The Cultural Politics of English as an International Language

A much-cited and highly influential text by Alastair Pennycook, one of the world authorities in sociolinguistics and English language education, *The Cultural Politics of English as an International Language* explores the globalization of English by examining its colonial origins, its connections to linguistics and applied linguistics, and its relationships to the global spread of teaching practices. Nine chapters cover a wide range of key topics including:

- international politics
- colonial history
- critical pedagogy
- postcolonial literature.

The book provides a critical understanding of the concept of the 'worldliness of English', or the idea that English can never be removed from the social, cultural, economic or political contexts in which it is used.

Reissued with a substantial preface, this Routledge Linguistics Classic remains a landmark text, which led a much-needed critical and ideologically informed investigation into the burgeoning topic of World Englishes. Key reading for all those working in the areas of Applied Linguistics, Sociolinguistics and World Englishes.

**Alastair Pennycook** is Distinguished Professor of Language in Education at the University of Technology Sydney, Australia. He is the author of many titles, including BAAL book prize winner 2008: *Global Englishes and Transcultural Flows* (Routledge, 2007), *Language as a Local Practice* (Routledge, 2010), and *Metrolinguism: Language in the City* (co-authored with Emi Otsuji, Routledge, 2015).
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The Cultural Politics of English as an International Language

Alastair Pennycook

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Preface

A book that seeks to locate the global spread of English in its cultural and political contexts might, it is possible to assume, have become somewhat dated. This book was written not long after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and at the time the salient shift in global politics appeared to be the final ascendancy of the USA as the preeminent global power. The years that followed saw globalization become the dominant framework for understanding the world, with the English language always in ascendancy. Those years also saw the rise of neoliberal ideologies as well as the massive growth of digital communication, with English once again intertwined with these developments. Now, however, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, things have started to look very different. The rallying cry of Donald Trump's 2016 presidential campaign – 'Make America Great Again' – is so evidently a response to the decline of the USA in the twenty-first century that the point does not need more elaboration here. This new era looks as if it will be the Chinese, or perhaps more broadly, the Asian century, as power and money shift inevitably eastwards after their relatively brief location in Europe and North America (Frankopan, 2015).

And yet, there are at least two reasons why this book remains as relevant now as it was when it was first written. The first is that it laid out a way of thinking about the global spread of English through an understanding of cultural politics. The global spread of English, with its connections to colonial exploitation and the contemporary inequalities fostered by globalization and neoliberal ideologies, cannot be understood without looking at these cultural, political and ideological forces. And English language teaching (ELT) – the global project that supports the spread of English – is therefore inescapably caught up in questions of power. Any discussion of English as a global language and its educational implications cannot 'ignore the
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fact that far from being a solution to the dismantling of “unequal power” relations in the world, English is in fact often part of the problem’ (Rubdy, 2015, p. 43). Second, therefore, even if we are potentially seeing a shift from English to Chinese as the major language of globalization – and it remains unclear that this is necessarily so (we may instead be seeing a reordering of the major languages of the world; Ostler, 2010) – English remains a massively dominant language of global relations that continues to threaten other languages, cultures and forms of knowledge, to disrupt the educational aspirations of many and to contribute to the reproduction of many global inequalities.

The global spread of English is a bigger problem now than it ever was and we continue to need ways to address this. As Tollefson (2000, p. 8) has warned, ‘at a time when English is widely seen as a key to the economic success of nations and the economic well-being of individuals, the spread of English also contributes to significant social, political, and economic inequalities’. One need only look at the continuing debates over the role of English in Singapore and Malaysia – two major themes of this book – to see that while the world has changed considerably in a quarter century, some of the issues remain very similar (the relations between English and social and economic prestige, and the place of English in relation to other languages in the school system, for example).

Since the first publication of this book, however, there has been an explosion of studies of the global spread of English from a range of directions, and it is to the ways in which some of these have taken us forward – and others not – that I now turn. Three passing paradigms, with their catchy titles, have come to dominate discussions of the global spread of English over the last few decades, two of which have failed to address fundamental questions of power and inequality in any adequate way, and another which, in attempting to do so, has been unable to construct a plausible model of language.

PASSING PARADIGMS: WE, ELF AND LI

Discussion of the global spread of English has been dominated over the last twenty years by World Englishes (WE) (Kachru, 1992), and more recently the emergence of studies of English as a lingua franca (ELF) (Seidlhofer, 2011). The late Braj Kachru’s (1932–2016) Three
Circle model of World Englishes, which was just starting to emerge when this book was first published, has certainly changed the ways in which we view varieties of English and norms of correctness (giving us multiple Englishes). Yet it also consistently failed to address questions of power, access and inequality in any adequate fashion. To take a context such as the Philippines, it is equally important not just to acknowledge a variety such as ‘Philippine English’ but also to understand that there are circles within circles, and wide differences between an educated elite who have embraced English, and the many others spread across the country of 7,000 islands who have a very different relationship to forms of English and the role it plays in educational and other institutions (Martin, 2014). It is essential to focus not just on a diversity of Englishes but also on the effects of unequal Englishes (Kubota, 2015; Tupas and Rubdy, 2015).

Whilst appearing to work from an inclusionary political agenda in its attempt to have the new Englishes acknowledged as varieties of English, the WE approach to language has ultimately been exclusionary, operating along national and class lines in ways that overlook all the struggles over language that a notion of cultural politics makes salient. The Three Circles model, concludes Bruthiaux, is ‘a 20th century construct that has outlived its usefulness’ (2003, p.161). The more recent work on English as a lingua franca (ELF) (e.g. Jenkins, 2006; Seidlhofer, 2011) has stepped into this gap as dissatisfaction has grown with a model of English that remains tied to national identities (Indian, Singaporean, Philippine etc. Englishes). ELF is in some ways a little more promising in that it does not work with either nation-based nor class-based linguistic models (though there is still insufficient attention to what we might call ‘English from below’ or the everyday interactions of non-elites). Yet as O’Regan (2014, p.540) notes, ELF research has been hampered by the ‘profound disconnect’ between the desire to identify and promote ELF and the inequitable distribution of such resources in a neoliberal world. While the ELF approach has been able to avoid some of the problems of the World Englishes focus on nation- and class-based varieties, and can open up a more flexible and mobile version of English, it has likewise never engaged adequately with questions of power. While the WE approach has framed its position as a struggle between the former colonial centre and its postcolonial offspring, the ELF approach has located its struggle between so-called native and nonnative speakers. Yet neither of these sites of struggle engages with wider questions of power, inequality, class, ideology or access.
The third major player over the last quarter century, Phillipson’s (1992, 2009) linguistic imperialism (LI) framework, which was also just emerging as this book was first published, places questions of power much more squarely in the picture. At stake in this account of the global spread of English is not only the ascendancy of English in relation to other languages, but also the role English plays in much broader processes of the dominance of forms of global capital and the assumed homogenization of world culture. For Phillipson (2008, p.38), ‘acceptance of the status of English, and its assumed neutrality implies uncritical adherence to the dominant world disorder, unless policies to counteract neolinguistic imperialism and to resist linguistic capital dispossession are in force’. While Phillipson usefully locates English within inequitable relations of globalization, a problem of linguistic imperialism’s macrosocial emphasis is that it does not leave room for more specific and ethnographically sensitive accounts of actual language use’ (Park and Wee, 2012, p.16). As Holborow (2012, p.27) puts it, in order to make the case for linguistic imperialism, Phillipson has to ‘materialise language’, a position that cannot adequately account for the ways in which English is resisted and appropriated, or how English users may find ways to negotiate, alter and oppose political structures, and reconstruct their languages, cultures and identities to their advantage.

The intention is ‘not to reject English, but to reconstitute it in more inclusive, ethical, and democratic terms’, as Canagarajah (1999, p.2) put it in a significant work that sought to find a better balance between the deterministic macrosociological framework of linguistic imperialism and more liberal and voluntaristic views of English that failed to adequately address questions of power. In order to understand ELT in the wider context of the global spread of English, it is essential to understand English in relation to globalization, neoliberalism, exploitation and discrimination, but we also need an understanding of language in relation to power that operates neither with a utopian vision of linguistic diversity, nor with a dystopian assumption of linguistic imperialism. While we ignore Phillipson’s warnings at our peril, it is important to develop a multifaceted understanding of the power and politics of ELT. A theory of imperialism is not a prerequisite to looking critically at questions of power and politics in ELT, though if we reject linguistic imperialism entirely because of its monologically dystopian approach to language and culture, we run the danger of overlooking central questions of power and inequality. Likewise, the WE and ELF frameworks are not prerequisites for
an understanding of the diversity of English use around the world, though if we reject them entirely because of their utopian pluralistic visions of diversity we run the risk of overlooking central questions of language variety.

More important for understanding the global spread of English are close and detailed understandings of the ways in which English is embedded in local economies of desire. We need to evaluate the global spread of English, and the role of English language teachers as its agents, critically and carefully in order to appreciate the ways in which demand for English is part of a larger picture of images of change, modernization, access and longing. It is tied to the languages, cultures, styles and aesthetics of popular culture, with its particular attractions for youth, rebellion and conformity; it is enmeshed within local economies, and all the inclusions, exclusions and inequalities this may entail; it is bound up with changing modes of communication, from shifting internet uses to its role in text-messaging; it is increasingly entrenched in educational systems, bringing to the fore many concerns about knowledge, pedagogy, culture and curriculum. We need to understand the diversity of what English is and what it means in all these contexts, and we need to do so not with prior assumptions about globalization and its effects but with critical studies of the local embeddedness of English. This book aimed to provide tools for doing so and a great deal of more recent work largely outside these passing paradigms has greatly contributed to our understanding of these issues.

LOCALITY, DESIRE AND CONTINGENCY: THE EMBEDDEDNESS OF ENGLISH

No longer can we assume English to be a pre-given object that we are employed to deliver; rather it is a many-headed hydra (Rapatahana and Bunce, 2012) enmeshed in complex local contexts of power and struggle. From the relation between English and other languages in the Pacific (Barker, 2012) to its role in countries such as Sri Lanka (Parakrama, 2012), Iran (Borjian, 2013) or Algeria (Benrabah, 2013), the position of English is complex and many sided. To understand the power and politics of ELT, then, we need detailed understandings of the role English plays in relation to local languages, politics and economies. This requires meticulous studies of English and its users, as well as theories of power that are well adapted to contextual
understandings. We are never just teaching something called English but rather we are involved in economic and social change, cultural renewal, people’s dreams and desires.

