GLOBALIZATION OF LANGUAGE AND CULTURE IN ASIA

THE IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION PROCESSES ON LANGUAGE

EDITED BY VINITI VAISH

ADVANCES IN SOCIOLINGUISTICS
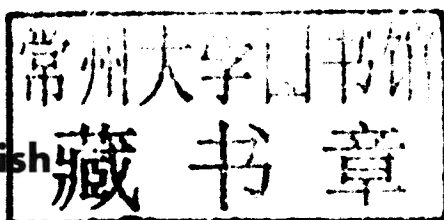
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Notes on Contributors

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Contents

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1 Introduction: Globalization of Language and Culture in Asia

Viniti Vaish

It is serendipitous that a book about globalization is being edited by someone working in Singapore which is, quite simply, the most globalized country in the world. This book began with my hunch that despite the homogenizing effects of globalization, Asia shows some unique aspects of language and culture which have not been given adequate air time in applied linguistics journals. When I received chapters from my contributors, who are all bilingual insiders conducting research in Asian countries, I realized that, indeed, there was some basis for my hunch.

The fact that books on globalization (see Rubdy, 2008) invariably organize themselves around countries signals that the most important aspect of the juggernaut of globalization is its local avatars. This book presents chapters from India, China, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore, Japan and Korea. In keeping with the animal metaphors favoured by economists, these countries include lumbering elephants like India and China, and the fast paced tigers of South East Asia. In addition there are chapters on Mandarin and Arabic, which are languages of immense cultural and spiritual capital, and, in the case of Arabic, not country specific. Other Asian countries, like Indonesia, Vietnam and Cambodia are not represented, which is a shortcoming of this book.

Is globalization, then, the process of homogenization, regionalization or syncretism? How can globalization be measured in the social sciences, especially in Applied Linguistics? Most importantly what are the unique aspects of globalization in Asia? Are you, as a reader, for or against globalization? And finally, what is the contribution of Applied Linguistics to a topic which is dominated by the disciplines of economics, sociology and anthropology? In this extended essay I explore answers or, as the case may be, non-answers, to these questions while at the same time introducing the ensuing chapters and indicating how the chapters contribute to our understanding of this topic.

Defining the nature of globalization

The economist Bhagwati (2004) takes a position in his book *In Defense of Globalization*, a position that is shared by Nobel laureate in economics, Amartya Sen (2004). I will discuss this stance in the section titled 'are you for or against globalization'. Suffice it here to state Bhagwati's definition: 'Economic globalization constitutes integration of national economies into the international economy through trade, direct foreign investment (by corporations and multinationals), short term capital flows, international flows of workers and humanity generally, and flows of technology . . .' (2004, p. 3). Bhagwati uses the word 'flows' in his definition which is also used by the cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (1996) in his definition of the term globalization. The significance of 'flows' lies in its directionality: globalization is not a linear process from West to East; the flow can be any direction.

Cultural anthropologist Pieterse (2004) defines globalization as 'an objective empirical process of increasing economic and political connectivity, a subjective process unfolding in the consciousness as the collective awareness of growing global interconnectedness, and a host of specific globalizing projects that seek to shape global conditions' (p. 17). An interesting aspect of this definition is that globalization is defined as both an empirical and a non-empirical process. Economic connectivity can be measured on the basis of the amount of remittances that migrant workers send back to the home country, and the amount of money that is traded in a 24-hour period on stock exchanges. However, 'awareness of . . . global interconnectedness' is hard to measure and I will come back to this issue in the section on the methodologies for researching globalization.

