

## REVIEWS

A. Tsui and J. Tollefson (eds): *LANGUAGE POLICY, CULTURE, AND IDENTITY IN ASIAN CONTEXTS*. Lawrence Erlbaum, 2007.

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This fine book, divided into three parts, addresses questions of national language policy and national identity in a global context from a number of perspectives. The nations covered include Japan, China, Brunei, India, Pakistan, Nepal, South Korea, Singapore, Cambodia, Hong Kong, and New Zealand. English, as one might expect, is of central importance and the third part of the book is devoted specifically to its role in language policy and language politics. Fortunately there is not a disruptive division between the parts. Moreover, the collection is nicely balanced in terms of method, material, and focus. The studies are well grounded in historical, political, and social contexts. The papers draw on attitude surveys, analysis of teaching materials, consideration of language policy history and documentation, the effect of international aid, economic development, and the presence of multilingualism.

How to reconcile the desire for opportunities with the retention of some kind of national identity, is a pressing one and a central underlying theme of the book. The integration of these two aims in the medium of English language materials is an excellent example of how this might be managed (Yim). From ethnolinguistic, cultural, and economic perspectives, Saxena's foregrounding of 'multiplicity and diversity' in his paper on Brunei Darussalam sets the scene for a consideration of multiple factors with the result, 'paradoxically, [that] this postmodern fragmented identity exists side by side with...fixed identities' (p. 157). Hybridity, then, is central to this paper and another persistent presence in the collection. The contributors do not shy away from complexity but confront the messy issues, rather than fix them with a theoretical buzzword. Much of this messiness inheres in the richness and difficulty of terms such as 'culture', 'identity', and indeed 'language', as well as the connections between them.

The connection between language and culture is a longstanding one, often used in arguments to protect minority languages. While I am sceptical as to how far the 'language is culture' argument can be taken, I was impressed at the way this was handled by authors. Indeed, if language is only truly a 'language' when it is used and situated, languages are always fractured along these contextual lines and thus never singular. This serves to highlight the importance of, for example, the pluralization of Englishes. Indeed, if language automatically brought culture, 'new' varieties of English (and indeed cultural differences between language communities) would not be possible. Chew articulates these concerns clearly, arguing that in Singapore, 'language is seen not so much as an emblem of culture and nationhood but as an important economic resource' (p. 74). Obviously, language may well be seen otherwise in other contexts

(those of nation states, nations, communities and so on). However, as Chew remarks, '[m]any states are increasingly forced to make pragmatic decisions, rather than purely nationalistic ones, leading us to question traditional notions of culture and identity' (p. 75). This is not to say that there is no cultural facet to language, or that the cultural capital of language is irrelevant. The point is that there are always other facets and it is impossible to provide a single 'meaning' of language(s).

My very specific concern with exclusive forms of the 'language is culture' position in this context, is the way it is linked with definitions of globalization as (often exclusively) homogenization. In short, the very framing of discussions in terms of globalization may well lead to the 'discovery' of sameness where there is also difference. That is, if one accepts that globalization means homogenization, it is not difficult to find sameness. Fortunately, 'globalization' does not simply mean homogenization; to take globalization as meaning only homogenization is to miss the opportunities that the global vista offers research. As an extra burden, the popular 'homogenization is bad' position also assumes that all cultural alignment is negative.

The recognition that language is always situated in the global world and the diverse treatments of this given in the collection commends it highly. There is also some nice analysis of how language (English in particular) can be used as an instrument without the expected contaminating effects. Thus, Hashimoto outlines the 'deconstruction' of English in Japan where 'English is adopted only as a tool so that the values and traditions embedded in the Japanese culture will be retained' (p. 27) is theoretically and politically useful. Chew also makes several excellent points about the symbolic capital that languages carry (p. 88) and that the decision to use 'rich' languages (such as English) can, in Singapore at least, be seen as 'a policy that makes economic sense and is part of a *popular* movement' (p. 89; my emphasis).

However, the central paradox of this whole area for me is the role of the nation state in addressing language policy in terms of globalization. While scholars in the broad field of globalization studies debate the future of nation states, the popular consensus appears to be that the power of nation states is being eroded by the forces of globalization (in some contexts, a synonym for 'transnational corporations'). This collection addresses the various ways in which nation states position themselves in the global world. While Japan (Hashimoto's chapter) and Hong Kong (Tsui's chapter) proclaim an international model, this is not uniform. The paradox, then, is the way in which nation states attempt to position themselves in a 'globalized world', a world which would deny the relevance of the nation state altogether. However, as Michael Mann argues, it is impossible to generalize about the status of the nation state because '[h]uman interaction networks are now penetrating the globe, but in multiple, variable and uneven fashion' (1997: 495). More importantly, there is space for other ways of doing language policy as Kaplan and Baldauf's distinction between micro- and macro-language policy makes clear (1997). As Omoniyi points out, situating language planning policy

‘within the framework of the nation-state leaves extensive gaps... that do not constitute neat and discrete units within a polity’ (2007: 535).