There are therefore many Englishes, not so much in terms of language varieties as posited by the World Englishes framework, but rather in terms of different Englishes in relation to different social and economic forces. We need to understand English not so much as a pregiven entity but rather as a local practice (Pennycook, 2010). In South Korea, for example, where ‘English fever’ has driven people to remarkable extremes (from prenatal classes and tongue surgery to sending young children overseas to do their schooling through English), English has become naturalized ‘as the language of global competitiveness’, so that English as a neoliberal language is regarded as a ‘natural and neutral medium of academic excellence’ (Piller and Cho, 2013, p.24). As a new destination for such English language learners, the Philippines markets itself as a place where ‘authentic English’ is spoken, yet its real drawcard is that its English is ‘cheap and affordable’ (Lorente and Tupas, 2014, p.79). For the Philippines, like other countries such as Pakistan (Rahman, 2009) with low economic development but relatively strong access to English, the language becomes one of commercial opportunity, so that businesses such as call centres on the one hand open up jobs for local college-educated employees, but on the other hand distort the local economy and education system and perpetuate forms of global inequality (Friginal, 2009).

These economic and ideological forces are also at play in the construction of student desires to learn English. As Motha and Lin (2014, p.332) contend

at the center of every English language learning moment lies desire: desire for the language; for the identities represented by particular accents and varieties of English; for capital, power, and images that are associated with English; for what is believed to lie beyond the doors that English unlocks.

Since English is often marketed in relation to a particular set of images of sexual desire, it ‘emerges as a powerful tool to construct a gendered identity and to gain access to the romanticized West’ (Piller and Takahashi, 2006: 69). Japanese women’s desire for English may be ‘constructed at the intersection between the macro-discourses of the West and foreign men and ideologies of Japanese women’s
life-courses in terms of education, occupation, and heterosexuality’ (Takahashi, 2013: 144). Focusing on the ways in which these discourses of desire implicate White western men, Appleby (2013, p.144) shows how ‘an embodied hegemonic masculinity’ is constructed in the Japanese ELT industry, producing as a commodity ‘an extroverted and eroticised White Western ideal for male teachers’. Any understanding of the motivations to learn English, therefore, has to deal with relations of power not only in economic and educational terms but also as they are tied to questions of desire, gender, sexuality (Nelson, 2009), and the marketing of English and English language teachers as products.

Several concerns raised in this book have received extended investigation in more recent times: the native/nonnative divide, the relations between English and religion, and the role of English in popular culture. Appreciation of the complicities of power – the ways in which ELT is tied up not only with neoliberal economic relations but also other forms of power and prejudice – sheds light on the ways in which assumptions of native speaker authority privilege not only a particular version of language ideology but are also often tied to particular racial formations (white faces, white voices): ‘Both race and nativeness are elements of “the idealized native speaker”’ (Romney, 2010, p.19). People of colour may not be accepted as native speakers: ‘The problem lies in the tendency to equate the native speaker with white and the non-native speaker with non-white. These equations certainly explain discrimination against non-native professionals, many of whom are people of colour’ (Kubota and Lin, 2009, p.8). Indeed, since teaching ‘second or foreign languages entails complex relations of power fuelled by differences created by racialization’ (Kubota and Lin, 2009, p.16), the field of ELT might be reconceptualized ‘with a disciplinary base that no longer revolves solely around teaching methodology and language studies but instead takes as a point of departure race and empire’ (Motha, 2014, p.129).

Another set of issues this book raised was how to understand the contingent relations between linguistic and cultural forms. It is often said that language and culture are closely tied together, that to learn a language is to learn a culture, yet such a proposition overlooks the contingent relations between linguistic and cultural forms, or the local uses of language. Attention has been drawn to the connections between English language teaching and Christian missionary activity. As Varghese and Johnston (2007, p.7) observe, the widespread use of English and the opportunities this provides for missionary work
dressed up as English language teaching raises ‘profound moral questions about the professional activities and purposes of teachers and organizations in our occupation’. The point here is not that to learn English is to be exposed to Christian values – as Mahboob (2009) argues, English can equally serve as an Islamic language – but that English may be called upon to do particular cultural and ideological work in particular pedagogical contexts.

Likewise, when we look at the powerful connections between English and popular culture, the point is not to assume that popular culture is in itself negative (a view that reveals the cultural elitism of some critics) and that English is the medium of such pernicious influences, but rather to explore the complexity of languages, flows, appropriations and cultural mixes at play. In this book, I made this point by looking at creative writing in English in Singapore and Malaysia. More recently (Pennycook, 2007) I have focused on more popular cultural forms such as hip hop, in an attempt to understand how language and popular culture are related. The promotion, use and teaching of English in contexts of economic development, military conflict, religious struggle, mobility, tertiary access and so on have to be understood in relation to the meanings English is expected to carry, as a language of progress, democratic reform, religious change, economic development, advanced knowledge, popular culture and much more. These connections are by no means coincidental – they are a product of the roles English comes to play in the world – but they are at the same time contingent. That is to say, they are a product of the many relations of power and politics with which English is embroiled, in other words, the cultural politics of English.

So when we talk of English today we mean many things, many of them not necessarily having to do with some core notion of language. The question becomes not whether some monolithic thing called English is imperialistic or an escape from poverty, nor how many varieties there may be of this thing called English, but rather what kind of mobilizations underlie acts of English use or learning? Something called English is mobilized by English language industries, including ELT, with particular language effects. But something called English is also part of complex language chains, mobilized as part of multiple acts of identity and desire. It is not English – if by that we mean a certain grammar and lexicon – that is at stake here. It is the discourses around English that matter, the ways in which an idea of English is caught up in all that we do so badly in the
name of education, all the exacerbations of inequality that go under the label of globalization, all the linguistic calumnies that denigrate other ways of speaking, all the shamefully racist institutional interactions that occur in schools, hospitals, law courts, police stations, social security offices and unemployment centres.

DEALING WITH ENGLISH: PEDAGOGICAL RESPONSES

Whether we see English as a monster, juggernaut, bully or governance (Rapatahana and Bunce, 2012), we clearly need to do something about this pedagogically. A range of key works have sought to take up this challenge since this book was first published, from critical responses to textbooks (Gray, 2010) to critical pedagogical approaches to ELT (Benesch, 2001; Chun, 2015; Crookes, 2013). While we might, like ostriches (Pennycook, 2001), be tempted to bury our heads in the classroom and refuse to engage with these issues, we surely owe more to the educational needs of our students than to ignore the many dimensions of power and politics in ELT. We would do well to question the linguistic, educational and pedagogical ideologies behind ‘the one-classroom-one-language pedagogical straitjacket’ (Lin, 2013, p.540) that many current ELT approaches continue to endorse, and embrace instead a broader, multilingual approach to our classrooms. Approaches such as communicative language teaching are far from neutral pedagogical technologies (Pennycook, 1989) but are rather ‘intimately linked to the production of a certain kind of student and worker subjectivity suitable for participating in a certain kind of political economy’ (Lin, 2013, p.540). Rather than focusing so intently on English as the sole objective of our teaching, we can start to reimagine classes as part of a broader multilingual context, and indeed, following Motha (2014) to engage in a project of provincializing English.

Such multilingualism needs to be understood not so much in terms of separate monolingualisms (adding English to one or more other languages) but rather in much more fluid terms. Drawing on recent sociolinguistic approaches to translanguaging (García and Li Wei, 2014) and metrolingualism (Pennycook and Otsuji, 2015), we can start to think of ELT classrooms in terms of principled polycentrism (Pennycook, 2014). This is not the polycentrism of a World Englishes focus, with its established norms of regional varieties of English, but a more fluid concept, based on the idea that students are developing
complex repertoires of multilingual and multimodal resources. This enables us to think in terms of ELT as developing resourceful speakers who are able to use available language resources and to shift between styles, discourses, registers and genres. This brings the recent sociolinguistic emphasis on repertoires and resources into conversation with a focus on the need to learn how to negotiate and accommodate, rather than to be proficient in one variety of English. So an emerging goal of ELT may be less towards proficient native-speaker-like speakers (which has always been a confused and misguided goal), and to think instead in polycentric terms of resourceful speakers (Pennycook, 2012) who can draw on multiple linguistic and semiotic resources.

Discussions of ELT all too often assume that they know what the object of ELT is: this system of grammar and words called English. But clearly this is not adequate since English is many things beside. The global spread of English and the materials and practices of ELT that support it cannot be removed from questions of power and politics. But to understand these political implications we need an exhaustive understanding of relations of power. Rather than easy suppositions about domination, about some having power and others not, or assuming ELT inevitably to be a tool of neoliberalism, we need to explore the ways in which power operates in local contexts, how English may be a global language but is always also a local practice (Pennycook, 2010). Such an approach by no means turns its back on the broader context of globalization but rather insists that this can never be understood outside its local realizations. These are some of the concerns I laid out in this book in the early 1990s. Since then, English teaching has become an ever greater global enterprise and the need for critical approaches to ELT has become ever greater.

Such an understanding urges us on the one hand to acknowledge that what we mean by English is always contingent on local relations of power and desire, the ways that English means many different things and is caught up in many forms of hope, longing, discrimination and inequality. It also allows us on the other hand to avoid a hopelessness faced by immovable forces of global domination, and instead to see that we can seek to change inequitable conditions of power through our small-scale actions that address local conditions of difference, desire and disparity, seeking out ELT responses through an understanding of translingual practices in the classroom, critical discussions of textbooks and ideological formations,
questioning of the norms of ELT practices and their interests. Power and politics are ubiquitous in language and language education, but resistance and change are always possible and necessary. These are the concerns I raised when this book was first published and these are themes to which we constantly need to return.

REFERENCES


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The author, John Agard c/o Caroline Sheldon Literary Agency for the poem ‘Listen Mr Oxford Don’ from Mangoes & Bullets published by Pluto Press, 1985; Mrs Ee Tiang Hong for an extract from the poem ‘Statement’ in Tranquerah by the late Ee Tiang Hong; the author, Shirley Geok-lin Lim for an extract from her poem ‘Lament’ in No Man’s Grove (1985); the author, Edwin Thumboo for part of his poem ‘May 1954’ in Ulysses by the Merlion (1979).

We have been unable to trace the copyright holders of the song ‘Third World Child’ by Johnny Clegg and Savuka, and would appreciate any information which would enable us to do so.
The very concept of an international, or world, language was an invention of Western imperialism.

(Ndebele, 1987, pp. 3-4)

To interpret People's English as a dialect of international English would do the movement a gross injustice; People's English is not only a language, it is a struggle to appropriate English in the interests of democracy in South Africa.

(Peirce, 1990, p. 108)

To speak means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization.

