Involuntary Associations

David Huddart

Published by Liverpool University Press

Huddart, David.
Involuntary Associations: Postcolonial Studies and World Englishes.
Liverpool University Press, 2014.
Project MUSE. muse.jhu.edu/book/72663.

For additional information about this book
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/72663
CHAPTER 1

Involuntary Associations: ‘Postcolonial Studies’ and ‘World Englishes’

To develop everywhere, in defiance of a universalizing and reductive humanism, the theory of specifically opaque structures. In the world of cross-cultural relationship, which takes over from the homogeneity of the single culture, to accept this opaqueness – that is, the irreducible density of the other – is to truly accomplish, through diversity, a human objective.

Édouard Glissant, Le Discours Antillais

Introduction

This chapter juxtaposes postcolonial studies and World Englishes studies, considering what the two disciplines share, as well as how they may differ. It also explores what it means to think about them as ‘disciplines’ in the first place. Accordingly, this chapter is about the act of naming, particularly as it gives shape to or calls into being disciplines, something that Philip Seargeant (2010; 2012) has written about at length in the context of World Englishes. Nonetheless, this chapter does not attempt to fix or freeze these two disciplines, as each is necessarily loosely defined. Furthermore, particularly in the case of postcolonial studies, the process of definition is quite possibly exhausted, with scholars having long ago asked ‘when was’, ‘what is’, etc. Indeed, Emma Dawson Varughese (2012) begins her recent study of World Englishes literature by refusing to make any attempt to redefine ‘the postcolonial’; this refusal is a prerequisite, she argues, for going ‘beyond the postcolonial’, as her book’s subtitle puts it. In order to avoid offering fixed, simple definitions of either World Englishes or postcolonial studies, this book will look at diverse case studies that frequently suggest very different things about the connections between the two disciplines. That approach begins
Involuntary Associations

here, as this chapter outlines some of the phenomena that give rise to the critical approaches, considers how the approaches differ, and explores the ways in which other writers have begun to bring them together. To begin, let us consider the proposition that the extent of English’s spread constitutes a form of ongoing domination that is best described in terms of linguistic imperialism. This diagnosis of linguistic imperialism is part of what is often called the Critical Linguistics approach, but is also and obviously connected with postcolonial approaches, as we will now see.

English Worldwide: Diagnosis Imperialism

Probably the most influential approach to English worldwide, and certainly an example of a postcolonial perspective in action, is Robert Phillipson’s Linguistic Imperialism (1992). I will refer to Phillipson throughout this book, and his work remains an indispensable prompt for reflection on World Englishes, even as the phenomenon of World Englishes to some extent demands that we extend and adapt Phillipson’s argument for specific contexts and conditions. Of course, in simple terms there are two ways to make the connection between English and imperialism. First, we might make the historical connection and demonstrate that English was an aspect of imperialism, its spread part of colonial settlement and imperial domination. Second, we might make an analogy and argue that the spread of English was like imperialism, which is to say that linguistic imperialism is a form of cultural imperialism. Phillipson famously argues that there is continuity between these two forms of connection; indeed, he suggests that ‘The British empire has given way to the empire of English’ (1992, 1). In making this argument, Phillipson is suggesting that English language teaching (ELT) has become the driver of a new form of linguistic imperialism that structurally positions both teacher and learner. Furthermore, he suggests that this imperialism is based on a more fundamental attitude of linguicism, which he defines in the following way: ‘Linguicism involves representation of the dominant language, to which desirable characteristics are attributed, for purposes of inclusion, and the opposite for dominated language, for purposes of exclusion’ (1992, 55). Linguicism accordingly attributes different if not entirely opposed qualities to languages in a given context, with English often represented as ‘scientific’ and ‘rational’ while other languages are understood to be ‘emotional’, ‘musical’, or possibly simply ‘irrational’. In the colonial context, these different attributes are used to justify the colonizer’s rule. In the end, the linked structures of linguicism and linguistic imperialism have become so successful that it is difficult to imagine how to challenge them, with Phillipson arguing that, ‘English is now entrenched worldwide, as a result of British colonialism, international interdependence, “revolutions” in technology, transport, communications and commerce, and because English is the language of the USA, a major economic, political and military force in the contemporary world’ (1992, 23–24). On this view, linguistic imperialism
appears far more successful, and perhaps longer lasting, than the actual political, military, and economic institutions of empire.

