Identity in post-colonial contexts

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Introduction

In August 2014, Hindi-speaking citizens of India aspiring to take the nation’s civil service examination protested against the exam’s English component, which was first instituted in 2011. Arguing that it discriminated against them and reproduced a class division, they called for the removal of the English aptitude section. The government conceded, and although the English portion of the exam remained, the government decided that it would no longer contribute toward the final score. Observers have argued that the critique of the English portion of the test is about the enduring legacy of colonialism and the division of haves and have-nots along linguistic lines in Indian society. This example shows the continuing relevance of post-colonialism for contemporary contexts, particularly with reference to the significance of English in shaping people’s lives.

In this chapter, we discuss the relationship between identity and language in post-colonial contexts. After describing the foundational concepts of post-colonialism and examining the impact that it has had in applied linguistics, we engage with more recent work on the sociopolitics of language and identity, which have emerged largely as a critique of post-colonial theory. While the term post-colonial still has widespread use in scholarship, many other concepts have emerged to complicate and to challenge the underpinnings of this term. In particular, work on translanguaging and translingual practices have challenged the relevance of colonial legacies by foregrounding local, transcultural language practices as the key sites for identity construction (see Pennycook 2010; Canagarajah 2013; Sultana et al. 2013; García and Li Wei 2014). This work moves away from the coloniser–colonised dichotomy frequently used in post-colonial approaches and highlights the importance of mobility in the relationship between language and identity, drawing attention to the varied use of language in new forms of cultural production afforded by intersecting scapes of people, media, ideas, technology and capital (Appadurai 1996; Higgins 2011a). Within this body of work, however, discourses tied to the colonial era can still be encountered as speakers themselves enact identities that explicitly index coloniser–colonised relations and ideologies.

Post-colonialism refers to a theoretical lens that is concerned with the legacies of colonial rule, including how the identity dimensions of class, ethnicity, language and gender have been
formed in response to centre–periphery political relations. Centre is a label used to refer to developed nations which have engaged in the colonisation of much of the world. Post-colonialism is multidisciplinary, though it is most often associated with literary and cultural studies. Usually considered the father of post-colonial theory, Edward Said (1978) was instrumental in producing a framework for post-colonial analysis and critique in his classic work *Orientalism*, which analysed literature as a key site in which representations of the cultural Other are created by the West. Said argued that ‘Self–Other’ and ‘Occident–Orient’ dichotomies exist because the West has produced them and it is the post-colonial scholar’s task to examine this production and reproduction. Through analysing literary representations of Middle Eastern cultures, Said focused specifically on the ways a Western self is produced through the act of creating an Eastern other. Spivak takes the argument further, asserting that ‘Western intellectual production is … complicit with Western international economic interests’ (2010 [1988]: 237). Working toward decolonisation, the prominent Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (1986) took the stance that African writers need to express their stories in African languages to escape the bondage of colonialism, including the effects of English as a ‘cultural bomb’, which he asserted had annihilated pre-colonial histories, literatures and cultures.

Scholarship on English as a global language has raised questions about the effects that English has on languages, schemas and cultures of people who were subjected to colonial rule. Hence, in this chapter we will examine the relationship between language and identity in post-colonial societies by focusing on the ideologies, policies and discourses about English in these settings. We also pay attention to the discursive (re)production of ideologies by examining how bi/multilingual individuals respond to the power of English in their everyday lives. We illustrate these ideas drawing on interview-based narratives, conversational interaction and media representations. While questions concerning post-colonial identities are relevant across a wide range of geographical and linguistic contexts, we frequently refer to settings which we are most familiar with, namely India, Tanzania and Hawai‘i, settings that qualify as post-colonial due to their occupation by British or American imperial powers. We then turn to a discussion of ongoing debates in applied and sociolinguistics, focusing on the thorny topic of hybridity and the politics of knowledge production and dissemination. The chapter ends with a discussion of the relationship between individual and societal multilingualism involving English in post-colonial contexts.

**Overview**

In this section we discuss salient concepts of post-colonial identities in research literature, focusing specifically on how ideologies become visible in varied discursive practices. For each concept within post-colonialism, we present discussions of ideologies (also referred to as big ‘D’ Discourses) (Gee 2014) that are illustrated by research that draws on studies of language use. We wish to shed light on the relationship between the individual and society in understanding the role of English in post-colonial contexts.