The spread of English is bound up in these complex relations and, in some cases, the dominance of English can be explained in terms of economic and social advancement. For better or worse, in the present world order, English allows, for some at least, access to a wider labour market, better quality of life and higher levels of social capital. But this could well be otherwise; a conscious departure from this, a challenge to the current political order is possible (Bourdieu 1999). It should also be remembered that while access to consumer culture is usually the first feature associated with English, ‘access to a global human rights discourse’ is not (Sonntag, p. 214). Obviously access to rights should not depend on access to English. Sonntag, however, points to a separation that sometimes has to be made between language and status, between cause and effect. While English is often blamed for inequality, it seems that sometimes it may be a flag—an important one—but a *marker* rather than a *maker* nevertheless. In Malaysia (David and Govindasamy), for example, ethnicity remains divisive, as do class and caste in India (Agnihotri), power in Pakistan (Rahman), and so on. While English language proficiency may be indexical of such discrimination, it is not indisputably the cause.

There are more head nodding parts to this collection than head shaking. However, I consider the latter as important and valuable as the former. This would be an excellent course text for an advanced course in language policy, while the geographical areas covered obviously make it ideal for area studies. For researchers, this edited collection provides an excellent and engaging way of entering the increasingly important area of language policy. The most significant contribution of the volume is the final chapter, written by the editors. I was tempted to suggest that the final chapter might be better placed at the start. On reflection, the bringing together of salient themes at the end of the book, provides a satisfying end to a varied tour. It elegantly and systematically raises questions and issues that run throughout the collection. While these questions do not have clear answers, framed as they are, they point to the research issues and policy questions that those working in language policy areas will increasingly have to address. The editors write in their concluding chapter: ‘A key finding of this research is that language policies are always linked with broader social, economic, and political agendas that usually have priority over pedagogical and educational concerns’ (Tollefson and Tsui, p. 262). Here is a space worthy of attention and perhaps even a serious bid for influence, from the growing number of interdisciplinary linguists.

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Reviewed by Annabelle Mooney  
 Roehampton University, UK  
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T. R. Trautmann: LANGUAGES AND NATIONS: THE DRAVIDIAN PROOF IN COLONIAL MADRAS. University of California Press, 2006.

The South Indian linguistic family known as Dravidian is reckoned by Ethnologue to include 73 languages, spoken by well over 200 million people. Tamil, the best known, has some 66 million speakers in India and beyond, but the most widely used is Telugu, with 70 million speakers. It was in an 1816 grammar of Telugu that the idea was definitively formulated of this group of languages having a historical unity and an origin distinct from Sanskrit and the other languages of the North.

This is an account of that 'Dravidian proof', as Trautmann terms it, although the term Dravidian itself did not come into use until 40 years later, and proof is not a word that would have been used in this context either then or now. Its author, Francis Whyte Ellis (1777–1819), is the book's central figure, though ample attention goes to the handful of others in the colonial service and the native scholars who devoted their extraordinary energies to the languages of South India. Besides the textual research and grammatical and historical analysis they undertook, they created institutions that would train all aspiring British administrators in Sanskrit and other languages of the areas where they would be located, as well as opening up education in these languages to socially aspirational Indians for the first time.

The book includes a facsimile reproduction of Ellis's text (the 'proof'). Since it is the crux of the study, one keeps expecting Trautmann to turn to a discussion of it, but he continually puts it off on the grounds that more background is needed. This might drive readers to distraction were the background not so fascinating that we are happy for the scenic tour. When we reach our destination, three-quarters of the way through the book and for just a seven-page stay, we wonder whether the background was not finally the point of it all. What Trautmann has to say about Ellis's text is anticlimactic, so thoroughly have we been prepared to work out its implications for ourselves. Whether that is good authorship is a matter of taste, but it is certainly the method of a teacher prepared to trust his students to read intelligently.

Trautmann shows how not just the proof but the whole concept of a Dravidian family was a colonial product, which does not mean produced by