘Interdisciplinarity is the acknowledgement of the emergent sign of cultural difference produced in the ambivalent movement between the pedagogical and performative address. It is never simply the harmonious addition of contents or contexts that augment the positivity of a pre-given disciplinary or symbolic presence’ (1994, 163). If there is necessary tension between the apparent pre-given feel (the presence) of culture and the necessity of its ongoing production, as Bhabha analyses through the tension between ‘pedagogical’ and ‘performative’, then the critical language with which this tension is analysed and further heightened ought to mark this understanding. Marking that tension can be achieved in various ways, for example, through the heterolingual address and the related development of ‘autobiographical’ critical writing.
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What Does it Matter Who is Speaking?

Accordingly, one other element of this book is important here, which is its loosely autobiographical tendency. This tendency is partly one facet of attempts to produce a heterolingual address. It is also one strategy for acknowledging what Pennycook refers to as worldliness, a recognition that 'while globalization on the one hand pushes us towards a worldly oneness, on the other hand it obliges an understanding that must draw on the multiple worldly localities of its viewers' (2010, 199). While not a systematic, constant, or necessarily insistent presence, this book’s autobiographical element is important. There are many broader arguments concerning the development of this kind of academic life writing, and we can certainly argue that there has been an autobiographical turn in critical writing. This turn has taken place partly as a result of the increased visibility of discussions concerning ethics, with Paul John Eakin arguing that ethics is ‘the deep subject of autobiographical discourse’ (2004, 6). Writing against a privacy-based ethics of life writing, Eakin stresses the relational quality of autobiography: ‘Because we live our lives in relation to others, our privacies are largely shared, making it hard to demarcate the boundary where one life leaves off and another begins’ (2004, 8). We are, then, relational in the broadest terms, evident in the writing that common sense tells us to be the least relational and most specific to ourselves. This combination allows us to compare academic life writing with the keen attention paid to institutions by the best forms of cultural studies. As Bowman suggests, institutions are neither public or private, which is suggestive in relation to Eakin’s general point, as critical academic writing certainly takes place in institutional contexts that are both utterly specific and also demanding of generalization. Robert Young suggests that a new emphasis on ‘chance’ in theory is symptomatic of a legitimation crisis brought about by the collapse of the culture/academia split: ‘The intimate revelations of the inquiring self stand in as a typical example of the wider social structure’ (1996, 14). Young identifies a kind of institutional anxiety about the apparently non-institutional exterior, something that is clearly not external at all. Without the possibility of recourse to ideals of cultural guardianship, the divide between culture and academia has been lost, and one response has been to embrace this loss; academic life writing reminds us that academics have lives too, as it were, lives meaning identities that are comparable to or can stand for various cultural, economic, or other groups. From this perspective, in various ways researchers are other too.