In his book on the cultural aspects of globalization, Pieterse (2004), somewhat simplistically, clusters the vast literature on this sub topic into three distinct paradigms. The first is the paradigm of cultural differentialism, which separates the world into civilizational units in conflict with each other, and for which Samuel Huntington (1996) has been severely critiqued. In Pieterse's (2004) critique Huntington's theory is a 'crude rendition of civilizational difference' which spreads fear in the West by highlighting the threat of two main forces: Islam and the 'yellow peril' of the Chinese. The second paradigm is based on the sociologist Ritzer's (2008) theory of McDonaldization which refers to the homogenization of the world in terms of fashion, eating habits, housing styles, lifestyles, etc. This is problematic not only because it is America-centric instead of polycentric, but, more importantly, because it denies agency to those being globalized. The third paradigm, which Pieterse (2004) promotes, is that of hybridity or 'global melange', which, in a

moment of extreme simplicity, he defines as 'the synthesis that acts as the solvent between these polar perspectives' (p. 57).

Appadurai's (1996) definition is that globalization is the flow of ideas, images, people, technology and money which can be both centrifugal and centripetal and, most importantly, highly unpredictable. For instance the idea of nationalism and the concept of India as an independent nation state were imbibed by freedom fighters in India like Rabindranath Tagore and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi because of their experience of studying in and through English. This is an illustration of ideas and images flowing from the West to South Asia. When Gandhi formulated his ideas of organized non-violence, symbolized in the powerful image of a half-naked wiry man striding forward with a staff, and this was embraced by Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King Jr, it was a flow of ideas and images flowing back to the West from South Asia. Today the anti-globalization movement has taken the idea of organized non-violence from M. K. Gandhi (Sklair, 2006) which is another illustration of the flow of ideas from South Asia to the West and beyond.

In Applied Linguistics Ritzer's idea of Mcdonaldization manifests itself as linguistic imperialism and the spread of global English. This is linked with its own anti-globalization movement of linguistic human rights in which English and the processes of cultural globalization are seen as eroding indigenous languages and cultures. These positions are well documented, as are their critiques, thus I do not plan to discuss them here except to make the link between Applied Linguistics and globalization literature. (For a succinct statement on these positions and their critiques see Pennycook, 2006).

The central concerns of applied linguists vis a vis globalization are the increasing use of English as medium of instruction in national school systems and the spread of global English with the concomitant loss of indigenous languages and cultures (though it has never been conclusively proven that the rise of English and the loss of mother tongues are in a cause and effect relationship). In this book the chapters by Viniti Vaish and Saran Kaur Gill et al. explore English as one media in dual medium education in India and Malaysia respectively. Whereas Saran Kaur Gill et al. emphasize the challenges facing Malaysia's national school system due to this language in education policy, Viniti Vaish emphasizes that globalization is increasing access to the linguistic capital of English for the urban disadvantaged in India. Mihyon Jeon's chapter on the English Program in Korea situates Korea in a postcolonial theoretical framework. The author thinks that Korea is hegemonized under American neo-liberal policies and that Korea is an illustration of the spread of global English in East Asia. Though Viniti Vaish finds

3

postcolonial theory impoverished and outdated for discussing English Language Teaching (ELT) in India, Mihyon Jeon finds it a good fit for ELT in Korea.

The measurement of globalization

Economists and political scientists have well placed quantified measures of this phenomenon. For instance the annual A. T. Kearney/ FOREIGN POLICY Globalization Index ranks 62 countries. The rankings are based on four dimensions: economic integration, personal contact, technological connectivity and political engagement. The methodology and data sources for these rankings are available online (www. ForeignPolicy.com; www.ATKearney.com). What is interesting is that Singapore, the tiny tiger of Asia, has consistently come out number 1 in this prestigious index in both 2006 and 2005. The other Asian countries in the top 30 are Malaysia, which ranked 19 in 2006, Japan which ranked 28 and South Korea which ranked 29. Philippines lost the 30th position to Romania and was ranked 31. Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia and India are at the bottom of this list of 62, though, in the inexorable march to globalization, they have done better than countries which did not make it to the list at all.