**Self and Other**

As mentioned in the Introduction, an important concept within post-colonial literature on identity is the notion of ‘Self’ and ‘Other’. Language ideologies can be analysed as the discursive effects of colonialism whereby Self and Other identities have been formed in connection to the West and to English. While the post-colonial project seeks to identify the ways in which
Self and Other relations have been critically re-examined and refuted, it is also the case that self-colonisation in the form of continued subordination can be found. These formations occur regularly in Hawai‘i, where Self and Other relations are visible in sentiments expressed about Pidgin, the creole language of the islands, in comparison to what is often called ‘proper English’, a language associated strongly with the continental United States (Marlow and Giles 2008; Higgins et al. 2012). Pidgin is spoken by the majority of local residents of Hawai‘i, but due to its plantation roots and the long history of educational authorities treating it as ‘broken English’, it remains a stigmatised language. Posts in an online newspaper forum from 2008 clearly demonstrate these language ideologies. The posts were made after a legislative bill was proposed to the Hawai‘i state legislature that sought funds to examine the role of Pidgin in educational contexts (the bill failed). Though many pro-Pidgin comments were posted, including ones that drew attention to the linguistic status of Pidgin as a ‘real’ language, other posts attributed low intelligence to Pidgin speakers:

Stop trying to legitimize [Pidgin]. It sounds like retarded cave people talking to each other because the correct word or pronunciation doesn’t come to their simple mind. The people for it are afraid and embarrassed to say that they have been teaching their children how to speak like an imbecile and they learned it from their parents.

(Balzac, Online post, 21 May 2008)

The portrayal of Pidgin in this post reproduces Said’s dichotomy in that English speakers are portrayed as educated and sophisticated while Pidgin speakers are Othered and presented as backward and uncivilised. Even when Pidgin is defended, it is always with deference to English, as another post reveals: ‘I say long live pidgin, speak it well, and speak straight English too. As adults it is our responsibility to demonstrate to the rising generation which is which. (In the classroom generally not, except maybe for creative writing.)’ (hoomalimali, Online post, 28 June 2008).

In India, social class and political ideologies are also at work in creating Self and Other categories. As Chand (2011) explains, groups of elites have a range of ideological positions, both in favour of and counter to English. Conservative elites who align with Hindi-based nationalism and right-wing nationalism valorise Hindi and produce a narrative that draws on India’s colonial past to support this discourse. In contrast, liberal elites downplay the potential of Hindi to unify the country and explain their Hindi incompetency through references to the failure of Hindi-based nationalism and to years of English-medium schooling that diminished the role of Hindi in their lives.

These same discourses are also articulated in interviews with Hindi-medium educated (HME) women from northern India who construct disempowered identities in their narratives as a consequence of their Hindi-medium education. One of the authors for this chapter, Sandhu (2014a), shows how Aditi, a highly educated woman, reports feelings of significantly diminished self-worth when negatively comparing her past non-proficient-in-English self to fluent English speakers: ‘when I used to listen that people who are speaking in English I feel very impressed that wow they are very much intelligent and I am nothing in front of them’ (ibid.: 34). Similarly, another HME woman, Sanjana, speaks of feeling highly inadequate in a romantic relationship with an English-medium educated man, imagining the negative positioning his family would ascribe to her as ‘Apne-aap ko kya samajhti hai aisa? [What does she think of herself like this?]’ (Sandhu 2014b: 27).
Hybridity

In addition to Self and Other theorisations, another salient concept within post-colonial discussions on identity is the notion of hybridity (Rampton 1995; Creese and Blackledge 2010). Hybridity offers space for new identities that are seen as the product of mixing. Many discussions of hybridity invoke Bakhtin’s work on ‘heteroglossia’, used to refer to the multi-voiced nature of language. When post-colonial speakers use English, they voice the language anew, imbuing it with their own meanings and aesthetic qualities. By incorporating others’ discourse into their own, speakers constantly engage in Bakhtinian ‘double-voicing’ since their articulations express novel sentiments and framings while retaining echoes of the previously articulated utterances. In performing hybrid identities, double-voicing is transparent in a number of domains in East Africa, including in the creative use of artistic naming practices among hip hop artists such as E-Sir, a Kenyan rapper whose name simultaneously indexes his given name (Issa Mumar) and his status as a youth icon through affiliation with e-commerce and e-entertainment, and in advertisements, where slogans play off the double meanings in Swahili-English, in ads such as Longa Longer [Chat Longer], to relate to young, cosmopolitan consumers (Higgins 2009).