But there is another motivation for writing autobiographical theory. Classificatory systems, small and large, construct their objects, which in terms of certain disciplines leads to misrepresentation. The example most obviously pertinent is orientalism as conceived by Said (1978). Instead of thinking that bias is an unnecessary but very real cause of Western misrepresentations of other cultures, Said has been taken to argue that misrepresentation is inevitable. There has been much debate over the extent to which this
characterization accurately captures Said's position, but even if we moderate it a little, arguing that misrepresentation was (and is) historically the fact, this position still allows us to justify academic life writing in terms of historical intervention. If we accept that the urge to know the other always morphs into a will to master the other (or at least always might), then we should fall back on apparently more modest aims, with theory translating itself into a kind of life writing. This is an extension of the point made by Young when he writes that 'if we cannot ever know the other, then we turn back to the self' (1996, 14). This turning back seems to be a shift back towards the non-relational or, perhaps, marks orientation without reference to the objective; it might appear to mark, then, a kind of academic pessimism. However, even this non-relational self is optimized towards a modest ideal, and it can be argued that much of this newly and explicitly inflected work is structured by certain kinds of ethical orientation. We can think about this ethical orientation deriving from the autobiographical turn in humanities writing in the context of orientation towards certain kinds of 'good'. In discussing such orientation, we would be following the work of Charles Taylor, specifically Sources of the Self (1989). Taylor reminds us that I say things about my social, cultural, or ethical identity within a context of questions that orients. Following Taylor, David Parker (2007) adapted this understanding of ethical orientation in order to re-cast the study of life writing in particular. In turn, it is clear that critical writing, in taking on characteristics of life writing, is involved in ethical orientation. I have addressed these and related issues in a previous book (Huddart 2008), and its assumptions continue to inform this work on World Englishes. Institutionally speaking, the theories concerning (for example) the expanded ownership of English, the death of the native speaker, or the confusion of error and innovation, are subject to daily testing in the classroom. Each classroom fits into its own institutional context (a specific curriculum, a wider university perspective, and educational needs, etc.) and a broader politics of language (how English sits alongside other languages, how so-called native speaker cultures are viewed, etc.). Furthermore, the spread of English implies a world, a globe, or maybe a planet (each term having its implications), although that begins to stretch any ethnographic account, and relies upon a mapping of the node's relation to the network that might remain speculative. Accordingly, in my case some specific reference to experiences of Japanese, British, and Hong Kong university contexts is inevitable and necessary. Partly that is due to the general requirement of refusing to theorize a general condition about what is a very diverse series of phenomena; World Englishes really are very difficult phenomena to discuss at a general level, and, despite the same processes, histories, etc., these Englishes are in certain ways more intractable than English as a global language (or any apparent equivalent). But, as I have suggested, it is necessary to foreground some of the goods to which postcolonial theories generally seem oriented, and check some of the ways that reality resists our demands. The classroom teacher comes in many forms, and works in many contexts, his or her research (if they are fortunate enough to be
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granted the time and freedom) coming up against the unexpected on a daily basis. I earlier mentioned likely and inevitable persistent bias, and I imagine that will come across as a bias towards (or a greater interest in and knowledge of) postcolonial theory, and that partly derives from my own institutional and educational grounding in literary and cultural studies. However, for eight years I have taught World Englishes to students in Hong Kong, immersing myself in disciplinary conventions and expertise quite foreign to my training, with varying levels of success. The results of this book’s dialogue between postcolonial studies and World Englishes cannot avoid being marked by this classroom-based prompt for my research, the more institutional aspects of which are often called ‘teaching-led research’. But this context is not simply an excuse, and, anyway, as J.L Austin put it, ‘the average excuse, in a poor situation, gets us only out of the fire into the frying pan’ (1961, 125). Contextualizing or situating knowledge is (or aims to be) less excuse than justification, however difficult they may be to differentiate. But even if it fails, the making of excuses is hardly worthless; as Austin continued: ‘but still, of course, any frying pan in a fire’ (1961, 125).

The ‘Communication’ of English

These comments on situatedness are not intended to be merely autobiographical comments. In any discussion of global English and World Englishes it is relevant that the writer is one of the so-called native speakers, even if that category is losing some of its exactness and cachet. This helps to make sense of experiences, assumptions, and assertions, and clarifies those moments when, despite best efforts, the heterolingual address slides unthinkingly into the homolingual address. And, if nothing else, writing in English about English inevitably draws on the norms of so-called Anglo cultures. Indeed, as we will see, one of those norms concerns the desirability of one particular kind of communication. As Martin Kayman (2004) has argued, the teaching of English worldwide tends to emphasize the distance between the language and the cultures with which it is inevitably and necessarily associated. In insisting on this distance, English teaching transforms English into a kind of neutral communicative tool. There are many obvious problems with this apparent transformation. For example, Anna Wierzbicka (2006) provocatively argues that linguistics has not had much to say about communication itself. She suggests that even theories of intercultural communication tend to lack specificity when it comes to the question of what needs to be learned when someone learns how to communicate in a language. Such theories can resist the idea that in learning a language you are learning a culture, particularly because of the assimilationist or coercive implications of that idea for immigrants. Wierzbicka argues that this resistance overlooks the actual experience of immigrants, who really do feel they are experiencing a frequently oppressive Anglo culture. In addition, she thinks it overlooks the immigrants’
practical needs: ‘To deny the validity of the notion of Anglo cultural patterns or Anglo ways of speaking is to place the values of political correctness above the interests of socially disadvantaged individuals and groups’ (2006, 22). Interestingly, in exploring the necessity of creating the appropriate ‘vibes’, Wierzbicka argues that World Englishes approaches and practices already incorporate this recognition, while global English approaches do not. She suggests that ‘it is often assumed that the main (if not sole) goal of English used as a tool of intercultural communication is to convey information, that the “pragmatics” of language use are not relevant in this case; and that Anglo conversational norms and conventions are (or should be) irrelevant in English-based cross-cultural exchanges’ (2006, 305). Again, this form of English is imagined to float free of any specific culture; World Englishes, meanwhile, are clearly situated in relation in each case to at least one culture. Given this recognition of necessary relation, at least in the specific context of language learning for immigrants, Wierzbicka pursues a renewed emphasis on native speaker cultural norms, not a relativistic and laissez-faire approach.