As one example of ongoing concerns about linguistic imperialism, Qiang and Wolff write the following about the role English was beginning to play in China towards the end of the last century and into the current one:

[T]he nationwide Chinese [English as a second language] campaign brings with it an immersion in Western concepts, including social, cultural, business and political thought. It is inevitable that a certain amount of traditional Chinese thought will give way to a certain amount of Western thought, which translates into a society developing with confusing input. (Qiang and Wolff 2003, 10)

For Qiang and Wolff, increased engagement with the English language will inevitably undermine aspects of Chinese culture, and will have specific political effects. Over the previous decade, they suggest, the increase in English teaching has been alarming, with the specific question of democracy’s desirability highlighted. Qiang and Wolf even ask if English language political culture is compatible with Chinese Communist Party objectives. Some of the specific concerns and language used here may be irrelevant or appear exaggerated to readers elsewhere (and also within China itself), but the general concerns remain familiar from earlier periods and other contemporary contexts. We can readily imagine that an equivalent situation in which Anglophones felt coerced into learning Putonghua would be experienced as politically and culturally threatening (although it might be felt that this situation is not readily imaginable to many Anglophones, partly explaining widespread linguistic insensitivity). Qiang and Wolf operate with a ‘weak’ version of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, arguing that English is at least a vehicle of Western thought, and even perhaps is intended to be such a vehicle. Elsewhere the same authors argue that English should be understood as a kind of Trojan Horse, with the hospitality of host countries being ripe for abuse in the current globalized regime (Qiang and Wolff 2005). In much the same way as Phillipson, Qiang and Wolff are concerned that English is becoming entrenched in China.

Phillipson’s important collaborative work on language rights (see Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson 1994) is just one example of how this entrenched English might be challenged, and perhaps with changing political and economic realities there is cause for optimism. However, while much has changed since 1992, Phillipson in fact argues that linguistic imperialism through ELT is even more evident, particularly, for example, in the ‘normalization’ of English within the global university system (itself a loaded description): ‘it is a survival strategy dictated by economic and political pressures, which dovetail with linguistic imperialism’ (2009, 207). Of course, while it may be someone’s strategy, and possibly even that of many, that word perhaps exaggerates the consistency of what is occurring, even when English is demonstrably a serious problem. Indeed, what we probably need is, rather than a more ‘balanced perspective’,...
some capacity for holding together both that which English enables and that which it refuses or denies. Phillipson's position remains invaluable, but as I am sure he would accept it requires adaptation for each context. One way to adapt the position is to put the idea of linguistic imperialism in communication with cultural theory. As one example, Kayman (2004) suggests that although English is taught as 'living speech' rather than 'dead writing', and is supposedly therefore quite distinct from the thickly imperialist cultures that led to its spread, in fact there remains a connection with a culture that has now transcended specific national cultures. Kayman thinks of this as a culture of a specific ideal of communication, one that is associated with a version of globalization that values consensus, transparency, connectedness, and accessibility. He argues that 'To the extent that English is promoted as a global language of communication it is likely to serve as the privileged vehicle for such cultures of communication' (2004, 17). Following the argument of Deborah Cameron, Kayman believes that however much English becomes a global language it will remain in thrall to a particular set of cultural norms.

In thinking about the apparent detachment of 'neutral' 'speech' from 'imperialist' 'writing', Kayman explicitly has the work of Jacques Derrida in mind, and Derrida will be an important influence on this book. As Michael Syrotinski (2007) and Jane Hiddleston (2010) demonstrate, his work remains important for postcolonial studies, and I here extend this importance into thinking about World Englishes. Indeed, it is in Derrida that we find the clearest expression of the difficulties of holding on to both the positive and negative aspects of a communication that goes beyond any individual language, even English (although, again, 'individual' and 'English' are problematic terms, and ones that in their inadequacy direct us towards different ideas of communication). It is arguable that what Phillipson has in mind when discussing linguistic imperialism is what Derrida refers to as a kind of Anglo-American Hegemony. In the interview 'Globalization, Peace, and Cosmopolitanism', Derrida associates English with a kind of 'homo-homogenization' that simultaneously offers positive and negative possibilities, the latter being perhaps more notable because they are often obscured by specific ideologies of globalization. He suggests that we must oppose such ideologies while holding on to the positive potential of global structures. Homogenization can obviously have negative consequences, but at the same time we need to insist on achieving the kinds of homogeneity that are announced but basically still withheld; new surfaces hide some of the same old profound inequalities.