Hybridity is also described by Bhabha (1994: 2) as the process of subverting colonial authority by interrogating ‘originary and initial subjectivities’, focusing instead on instances and processes where cultural differences are articulated. For him, in-between, interstitial, ‘third spaces’ of engaging cultural differences are sites where collaborative or contested new identities are performed from the minority viewpoint located in the peripheries of power and privilege. In Sandhu’s (2010: 230–231) analysis of North Indian women’s narratives, Aditi, who is located in the linguistic peripheries due to her Hindi-medium education, provides an instance of Bhabha’s cultural interrogation. She contrasts a narrative of an unsuccessful job interview for a school teaching position where she claims that she is rejected due to her Hindi background with a narrative where she is offered a similar post at a more prestigious school with a higher salary:

Rejection narrative: ‘But when they asked me that ki [that] “are you from Hindi medium or English medium?” then I … [said] … “yeah I am from Hindi medium” … then they got then they have not shown their interest and they say “yes you can go”.’

Counter-narrative: ‘I have got selected in CHS <name of school which hired her> … [the salary is] … almost double … even that time uhh our princi- vice-principal has asked me that ki [that] “Aditi you now you don’t give … you not need to give any interview in any school … because our school pays the highest salary in the surrounding area”.’

While portraying herself as subject to a social order that elevates English speakers over Hindi ones in the first narrative, Aditi succeeds in discursively constructing a more powerful identity that is capable of overcoming such social hierarchies in her counter-narrative.

In applied linguistics, hybridity has most often been applied to language practices such as code-switching and code-mixing, areas of inquiry that require microanalysis of language data (see e.g. Sp Tulnik 1998; Woolard 1998; Jaffe 2000; Higgins 2007; Rubdy 2013). Hybridity has also been identified using Bhabha’s (1994) notion of a third space, where local linguistic resources mix with global resources to produce new identities. For example, Rubdy (2013: 44) theorises linguistic landscapes in India as third spaces in which language on public signs inscribes a new class identity that is ‘simultaneously local and global, traditional and modern, indigenous and cosmopolitan’, enacted for and by the English-knowing bilinguals whose identity is dependent on knowing English but who also constantly and creatively rework their multilingual resources.
Similar arguments are made by Stroud and Mpendukana (2009) about Khayelitsha, a township in the Western Cape of South Africa, where hybridity involving isiXhosa and English in signs advertising luxury goods produces consumerist identities for working-class South Africans to aspire toward. In their analysis, the hybrid signage of the linguistic landscape (along with other markers of socio-economic mobility such as brick-built houses) literally puts a better life on display and invites people to desire that lifestyle.

**Appropriation**

A third concept that has significantly influenced post-colonial work on identity has been the idea of appropriation. An oft-cited sentiment by the late Chinua Achebe summarises the concept of appropriation (1965: 21):

> My answer to the question, Can an African ever learn English well enough to be able to use it effectively in creative writing? is certainly yes. If on the other hand you ask: Can he ever learn to use it like a native speaker? I should say: I hope not. It is neither necessary nor desirable for him to be able to do so. The price a world language must be prepared to pay is submission to many different kinds of use.

Appropriation refers to the act of taking a cultural or linguistic legacy, such as English, and making it one’s own through shaping it to fit the local circumstances and to express the local aesthetics and worldview. Ashcroft et al. (1989) argue that appropriation is impossible without abrogation, or the rejection of the categories instantiated by the imperial culture. In British post-colonial countries, the presence of English has become an established phenomenon both at the level of national linguistic policymaking as well as in more individualised contexts of everyday language use. Most post-colonial countries have granted some official status to English in their national and educational linguistic policies. For example, English is the associate official language in India and is used for administration and judicial work at the central level as well as being the lingua franca of higher education, urban professional landscapes and upper-class social circles. Similarly, it is one of the four official languages of Singapore. Kachru (1985, 1986) delineates the independent English varieties that proliferate within post-colonial Outer Circle countries. Kirkpatrick (2007: 28), situating the model within contemporary perspectives, points out that it is useful as it pluralises the notion of English by acknowledging the presence of several Englishes without suggesting the linguistic superiority of any one variety. Though the Kachruvian model has been critiqued for inadequately representing the dynamic heterogeneity of highly divergent English-speaking communities, academics have found it useful as a framework for representing ‘dominant ideologies that constrain speakers’ performativity in English in local contexts’ (Park and Wee 2009: 390).