Clearly, Wierzbicka’s argument applies to academic writing as much as any other form of cross-cultural exchange; it is also obvious that the increasingly general pressure to publish in Anglophone publications can lead to problems for those unwilling or unable to conform to the relevant Anglo norms. This is one justification for attempting the heterolingual address, however superficial that address might appear. Wierzbicka focuses on general aspects of what she terms ‘cultural script’, many of which contribute to a particular take on communicating in a reasonable way, e.g., right/wrong; reasonable; being fair; ‘I think’; probable/likely/certainly. Of course, her study is part of a highly systematic take on communication across cultures. Wierzbicka considers the question of English’s cultural baggage in terms of how different cultural scripts can be broken down into what she calls Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM). NSM provides a form of universal semantic grid, which allows the comparison of different languages in terms of semantic domains. It is, then, a way of translating cultural scripts into something more fundamental (indeed, universal), and accordingly a way of attempting to foster better intercultural communication, even if perfection is beyond its ambition, or even its sense of the possible. Seeking ‘good vibes’ in intercultural communication can be very difficult, she acknowledges, but she also suggests training in cultural norms is both necessary and possible, and that, ‘Given the realities of the world today, it is particularly important for both the insiders and the outsiders that the cultural scripts of Anglo English be identified in an intelligible and readily translatable form’ (2006, 308). According to this perspective, Anglo communicational norms most frequently go unremarked by Anglos themselves; however, the issue is far broader than instances of face-to-face communication.

One of the norms we could usefully reconsider is ‘communication’ itself, and there have been numerous attempts to explore it as a situated value in its own right. It has been suggested that even when English and Englishes are
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not present, a certain form of Anglo norm concerning communication holds sway. Deborah Cameron (2000) argues that a fundamentally instrumental and ‘managerialist’ vision of communication has become prevalent around the world, with the study of language increasingly divorced from culture (which this time is conceived as a waste of time). This idea of communication is ‘skills-based’, focusing on aspects such as ‘listening skills’, etc. Such communication views diversity as important, but assumes that it is not something that can encroach on a fundamental level at which sameness is necessary; indeed, this communication neutralizes the apparent threat of diversity through a ‘unity in diversity’, which dominates discourse on global communication. For Cameron, this idea of communication is based on an ethnocentrism that is distinct from (despite continuities) linguistic imperialism as we usually understand it (and as I will describe it in the next chapter); it is an ideology of communication, ‘promoting particular interactional norms, genres and speech-styles across languages, on the grounds that they are maximally “effective” for purposes of “communication”’ (2002, 69). Importantly, this idea of communication dominates, ‘even when no attempt is made to export the English language itself’ (2002, 81). Indeed, she goes further and suggests that this situation requires teachers to understand exactly what idea of communication stands behind the questions posed about specific languages and specific practices; they must, Cameron argues, ‘engage with questions about what kinds of communication are valuable. Such questions are just as significant, politically speaking, as questions about which actual language(s) should serve as means of communication in a globalizing world’ (2002, 81). Cameron’s point is clear and immensely important. The ‘communication’ associated with Anglo norms (Cameron actually argues that they are specifically North American norms) has been globalized (potentially) independently of the English language. In the proposals for forms of English as an International Language (see Modiano 1999) or English as a Lingua Franca (see Jenkins 2007), there might seem to be confirmation of Cameron’s argument, and yet these ideas also contain the possibility of resistance to Anglo communication. Perhaps, indeed, World Englishes and World Englishes studies offer a challenge to this dominant sense of communication, as this book will suggest.