(Fanon, 1967, pp. 17-18)

INTRODUCTION: FROM KURT WALDHEIM TO JOHNNY CLEGG

Drifting on its lonely trajectory in search of other life-inhabited galaxies, the Voyager spacecraft carries recorded messages of greetings in fifty-five of the world's languages. But the principal message of greeting is delivered by the then UN Secretary-General, Kurt Waldheim, his Austrian-accented voice bidding anyone who may hear a welcome in the global, the universal, language: English: 'As the Secretary General of the United Nations . . . I send greetings on behalf of the people of our planet.' The language chosen to speak on behalf of the five billion inhabitants of the globe is English. Meanwhile, back on the surface of the earth, from a small radio in a township shack in Soweto, come tumbling the words of a song by Johnny Clegg and Savuka:
Bits of songs and broken drums
are all he could recall
so he spoke to me
in a bastard tongue
carried on the silence of the guns

It's been a long long time
since they first came
and marched thru the village
they taught me to forget my past
and live the future in their image

Chorus: They said I should learn to speak
a little bit of english
don't be scared of a suit and tie
learn to walk in the dreams of the foreigner
- I am a third world child

(Third World Child, Johnny Clegg and Savuka)

These two brief snatches of English, from the UN Secretary-General and a South African singer, frame some of the questions I want to pursue in this book. How can I start to explore the implications of this spread of English in both its global (or even universal) expansion and its local contexts? In what ways can we both understand this prodigious spread – 'I send greetings on behalf of the people of our planet' – and at the same time take seriously the implications of 'learn to walk in the dreams of the foreigner'? What are the connections here between the Voyager spacecraft, the UN, a suit and tie, the dreams of the foreigner, forgetting the past, a third world child, and the English language? And how can we start to find ways of taking such connections seriously?

These and other questions have been pursuing me – and I them – for a number of years, especially as my life has come to intersect with many of these complexities more and more. As a teacher of English in Germany, Japan, Canada, China and now Hong Kong, as a traveller in Europe and Asia, as a resident of Quebec for two years, I have constantly sought ways of trying to understand the position of English in the world. As someone who watches the shifts and changes in the world with interest and as someone who is often deeply disturbed and angered by what I see around me – the deaths of children, the poverty and starvation, the pointless consumption and thoughtless pollution, the discriminations against
people because of their colour, their language, their gender, their sexual orientation, their culture, their class – I find questions around local and global inequalities and injustices constantly return. And, over the years, I have become increasingly sure that these are connected, that it is essential for me, politically and morally, to work out the relationships between my work as an English teacher and what I see around me in the world.

Many questions come from small fleeting moments. Watching television as placards in English are waved to support Chinese students demonstrating for political change, Estonians demanding independence, Iraqis inveighing against the United States. What is the power and the effect of the English-speaking world and its media that placards are often most effective in English? How does that affect the demonstration and the protest? What were the complex relationships between the English-speaking media and the Chinese students’ demonstrations and deaths in 1989? Or between these media and the ‘Gulf War’? What role does CNN, for example, play in the construction and dissemination of world news? Why did Benazir Bhutto opt to allow CNN to broadcast in Pakistan, and why did Malaysia allow CNN for only half an hour each evening, interrupted by the evening call to prayer, only to change its policy recently and allow unedited broadcasting of CNN and the BBC World Service? One of the most poignant and painful examples of the connections between English and global media is given by Edward Behr (1978, p. 136), recalling an incident as Belgians were being evacuated from the newly independent Zaire: ‘Into the middle of this crowd strode an unmistakably British TV reporter, leading his cameraman and sundry technicians like a platoon commander through hostile territory. At intervals he paused and shouted, in a stentorian but genteel BBC voice, “Anyone here been raped and speaks English?”’ This question, linking male violence, war and what the world hears about it, is not just an aberration of one conflict. According to Grant (1993), after the stories of the rape of Bosnian women started to emerge, Zagreb ‘was teeming with foreign journalists, scouring refugee camps with a revival of that familiar wartime phrase: “Anyone here been raped and speaks English?”’ (p. 1, Section D).

As we watch the difficult dismantling process of the former Soviet Union and other Eastern European states, English seems to re-emerge constantly as these new states seek a new future. Discussing the significance of the newly emergent Central Asian
states (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tadzhikistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan), for example, Haroon Siddiqui points to the connections being developed between these states and other Muslim nations to the south, notably Pakistan, which is 'promoting joint ventures in tourism, banking, cement, textiles, and English language teaching' (Haroon Siddiqui, 1992). What are the implications here, as these nations redefine their ethnic, linguistic and religious identities, of the export of English language teaching from Pakistan? And what kind of English is this that is mixed up in trade relations in Central Asia? What intrigues me here is not so much how this 'variety' of English differs from other forms of English as a linguistic system, but rather to what uses it is put, what different meanings it comes to carry.

Other questions come to mind when I watch children in the Philippines, for example, or China, using a few words of English as they pursue some video-camera-carrying tourists. Or the sight in so many places of students huddled over their books late at night, trying to study for the TOEFL exam. English seems to turn up everywhere. In a small village market near the border between China and Burma, a T-shirt declaring 'we are animal', or the sounds of Michael Jackson tumbling from a dusty stereo in a roadside restaurant. Conversations on buses and trains. Sitting in monasteries in Thailand and Tibet, talking about religion, repression and revolution. On a beach in the Philippines talking about Catholicism, contraception and poverty. Drinking Guinness in a hawker centre in Singapore and listening to a bitter tale of the limited opportunities in English-speaking Singapore for the Chinese-educated. Learning that the 'English Corner' in Changsha (Hunan, PRC) every Sunday was used by English teachers to distribute Christian literature. Finding the inscription 'I ♠ homosexual' carved into a table in a small town in Malaysia.

Watching the thousands gather at a TESOL conference to talk about strategies, schemata and syntax. Walking into libraries around the world and being able to pick up a newspaper or journal in English. Listening to colleagues in a bar in Tokyo calling their students 'robots'. Sharing the pride and joy of setting up and seeing succeed a new intensive language programme in the Chinese countryside. Sitting in staffrooms, conferences, bars, coffee shops, talking and listening to earnest language teachers and our shared joys, concerns, hopes, worries. Walking along a muddy path between the rice fields in northern Hunan as the hectic work
of harvesting, reploughing, and replanting is going on, talking to an old student of mine about Dickens and Hemingway. 'But what have these writers got to do with all this?' I ask. 'Much more than you will ever know', she replies with a smile. There are longer stories, too, but no space to tell them. I recall many conversations in China about families sent down to the countryside during the Cultural Revolution because of their connections to English, of their quiet work to ensure their children would be proficient in the same language that in the 1980s would take them back to prestigious jobs in Beijing, Guangzhou or Shanghai. English and English language teaching seem ubiquitous in the world, playing a role everywhere from large scale global politics to the intricacies of people's lives.

These moments and stories have all affected my thinking, my attempts to understand the roles of English in the world, my attempts to understand what it has meant for me to be standing in front of (or amid) groups of students in London, Munich, Tokyo, Montreal, Xiangtan, Toronto, Hong Kong teaching English. Indeed, despite the apparent commonality implied in the terms 'teaching/learning English', I wonder whether these situations are not in fact so diverse that they can only be discussed in terms of their specific contexts. And as I have sought ways of thinking about these questions, I have been so often disappointed by what the 'experts', the applied linguists, have to say. While many people I have talked to share similar concerns to my own, it has been almost impossible to find any serious academic treatment of these questions. Of course, there is talk of 'English as an international language' and of local varieties of English but much of this seems to have served as a smoke screen that has obscured the underlying political, cultural and ethical questions around English and English language teaching.

Outline

What I have aimed to do in this book, then, is to seek out ways of thinking about the position of English in the world that will help myself and other teachers to understand our work differently. Although this project ranges over a wide area, from international relations to linguistics, from colonial history to postcolonial
literature, there are nevertheless two principal themes. The first develops my concern with the limitations I see in the dominant ways of thinking about English language teaching in applied linguistics, which I have here called the discourse of English as an International Language (EIL). The second theme involves an attempt to think about the cultural and political implications of the spread of English, which I have termed the worldliness of English.

The next section introduces the discourse of EIL and suggests that this discourse tends to look at the spread of English as natural, neutral and beneficial. This will then be taken up in much greater depth in Chapters 3–5. Considerable space has been devoted to this attempt to locate the historical and cultural origins of this discourse because it is probably impossible to develop an alternative understanding of English language teaching without looking in depth at how the dominant understanding in mainstream applied linguistics has come to be constructed as it is. Chapter 3, therefore, looks at the colonial origins of this discourse, examines the debates between the colonial ‘Anglicists’ and ‘Orientalists’, and argues that colonial education policies were significant not only because of the spread of English that they brought about but also because of the increase in studies of English that they produced. This idea is developed further in Chapter 4, which argues that the key aspect of the development of linguistics and applied linguistics has been their status as disciplines, as academic fields of study that define and control language and language teaching. In Chapter 5 this discussion of the discourse of EIL is brought up to the present by showing how it has shifted in accordance with other global changes, and specifically how it has moved from a rhetoric of colonial expansion, through a rhetoric of development aid to a rhetoric of the international free market. English and English teaching in these terms has been considered intrinsically good for the world, a key aspect of global development, and a commodity freely traded on world markets.

In contrast to this view, Chapters 6–9 explore the cultural politics of English as an international language, or what I have termed the worldliness of English (a concept discussed in greater depth later in this chapter). Another aspect of this worldliness is developed in Chapter 2, which looks at ways of understanding international relations. If we are to pursue ‘international’ or ‘global’ questions, it is important to do so in the context of a carefully thought-out understanding of what we mean by ‘interna-
tional relations'. Chapters 6 and 7 try to make the idea of worldliness more concrete by looking in some detail at English in Singapore and Malaysia. The central argument here is that English is bound up in a wealth of local social, cultural, economic and political complexities. While it is important, therefore, to understand English globally, this must include the idea that 'global' here means not only around the world but also in the world, that English is embedded in multiple local contexts of use. Such an argument, however, runs the possible danger of reducing language to its material circumstances, of making language not only bound up with its particular contexts but also determined by them. Chapter 8, therefore, discusses aspects of resistance and human agency in appropriating English to its local contexts, by looking at writing back, at what is often termed 'postcolonial literature' in English. This chapter explores what it might mean to find a voice in English and how different conditions of possibility affect that process. Finally Chapter 9 returns to the key issue of teaching. While much of this book discusses the cultural politics of English as an international language, one of my basic challenges is how to come to terms with this pedagogically. In this last chapter, therefore, I discuss the implications of this view of language for teaching and, more specifically, try to suggest what a critical pedagogy for teaching English as a worldly language might look like.

