

Brutt-Griffler, Janina, 2002. *World English. A study of its development. Multilingual Matters: Clevedon, UK. xiv+215 pp. ISBN 1-85359-577-2 (pbk).*

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Until recently the spread of English was conceptualized in rather simplistic terms as 'the right language—most widely spoken—at the right time—after World War II—in face of the needs of new nations. This view was attacked by Phillipson (1992), Pennycook (1994), etc. who focused on imperialism as the biggest force and ideological implications. Fishman *et al.* (1996) countered by showing that its spread more often than not benefited those who adopted English. Brutt-Griffler's study is a fresh attempt to write a story that veers between extremes views and includes the spread of English in today's UK and Ireland. Her main focus is on "non-mother tongue English speech communities and the two principal processes by which English has become a world language: language spread and language change." (p. ix). While spread is crucial, it is, she argues, change or adaptation that enables writers from Asia and Africa to "claim the linguistic space of English to express their experience." (p. ix). To unify these main forces behind the rise of English to a world language, she argues for the concept of *macroacquisition*. The learning of English on a global scale without aiming for native-like competency—in fact by aiming for localized norms—explains the adaptability of the language.

World English (WE) divides into ten chapters, which develop this link between spread and change especially in the multilingual nations of Africa and Asia. Chapter 1 introduces various conceptualizations of *world English*, chapters 2 to 5 focus on several periods of spread from a comparative, thematically focused angle. Chapter 6 and 7 turn to the impact of non-mother tongue speakers in the adoption of English and the *change* they brought about to enable English to express their experiences. "The formation of language policy in British colonies", she says, "shows the centrality of the struggle *against imperialism* to the creation of World English." (p. 107). She asks why English "tended to replace *local* languages in most of the British Isles, North America, and Australia, while becoming established *alongside* them in much of Asia and Africa" (p. 108). The main factors are—as I understand her—the development of a national domestic market, a national language and culture in England and a world economy and culture as well as favourable socio-historical circumstances during the later imperial phase (pp 108-110). She downplays the role of the demographic model for the spread of English to Australia as it does not explain why English rather than Portuguese or Arabic did not become world languages. Migration-based colonialism had its limits; Britain's political and economic hegemony called for the *conquest of peoples*, which took place during the 18th century (p. 115). The East Indian Company was indeed, I would add, a major factor in creating a world market that complemented the earlier networks of the Chinese, Arabs and others. The East Indian companies of Denmark, France, Holland, etc., also contributed to the rise of a European market and the formation of national domestic markets. As England became the dominant power, other European and Asian languages lost ground. That is a sensible argument, even if one has reservations about historic details. However, she gives too little space to the role of British-populated economic centres and to migration-based colonies. Sydney, for instance, was a major port in the Pacific and played a key role in the rise of English. For as long as the East India had a trading monopoly, Australia's main partners were across the Pacific, which attracted the pidgin English of the Atlantic. British South Africa also had a strategic function in the domination of East African markets at the end of the 19th century. While WE is refreshingly unbiased in many respects, it ignores the economic interaction of colonies based on diverse models of spread and thus fails to pursue the goal it sets itself. It also has too little to say on the role of Christian missions and education. But WE is a brief study of a complex area and projects a clear perspective that can be complemented in courses on English as a world language and on its national varieties.

References

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