Accordingly, it is necessary to understand that which in English puts it on the side of undesirable homogenization, and what can be rescued for its more positive potential. Language, he suggests is the most visible site of ongoing or reconfigured inequalities. The delicate balance needed when considering this hegemony derives from the following:

These imbalances are all the more difficult to challenge – and this is another contradiction – because, on the one hand, this hegemony is very
useful for universal communication (thus equivocal in its effects); and, on the other, because the linguistic-cultural hegemony (obviously I am alluding to the Anglo-American hegemony), which increasingly asserts itself or imposes itself on all modes of techno-scientific exchange, the Web, the Internet, academic research, etc., promotes powers that are either national and sovereign states, or supranational states, this time in the sense of corporations or new figures of the concentration of capital. (Derrida 2002, 373)

Immediately Derrida moves on, almost dismissively noting that all of the above is extremely familiar – as indeed it is, in one sense. It is what follows that is important when exploring the implications of World Englishes, as Derrida outlines what for his readers must remain a challenging logic. It is necessary to be focused concerning English’s role in a hegemonic globalization while at the same time attending to the other possibilities it opens, both those that exist outside the official narratives and also those announced as absolutely central to those narratives. Indeed, one conclusion we might draw is the need to insist on realizing that which narratives of globalization tell us we already have; the latter is something particularly problematic, perhaps, beyond the nation state, as we now apparently are, but often in fact prove not to be. He acknowledges that the Anglo-American hegemony is simultaneously that which enables a desirable globalization in the form of participatory exchange (cultural, political, and economic) in a global community. It is necessary, then, to ‘fight this hegemony without compromising the broadening of exchange and distribution’ (2002, 374). This ‘balance’ is not something that can be guaranteed in advance, and indeed is something that needs to be concretized endlessly: ‘a transaction must be sought at every moment, in every singular set of circumstances’ (2002, 374). Such a transaction entails the invention and reinvention of apparently stable norms, in what seems like an impossible demand:

This inventiveness, this reinvention of the norm, even if it must be inaugral, different, without precedent and without prior guarantee, without available criteria every time, must not for all that yield to relativism, empiricism, pragmatism, or opportunism. It must justify itself by producing its principle of universalisation in a universally convincing way, by validating its principle through its very invention. In this way, I am formulating (and I am perfectly aware of it) a task that appears contradictory and impossible. Impossible at least for a response that would be instantaneous, simultaneous, immediately coherent, and identical to itself. But I maintain that only the impossible arrives and that there is no event, and thus no irruptive and singular decision except where one does more than deploy the possible, a possible knowledge – where exception is made to the possible. (Derrida 2002, 374)

What this logic demands is that we not apply rules, but invent them. Derrida illustrates this logic with the very example of ‘globalization’ as a word bearing
Involuntary Associations

a history; as is well known, he retains ‘mondialisation’. There are of course competing possibilities within globalization – a diversity of globalizations. But Derrida’s retention of the French term is partly a question of situating what he is saying in the context of philosophical thinking from Kant to Heidegger and beyond. Is it possible to imagine global citizenship, even one speaking English, as offering a form of access to an experience of the world unlike that of global entrepreneurship? That entrepreneurial vision of engaging with the globe is, after all, one form of global citizenship, as will be discussed later in this book. Is it possible to imagine World Englishes, at least partly resistant to the smooth transparency of a mutual intelligibility and easy access to ‘markets’, as languages that enable another form of global citizenship? According to Derrida, that is something we have to work out in each singular instance, but according to a universal intent thereby particularized and concretized. Derrida’s logic here is one that has relevance elsewhere in the study of World Englishes, and I will return to it in terms of global citizenship, as well as the postcolonial dictionary in particular, and codification more generally. There are clear tensions between centripetal and centrifugal forces currently acting upon English, and it may be unrealistic if not indeed impossible to imagine that we can hold these forces in balance, as might be supposed by the ideal of dual affiliation in English (i.e., to an international standard and a local variety). There might be inevitable forms of linguistic violence brought to bear on English and its speakers, and it would then be our responsibility to secure the lesser violence.