THE NATURAL, NEUTRAL AND BENEFICIAL SPREAD OF ENGLISH

Otto Jespersen (1938/68) estimated speakers of English to have numbered four million in 1500, six million in 1600, eight and a half million in 1700, between twenty and forty million in 1800, and between 116 and 123 million in 1900. As we approach the end of the twentieth century, the number of speakers of English appears to have increased almost ten-fold since 1900. Today, rough agreement can be found on figures that put the total number of speakers of English at between 700 million and one billion. This figure can be divided into three roughly equal groups, native speakers of English, speakers of English as a second (or intranational) language, and speakers of English as a foreign (or
international) language. It is this last group which is the hardest to estimate but clearly the fastest growing section of world speakers of English. Beyond these crude figures, a measure of the extent of the spread of English can be found by its varying uses around the world. For some time now, there has been circulating a range of descriptions of and statistics on the use of English, which have now become enshrined in the *Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*:

English is used as an official or semi-official language in over 60 countries, and has a prominent place in a further 20. It is either dominant or well-established in all six continents. It is the main language of books, newspapers, airports and air-traffic control, international business and academic conferences, science, technology, medicine, diplomacy, sports, international competitions, pop music, and advertising. Over two-thirds of the world's scientists write in English. Three quarters of the world's mail is written in English. Of all the information in the world's electronic retrieval systems, 80% is stored in English. English radio programmes are received by over 150 million in 120 countries. Over 50 million children study English as an additional language at primary level; over 80 million study it at secondary level (these figures exclude China). In any one year, the British Council helps a quarter of a million foreign students to learn English, in various parts of the world. In the USA alone, 337,000 foreign students were registered in 1983.

(Crystal, 1987, p. 358)

There also seems to be fairly broad agreement on the reasons for and the implications of this spread. While perhaps not all would agree with Hindmarsh's (1978) bland optimism, his views nevertheless appear to represent a commonly-held view about how English has become so widely used: 'the world has opted for English, and the world knows what it wants, what will satisfy its needs' (p. 42). Although there are probably not many today who would overtly cling to the common nineteenth-century arguments (see Chapter 3) that England and the English language were superior and thus intrinsically worthy of their growing pre-eminence, it nevertheless seems that English is seen as beneficial to the world (which has freely chosen the language), and that the major danger may be to the language itself rather than to other people's languages or cultures. According to Crystal (1988), this view holds that 'while all mother-tongue speakers inevitably feel a modicum of pride (and relief) that it is their language which is
succeeding, there is also an element of concern, as they see what happens to the language as it spreads around the world. . . . Changes are perceived as instances of deterioration in standards’ (p. 10). Mazrui (1975a) sums up this attitude: ‘In spite of the phenomenal spread of the language, the British at home seem to look on it at best as an amusing phenomenon, and at worst as something which is tending to pollute and corrupt the language’ (p. 75).

The discourse of EIL

In linguistic and applied linguistic circles, however, such judgments are by and large eschewed (though they may indeed form the basis for the more conservative arguments for maintaining one standard), and the main focus is on description of the different types of English produced by its spread. The causes and effects of this spread are not generally considered and are relegated to a functionalist perspective not so different from Hindmarsh’s opinion that the world has chosen English because it knows what it wants. By and large, the spread of English is considered to be natural, neutral and beneficial. It is considered natural because, although there may be some critical reference to the colonial imposition of English, its subsequent expansion is seen as a result of inevitable global forces. It is seen as neutral because it is assumed that once English has in some sense become detached from its original cultural contexts (particularly England and America), it is now a neutral and transparent medium of communication. And it is considered beneficial because a rather blandly optimistic view of international communication assumes that this occurs on a cooperative and equitable footing. Such views can be seen, for example, in the way in which Platt, Weber and Ho (1984) introduce the question of the ‘new Englishes’: ‘Many of the New Nations which were once British colonies have realised the importance of English not only as a language of commerce, science and technology but also as an international language of communication’ (p. 1). Similarly, Kachru (1986), who has been one of the most effective campaigners for the recognition and study of local varieties of English, argues that

English does have one clear advantage, attitudinally and linguistically:
it has acquired a *neutrality* in a linguistic context where native languages, dialects, and styles sometimes have acquired undesirable connotations. . . . It was originally the foreign (alien) ruler's language, but that drawback is often overshadowed by what it can do for its users. True, English is associated with a small and elite group; but it is in their role that the *neutrality* of a language becomes vital.

(pp. 8–9)

He goes on to suggest that 'whatever the reasons for the earlier spread of English, we should now consider it a positive development in the twentieth-century world context' (p. 51).

The main issue of debate is whether efforts should be made to maintain a central standard of English or whether the different varieties of English should be acknowledged as legitimate forms in their own right. The two ideologies – one or multiple standards – can be clearly seen in the title change of the leading journal on English as a world language: When its editorialship moved from W.R. Lee in Britain to Braj Kachru and Larry Smith in the United States, its title also changed from *World Language English* to *World Englishes*. In academic circles, the two leading figures in this debate have been Kachru (e.g. 1985) and Quirk (e.g. 1985), the former arguing, for example, that 'native speakers of this language seem to have lost the exclusive prerogative to control its standardization' (p. 30), and the latter, for example, that 'the existence of standards . . . is an endemic feature of our mortal condition and that people feel alienated and disorientated if a standard seems to be missing in any of these areas' (pp. 5–6).

Apart from the important work by Fishman, Cooper and Conrad (1977a) on the sociology of 'English as an additional language' (see also Fishman, 1982a), a comprehensive documentation of the spread of English which nevertheless has some surprising claims such as Fishman's (1977b) conclusion that English is not 'ideologically encumbered', the principal focus of work on English as an international language has been on questions of standards or on descriptions of varieties of English. The key issues, then, as represented in Kachru's important edited volume, *The Other Tongue: English across Cultures*, are questions of models, standards and intelligibility (e.g. Kachru, 1982a, b; Nelson, 1982), and descriptions of the new forms of English: Nigerian English (Bamgbose, 1982), Kenyan English (Zuengler, 1982), Singapore English (Richards, 1982), and so on. Similarly, a recent volume, *English Around the World: Sociolinguistic Perspectives* (Cheshire,
1991), although promising more, devotes a lot of space to questions such as variation of the use of ‘after’ in Dublin (Kallen, 1991), sociophonetic variation in Vancouver (Esling, 1991), /æ/ and /a:/ in Australian English (Bradley, 1991) or the pronoun system in Nigerian Pidgin (Bokamba, 1991). Indeed, so dominant has this focus become, World Englishes (which does at times deal with broader issues than these) has been joined by two more journals that focus almost entirely on varieties of English: English Worldwide: A Journal of Varieties of English and English Today: The International Review of the English Language.

This view of the spread of English as natural, neutral and beneficial also seems to hold sway for many people more directly involved in English language teaching (ELT). Naysmith (1987) suggests that there is a ‘cosy, rather self-satisfied assumption prevalent at successive national and international conferences that ELT is somehow a “good” thing, a positive force by its very nature in the search for international peace and understanding’ (p. 3). My point here is not so much that intelligibility, standards or varieties are irrelevant questions (indeed, they are clearly of some significance) but rather that they have tended to become the only issues of debate and have thus obscured other questions. To the extent that debate on the role of English in the world is now framed between a conservative view on standards and a more liberal pluralist concept of variety, and to the extent that the primary concerns have become those of intelligibility and description, most people in English language teaching have been poorly served by academic work which fails to address a far more diverse range of questions that might encourage a reassessment of our role as teachers of English in the world. This is not surprising, however, since the view of the spread of English as natural, neutral and beneficial is central to the discourse of English as an international language.

THE SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXTS OF ENGLISH

Recalling the abrupt shift from Chinese-medium elementary school to English-medium secondary school in Hong Kong, one of my students recently wrote: ‘I had to speak and listen to English in all
subjects except Chinese and Chinese History. It was a hard time for me indeed... Every word looked like a monster, I wanted to kill them.' Another student wrote: 'Many students find difficulties in learning not due to their inferiority in learning ability, but the differentiation in their English proficiency... Thus, students are subjected to the hindrance in studying through a second language.' Reading such remarks and discussing these issues with my students, it seems to me that the questions that emerge here have little to do with the structure of English or whether there are now acceptable forms of Hong Kong English, but rather with the worldliness of English, its relationship to class, education and culture, the materiality of its imposition on these students at secondary school, the complex implications of their eventual success in and through English. Certainly, it could not be said that English here has some sort of neutrality. And neither does it make much sense to consider its presence natural. As for being beneficial, in some ways it has been for my students – they are the successful ones who have 'made it' to Hong Kong University – but to see this as automatically beneficial is to see things only in terms of social and economic advantage within the colonial context of Hong Kong. We need to acknowledge the problem that this 'access' to English is anything but beneficial for the majority of Hong Kong students, and that even among these 'successful' students there are deep ambivalences in their relationship to English.

Sorely lacking from the predominant paradigm of investigation into English as an international language is a broad range of social, historical, cultural and political relationships. First, there is a failure to problematize the notion of choice, and therefore an assumption that individuals and countries are somehow free of economic, political and ideological constraints when they apparently freely opt for English. It is this failure to look critically at global relations that allows for a belief in the natural spread of English. Second, there is a structuralist and positivist view of language that suggests that all languages can be free of cultural and political influences; and, more particularly, there is a belief that by its international status English is even more neutral than other languages. And finally, there is an understanding of international relations that suggests that people and nations are free to deal with each other on an equal basis and thus, if English is widely used, this can only be beneficial.
Similar shortcomings can be found in much educational theory, where, as Giroux (1983) suggests, the predominant ‘culture of positivism’ allowed for analysis only of questions of efficiency in learning and teaching, and not for questions such as the extent to which ‘schools acted as agents of social and cultural reproduction in a society marked by significant inequities in wealth, power, and privilege’ (p. 170). As English language teachers, then, we have had little help in trying to understand our work, being obliged to draw on a specialist body of knowledge in applied linguistics that has operated with a very limited view of the world. As Phillipson (1988) suggests, the ‘professional training of ELT people concentrates on linguistics, psychology and education in a restricted sense. It pays little attention to international relations, development studies, theories of culture or intercultural contact, or the politics or sociology of language or education’ (p. 348). These, then, are the types of question I want to raise with respect to the global spread of English.

Beyond the issues outlined above, dealing with questions of standards and descriptions of new forms of English, a number of writers have pointed to a far broader range of cultural and political effects of the spread of English: its widespread use threatens other languages; it has become the language of power and prestige in many countries, thus acting as a crucial gatekeeper to social and economic progress; its use in particular domains, especially professional, may exacerbate different power relationships and may render these domains more inaccessible to many people; its position in the world gives it a role also as an international gatekeeper, regulating the international flow of people; it is closely linked to national and increasingly non-national forms of culture and knowledge that are dominant in the world; and it is also bound up with aspects of global relations, such as the spread of capitalism, development aid and the dominance particularly of North American media.