Appropriation underlies much of the World Englishes (WE) research paradigm, an approach that seeks to describe variation in English as an international language. Rather than viewing World Englishes, such as Kenyan or Indian English, as deficient versions of standard British English, unique features of these varieties are identified and the analysis is located within cultural and multilingual contexts.

While the WE paradigm focuses on describing new Englishes, it is often the case that appropriation includes multilingual practices involving English. Canagarajah and Ashraf (2013: 275–277) highlight the ‘blurring of identities of language’ in communicative language practices within education and society in post-colonial India and Pakistan. Though these countries have adopted a
multilingual approach whereby local languages and English are viewed as separate autonomous systems, at the level of communicative practices, what exists is plurilingualism or the meshing of vernacular languages and English to ‘form hybrid grammatical and communicative practices’. Scholars have also examined the various appropriations of English where localised performative has instantiated the role of human agency and resistance, such as the opposition towards Western-centric English language lessons demonstrated by students in Sri Lanka (Canagarajah 1999) and examinations of local post-colonial literatures where authors ‘write back’ to the Empire by expressing their voice in English (Ashcroft et al. 1989; Pennycook 1994). Similarly, Sandhu (2010) examines the identity constructions of North Indian women with a combined Hindi and English-medium education who narrate instances of successfully ‘passing’ as English-medium educated, thereby appropriating professional and social advantages associated with English education.

Another instance of post-colonial appropriation is Yamuna Kachru’s (2006: 223) analysis of Hindi Bollywood songs demonstrating the nativisation of English through a blending of English with Hindi and exemplifying a playful ‘fun with the language’.

**From post-colonial to transnational**

In the present era of late modernity, discussions of scholarship on language and identity in post-colonial contexts have benefited from examining the consequences of globalisation and transnationalism. Despite the unequal, patchy influence of globalisation processes, the commodification of language and identities is acknowledged as one of its major consequences (Coupland 2003: 470) and has been widely studied (e.g. Rubdy 2008; Heller 2010; Duchêne and Heller 2012; Park and Wee 2013). The ruptures between past and present wrought by globalisation and partially symbolised through new constructions of imagined selves and worlds (Appadurai 1996: 3) are well established, with the incessant flow of material goods and discourses, images and symbols across borders, cultures, languages and lives examined through the lens of local–global interactions, ‘super-diversity’ (Vertovec 2007), mobility and the use of new technologies (De Fina and Perrino 2013: 509–510). Such physical mobility has created super-diverse metropolises where myriad cultures and languages become dynamic (and/or) conflicted ‘contact zones’ (Pratt 2008: 7), impacting identity negotiation and formation. While the value of linguistic repertoires or specific language varieties and discourse practices owned by people/communities are transferable across borders, their local value shifts with such mobility (Blommaert 2005, 2010). For instance, a variety of English viewed as imparting considerable prestige to its owner/speaker in a particular context (especially so in the peripheries of a globalised world) might have the impact of imparting to its speaker a subordinated position in an English-dominant setting. Such local/translocal ascriptions of identities need to be understood in the context of a world order typified by inherent inequalities exemplified at the level of language varieties and discourses (Blommaert 2010).