World Englishes as a Term

The various approaches to World Englishes certainly discern the lesser violence. That seems inevitable given that the very phenomenon under consideration is a challenge to the sense of strategy, directedness, or control that continues to reassert itself in the linguistic imperialism paradigm. But what exactly are World Englishes, and why do they necessitate adaptation of the linguistic imperialism paradigm? Superficially, ‘World Englishes’ as a term seems clumsy or unwieldy. If we extend the term still further, discussing for example, ‘World Englishes literatures’ or ‘World Englishes studies’, it might seem all the more clumsy. And yet there are good reasons for the use of this term. If, as Roy Harris (1989, 39) argues, ‘New Englishes’ functioned as a euphemism for what had been previously dismissed as ‘colonial Englishes’ or ‘non-native Englishes’, then ‘World Englishes’ appears a far less apologetic or euphemistic term, partly because in principle it ought to refer to the so-called native speaker Englishes as well.

To the extent that postcolonial studies makes cultural translation so central, theorizes travelling theory, and in its literary approaches has tended to favour Anglophone writers, it would seem that postcolonial studies and World Englishes studies are natural allies. Of course, there may well be ways
in which postcolonial perspectives could plausibly distance themselves from World Englishes. It can be all too easy to assume, for example, that World Englishes studies constitute in some sense a celebration of the spread or rather diversification of English, and such a celebration is obviously likely to meet with resistance. At least in principle, postcolonialism ought to be multilingual, resistant to any Anglophone bias that might be found in current research agendas and past structures of linguistic hierarchy. Postcolonialism as a discipline might also be wary of the institutional Anglophone emphasis that partly derives from a worldwide bias towards Anglo-American universities and English language research. To that extent, it seems that it ought to be quite distinct from World Englishes studies, which by their nature are immersed in the Anglophone world. However, as Seargeant has recently observed, ‘world Englishes studies has developed from a number of discursive traditions, yet at the same time one key motivating factor behind its development as a discipline has been a change in the nature of the ecology of world languages, namely, in the nature of the phenomenon being studied’ (2012, 117). The Anglophone world, of course, is far more complex than ‘Anglophone’ suggests, and far broader in scope, with English responding to changing linguistic and other contexts in unexpected and fascinating ways. That change in the nature of the object ought to be a prompt for reflection on postcolonial studies as well. Of course, Anglophone postcolonial studies might still be mistaking a present globalized condition for a general past hybridity, and should avoid that level of anachronism. Nonetheless, present conditions derived from the histories that most usually constitute postcolonial studies’ object, and so there is at least that sense of historical connectedness between the disciplines, even if it is obviously undesirable to view one as somehow the fulfilment of the other.

Indeed, some commentators have guarded against the possibility of privileging postcolonial studies, and have made a robust defence of the World Englishes approach. Kingsley Bolton (2003, 7) discusses the following overlapping approaches to World Englishes: English studies; sociolinguistics; applied linguistics; lexicography; ‘popularisers’; critical linguistics; and futurologists. He later refines this in defining three distinct approaches to the phenomenon in question: ‘approaches whose objectives are largely linguistic in orientation (e.g., English studies, and corpus linguistics); approaches that share both linguistic and sociopolitical concerns (e.g., most sociolinguistic approaches, and the world Englishes approach), and those approaches that are primarily sociopolitical and political in orientation (e.g., studies of linguistic imperialism, and other critical approaches)’ (2005, 74–75). The first of these approaches, focusing on the linguistic features and changes characterizing the spread of English worldwide, one would take to be a precondition of any serious study of the phenomenon. However, the third, which Bolton calls Critical Linguistics, often appears to jettison concern with these actual descriptions of facts and processes characterizing English worldwide. Whether or not Bolton is being too robust in his attack on this latter perspective, it is certainly the case that his second identified approach, balancing linguistic
and sociopolitical research, seems preferable, and ought to be a natural complement to the descriptive work carried out in the first approach. Bolton identifies (and, in doing so, is merely following the self-identification of a writer like Pennycook) Critical Linguistics with postcolonial theory, and for him this can be no compliment. His article tabulates different sub-approaches to World Englishes, and under Critical Linguistics he notes that it is ‘Derived from a Marxian political analysis and/or postcolonial theory’ (2005, 71). As is often the case when one is immersed in a field, it is external perspectives that help bring a measure of clarity; of course, within postcolonial studies, ‘postcolonial theory’ would more usually be identified with capital-T theory (familiar names such as Deleuze, Foucault, and Derrida), and would most likely remain opposed by more Marxist approaches. From outside the field, however, the narcissism of minor differences is diagnosed.