Linguistic genocide

Cooke (1988) has described English as a ‘Trojan horse’, arguing that it is a language of imperialism and of particular class interests. Both he and Judd (1983) draw attention to the moral and political
implications of English teaching around the globe in terms of the threat it poses to indigenous languages and the role it plays as a gatekeeper to better jobs in many societies. First of all, then, English poses a threat to other languages. This process is what Day (1980; 1985) has called 'linguistic genocide'. In his study of the gradual replacement of Chamorro in Guam and the North Marianas, Day (1985) concludes pessimistically that 'as long as the Marianas remain under the control of the United States, the English language will continue to replace Chamorro until there are no native speakers left. This has been American policy and practice elsewhere, and there is no reason to believe that Guam and the North Marianas will be an exception' (p. 180). In a number of instances, therefore, English poses a direct threat to the very existence of other languages. More generally, however, if not actually threatening linguistic genocide, it poses the less dramatic but far more widespread danger of what we might call linguistic curtailment. When English becomes the first choice as a second language, when it is the language in which so much is written and in which so much of the visual media occur, it is constantly pushing other languages out of the way, curtailling their usage in both qualitative and quantitative terms.

Social and economic prestige

The second major issue raised here is the extent to which English functions as a gatekeeper to positions of prestige in a society. With English taking up such an important position in many educational systems around the world, it has become one of the most powerful means of inclusion into or exclusion from further education, employment, or social positions. In many countries, particularly former colonies of Britain, small English-speaking elites have continued the same policies of the former colonizers, using access to English language education as a crucial distributor of social prestige and wealth. Ngugi (1985) describes his experiences in Kenya, where not only was his native language proscribed with humiliating punishments but English became 'the main determinant of a child's progress up the ladder of formal education' (p. 115):

Nobody could go on to wear the undergraduate red gown, no matter
how brilliantly they had performed in all the papers in all other subjects, unless they had a credit (not even a simple pass!) in English. Thus the most coveted place in the pyramid and in the system was only available to holders of an English-language credit card. English was the official vehicle and the magic formula to colonial elitedom. (p. 115)

Tollefson's (1986; see also 1991) study of leftist opposition to English in the Philippines gives further evidence of these connections between English and the social and economic power of élites. While many studies of English language use in the Philippines have concentrated on questions such as integrative or instrumental motivation, leftist policies on language suggest a different orientation in the support for English or Pilipino. The increased emphasis on English during the Martial Law restrictions from 1972 to 1983, Tollefson argues, underlined the degree to which English plays a major role in 'creating and maintaining social divisions that serve an economy dominated by a small Philippine élite, and foreign economic interests' (p. 186). What emerges here is the clear suggestion that we cannot reduce questions of language to such social psychological notions as instrumental and integrative motivation, but must account for the extent to which language is embedded in social, economic and political struggles. Arguing against the standard interpretation of the language situation in the Philippines, therefore, which tends to ascribe instrumental value to English while Pilipino struggles to maintain a symbolic and integrative role, Tollefson makes it clear that 'consistent leftist opposition to English in the Philippines should not be viewed as an effort to adopt Pilipino as a symbol of national unity and identity, but rather as part of a program to change the distribution of political power and material wealth' (p. 186).

Similar conditions obtain in India, where, as Pattanayak (1969) observes, 'English serves as the distinguishing factor for those in executive authority, no matter how low the level is, and acts as a convenient shield against the effective participation of the mass of the people in the governmental process' (p. 43). In recent years, there has been an increase in anti-English activity in the northern states of India, where the Angrezi Hatao (Ban English) movement, led by Mulayam Singh Yadav, the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, has been urging far more widespread use of Hindi. This, however, has been met by fierce opposition from some southern states,
notably Kerala and Tamil Nadu, where there has long been support for English (including violent demonstrations in the 1960s), largely out of resentment at the perceived imposition of the North Indian language, Hindi. It is against this background that writers such as Kachru (see above) have claimed a certain 'neutrality' to English, arguing that it rises above such 'local' concerns. Such arguments, however, fail to acknowledge both how English is embedded in local political and economic relations (there is something strangely awry, for example, in the claim that English is simultaneously used by a 'small and élite group' and also 'neutral') and how, as the dominant international language, it is bound up in a multitude of international relations (international capitalism, for example, is not in some way more 'neutral' than local relations of production).

The extent to which English is involved in the political, educational, social and economic life of a country is clearly a result both of the historical legacy of colonialism and of the varying success of countries since independence to ward off the threats of neocolonialism. The different roles of English and Swahili in Kenya and Tanzania, for example, need to be seen both with respect to their colonial pasts and to the different educational and development policies in the two countries (Zuengler, 1985). In Tanzania, Swahili has become widely used as the national and official language due in no small part to Nyerere's insistence on 'Education for Self-Reliance', a policy which emphasized the need for each stage of schooling to be complete in itself and to prepare Tanzanians in the socialist development of the country. In Kenya, by contrast, English is more widely used and enjoys greater prestige, largely because 'Kenya's capitalistic system, whose success depends on foreign investment, creates a climate for dependence on the English language' (Kanyoro, 1991, p. 415). The power of English in the world, however, has made it virtually impossible for a country like Tanzania to maintain policies favouring Swahili over English, and just as countries such as China and Malaysia reverted to more pro-English policies in the 1980s, so Tanzania has also been obliged to reconsider its stance.

Alexandre (1972) has suggested that in postcolonial Africa, social class may be distinguished more clearly along linguistic than economic lines. The group of speakers of the colonial languages, predominantly English or French, he argues, 'is separated from the [majority] by that monopoly which gives it its class specificity: the
use of a means of universal communication, French or English, whose acquisition represents truly a form of capital accumulation' (p. 86). Resistance to the spread of the colonial languages also had its effects. Thus, while one effect of Muslim resistance to the imposition of European languages in North Africa was the preservation of a stronger sense of religious and linguistic cohesion, this also led to a degree of isolation and their slowness in gaining power after independence while English- or French-speaking African élites gained ascendancy (Laitin, 1977). A similar condition can be seen in Malaysia, where, under British colonial rule, the Malays were able to maintain their language, culture and religion but found themselves thereby excluded from social and economic power within the country (see Chapter 6).

Professional distance

A further dimension to the spread of English is the effects it has within specific domains. Maher (1986), for example, examining the development of English as an international language of medicine, found that the dissemination and exchange of medical information in English had become not only an international but also an intranational phenomenon, so that 'in countries such as Germany, Japan, and France, information is being regularly published in English for domestic "consumption" ' (p. 216). While this is clearly an important observation in terms of the influence the use of English may have on the education of doctors and on the type of information that is disseminated, Maher suggests a further implication of the expanding use of English in medical discourse. Drawing on the research that has shown how the use of medical terminology in doctor–patient interviews serves to reinforce the unequal power relations between doctor and patient (e.g. Shuy, 1974), Maher suggests that the use of English in certain clinical contexts could also be 'instrumental in making the "ownership" of medical information equally one-sided' (p. 215).

Such observations start to show not only that the effects of the spread of English can be seen on a large scale in education and other systems and institutions, but also that its spread reaches and has implications for interactions at many points in different societies. Given the many domains in which such unequal
positions of power operate in conjunction with a specialized form of language, such as medical interviews (e.g. Treichler, Frankel, Kramarae, Zoppi and Beckman, 1984) or in the courtroom (e.g. Wodak-Engel, 1984), and given the predominance of English in these professional domains, the use of English may have quite far-reaching effects in terms of exacerbating problems of the inaccessibility of information. In Malaysia, for example, where the move to replace English by Bahasa Malaysia as the language of the courts has been a long and often postponed process (see Mead, 1988), many issues arise over the differential access to justice posed by the continued dominance of English in the legal profession. Gibbons (1990) has also shown how police language use in Australia clearly disadvantages second-language speakers.

The international gatekeeper

Thus far, this section has been concentrating on the implications of the spread of English within countries, but clearly its global position also has numerous effects internationally. If English operates as a major means by which social, political and economic inequalities are maintained within many countries, it also plays a significant role as a gatekeeper for movement between countries, especially for refugees hoping to move to the English-speaking countries. In his extensive studies of the English language programmes in the South East Asian Refugee Processing Centres, Tollefson (1988, 1989) argues that they 'continue to limit refugees' improvement in English language proficiency, capacity for cultural adaptation, and pre-employment skills, thereby contributing to the covert goal of ensuring that most refugees will only be able to compete effectively for minimum-wage employment' (1988, p.39). These programmes, then, while ostensibly providing immigrants with English language education to prepare them for their immigration into the United States, serve as centres for the preparation of a workforce to suit the US economy. They are constantly oriented towards the Americanization of immigrants, a process that assumes that American society has little or nothing to learn from immigrants' cultures and that 'immigrants' primary civic responsibility is to transform themselves by adopting that society's dominant values, attitudes, and behaviors' (1989, p.58).
Significant here are the close links between, on the one hand, the English language and global relations of economic dependency and exploitation, and, on the other, between English and various forms of culture, in this case aspects of North American culture.

Linking the English Only movement in the United States to anti-immigration sentiment, Crawford (1989) argues that language politics has become a substitute for racial politics:

The English Only movement, an outgrowth of the immigration-restrictionist lobby, has skilfully manipulated language as a symbol of national unity and ethnic divisiveness. Early in this century, those who sought to exclude other races and cultures invoked claims of Anglo-Saxon superiority. But in the 1980s, explicit racial loyalties are no longer acceptable in our political discourse. Language loyalties, on the other hand, remain largely devoid of associations with social injustice. While race is immutable, immigrants can and often do exchange their mother tongue for another. And so, for those who resent the presence of Hispanics and Asians, language politics has become a convenient surrogate for racial politics.

Thus, as Tollefson (1991) suggests, following Marshall (1986), 'the agenda of those who support the ELA [English Language Amendment] must be something other than language, namely, restricting access of non-English speakers to economic resources and political institutions' (p. 128).