Census results, or sociolinguistic surveys, which have been used in the past to measure language loss and shift, are still a good measure of globalization. They can provide figures for the spread of English and the loss of mother tongues, though, as I pointed out earlier, these phenomena cannot be presumed to be in a cause and effect relationship. Census results can also provide valuable information on how family structure is changing due to high levels of mobility amongst people, which, according to Giddens (2002) is an important indicator of globalization. These quantitative measures have always been available to researchers; however, such measures tend to document change only after it has become substantial so that large-scale surveys can pick it up with significant effect sizes. On the other hand, small scale in-depth studies, like the one presented by Phyllis Chew in this book, about study-mothers in Singapore, are a powerful method of exploring changes due to globalization that are discernable in family structure.

There remain enormous knowledge gaps in the methodology for measuring globalization especially in Applied Linguistics. Quantitatively we still do not have a reliable gauge for the languages in which users access the World Wide Web. This measurement is imperative because the new frontier for the spread of languages is not the national boundary but cyberspace. In a chapter aptly titled 'Flows of technology' Shouhui Zhang explores technological challenges in using Mandarin

on the computer. Due to socio-political differences between hanzi using countries, like China, Japan, Taiwan, etc., there is, as yet, no standardized form for Chinese characters on the computer. Though there is great attention paid to English in globalization studies, other languages which are proliferating rapidly, like Mandarin and Arabic, have been ignored, a gap that this book tries to bridge.

There is a need for ethnographies, cases, area-studies and observations of globalization with a focus on how languages and cultures are affected in communities by the inflow and outflow of people, images, ideas, technology and money. Blommaert (2003) calls for more ethnographic studies which are sensitive to the scale and speed with which linguistic variation and language shift takes place. Thus there needs to be a paradigm shift in looking at the ethnography not as the study of small things but as illustrations of global trends in language. However, most measures or indicators of globalization privilege a quantitative approach. For instance the sociologist Guillen (2001) measures globalization from 1980 till 1998 on the basis of 4 indicators: economic, financial, social & political, and bibliographical. For each of these indicators the author offers a quantitative figure. Quantitative figures, for instance those which measure the growing numbers of tourists and migrants, are woefully inadequate for measuring the cultural and linguistic aspects of globalization.

Globalization in Asia

We now turn to the heart of the matter: what exactly are the unique aspects of globalization in Asia that sets this part of globe apart from the rest of our world? The first, I think, is the resilient and strong nation-state model. Secondly there are challengers to global English like Mandarin, Hindi and Arabic not only in the number of speakers but also in the cultural and spiritual capital that is associated with these languages. Thirdly, aspects of Asian culture like Bollywood and Japanese anime are spreading across the globe with consequences in the way that Asians perform identity. And finally the Western economic model of unbridled, unregulated capitalism is under serious attack due to the global financial crisis of 2008 which is making the Asian Financial Crisis of 1998 look like a ripple compared to a tsunami.

The processes of globalization are supposed to weaken the state and Appadurai is convinced 'that the nation-state, as a complex modern political form, is on its last legs' (1996, p. 19). Even in his later work, Appadurai (2001) insists that 'I am among those analysts who are inclined to see globalization as a definite marker of a new crisis for the sovereignty of nation-states' (p. 4). However, countries like Singapore and Malaysia, both of which get a high rank in the A. T. Kearney

5

Globalization index, are reputed to have a strong state with tight regulations in most sectors including the economy and mass media. These highly globalized Asian countries have put paid to Appadurai's view. Singapore and Malaysia are environments of dirigisme where governments exercise considerable control on the economy, mass media, education and language planning. According to Gopinathan (2008) the East Asian developmental state is still the model that Singapore follows, as do the countries of Taiwan, South Korea and Hongkong, in which the state governs the market instead of being governed by it. 'Singapore has also aligned itself to the view that the neo-Confucian ideology is a sensible alternative framework for socio-economic and political organization' (Gopinathan, 2007, p. 59), which is an ideology in which discipline and hierarchy play a key role in people's behaviour towards the state.