Given his later remarks about the potential pathos of academic activist discourse, I imagine that Bolton associates postcolonial studies with a misplaced or exaggerated rhetoric of political intervention; as he notes,

Engaging in ‘resistance’ and ‘struggle’ in London, Stockholm or Sydney risks much less than in Beijing, Islamabad or Jakarta. In first-world universities, the politics of ‘resistance’ is often merely rhetorical, and the rhetoric has few real-world consequences. In other contexts, activism and resistance all too frequently incur dramatically real consequences, particularly in politically repressive regimes of both the left and right. (Bolton 2005, 78)

Furthermore, the rhetoric of resistance begins to obscure actual disciplinary competence, or even simple attention to the phenomena that are apparently in question. Descriptive attention to the actuality of English worldwide is a particular strength of World Englishes studies, as we might expect, but so is what follows the description, an evaluative or interpretive attention that does not already know what it will say about English. Accordingly, at the very least, postcolonial approaches to English might draw on the second approach identified by Bolton, one most usually associated with Braj Kachru, and to some extent this has already begun, as I will discuss a little later.

Postcolonialism as a Term

The other main discipline covered by and guiding this book presumably needs little introduction, given the series in which this book appears. Other than declaring that it is, or must be, an interdiscipline, I have nothing to add to the definition of ‘postcolonialism’. I have no new formulation of ‘postcolonialism’, no new understanding of ‘postcolonial theory’, and so no exciting new proposals for ‘postcolonial studies’. In much the same way as Dawson Varughese (2012), I see correcting the misconceptions of previous versions of postcolonialism to be characteristic of an approach that many commentators have been attempting to go beyond for some time. Postcolonial studies
are constituted by a constellation of related disciplinary approaches, often characterized by cross-disciplinary experimentation, and frequently engaged in vociferous ‘internal’ disagreement. There are no postcolonial studies, we might say. Likewise, there is no postcolonial theory, given that the approaches most associated with capital-T theory (Bhabha, Said, and Spivak) are hardly uniform in themselves, and the approaches most resistant to them are at least as theoretical (most obviously Marxist approaches). As Robert J. C. Young suggests,

So many disciplines have been, so to speak, postcolonialized, along with the creation of related subdisciplines such as diaspora and transnational studies, that this remarkable dispersal of intellectual and political influence now makes it difficult to locate any kind of center of postcolonial theory: reaching into almost every domain of contemporary thought, it has become part of the consciousness of our era. (Young 2012, 22)

The rhetoric here is provocatively exaggerated, and yet Young obviously has a point, even if on many occasions postcolonial studies as discipline is only ‘brought to consciousness’ in order to be dismissed. Accordingly, at best we can say that ‘postcolonialism’ floats free from authoritative categorization, the institutional moorings of a ‘Western’ university system being useful but in the end restrictive.

Nonetheless, there have been important interventions made in postcolonial studies that clearly have relevance to work in World Englishes studies. Highly situated readings give many examples of postcolonial studies their strength, and of course for a long time those readings were literary and cultural. Even on a more institutional level, a scholar such as Gauri Viswanathan (1989) considers the role of English literary studies in colonial education. In terms of postcolonial approaches to the English language as it is found mainly in literature, Bill Ashcroft’s work is exemplary. In *Caliban’s Voice*, he suggests that ‘The most powerful discovery made by an examination of post-colonial language use is that language is used by people. Although it can be an ontological prison it need not be, for the key to post-colonial resistance is that speakers have agency in the ways they employ language to fashion their identity’ (2008, 3). This argument is a clear challenge to some of the assumptions that might be derived from the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, and presupposes the vitality of forms of cultural translation, adaptation, and transformation. Indeed, in the earlier work, *Post-Colonial Transformation*, Ashcroft gives the clearest expression of this kind of approach, writing that ‘The language is a tool which has meaning according to the way in which it is used’ (2001, 57). Theories, concepts, cultures, ideologies, and languages all have an inbuilt tendency to fail to reach their ‘destinations’. Against notions of oppositional resistance, Ashcroft argues that postcolonial culture more commonly (and, he insists, more productively) tends to utilize colonial culture’s materials, transforming them in such a way as to mark the fact of colonialism and its aftermath. Postcolonial culture refracts colonial culture’s tendency to present
Involuntary Associations

itself as monological; the postcolonial consumer of colonial culture is also the producer of postcolonial culture, and this production is an agency, if not one simply opposed to all that emanates from any metropolitan centre. Indeed, this postcolonial subject recognizes something of the rhizomatic nature of cultural power, and that intervention can occur in diverse locations, with unpredictable effects. However, the privileged focus of Ashcroft’s book is literature: ‘it is still, perhaps, in creative writing that the fullest and most energetic interpolation takes place’ (2001, 55). That privilege, while still to an extent understandable, is one thing that marks distance between World Englishes studies and postcolonial studies. Accordingly, if we are going to move postcolonialism across the disciplines, we may have to make the connection between the two in different ways that do not begin by privileging predictably traditional forms of cultural production.

