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Entanglements of English: Problems to be solved or realities to be acknowledged?

Jerry Won Lee and Sofia Rüdiger (eds.), *Entangled Englishes* (1st ed.)

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Pasan Athapaththu

Department of English Language Teaching, University of Kelaniya, Kelaniya, Sri Lanka

Book Review

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Email: pasan.athapaththu@outlook.com

As we continue to marvel at the global proliferation of the English language, scholarly attention has noted the rapid growth of its presence worldwide (e.g., Crystal 1997; Jenkins 2015; Kachru 1986; McArthur 2002; Pennycook 2007). Some commentators have found the dominance English has established over other languages to be intrusive and even threatening (e.g., Holliday 2005; Pennycook 1994; Phillipson 1992; Skutnabb–Kangas and Philipson 2022; Skutnabb–Kangas et al. 2009; Thiong'o 1986). The spread of English worldwide has also been described as parasitic. For example, O'Regan (2021) argued that English has acted as a free rider on the networks of global capital, thriving and spreading by attaching itself to the mechanisms of global capital and power. The continuous penetration of English into virtually every facet of human life, in a way, resembles the giant octopus-like creature featured on the front page of *Entangled Englishes*, the recently published edited volume on the global spread of English. Given the level of attention the global spread of English has received thus far, *Entangled Englishes* is another scholarly work that explores the complex interplay between English and the world. It is written informatively, keeping in mind the enthusiasts of World Englishes today. This compendium of global scholarship examines in depth, coupled with a deeply analytical voice grounded on a strong empirical base, the complex historical, linguistic, sociopolitical, economic, ideological, and materialistic phenomena the contemporary English language is associated with, approaching what is metaphorically referred to as 'entanglements' from a unique blend of historical and sociolinguistic perspectives.

The text features twelve chapters divided into four thematic sections covering different fields of entangled Englishes: 1) sociopolitics (chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4); 2) race (chapters 5, 6 and 7); 3) practice (chapters 8, 9 and 10); and 4) education (chapters 11 and 12). Each section represents a specific macro-level domain English is found to be entangled with, and the chapters included within each domain are written by specialists sharing their expert knowledge and experience in the subject combined with a micro-level inquiry into the entanglement in question.

The introduction presents a brief, yet revealing and insightful description of the historical background leading to the discussion on the global spread of English, the influential publications on the emergence of its new varieties, and the eventual establishment of a new linguistic discipline, World Englishes. This background setting is combined with thoughtful perspectives and critiques sourced from authoritative texts published by various scholars, from whose works inspiration and initial input for the present work seem to have stemmed. Also, to justify the text's (entangled) approach to discussing the current global state of the English language and the complexities with which it is associated, strong conceptual support from the experts in global Englishes is garnered. Accordingly, the 'uses of English around the world are better understood in terms of entanglements of English that can help us to move beyond the naming of new national varieties and to seek instead an understanding of how linguistic resources are connected to the world' (Pennycook 2025, xiv) and 'adopting an entangled approach may prove to be fruitful in uncovering various "invisible" contexts at play' (Tong et al. 2025, 201).

Section 1 examines the ways in which English is entangled with local languages, identities, and sociopolitical movements across Hawai'i, South Asia, India, and Japan. Through studies of social media spaces, music, and public signage, the chapters in the section reveal how linguistic practices are deeply connected to histories of imperialism,

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social activism, cultural pride and responses to global crises. Section 2 explores how English is entangled with race, identity and sociopolitical dynamics in different contexts. Through the exploration of Brazilian Black feminists and their use of English as a decolonial tool, the racialisation of English in Czechia and the dynamic interplay between language and racialised identities of Black Caribbean immigrants in the United States, the chapters reveal how English is used to challenge exclusionary structures, reflect shifts in social attitudes and propose new approaches to decolonising multilingual practices. Section 3 examines how English interacts with embodied practices, digital technologies and virtual spaces. It explores the role of English in Bikram yoga ideologies, digital devices such as smartphones, and shifting power dynamics on online discourses, highlighting material and technological design on language use. Section 4 investigates the complexities that occur when integrating English with content teaching and addressing linguistic and cultural diversity in two educational contexts: Taiwan and Australia. Whilst the entangled narrative from Taiwan promotes studying education phenomena and related practices as assemblages, the Australian case advocates for more inclusive pedagogic practices in the mainstream Aboriginal translingual classrooms.