Popular culture and academic knowledge

Although historically English has been closely tied first to British cultural forms and later to the cultures of an expanded circle of English-speaking countries (as in the example above), of more significance today may in fact be the connections between English and various forms of culture and knowledge that are far less readily localizable. Most important in this respect is the dominance of English in the domains of popular culture, international academic relations, and other forms of international information transfer. As Flaitz (1988) has shown, it is through popular music that English is making a major incursion into French culture. As this study also shows, there is a deep split between the attitudes of
various members of the French élite, with their constant attempts to lessen the effect of English on the French language, and those of a broader section of the population, who welcome the conjunction of popular culture and English. Thus, just as Frith (1983) argues that in the 1920s the Americanization of popular culture in Britain was a threat to the cultural hegemony of Britain’s intellectuals and produced hostile reactions from the likes of Orwell and Leavis, so Flaitz (1988) shows how the more recent incursion of American popular culture into France through English poses a threat to the cultural hegemony of the French cultural élite. More generally, Flaitz’s study clearly shows how English is closely connected to the global spread of popular culture through music and films and thus that it is hard to maintain, as does Fishman (1977b), that English is not ‘ideologically encumbered’ (1988, p. 201).

In international academic relations, the predominance of English has profound consequences. A large proportion of textbooks in the world are published in English and designed either for the internal English-speaking market (UK, United States, Australia, etc.) or for an international market. In both cases, students around the world are not only obliged to reach a high level of competence in English to pursue their studies, but they are also dependent on forms of Western knowledge that are of limited value and of extreme inappropriacy to the local context. As Jernudd (1981) suggests, for example, the modern discipline of linguistics, with its very particular ways of studying formal properties of language, generally serves needs different to those of many Third World countries, where diverse questions concerning language use are often far more appropriate. Yet, as he explains, linguistics is often exported to and taken up in those countries ‘because it is an internationally visible, modern approach to the study of language (and that not the least because it is available through the medium of English), and because the new countries’ universities model themselves on Western counterparts’ (p. 43). Pattanayak (1986) similarly argues that language planning policies in India have often been inappropriate and destructive because they have been based on ideas developed by an English-educated élite. These English-educated language planners ‘plan for reduction of variation, thus creating confrontation among groups using different languages. They then prescribe so-called neutral languages to be used at different levels among the many groups seeking self-fulfillment through symbolic or token functional recognition of
their languages. These societies are then made permanent parasites on the developed countries for knowledge and information' (p. vi).

Altbach (1981) also suggests that much technological expertise in India has been inappropriate because 'much of Indian science is oriented toward metropolitan models, because of the use of English, because of the prestige of Western science, and because of the foreign training of many key Indian researchers' (p. 613).

What emerges here, then, is a complex set of relationships between English and what types of culture and knowledge are given international credibility. Access to prestigious but often inappropriate forms of knowledge is often only through English, and thus, given the status of English both within and between countries, there is often a reciprocal reinforcement of the position of English and the position of imported forms of culture and knowledge. This problem often permeates down through education systems, and indeed Pattanayak (1969) argues that English in India 'stands as a barrier between the student and a meaningful education', that 'English education bestows maximum advantage in acquiring position, rank, wealth and consequent power to the few who worship it and thus perpetuate the circle of intellectual aristocracy', and that ultimately 'the study of English remains a purposeless pursuit excepting as a passport to a degree and a convenient ladder to a job and consequent privileges' (p. 44). But therein, of course, lies one of the central difficulties: while from one perspective learning English is a 'purposeless pursuit', from another perspective it is anything but purposeless as long as it provides access to social and economic prestige.6

International capitalism

Finally, some writers have suggested connections between the spread of English and more general issues in global relations. Ndebele (1987, p. 4) suggests that 'the spread of English went parallel with the spread of the culture of international business and technological standardization'. Naysmith (1987) argues that English language teaching 'has become part of the process whereby one part of the world has become politically, economically and culturally dominated by another' (p. 3). The core of this process, he argues, is the 'central place the English language has taken as the
language of international capitalism' (ibid.). Such a position, which suggests that English is an integral part of the global structures of dependency, has been explored at length by Robert Phillipson (1986; 1988; 1992). Phillipson's aim is to establish a connection between imperialism in general – global structural relations that maintain and reproduce economic and other inequalities between countries – and what he calls 'English linguistic imperialism'. English linguistic imperialism, a subtype of general linguistic imperialism, operates when 'The dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages' (1992, p. 47).

Most significantly, Phillipson's work clearly demonstrates the limitations of arguments that suggest that the current position of English in the world is an accidental or natural result of world forces. Rather, through his analysis of the British Council and other organizations, Phillipson makes it clear that it has been deliberate government policy in English-speaking countries to promote the worldwide use of English for economic and political purposes. The British Council report for 1960–61, for example, draws a direct parallel between the advantages of encouraging the world to speak English (with the help of American power) and the history of US internal policies for its immigrant population: 'Teaching the world English may appear not unlike an extension of the task which America faced in establishing English as a common national language among its own immigrant population' (British Council Annual Report 1960–61, p. 16). Ndebele (1987) also suggests that 'The British Council ... continues to be untiring in its efforts to keep the world speaking English. In this regard, teaching English as a second or foreign language is not only good business, in terms of the production of teaching materials of all kinds ... but also it is good politics' (p. 63). Given the connections outlined above between English and the export of certain forms of culture and knowledge, and between English and the maintenance of social, economic and political élites, it is evident that the promotion of English around the world may bring very real economic and political advantages to the promoters of that spread. Indeed, Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1989) conclude that 'it has been British and American government policy since the mid-1950s to establish English as a universal "second language", so as to protect and promote capitalist interests' (p. 63).
Clearly, then, a more critical analysis of the global spread of English reveals a broad range of questions about its connection to social and economic power within and between nations, to the global expansion of various forms of culture and knowledge, and to various forces that are shaping the modern world. Such relationships can clearly be seen in Hong Kong, 'a monolingual (Cantonese-speaking) and ethnically homogeneous (98 per cent Chinese) society' (So, 1987, p. 249) in which English plays a disproportionately large role. While Cantonese is not threatened with linguistic genocide, it certainly encounters 'linguistic curtailment' because of the dominance of English in academic, professional and legislative domains. This, in turn, leads to a circular argument whereby Cantonese is then claimed to be linguistically unable to perform in these domains. Clearly, English is the language of social and economic prestige in Hong Kong: 'English is the passport, it is the prestige, it is the profession, and parents want their children to get on the boat early and to stay there' (Fu, 1987, p. 29). The position of English in areas such as education and law also exacerbate difficulties of access to such domains for many people. In fact, the predominance of English in education – around 90 per cent of secondary education is in English – is clearly detrimental to the large majority of students (see, for example, Yu and Atkinson, 1988). As So (1987) remarks, 'there is much evidence indicating that EM [English medium] instruction has created learning problems for many students' (pp. 264–5). This dominance of English in the academic sphere also, of course, continues to promote inappropriate and irrelevant domains of knowledge for many students. Fortunately, one result of the burgeoning Cantonese popular music and film industries has been a clear domain of resistance to the incursion of English-connected cultural forms.

If on the one hand, then, it seems clear that there is a range of issues to be explored here, it also seems clear, on the other hand, that there is a dominant discourse on English as an International Language which tends to ignore many of these issues. In the light of many of the points discussed above, a view that holds that the spread of English is natural, neutral and beneficial needs to be investigated as a particular discursive construct. To view the spread as natural is to ignore the history of that spread and to turn one's back on larger global forces and the goals and interests of institutions and governments that have promoted it. To view it as neutral is to take a very particular view of language and also to
assume that the apparent international status of English raises it above local social, cultural, political or economic concerns. To view it as beneficial is to take a rather naively optimistic position on global relations and to ignore the relationships between English and inequitable distributions and flows of wealth, resources, culture and knowledge.

To the extent that this discourse of EIL has permeated much thinking on English language teaching, there is an urgent need to investigate the construction of this discourse and its relationship to English language teaching. From his own particular perspective, Phillipson (1986) states that a primary purpose of his work is to gauge 'the contribution of applied linguists and English Language Teaching Experts in helping to legitimate the contemporary capitalist world order' (p.127). As I have argued elsewhere (Pennycook, 1990b), it is incumbent on us as teachers and applied linguists to discard ways of thinking about ELT as if it were some neutral enterprise and, instead, to start exploring the interests served by our work. If we start to accept some of the critical perspectives outlined here, we must surely start to raise profound questions about our own theories and practices.

THE WORLDLINESS OF ENGLISH

While the critical orientations outlined above raise a number of far more significant questions than have been posed by the predominant paradigms of linguistics and applied linguistics, they also leave us with a number of difficult theoretical issues. A key part of this book, therefore, is concerned not so much with trying to describe the global spread of English or trying to present a theory that can explain it, but rather with trying to come to terms with the difficulties in understanding its diverse implications. The discussion in the last section showed how English is connected to social and economic inequalities both within and between countries and how it is bound up with various forms of culture and knowledge that are increasingly dominant in the world, but this still leaves us with certain questions concerning what 'connected to' or 'bound up with' mean. How can we make more concrete the connections between language and social, economic, cultural, political and
historical contingencies? And how can we avoid a view that places language on one side of the equation and society, culture, politics or the economy on the other?

While there has clearly been a rejection of connections between language and its contexts in much of mainstream linguistics (there are of course exceptions to this, such as Halliday), it is at the same time clear that to many people who have not been caught up by the reductions and rejections of linguistic thought, these connections are of great significance. Thus I want to find ways of taking seriously such comments as Franz Fanon’s that ‘To speak means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization’ (1967, pp. 17–18). Or Lloyd Fernando’s comment on the use of English in South East Asia: ‘It is not British culture which should be feared in South East Asia... It is rather certain Western habits of thinking which are now deeply infused into the language to which we must be much more alert’ (1986, pp. 89–90). Or Ndebele’s (1987) suggestion that in South Africa ‘the problems of society will also be the problems of the predominant language of that society. It is the carrier of its perceptions, its attitudes, and its goals, for through it, the speakers absorb entrenched attitudes. The guilt of English must then be recognized and appreciated before its continued use can be advocated’ (p. 11). To pursue such questions, to take seriously the idea that to speak can be ‘to assume a culture’ or that ‘habits of thinking’ can be ‘deeply infused into the language’, or that we can talk of ‘the guilt of English’, it is necessary to look beyond much standard linguistic theory, especially in its dominant structuralist mode.