Postcolonialism ‘and’ World Englishes

Of course, to some extent, to refer to these disciplines as ‘two’ is already to have made an assumption that in practice is very difficult to justify. In each case, as Seargeant (2012) and Huggan (2008), respectively, argue, these disciplines from the beginning accumulate diverse disciplinary approaches. That World Englishes studies suffers relatively little of the criticism deriving from this fact that postcolonial studies has sustained (if often from ‘within’, as Huggan notes) is certainly interesting, and perhaps derives from the frequently over-ambitious political claims the latter has long made. That being said, at least some elements in World Englishes studies, for example in Critical Linguistics, are concerned to make comparable claims, and often draw on the same sources; indeed, they have more recently begun to come under attack, again often from other areas within World Englishes studies. Interdisciplinarity, it often appears, is a dangerous game, leading researchers to stray outside their remit, to betray disciplinary incompetence, and perhaps to become masters of no trade at all. Of course, this book cannot accept this diagnosis for either discipline.

In the case of both ‘postcolonialism’ and ‘World Englishes’, it seems necessary first to distinguish something like a phenomenon under consideration from a set of approaches to the phenomenon. Of course, the set of approaches in each case also partly calls the phenomenon into being, and so the tools you use inevitably affect the object you are observing. Nonetheless, it is also the case that for both disciplines there is something there that calls them into being in the first place. Accordingly, it is a complex picture, and in this book each instance or example (of a theory, of a place, etc.) needs to be taken on its own terms, to some extent. There is no one postcolonial theory, and no single approach in postcolonial studies or World Englishes studies, just as there was no one colonial framework; obviously enough, there is no single phenomenon, only the phenomena of World Englishes. All of the above makes it difficult
to bring postcolonialism and World Englishes together, or even postcolonial studies and World Englishes studies. Yet this book presupposes that some kind of interdisciplinary dialogue ought to begin, however problematic or incomplete. It will often (but not always) be modest in its aims. Huggan suggests that a more Utopian future post-disciplinary context is discernable, one that aims at decolonization and disciplinary interaction (indeed, Huggan cites the example of Wilson Harris, from whose work the present book's title is drawn). However, for the moment some more tentative goals are desirable: ‘Postcolonialism’s more immediate future surely lies in a patient, mutually transformative dialogue between the disciplines rather than in triumphalist announcements of the imminent end of disciplinarity tout court’ (Huggan 2008, 13). The dramatic transformative ambitions of postcolonial studies have been clear to see, but a certain disciplinary wariness is also important. There is medium term value to dreams of a post-disciplinary version of World Englishes studies, or postcolonial studies, or both. But, for now, it is necessary to develop a dialogue that intuitively should already be well underway. What kind of patient dialogue has taken place between postcolonial studies and World Englishes studies up to this point?

Selected studies already bring together postcolonial studies and World Englishes approaches. My first example is a wide-ranging and provocative article that presents World Englishes as a ‘challenge’. In this article, Pradeep A. Dhillon (2008) identifies relativism as the basic issue around which postcolonial studies and World Englishes studies come into contact, and concerning which they may well disagree. Focusing initially on Said’s application of Foucault in Orientalism (1978), Dhillon argues that its explanatory power was compromised by the extent to which its polemical force produced reified and opposed identities (‘us’ and ‘them’). It is necessary to move beyond such polarizations, in order ‘to work towards finishing the humanistic project of the Enlightenment’ (2009, 533). World Englishes studies, unlike postcolonial studies, are well placed to play a part in this unfinished Enlightenment project, for the following reasons. Focusing particularly on Braj Kachru, Dhillon argues that, ‘the world Englishes approach recognizes the hegemony that lurks under the spread of language through institutions of power. At the same time, however, it does not deny the creativity that allows for human agency even under the most difficult situations’ (2009, 536). World Englishes studies, from this perspective, acknowledges the force of a postcolonial critique, and indeed the critique of linguistic imperialism already outlined. However, it also holds that critique alongside exploration or even celebration of the creative potential that has been produced through the spread of English. Furthermore, the basic concepts of World Englishes concern both that which is shared and that which is different: ‘The linguistic phenomena captured by the term world Englishes speak no doubt to the language that is shared, but speak with as much force to the ways in which varieties have developed in response to specific life-worlds’ (2009, 536). The latter is something to which postcolonial studies pays a great deal of attention, but it may be argued that
the former is something about which it is highly suspicious. Now, it may be the case that both Said and Foucault can be read in other ways, or even that, as Young (2001) suggests, a more strictly Foucauldian version of discourse would be much more useful for postcolonial studies. Nonetheless, Dhillon's intervention is an important contribution and poses World Englishes as a powerful corrective not only to postcolonial understandings of the English language, but also to more general assumptions in postcolonial studies.