Within discussions of the impact of globalisation on language and identity research, the ever-increasing impact of transnationalism is particularly significant due to large-scale movement of people across national borders motivated by globalised economic and educational incentives. Such people are no longer permanently displaced from their original countries and cultures either physically (due to ease of travel) or virtually (because of audio/video connectivity, globalised media, the Internet, social networking sites). No longer limited to binaries of ‘here’ or ‘there’, but able to participate in multiple cultures and languages, novel identity constructions are available to transnational individuals (De Fina and Perrino 2013). However, this transnationalism, characterised by processes of ‘movement, dislocation and uprooting’ and often
accompanied by the contradictions and ambiguities of inhabiting in-between and hybrid spaces, results in complex ‘self–other differentiation, proclamations of sameness, and strategic identity positionings’ (ibid.: 512) (also see Baynham and De Fina 2005). Language and identity scholars have examined such nuanced, transnational language and identity interconnections across multiple sites; for example, in an edited volume, Higgins (2011a) explores the impact of phenomena such as transnationalism, intercultural contact zones and globalised media on additional language learning, teaching and learner identity formation across multiple languages and geographical contexts. In this collection, Higgins (2011b) examines how expatriate learners of Swahili adhere to a transnational positionality rather than taking up the opportunity to develop second language identities attached to Tanzanian culture or Swahili pragmatics and norms, largely because of their negative reactions to the gendered identities available to them in the Tanzanian context. Despite positively evaluating Tanzanian culture, they identify themselves most strongly as global citizens who occupy a third space and feel most at home with others who share their global orientation.

**Issues and ongoing debates**

We now turn to a discussion of debates and controversies that post-colonial thinking has spawned with regard to studies of language and identity. Responses to the role of hybridity in decolonisation and representation have centred on two areas:

1. Arguments about linguistic purism and mixing;
2. The failure of hybridity to overcome enduring economic divisions.

A third area that has received significant attention is the politics of knowledge construction and dissemination. We examine the challenges that these new perspectives have raised, with attention to our own contexts of research.

**Questions of ontological purity and the translingual turn**

In recent years, hybridity has been the centre of criticism for the assumptions that it carries with it regarding origins. On the face of it, hybridity entails mixing, so the term presumes that languages and cultures must exist in pure forms prior to hybridisation. This is problematic since it is impossible to establish that any language is in fact pure. While interrogating the concept of an English, or any other, language, Makoni and Pennycook (2005: 137) emphasise the ‘need to understand the interrelationships among metadiscursive regimes, language inventions, colonial history, language effects, alternative ways of understanding language, and strategies of dis-invention and reconstitution’. Moreover, linguistic hybridity is associated with cultural hybridity in that it is assumed that bi/multilingual individuals inhabit a hybrid cultural identity by virtue of translanguaging, or mixing the codes in their linguistic repertoires. Otsuji and Pennycook (2010, 2013) have argued that this is problematic, drawing attention to the ‘unmarked’ nature of hybridity. Drawing parallels with ‘metrosexuality’, a gendered identity ascription related to grooming and appearance that is typically attributed to men, they offer up the new term ‘metrolingualism’, which refers to how people use, play with and negotiate identities through language; it does not assume connections between language, culture, ethnicity, nationality or geography, but rather seeks to explore...
how such relations are produced, resisted, defied or rearranged; its focus is not on language systems but on languages as emergent from contexts of interaction.

(Otsuji and Pennycook 2010: 246)

Metrolingualism challenges the very ontology upon which language is based. Just as metrosexuality is not the reallocation of male and female attributes, but instead a questioning of those very attributes, metrolingualism is also a questioning of the countable and separable nature of language in multilingual practices.

Metrolingualism foregrounds a practice-based understanding of language that begins not with identifying codes, but with analysing social practices that are at the heart of identity construction. In examining the localised mixing of English with vernacular languages in South India and the Philippines, Pennycook (2010: 13) argues that language is a practice influenced by the confluences of ‘time, place, repetition and relocalization’ rather than as a fixed structure. This view enables an examination of the creativity evident in local practices and usages of English rather than an analysis of difference from a ‘core of similarity’. It also pushes analysis beyond acritical celebrations of multiplicity, which tend to view hybridity as mere combinations of cultural and linguistic resources. Rather than examining the practices in depth, these ‘happy hybridity’ (Lo 2000) approaches tend to pluralise languages and to present multiculturalism as Benetton ads instead of considering the complex social practices that are at the forefront of their production.