Unfortunately, to those trained in the structuralist traditions of linguistics and applied linguistics, the kind of questions raised here are either completely dismissed or put into boxes such as ‘sociolinguistics’ or the ‘Sapir-Whorf hypothesis’. This is not the place to engage in a long debate on these perspectives, but I want to suggest briefly why I want to distance myself from such labels. The first problem here is exactly in this type of labelling and boxing: issues in applied linguistics are often seen as either sociolinguistic or psycholinguistic, a tendency which severely limits the scope of applied linguistics. Furthermore, sociolinguistics itself has generally come to be very narrowly conceived. It has, first, failed to explore the whole question of social class against
which linguistic features are correlated (see Fairclough, 1989; Mey, 1985); second, it has frequently only seen language as a passive reflector of rather than an active agent in social relations (see Stewart, 1986); and third, it has continued to operate with, indeed to reinforce, the divide between the individual and society that is so central to structuralism (see Urwin, 1984). As for the so-called Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, the problems here are, first, that any attempt to discuss language, culture and thought gets instantly labelled as ascribing to this view and is then fatuously dismissed; second, Whorf's work, though important, was limited by his structuralist approach that concentrated on language as structure rather than on language in use; and third, Whorf's ideas are often misrepresented and, as Fishman (1982b) suggests, the political implications of his struggle to support a view of difference and diversity in the face of Anglo-American genocide and disregard of Native people's languages and cultures are frequently overlooked.

In trying to find ways to think about how to understand language and its connections to its many contexts, Edward Said's (1983) attempts to find a way of dealing with the 'worldliness' of texts is a useful way forward. 'Is there no way', he asks, 'of dealing with a text and its worldly circumstances fairly?' (p. 35) What Said is trying to do here, as a politically-engaged literary critic, is find a way of dealing with a text that does not leave it as a hermetically sealed textual cosmos with no connection to the world, but which also avoids reducing a text to its worldly circumstances. The key point here is to find a space between, on the one hand, a structuralist view of language as an idealized, abstract system disconnected to its surroundings, and, on the other hand, a materialist view of language that reduces it to its contexts and therefore sees language use as determined by worldly circumstance. To make this idea of worldliness useful, however, there are a number of other aspects of language that need to be discussed.

The language myth

The first important question worth raising concerns the very status of the notion of a language. Unfortunately this question is infrequently raised and, when it is discussed, it is rarely taken far
enough. Lyons (1981), for example, after discussing various definitions of language, suggests that there is indeed a difficulty with the fiction of whole, homogeneous languages but, he suggests, if we follow this questioning to its logical conclusion, we end up with a position that acknowledges only difference: ‘In the last resort, we should have to admit that everyone has his\(^8\) own individual dialect’ (p. 27). Thus, we are left here with an argument that hinges on the supposed opposition between universality and relativism: if we give up our universal construct of language, we will be left only with individual difference. Corder (1973) pursues this question a bit further and points out that there can be no linguistic definition of ‘a language’; rather, we need to look to social psychology for a definition: ‘The concept of “a language” is a matter of social psychology. A speech community is made up of people who regard themselves as speaking the same language’ (p. 53). This certainly raises some interesting questions but still leaves us with the proposition that mutually unintelligible speakers nevertheless speak the ‘same language’ because they ‘accept the same norm. They both regard themselves as English speakers’ (p. 54).

It is interesting that in one of the first published discussions of the concept of English as an International Language, Strevens (1980) also takes up this question when he refers to the ‘fiction of “English”’ (p. 79). Unfortunately he then backs away from this position and insists that we have to assume some form of commonality between the disparate forms and usages. What is commonly argued, then, is that although there is no clear way in which English can be defined, there is nevertheless something in common between the various international ‘dialects’ of English. It is then stressed that, in common with other structuralist approaches to language that discuss the ‘equality’ of dialects, these dialects of English should enjoy equal linguistic status with each other, as equal parts of a larger system. Although this emphasis on the equality of dialects has been an important egalitarian move that counters linguistic elitism and purism, it has tended to overlook another sense in which dialects are anything but equal. As Mey (1985) puts it:

Abstract considerations of ‘uniform structures’ and general postulates about ‘equal rights’ of dialect speakers can easily lead the way to potentially manipulatory notions about ‘linguistic democracy’
and similar things. Against this, I want to emphasize that linguistic models, no matter how innocent and theoretical they may seem to be, not only have distinct economical, social, and political presuppositions, but also consequences. . . . Linguistic (and other) inequalities don’t cease to exist, simply because their socio-economic causes are swept under the linguistic rug. The veil of linguistic manipulation that is drawn across the consciousness of the underprivileged, can only hide, not abolish the existing state of social inequality.

(p. 26)

It is indeed interesting to observe the hierarchy implicit in Strevens’s tree diagram of Englishes (1980, p. 86), with ‘English’ at the top, followed by ‘British’ and ‘American English’ and branching out into all the other ‘dialects’ of EIL.

There is, then, a fundamentally important question to be asked about the very assumptions contained in the term ‘English as an International Language’, assumptions that do not disappear by arguing that if the reality of the concept of a language is not acknowledged, we may slip into complete relativism, or that we can assume that speakers believe themselves to belong to the same ‘language community’ and therefore follow the same norms, or that we can avoid the problem by acknowledging some parity between all the ‘dialects’ of English. All these arguments seem to resolve themselves into the same a priori belief that the very existence of the term ‘English’ or ‘English as an International Language’ must imply some commonality, some shared system and norms, an argument that seems to recapitulate the seventeenth-century ontological argument for the existence of God (there could not be a concept of a perfect being were there not an ultimate referent for the concept). What is not acknowledged is that ‘English’ may indeed be fragmented, struggled over, resisted, rejected, diverse, broken, centrifugal and even incommensurable with itself. The point here is that the wrong questions are still being asked. When the impossibility of linguistic definition is raised, the question then switches to how else a top-down definition of a language can be arrived at. By contrast, my search is not for a definition but for a bottom-up way of understanding language, not for a description of language structure but a way of looking at the creation of meanings through English.

Harris (1981) is useful here in his call for a ‘demythologised linguistics’ that would involve an ‘investigation of the renewal of language as a continuously creative process’ (p. 164). He points to
two central fallacies in modern linguistics, namely the idea that language transparently reflects either a real world or the thoughts of a person and the belief that language communities share a fixed code through which they communicate similar meanings to each other. This 'language myth', Harris suggests, 'is a cultural product of post-Renaissance Europe. It reflects the political psychology of nationalism, and an educational system devoted to standardizing the linguistic behaviour of pupils' (p. 9). (For further discussion, see Chapter 4.) The notion of a language, therefore, is a very particular cultural and historical construct; it may be more useful to start with a notion of language as constant change. Le Page (1985) has also challenged the assumptions made about categories such as language, race and ethnicity. Most Western linguists, he argues, are heavily influenced by, but largely unaware of, the ideological underpinnings of their view of language, influenced as it is by their own prescriptive educations, their belief in a concordance between language and nation-state, and by the monolithic grammars which claim to represent 'English', 'French' and so on. Linguistic behaviour for Le Page, then, is better understood in terms of 'a series of acts of identity in which people reveal both their personal identity and their search for social roles' (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, 1985, p. 14).

By following this deconstruction of the notion of language, it is possible to start not with mainstream linguistic's version of language as a formal system for study, with priority always given to langue and competence while parole and performance are relegated to a position of fleeting aberrations, but rather to start with the utterance, with language in everyday life, with language use as a social, cultural and political act. This, then, is not merely a reversal of the performance/competence distinction (and hierarchy) but a questioning of the very nature of this dichotomy. Language is located in social action and anything we might want to call a language is not a pregiven system but a will to community. Having made a case for understanding language in terms of difference, in terms of individual acts that move towards community, however, it is important not to adopt some voluntaristic conception of language acts in which individuals freely do and say as they please. Rather, we need to understand the ideological or discursive constraints on language use. Once we start with a view of language in terms of difference, the next step is to consider how it is that meanings are created and produced in language.
This is the next crucial stage in developing a notion of worldliness: if I have successfully argued against a view of language as an abstract and isolated system, the next step is to find ways to think about how we come to use language and make sense that does not leave individuals as completely free and random actors in the world but that also does not deterministically tie us to our worldly circumstances.

Discourse and dialogue

Here the notions of dialogue and discourse in the writings of Bakhtin, Vološinov, Pêcheux and Foucault, are useful. For Bakhtin, like Harris and Le Page, it is important to understand language and metalanguage (linguistics) as particular to their social, cultural and political contexts. He also draws attention to the process by which the concept of a unitary language arose as part of the centralizing movement of European state-building, of the centripetal forces that created a notion of a unitary language, which 'at every moment of its linguistic life ... is opposed to the realities of heteroglossia' (1981, p. 270). Vološinov's (1973) wide-ranging critique deals, like Harris's, with the move, especially by Saussure and his followers, to construct a linguistics based on a view of language as an abstract system, to stress *langue* (the system) at the expense of *parole* (everyday utterances), and to remove language from its contexts and its ideological formation. 'Abstract objectivism', Vološinov argues, gives precedence to stability over mutability of form, to the abstract over the concrete, to systematization over historical actuality, to the forms of elements over the form of the whole, to the reification of isolated elements over the dynamics of speech, and to the singularization of word meaning over the living multiplicity of meaning and accent. Language is taken to be a ready-made artifact handed down from one generation to another and cannot account for creativity or difference (1973, pp. 77-82).

Stewart (1986) comments that the tendency of structuralist linguistics to 'silence the diversity of the powerful "unsaid" of actual speech in favour of an opaque and universal form of language is to strip language of its ideological significance – a stripping that is itself strongly and univocally ideological' (p. 44). It
is Voloshinov's development of the ideological dimension of language and of the sign as a site of multivocality and struggle that is most significant here. 'The divorce of language from its ideological impletion,' Voloshinov comments, 'is one of abstract objectivism's most serious errors' (1973, p. 71). For Voloshinov, language and the sign must always be seen as forged in the contested domain of social interaction: 'The forms of signs are conditioned above all by the social organization of the participants involved and also by the immediate conditions of their interaction' (p. 21), and 'linguistic creativity cannot be understood apart from the ideological meanings and values that fill it' (p. 98). Such a view, then, takes language out of the abstract domain of the systems posited by the 'abstract objectivists', out of some idealized liberal notion of the individual, and into the social and political domain. Meaning becomes multiple, mutable and struggled over. Meaning can never be monological; it must always be dialogical. Similarly, Pêcheux (1982) argues that

The meaning of a word, expression, proposition, etc., does not exist 'in itself' (i.e. in its transparent relation to the literal character of the signifier), but is determined by the ideological positions brought into play in the socio-historical process in which words, expressions and propositions are produced (i.e. reproduced) ... Words, expressions, propositions, etc., change their meaning according to the positions held by those who use them, which signifies that they find their meanings by reference to those positions, i.e. by reference to the ideological formations ... in which those positions are inscribed.