Dhillon's comparison, then, is broadly in favour of revising postcolonial studies in light of World Englishes studies. Ian Mai-chi Lok (2012), meanwhile, like Dhillon, compares the work of Kachru and Edward Said, partly in order to discern the points on which they both agree and disagree. It is entirely understandable that Said and Kachru would be able to stand for their respective disciplines, partly in the sense that they could plausibly be viewed as the founders and enablers of much of the work that followed them. In terms of the comparison, Lok writes that 'There is definitely a consensus on the need to insist on one's own geographical position and resist against the sort of Western imperialism abetted by the linguistic purist in language and the Orientalist expert in culture that threatens to suppress and extinguish other linguistic, cultural and geopolitical identities' (2012, 424). That 'defensiveness' has translated itself into a kind of regionalism in Kachru's later work, while by apparent contrast Said argued tirelessly against all forms of essentialism as fundamentally dangerous. In Kachru, Lok suggests, hybridity is explored for the ways in which it operates 'within and between the boundaries' (2012, 426), such as in Indian culture and English. By apparent contrast, hybridity in Said tends towards the transcendence of geopolitical boundaries. While, as Lok argues, these positions are only superficially divergent, when he considers it necessary to compare the two figures contrapuntally, the greater emphasis on Said seems obvious, because contrapuntal reading is of course associated with Said's work. Indeed, Lok begins by relating a common teaching experience, in which students respond to examples of World Englishes by asking, 'What about cultural hybridity?' In one way, the students are posing postcolonial studies as something that anticipates and perhaps even comprehends World Englishes studies.

In fact, the contrapuntal becomes the central term in Lok's comparison of the two, again apparently favouring the students' response, and, accordingly, Said's anti-essentialist position; however, Lok argues that Kachru's work contains its own comparable emphasis on a positioning that is not fixed to the extent that it contains within it multiple aspects of equally multiple traditions. In explaining Kachru's position, Lok writes that a contrapuntal approach allows us to understand a user of one variety of English in terms of experience that is, 'accumulative, hybrid, and residual, a mosaic that is constantly being rearranged, recalled and deleted, forgotten, and reconstructed through a web of interaction between different agents and contexts past and present, via the assimilation (bits or whole) of different languages and varieties of languages through interactions' (2012, 230). While there are inequalities built into local,
regional, and geopolitical positioning, such positioning is only one aspect of identity. That aspect interacts with more connected, supranational, or universal aspects of experience, without being swallowed by them. For Lok, accordingly, it is possible to articulate Kachru's position with Said's work. Indeed, Lok explicitly seeks to synergize valuable and challenging aspects of World Englishes studies and postcolonial studies. At the same time, he notes that work bringing the two disciplines together is hardly likely to be simple and harmonious; indeed, I would suggest that we can extend Lok's position to argue that bringing the two together cannot be unproblematic sublation or a contrived consensus. Lok's idea of interdisciplinarity, despite the drive of this particular article, is one that places emphasis on the point of conflict, and is likely to result in unexpected and often 'unpleasant' refractions; in short, this interdisciplinarity is one likely to lead to a great deal of dissensus.