One particular strength of this edited volume is the novelty of its approach to the discussion of the ongoing globalisation of the English language. The text does not limit its scope only to the changes English has triggered in the multilinguistic landscapes globally. It also analyses the social, cultural, political, economic, educational and ideological territories English has infiltrated as a global lingua franca, the complex links it has established with the world in the process, and the variety of implications of these interactions for both native and non-native speakers of English. The expert authorship of the contributors to *Entangled Englishes* collectively prompts the reader to view those complexities through a microscopic lens. Chapters 11 and 12 in Section 4, for instance, explore how English is entangled in the education of Taiwan and Australia whilst inviting the educators, applied linguists in particular, to relate the discussion and its implications to their relevant education contexts. It further reflects the analytical depth with which the discussion of global Englishes needs to continue, inviting the reader to go beyond a surface-level reading of the global spread of the English and instead, reach a more informed, debated and enhanced version of a reading given the multifaceted and complex nature of the current global position of the English language and its role in shaping the translingual practices of multilingual communities worldwide.

As the contributors to this edited volume are representative of diverse linguistic and academic backgrounds, their expertise and experience significantly contribute to the text by adding a layer of fresh global perspectives to enrich the content, appealing to a wider readership. In addition, the content is further supplemented by the evidence of empirical investigations which also supports the authors' analyses of the entanglements in question. Due to this strong methodological backdrop, the chapters collectively demonstrate the capability of entanglements of English being approached from a range of methodological and epistemological angles. However, this empirical density evident in some chapters, which demand an engaged and critically reflective reader, may be potentially challenging for readers who are new to sociolinguistics and sociolinguistic research. While this complexity enriches the scholarly expertise with which the text has been authored, it might pose a steep learning curve for those less familiar with the field's theoretical and methodological frameworks.

Another notable contribution of this edited volume is its commitment to highlighting underrepresented voices and contexts, moving beyond the traditional Anglophone-centric discussion and walking into the non-Anglophone linguistic territories, particularly in the Global South, to explore the multifaceted and often unexpected ways English is found to be intricately woven into the local realities, social dynamics, and power relations of different communities. The text's approach to the detailed examination of complex relationships English has established with the world is not confined to physical contexts; accordingly, how English is entangled in the translingual practices of speakers of English in digital spaces is also brought up in Chapter 1 in Section 1 and Chapters 9 and 10 in Section 3. In doing so, the text attempts to convince the reader that although entanglements can be found in both expected and unexpected places and forms, these entanglements are not problems to be solved but realities to be acknowledged and discussed in detail.

The sources cited in the text establish a web of conceptually related works that directs the reader to a repository of authoritative publications on the subject matter being discussed in this text, allowing the reader to expand their knowledge base and contribute to this ongoing discussion with a broadened perspective. While a reference list is provided at the end of each chapter for this purpose, the text could have been further complemented with a recommended academic reading list to guide the reader, particularly those new to World Englishes, to the other major works previously published or the ones currently being processed. An arrangement of this sort would prompt the reader to establish a conceptual link with other works while reading this edited volume. An interactive element such as a reflection point or an explorative task connecting *Entangled Englishes* with the other works could have been employed for this purpose.

Overall, *Entangled Englishes* redefines how we think about the global spread of the English language by advancing the concept of 'entanglement' as an analytic lens to view its deep interconnections with other languages, cultures, and material conditions, both local and global. While challenging the popular narrative of seeing English as a uniform global force, this edited volume shows the complex and changing global presence of English, shaping and shaped by countless social, political and economic realities. *Entangled Englishes* calls on the reader to accept those realities instead of viewing them as problems requiring solutions. By presenting case studies with empirical evidence from diverse geographical regions, the text shows the global nature of English and its varied manifestations. It is a crucial resource for scholars interested in the complexities of English in a decolonial, globalised and post-pandemic world. It is also recommended as an essential read for students and researchers in English as a global language, global Englishes, and sociolinguistics.

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PASAN ATHAPATHTHU is a lecturer in the Department of English Language Teaching at the University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka. He holds a bachelor's honours degree in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL), and he is currently a postgraduate student reading for his master's in Linguistics with a special focus on Sociolinguistics. Pasan teaches pedagogical grammar, principles of curriculum and course design, critical theories in language education, and technology-enhanced language learning to undergraduate students specialising in TESL. Pasan is also a visiting lecturer in Business Communication in the Department of Accountancy of the Faculty of Commerce and Management Studies of the University of Kelaniya. In addition to his teaching in the department, he is the co-ordinator for the Academic Literacy (ACLT) programme in the Faculty of Science of the University of Kelaniya. Email: apbat231@kln.ac.lk

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