Other forms of language that reflect a transborder, transcultural influence have been designated as ‘polylanguaging’ (Jørgensen 2008) and ‘translanguaging’ (García 2009). Like metrolingualism, these terms reflect an approach to language that avoids compartmentalising linguistic resources into language categories; instead they begin by viewing language as a practice and as an activity rather than a structure. Hence, speakers engage in ‘languaging’ in the process of meaning-making, and their languaging can draw from different linguistic and semiotic resources, which may or may not be viewed as crossing linguistic boundaries. As Otsuji and Pennycook (2013) note, multilingual speakers move between fixed and fluid identities, and this movement in itself is worth analysing to better understand the ways that they construct social spaces and identities.

In addition to code-switching, code-mixing and borrowing, translanguaging includes ‘stylisation’, a form of speech that is highly performative, usually exaggerated, and put on for effect (Coupland 2001). Stylisation raises difficult questions about authenticity and the ownership of English when people with more linguistic and cultural capital style those with less, and vice versa. A useful example is found in Sandhu’s (2015) analysis of stylisation by Gayatri, a transnational, English-medium educated woman, who employs ‘mock Hindi-medium English’ to critique the English used by the generic HME masses. Her mock language works to reproduce hegemonic linguistic discourses within India as it portrays the masses as unsophisticated because of their lack of proficiency in English. Suhaní’s stylising of a socially authoritative English-medium educated person through ‘Hinglish’ (a mixture of Hindi and English) is also an example of translanguaging. However, Sandhu shows that this second instance of stylisation highlights the ambiguous linguistic identities of Hinglish speakers, their equation of social power with English fluency and, in this instance, the narrator’s inability to resist subordinate positioning within her narrative. In Hawai’i, similarly ambiguous forms of stylisation are found in local television advertisements targeting local consumers. In 2008, one ad for a local cable company featured a local man dressed in a velvet smoking jacket, reciting poetic verses that praise the company in a stylised upper-class, overly enunciated English (Hiramoto 2011). At the end of his recitation, he turns to the camera and says ‘No kæn help. Ai ste ejumakeited! [I can’t help it. I’m educated!]’ in Pidgin, thus mocking
both the upper class and forms of American English usually associated with the continental U.S., and reproducing the historical class divisions between Pidgin and English-speaking people in Hawai‘i, a state with a legacy of linguistic discrimination toward Pidgin.

**Enduring economic divisions**

Another controversy that hybridity has provoked surrounds the question of social class. Block (2012) argues that hybridity often posits overly romanticised ways of coping with globalisation, drawing on glocalisation models from the business world to account for the ways in which multilinguals have adopted and adapted English for their local purposes. At the same time, he notes that social class remains unexamined within discussions of hybridity, which typically take a culturalist approach to understanding language and identity. Similarly, Kubota (2014) points out that questions of power and language ideologies remain inadequately addressed and asserts that the promotion of translingual practices is ironically similar to the romanticisation of hybridity that translinguists have critiqued. This raises questions for applied linguists with regard to English and language mixing, such as:

- Who gets to mix English with local languages?
- Which segments of society have the facility to move with ease between English (typifying power and prestige) and ‘lesser’ languages?
- What social groups/individuals project which types of identities when mixing English with local vernaculars?

Investigating these questions has the potential to reveal the roles of power, class, structure and agency in the performance of metrolingual and translingual practices.

Though language blending and meshing of English are considered examples of appropriation by post-colonial thinkers and proponents of translanguaging alike, the elevated cultural and economic capital enjoyed by English speakers in these countries continues, and the resulting linguistic ideologies in turn ensure its insidious connections with social class. In India, English-medium education is widely perceived as leading to social, educational and economic advancement. However, due to its colonial past and post-independence educational language policies, English-medium education is available only to about 6 per cent of the elite (Annamalai 2004) and so is implicated in deepening class-based chasms (Ramanathan 2005, 2013; Sandhu 2010). Vernacular-medium students in Gujarat, India, have been shown to struggle with English curricula at the tertiary level due to the divergent pedagogical practices adopted in K-12 schooling in vernacular and English-medium schools (Ramanathan 2013). Consequently, Rubdy (2008) discusses the commodification of English in India (as elsewhere) as manifested in an ever-increasing demand for English-medium education. It is not surprising that Chaise LaDousa (2014), in his extensive work across mostly Hindi-speaking North India, demonstrates that English acts as an important identity-building category for social structuration.