Similar arguments have been explored by specifically postcolonial perspectives on communication, for example, in the interventions of Raka Shome and Radha S. Hegde, who argue that ‘critical communication scholars need to problematize both communication and globalization by taking into consideration historical contingencies and local specificities’ (2002, 186). They argue that the idea of communication has become canonical, and requires rethinking in order to become more adequate to the disjunctive and unpredictable realities of global communication (indeed, ‘global communication’ is not necessarily a better way of putting it, as we will see later). Shome and Hegde suggest that it is necessary to deconstruct assumptions concerning global exchange, particularly through interrogating Western ideals of communication: ‘These changing conditions demonstrate that communication scholars
need to engage with the narratives elided by linear and consensual models of communication – the narratives of rupture, displacement, and detour’ (2002, 182). The existence of World Englishes already challenges us to rethink linearity and consensus. In fact, the frequent use of a vocabulary of *hegemony* in discussing World Englishes implies less consensus (which is what hegemony seeks to achieve) and more *dissensus*. Dissensus may well be what we want, and what we (can) get through World Englishes, and this book assumes that different senses of communication are key to holding in mind the apparently contradictory qualities of English today.

Indeed, questioning communication underlies each chapter in this book, according to the following broad engagements. In the first chapter, it is possible to see the extent to which one idea of communication informs certain understandings of interdisciplinary work. We might want to rethink that idea, and at the very least engage with diverse senses of communication ‘between’ seemingly discrete disciplines, in this case postcolonial studies and World Englishes studies. In the second chapter, the connection between World Englishes and cultural translation is considered. It has been argued that cultural translation always might turn into a coercive structure given form by yes/no questions and fixed ‘target’ identities. Indeed, language policy in specific contexts has frequently imagined the use of English in terms of a certain kind of successful translation. However, it can be argued that World Englishes escape from that kind of model of success, which again is a model of communication. In the third chapter, concerning the connection between English and ideas of global citizenship, it is argued that the gap between literal and metaphorical conceptions of that citizenship derives from very different models of communication. Again, World Englishes themselves undermine a particular understanding of what a global language might be for, and exemplify the evolution of forms of ‘globalization from below’. In the fourth chapter, focused on what dictionaries make happen, and deriving its insights from Jacques Derrida’s analysis of the act of constitution, there is an emphasis on the idea of the performative and its challenge to ideologies of communication. In the fifth chapter, exploring the extent to which composition has been ‘postcolonialized’, it is argued that the use of Englishes for cultural expression is, at least in some contexts, resisted to the extent that it implies transparent accessibility on someone else’s terms, i.e., a particular understanding of globalized communication. Finally, in reconsidering models of postcolonial and comparative literary reading, the sixth chapter argues that a particularly valuable aspect of that reading is its resistance to pre-packaged transparency in cultural meaning. Comparing recent ideas of distant reading to a kind of slow postcolonial reading, it suggests the necessity of foregrounding of literature and other cultural signs in the teaching of English language, whether that teaching is exonormative or endonormative. In conclusion, the book indicates the potential fragility of the contemporary state of Englishes, partly because the model of communication in question is not as fundamental as it may seem. The inevitability of English as medium of globalized communication is already
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overstated, but even its present reach is perhaps vulnerable to clear shifts in economic and cultural balance. Yet again communication in World Englishes is at least as open and uncertain as it is closed off (or ‘imperialist’). But it is to the question of how to make World Englishes studies and postcolonial studies communicate that I turn first.