(1982, p. 111; emphasis in original)

The importance of these ideas for an understanding of the worldliness of English is that it is now possible to consider language and meaning not in terms of a language system (English as an International Language) and its varieties (the New Englishes) but rather in terms of the social, cultural and ideological positions in which people use language. At this point, however, it is worth making a few comments on the notions of discourse and ideology, since throughout this book Foucault's concept of discourse will be preferred to the concept of ideology.10 By and large, this is because it avoids notions of false consciousness (and, therefore, 'true consciousness') refrains from positing some underlying cause of social relations (usually taken to be socioeconomic relations), and
always allows for the possibilities of counter-discourse. Discourses, in this sense, are relationships of power/knowledge that are embedded in social institutions and practices. They are ways of organizing meaning that are both reflected and produced in our uses of language and the formation of our subjectivities. Importantly, the focus in this poststructuralist sense of discourse is on 'seeing historically how effects of truth are produced within discourses which in themselves are neither true nor false' (Foucault, 1980a, p. 118). Here, then, we can start to see how using language is never simply an act that can be considered in terms of a linguistic system, the volition of an individual in cognitive isolation or an ideological trap determined by material relations. Rather, to engage in the social practice of language use is always an act situated within some discourse.

My insistence on the centrality of a notion of worldliness to my thinking should indicate that, if my stance is a poststructuralist one, it is not concerned centrally with the endless play of meaning, as deconstruction tends to be, but rather is concerned on the one hand with a challenge to the dominant dichotomies of structuralism (the individual and society, langue and parole, synchronic and diachronic linguistics, and so on), and on the other with an understanding of language and discourse in the world, with the relationships of power and knowledge. This is not, therefore, an attempt to find a relationship between the individual or language and society, but rather to suggest that they are inseparably intertwined. This is not an attempt to focus attention on parole instead of langue but rather to argue that language as system is only interesting as a by-product of language in use. This is not an argument for a historical rather than a contemporary analysis of language but rather an argument that the past is ever-present in language. Poststructuralist thinking has claimed a more fundamental role for language in human life than has been the case with the reified and compartmentalized version of language constructed by structuralist linguistics, and thus allows me to pursue my questions in a far more comprehensive way. 'Language', Weedon (1987, p. 21) argues, 'is the place where actual and possible forms of social organization and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested. Yet it is also the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is constructed.' This notion of the discursive construction of subjectivity immediately gives us a way of taking Fanon's assertion that 'to speak means ...
assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization' (1967, pp. 17-18) more seriously, for as Weedon later asserts, 'To speak is to assume a subject position within discourse and to become subjected to the power and regulation of discourse' (p.119). We do not, therefore, need to try to correlate linguistic systems with assumed social or cultural systems, but rather can focus on the discursive location of the speaker.

There is clearly a complex interweaving here of language acts and both local and global discourses. The relationship between 'English' and global discourses of capitalism, democracy, education, development, and so on, is neither a coincidental conjunction - English just happens to be the language in which these discourses are expressed - nor a structural determinism - the nature of English determines what discourses are spoken, or the nature of discourses determines what language they are spoken in. Rather, there is a reciprocal relationship that is both historical and contemporary. Colonial discourses and discourses of contemporary world relations have both facilitated and been facilitated by the spread and construction of English. English and a range of local and international discourses have been constituted by and are constitutive of each other, both through the history of their connections and their present conjunctions. Particular global and local discourses create the conditions of possibility for engaging in the social practice of using 'English', they produce and constrain what can be said in English. At the same time, English creates the conditions of possibility for taking up a position in these discourses. Clearly, then, language can never be removed from its social, cultural, political and discursive contexts and, to return to Fanon or Fernando or Ndebele - with a changed perspective on what is meant by 'language' or 'culture' - to speak is to 'assume a culture', habits of thinking are 'infused into the language', English can be called 'guilty'.

It is now possible, finally, to return to the notion of the worldliness of English and to suggest more clearly what I take this to mean. I believe that it is a felicitous term for what I want to deal with here because it points both to the global position of English and to English being embedded in the world. I do not intend to try to provide a firm definition of this term (such a proposition, in any case, would be somewhat contradictory to my discussion of meaning above), but will suggest some key aspects to this notion of worldliness. First, and in the most obvious sense, English is
worldly by dint of its vast global expansion. Second, English is worldly in the sense that a person may be called worldly: it has been and is constantly in the process of being changed by its position in the world. And third, it is in the world, it is part of the world; to use English is to engage in social action which produces and reproduces social and cultural relations. The worldliness of English refers both to its local and to its global position, both to the ways in which it reflects social relations and constitutes social relations and thus the worldliness of English is always a question of cultural politics.

It is the tendency in much of mainstream linguistics to locate meaning as centred in the core countries, institutions and linguistic/cultural systems (see Chapter 4) that this notion of worldliness attempts to counter by suggesting that language be viewed as a social practice. This view suggests that language use is always 'situated', which is not to argue that context or participants determine meaning but rather to argue that language is always located within larger discursive frameworks and is always part of the cultural and political moments of the day. The issue, then, is not so much how 'using English as an international language' involves the users in various syntactical, phonological or lexical diversity from central English norms, but rather how those acts of language use always imply a position within a social order, a cultural politics, a struggle over different representations of the self and other.

The importance of the language under consideration being English, then, is not so much an issue of structural diversity, of trying to establish what syntactical or phonological norms and divergences occur as English spreads across the globe; rather, the issue is one of considering how using English implies certain relationships to certain discourses. The global position of English means that it is situated in many contexts that are specific to that globalization: to use English implies relationships to local conditions of social and economic prestige, to certain forms of culture and knowledge, and also to global relations of capitalism and particular global discourses of democracy, economics, the environment, popular culture, modernity, development, education and so on. The particular position of English suggests that these relationships, both local and global, will be very different from those between other languages and discourses. The worldliness of English, in both its global and local senses, implies relationships to
the larger world and to the local context different from those of other languages. Given the dominant position of English in the world and its connections both to inequitable economic systems and to the dominance of certain forms of culture and knowledge, there are inevitable questions to be asked here concerning language and inequality.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have laid out some of the principal preliminary concerns of this book. Taking questions about the cultural and political implications of the global spread of English as my starting point, I argued that the dominant discourse on EIL, which is of particular significance for English language teaching, considers this spread to be generally natural, neutral and beneficial and is concerned more with questions of linguistic description than of language, culture and politics. By contrast, a review of some of the more critical work on English in the world has shown how it is linked to social and economic power both within and between nations, to the global diffusion of particular forms of culture and knowledge, and to the inequitable structures of international relations. Peirce's (1989; 1990) explanation of the differences between considering People's English in South Africa merely as a variety of English and viewing it as a locus of political struggle is a clear example of the difference between working from a traditional-structuralist approach to language and working from a politically-informed critical standpoint:

To interpret People's English as a dialect of international English would do the movement a gross injustice; People's English is not only a language, it is a struggle to appropriate English in the interests of democracy in South Africa. Thus the naming of People's English is a political act because it represents a challenge to the current status of English in South Africa, in which control of the language, access to the language, and teaching of the language are entrenched within apartheid structures.

(Peirce 1990, p. 108)

To pursue the issue of the cultural politics of English as an
international language, I introduced the notion of the worldliness of English, a term which is intended to refer to the material existence of English in the world, its spread around the world, its worldly character as a result of being so widely used in the world, and its position not only as reflective but also as constitutive of worldly affairs. By deconstructing the notion of a language, furthermore, it is possible to take further the two central questions of this book. Thus, by viewing language use in terms of discursively mediated social action, rather than in terms of a fixed system for analysis, it is far more possible to explore the cultural and political implications of language use. Not only is the reinsertion of language in general into daily life a necessary step in understanding the worldliness of English, but we must also start with a deconstruction of the whole notion of 'English' and of 'English as an International Language'. Thus, rather than according some a priori ontological status to English in the world, English as an International Language can be understood as a discursive construct; rather than being some objective descriptive category, it is a whole system of power/knowledge relationships which produce very particular understandings of English and English language teaching (see Chapters 3–5). This helps us to make sense of Ndebele's (1987) comment that 'the very concept of an international, or world, language was an invention of Western imperialism' (pp. 3–4).

NOTES

1. From the BBC series *The Story of English*. See also McCrum, Cran and MacNeil (1986).
2. My thanks to Roger Simon for bringing this song to my attention.
3. My thanks to Roger Bradshaw for mentioning and locating this example.
4. Although this sort of labelling (ESL, EFL, ESP, EAP, EST, SLA, LAD, L1, L2, etc.) is what I see as both the cementing of complex ideas into simplistic and rigid categories and the attempt by applied linguistics to constitute itself as a science (see Chapter 4), I have abbreviated this clumsy term for convenience. As will become clear, however, I do not wish to signal my acceptance either of the standard understanding of EIL nor of the tendency to make such neat formulations.
5. Ngũgĩ's account of the system of informants and punishments to
prohibit the use of native languages in Kenyan schools echoes in painful fashion similar stories of the brutal repression of native languages and imposition of English among Native Canadians.

6. My thanks to Arleen Schenke here, who asked the key questions 'Purposeless for whom?' and 'Purposeless in what sense?'.

7. My thanks to Tse Lai Kun for our discussion of this and other issues related to English in Hong Kong.

8. After a great deal of consideration, I have decided to drop my former practice of marking all 'inappropriate' pronoun usage in quotations with [sic]. My feeling now is that this convention, although extremely important, has now become too formalized a practice to be useful. I suspect the same is the case with 'he or she', which has now become a formalized convention that does little to change gender relations in language. This misgiving is coupled with two other concerns: (1) that this practice has tended to follow a representationalist view of language (for a discussion of the complexities of gender, pronouns and representationalism, see Black and Coward, 1990); and (2) that, along with gendered pronouns, there are many other terms that we may find problematic (especially in terms of race, ethnicity and ethnocentricity in colonial documents). Rather than highlight an ever-increasing number of words and phrases with [sic], I have chosen to let them stand, in the hope that readers will see for themselves the problematic discourses at play.

9. There is a problem with attribution of authorship here. For simplicity, however, I am referring to *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* as Vološinov (1973), whether or not its real author or coauthor was Bakhtin.

10. A great deal more could be said about this but I feel this is not the place to do so. In general, too, Foucault's thinking has been central to many of the ways I have approached this project, not only in terms of his work on the disciplining of language and distribution of discourse (1970; 1972), but also in terms of his methodological and political projects (1980a). Thus, I shall pursue genealogical, archaeological and ethical concerns. A genealogical focus will attempt to show how inquiries into the past can be of political relevance to the present by unravelling the historical construction of unquestioned assumptions. An archaeological focus will seek to investigate more closely the formation of discourses themselves, the historical conditions of possibility that gave rise to them, and the conditions of possibility that they in turn engender. An ethical focus will seek to draw connections between theoretical work and political struggles (see Gordon, 1980, p. 233).
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