In Tanzania, discourse analytic studies have for many years demonstrated how class distinction is performed among those who have more access to English, as in the case of professors at the University of Dar es Salaam (Blommaert 1992) and among journalists working at an English-medium newspaper office (Higgins 2007). Both groups use English-infused Swahili, thereby enacting ‘elite closure’, a concept which Myers-Scotton (1990) used to refer to class-based language choice in Kenya which excludes listeners by virtue of their lack of familiarity with certain types of mixed codes. Similar forms of class distinction are present in Tanzanian beauty pageants,
where language mixing is proscribed for the contestants who are expected to produce monolingual, globally intelligible varieties of English in a context where everyone around them is using a hybrid variety (Billings 2013).

Current Indian commercials typically use a mix of Hindi and English (or other local vernaculars and English) to sell a range of high-end products. On the surface, these are encouraging examples of local appropriations, hybrid language use, plurilingualism and translanguaging, but a closer examination reveals that the target audience and potential buyers are the urban socio-economic elite with access to English-medium education, facility with the local vernaculars and ever-increasing disposable incomes. Therefore, in effect, it is the linguistic mobility of this class of people that is catered to. Usually depictions of people from lower socio-economic backgrounds mixing English with local languages in social media or in interpersonal communication show them using marked accents, incorrect grammar or displaying limited English fluency. Recent Indian debates about the mixing of Hindi and English (labelled Hinglish, as mentioned above) call it the ‘fashionable language’ of the elite of metropolitan India; however, Hinglish is also wielded by Indians relocating from hinterlands to metropolises to gain entry into the imagined sites inhabited by urban denizens (Das et al. 2011: 191–196).

If both scenarios are to be believed, then the question arises if such Hindi–English mixings are uniform across both contexts. When attempting an answer, Joshi distinguishes between two such types of fusions (Das et al. 2011: 191–192). First is ‘Indi’, or the language spoken by speakers fully conversant with English grammar, who ‘twist Hindi words, for instance chutneyfying or rakhoed’. This is accomplished by adding English inflections or conjugations to Hindi base words to create new, hybrid words and phrases. In these examples, chutney (‘a condiment made from a mixture of spices, vegetables and/or fruits’) is inflected with the English suffix ‘-ing’ to create a verb signifying a hybrid, innovative mixing of elements. Rakhoed inflects the base Hindi verb rakho (‘to keep, lay or put’) with the English past tense ‘-ed’. This playfully twisted and contorted language is spoken by English-educated, young, urban Indians who are reportedly rediscovering a sense of pride in their country and roots and is used to index a certain cool, urban identity. It is also now widely used in advertising and popular media where neither only Hindi nor pure English are deemed sufficient to connect to urban markets. The second variety of Hindi–English blending is the more sedate Hinglish, where words/phrases from one language are inserted into the other with no contortions or grammatical innovations. For example, Mera baap off ho gaya (‘My father died’). This, Joshi posits, is the language of work, communication and survival. While Indi symbolises ‘experimentation and attitude’, Hinglish is used for ease of communication, according to Joshi (Das et al. 2011: 197). Both allow what Joshi calls a ‘loosen[ing] of the idea of English, especially around the margins’, creating spaces for greater inclusion into the various benefits associated with English (Desai et al. 2011: 200). But the point remains that they index remarkably different identities, potentially leading to the ascription of divergent social positionings to their speakers. Similar points have been made about Campus Kiswahili and Street Swahili in Dar es Salaam (Blommaert 1992) and the mixed varieties Engsh and Sheng in Nairobi (Meierkord 2009). Perhaps the metaphor of ‘cultural omnivores’ – or the phenomenon of elite segments increasingly being able to participate in and adopt the cultural practices of the masses and of popular culture (Peterson 1992) – might be modified to explain these phenomena. While being ‘linguistic omnivores’ is no longer only the privilege of the elite, the shape it takes is significant for identity construction. This is an issue for further language and identity research in applied linguistics.