Other attempts to bring World Englishes studies and postcolonial studies together have gone beyond comparing their theoretical assumptions, and have begun to put into practice a form of hybrid method to explore an equally hybrid object. For example, one version of interdisciplinarity concerned with both postcolonial studies and World Englishes is found in work in Critical Linguistics, which often involves the application of insights from postcolonial studies alongside other cultural studies approaches (see Pennycook 2007b). A more critical perspective on postcolonial studies is found in the ethnographic studies of World Englishes literatures conducted by Emma Dawson Varughese. Indeed, Dawson Varughese's work is fascinating in its practical application of a kind of interdisciplinary approach that yet focuses its energies on directing postcolonial literary studies into vibrant new forms. She focuses her 2012 book on reimaging postcolonial literature in the context of World Englishes. From the beginning, she makes this focus clear: 'within the field of postcolonial studies, it is postcolonial literature, its definitions and its terms of reference that are undergoing significant change' (2012, 1). By change, she means that postcolonial literature itself is a label that is being superseded. Accordingly, any critical approach basing itself on that label or category is likely to be to that extent also superseded: ‘the framework of postcolonial literary theory has become limiting because, essentially, the production of “postcolonial literature” per se is waning. [...] In short, contemporary and emerging writing has less in common with postcolonial literature from the second part of the 20th century than one might immediately appreciate’ (2012, 2). She outlines many ways in which World Englishes literature explores themes and genres very different from those found in classics of postcolonial literature, for example, discussing Bildungsroman in Camroonian literature, crime-horror in Nigerian fiction, or erotica in Singapore (however, it should be remembered that postcolonial writers, following a logic given concise critical expression by Aijaz Ahmad (1992), were often themselves rather insistent that the label was unnecessarily limiting). Dawson Varughese's study has points of overlap with the present book, and is certainly attuned to the same apparent limitations in postcolonial studies. Her work brings together fieldwork and
sociology of literature, exemplifying one kind of post-disciplinary approach to literary studies. In her book she focuses on World Englishes literature from former British colonies. In each chapter the book follows this structure: 1. historical overview of Anglophone writing in the country; 2. manuscripts received in response to Dawson Varughese’s call; 3. analysis of selected stories according to themes and trends; 4. interview (writer/publisher/academic). This is a very different approach from those that went before, and is very different in turn from the present book. Dawson Varughese’s conclusion is that “‘World Englishes literature’ characterizes emerging literature, highlighting the employment of the English(es) of the place in the literature and the interest in the culture(s), country and peoples from which the literature is being produced’ (2012, 228–229). By comparison with Dhillon and Lok, Dawson Varughese’s aims are in some ways more modest. However, in terms of the originality of her contribution, and some of the underlying assumptions, her work will be a vital prompt for further reflection on the connections between postcolonialism and World Englishes.

Conclusion

By contrast with Dawson Varughese’s movement beyond the postcolonial, which signals a movement beyond postcolonial literature and postcolonial literary studies, but remains a study of literature, the present book seeks to extend discussion of World Englishes and postcolonial studies in contexts beyond literature. On the assumption that the two disciplines come together, or can be made to communicate with one another, this book aims to apply the resulting insights to topics and questions that might seem on occasion only distantly connected, which will certainly lay it open to the charge of over-ambition. Bolton wonders about the dangers of Critical Linguistics producing a generation of linguistics scholars who know relatively little about their own discipline, and it is certainly possible that in exploring lexicography, global citizenship, and translation, this book will prove that its author knows relatively little about many of the disciplines it thereby takes in. That, however, is one obvious risk that is taken when trying to extend postcolonialism across the disciplines. It is arguable that postcolonialism is both too comfortable in its enclosed literary world, and yet at the same time cavalier in its pronouncements about related areas and disciplines. World Englishes studies, particularly insofar as they are identified with the kind of critical attention and knowledge exemplified by Kachru’s own work, provide a vital model for the renewal of postcolonial studies.

Finally, while both World Englishes studies and postcolonial studies have been here and are elsewhere referred to as disciplines, it is more accurate to describe them as interdisciplines, as discussed earlier. This book brings them together, with their shared and also divergent emphases on language, globalization, histories of colonialism, etc, to see how they might be most productive.
in discussing English worldwide, which I take to be fundamentally (indeed, *ideally*, but of course not *entirely*) a discussion of English alongside other languages. The very different case studies come together to exemplify the other way in which the book concerns interdisciplines as defined by Bowman, inhabiting different discursive contexts both temporarily and to some extent strategically. As I discussed at length in the book’s introduction, what unites all of these chapters, and directs the book’s general argument, is a sense of what we might call postcolonial communication, as distinct from some familiar alternatives more usually assumed to constitute communication. The difficulty of communication is of course to some extent a problem with one idea of interdisciplinarity, which might seek to merge disciplines in pursuit of a kind of post-disciplinary consensus. Such an idea of interdisciplinarity implies that one might translate disciplines, taking discrete and possibly even static forms and putting them into dynamic relation. This idea, essentially one of *cultural* translation, is the focus of the next chapter and, as will be argued, it is an idea that is undermined by World Englishes.