Goh Yeng Seng and Lim Seok Lai in this book raise awareness about the increasing numbers of Mandarin learners in the United States of America. Though the number of Mandarin speakers in the world outnumber native English speakers (as do the number of Hindi speakers) they point out that Mandarin may not be considered 'global' because the bulk of Mandarin speakers live in and not out of China. However, the impact of the large number of Mandarin speakers can be seen on language use on the internet, which has led Dor (2004) to speculate that in future English will be surpassed by other languages on the internet. I surmise that as languages like Arabic, Mandarin and Hindi become more computer-friendly, there will be an increasing number of users who google, game and blog in these languages rather than English. Sa'eda Buang in her chapter in this book explores the religious importance of Arabic in South East Asia, a topic rarely seen in Applied Linguistics journals. Through primary and secondary research she documents that though English and Malay have changed their roles, Arabic has held its status as the language of immense spiritual capital for Muslim people. In addition its domains are expanding as it becomes the language in which business is done with the Middle East. A similar claim for the entrenchment and preservation of Arabic is documented ethnographically by Rosowsky (2006). In this study of a South Asian Muslim community in the UK, the spoken language at home is Mirpuri Punjabi, with English and Urdu as languages of literacy. Arabic is the language of liturgical literacy being acquired in mosques by adults and children. In this community language attitudes favour the learning of Arabic over that of learning Mirpuri Punjabi or Urdu thus affirming the importance of Arabic and religion.

That English is a world language because of its econocultural properties and the agentive acceptance of the colonies (Brutt-Griffler, 2002) is yet another triumphalist view. The term 'econocultural' for English is problematic: I do not see that that world economy is linked via English.

What about the Chinese, German and Japanese economies? Are these linked via English? And I do not believe that there is such a thing as world culture. The gaze in applied linguistics and related fields needs to shift from English to new ideas like the increasing numbers of Mandarin learners, how Arabic unites Islamic peoples as a global language and the entrenched nature of Hindi in India despite the fact that English is its co-official partner.

Though the spread of English is written about ad nauseum, the entrenched nature of Hindi and its resistance to the spread of global English despite a rapidly globalizing India has gone unnoticed. A look at the figures for Hindi in the census of India from 1971 till 2001 shows that the number of Hindi speakers is rising at an average of about 25 per cent every decade. There are currently about 422 million Hindi speakers and if the trend continues this number will surpass the half a billion mark by 2011. The decadal increase in Hindi speakers existed before India started globalizing in 1991 and is continuing, thus showing that globalization has not affected India with the penetration of English as it has in certain other parts of the world. One of the reasons for this is that globalization is about multinationals penetrating large local markets through local languages, a strategy that supports additive bilingualism (Vaish, forthcoming). Quite simply, if the COKE Company advertises in English in India it will reach 2 per cent of one billion people; if it advertises in Hindi, nearly half a billion.

A similar sociolinguistic situation exists in Japan. Masakazu Iino in his chapter in this book documents two phenomenon happening simultaneously. The first is the spread of English in elementary schools as a compulsory subject even though English is not really used by the Japanese for communicative purposes. The other is the teaching of Japanese to inbound immigrants and their children who are increasing in number and are being encouraged to become the residents of Japan, an immigration policy which is resulting in a disturbing rise in national pride. Thus the examples of India and Japan show the entrenchment of languages despite, or because of, globalization.

Cultural globalization has numerous nodes in Asia like Bollywood movies made in Mumbai, the Japanese anime cartoons and Kung Fu movies made in Hong Kong which are subtitled in as many as 17 languages and distributed to specific diasporas. These cultural spaces, which are dominated by languages like Hindi, Japanese and Mandarin, ignore and challenge the spread of English. Vaish (2007) has shown how Chinese and Indian children in Singapore are networked into the pan-Chinese and pan-Indian culture through their engagement with Canto-pop music and Tamil movies respectively. She thus empirically challenges the idea that Asian youth are passive victims

of cultural globalization, or what Brutt-Griffler (2002) calls 'world culture' that emanates from the West.

Finally, we come to the global financial crisis of 2008 which has upstaged the Asian financial crisis of 1997–1998. It is not my area of expertise or the purpose of this introduction to give an economic interpretation of these crises. More importantly, having lived in Singapore through both these crises, I want to point to some cultural impressions of the same. In 1997–1998 the *International Herald Tribune* and the *Economist* magazine carried numerous articles which berated the 'crony capitalism' of East Asian countries and held it responsible for the near collapse of countries like Indonesia. There was a sense that the Western capitalist model had been imperfectly supplanted in East Asia, thus resulting in the crisis. The global financial crisis of 2008 has, ironically, made Asian economies look better, though they are by no means totally unaffected by the crisis. However, the protectionist policies of governments in developmental states, which earlier were berated as part of a patriarchal neo-confucianist system, are now considered sensible as they have prevented banks from collapsing. Once again the gaze is on Asia, this time on nationalized banks and businesses, which are part of a patriarchal culture in which the government controls the market. Now the unbridled market capitalism of the West and the mythical self-correcting nature of this market are under attack.

Are you for or against globalization?

If there was a debate in which the motion was: 'this house believes that globalization is a benign process which can benefit both rich and poor countries', would you be for or against? In academia this seems a trite question to ask as academics are above taking positions. However globalization is one topic that makes many scholars take a stance and argue from their point of view. Scholars are divided between those who see globalization as a benign process (Bhagwati, 2004; Sen, 2004; Friedman, 2005) and those who see globalization as a process that will harm the environment and deepen the existing divide between the rich and the poor, the technologized and non-technologized (Shiva, 2004; Sklair, 2006).

Sen (2004) persuades that globalization is not particularly Western and it is not a process that makes the poor poorer. He gives numerous examples from history to show how ideas from the East spread to the West through trade, travel and migration, like the decimal system which was developed in India between the second and sixth centuries and was carried to the West by Arab traders. Bhagwati (2004) substantiates Sen's contention that the poor do not become further disenfranchised

because of the processes of globalization, and attempts to prove that globalization can benefit all social classes if it is managed. For both these economists market capitalism must go hand in hand with public policies in education, land reform, microcredit facilities and appropriate legal protection for labour. Thus the real issue is the equitable distribution of globalization's benefits through appropriate public policy. Both these economists are well aware of the shortcomings of globalization. Bhagwati writes that 'A dramatic example of mismanagement of globalization . . . is the imprudent and hasty freeing of capital flows that surely helped to precipitate the Asian financial and economic crisis starting in 1997' (p. 35). Thus he asserts that 'globalization must be managed so that its fundamentally benign effects are ensured and reinforced' (Bhagwati, 2004, p. 35).

My own work on globalization and English language education in India draws extensively on the work of Bhagwati and Sen (Vaish, 2008). I find that a postcolonial doom and gloom view of English in India is not productive because there is high demand for this product from the disadvantaged who should be given equitable access to this linguistic capital. The reason for this demand is the burgeoning of new employment sectors, like call centres, which employ English-knowing bilinguals. The government school system is rising to meet this challenge and my book, Vaish (2008), is the story of one such school. At the same time I acknowledge that these changes in India are not across the board and large parts of rural India are not seeing the effects of globalization. In his research on Bangladesh Bruthiaux (2002) rightly comments that English language education is of no use for the poorest of the poor because they do not have access to the global economy. Yet, globalization can bring new employment opportunity to the disadvantaged and when coupled with appropriate public policy, in this case a dual-medium language in education policy, it can create what Friedman (2005) calls a level-playing field or a 'flat world'. My concern is not that English spreads, and neither is it, I think, the concern of most Asians. My concern is that English has been spreading along class lines.

Opponents of globalization are not convinced. In a polemical essay on the environment Shiva (2004) argues that 'Globalization is not the cross-cultural interaction of diverse societies. It is the imposition of a particular culture on all others . . . It is the predation of one class, one race, and often one gender of a single species on all others' (p. 422). Though his tone is more neutral Guillen (2001) agrees that 'Globalization . . . is also an ideology' which is loosely associated with neoliberalism and with technocratic solutions to economic development (p. 236). Shiva's negative view of global institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund is echoed by Kushalya Parera and