While these discussions show that in spite of linguistic and cultural hybridity ideologies tied to economic advantage still shape people’s lives, English can also be used to enhance the
subaltern’s (i.e. member of an oppressed group) status and offer alternative, possibly more prestigious, identities to inhabit. From Hong Kong, Lin (2013) reports the success content teachers have experienced in incorporating innovative plurilingual pedagogies that accommodate local sociocultural contexts. This success was achieved despite challenges emanating from firmly entrenched purist language ideologies and dominant TESOL methodologies. In India, Vaish (2005) examines how English works as a tool for decolonisation, enabling urban, socioeconomically disadvantaged students from a dual education school in Delhi to access the global economy through unique workplace literacy practices. It is crucial, however, to recognise that the success of any school in providing economically disadvantaged students with education depends greatly on their linguistic and material resources. Bhattacharya (2013) shows the problematic outcomes of resource-poor institutions that aim for English-medium education but lack the material and literacy resources to achieve it in her study of an English-medium school for orphans. She shows how the children are doubly disadvantaged as they fail to learn content or English in their English-medium school.

### Politics of knowledge construction

Another important issue connected to language and identity scholarship for applied linguists concerns the politics of knowledge construction. This is closely connected to the politics of location, both of which can work to exclude and marginalise language and identity scholars (as well as of other areas of applied linguistics) from non-Western periphery countries. While documenting the unequal representation of research conducted outside North America and European contexts in a sample of 33 applied linguistics texts on language learning and teaching written in English, Pakir (2005) identified only one scholar (Braj Kachru) who proposed a non-Western perspective. She then raised the question if this work was ‘a Western representation of non-Western societies rather than an Indian representation of Indian society’ (ibid.: 720). Explaining such phenomena, Altbach (1998) claims that editors and reviewers of international journals based in North America and Europe are usually oriented towards their own national audiences, which could serve to disadvantage research studies located in non-Western contexts. Adding to this explanation is a study conducted by Flowerdew (2001: 121), who interviewed the editors of 12 leading international journals in applied linguistics and English language teaching, who in turn described the specific characteristics they found problematic in the writing of non-native scholars: surface errors, insularity, the ‘absence of authorial voice’ and ‘nativized’ English varieties. The identity of an applied linguistics scholar is therefore another issue that the field could usefully follow up in language and identity studies.

### Summary

In this chapter, we examined identity scholarship in post-colonial contexts with a specific focus on India, Tanzania and Hawai‘i. Our discussions encompassed the historical and current forms of ideologies, policies and discourses about English impacting the values accorded by people to English and their local languages. We also illustrated how these were experienced in everyday lives.

We first examined Said’s (1978) Self–Other concept, focusing on how identities were shaped in relation to English and the West. We then examined the concept of hybridity theorised as Bakhtinian heteroglossia and double-voicing. Hybridity was illustrated through code-switching and code-mixing and as providing a theoretical base for change in institutional practices.
Appropriation, or the act of shaping cultural and linguistic legacies to fit local circumstances, aesthetics and worldviews, was examined with reference to Chinua Achebe’s (1965) stance against native-speaker conformity and a rejection of imperialist culture (Ashcroft et al. 1989). We then discussed the movement from post-colonialism to transnationalism as a consequence of globalisation and the impact of such mobility on identity construction.

In the section on issues for applied linguistics scholars interested in language and identity, we evaluated the translingual turn in the field, looking at notions of metrolinguism (Otsuji and Pennycook 2013), polylanguaging (Jørgensen 2008) and translanguaging (García 2009) as useful frames to understand languages as practices and activities rather than static structures. Simultaneously, we engaged with issues of authenticity and ownership of English connected to translanguaging exemplified through stylisation, with data from India and Hawai‘i. We also discussed the relevance of social class, questioning acritical cultural approaches to linguistic pluralism in language and identity scholarship with inadequate attention to power and language ideologies. Finally, we questioned the politics of knowledge construction and location and the challenges that multilingual scholars, especially those situated in underdeveloped post-colonial contexts, face in getting published in Western-based international journals and the impact this has in marginalising post-colonial scholarship.

Related topics
Positioning language and identity: poststructuralist perspectives; Language and ethnic identity; Linguistic practices and transnational identities; Class in language and identity research; Ethics in language and identity research; A linguistic ethnography of identity: adopting a heteroglossic frame; Beyond the micro–macro interface in language and identity research; Language, gender and identities in political life: a case study from Malaysia; Styling and identity in a second language; Language and identity research in online environments: a multimodal ethnographic perspective.

Further reading
Block, D., Gray, J. and Holborow, M. (2012). Neoliberalism and applied linguistics. London: Routledge.  (This volume examines the interconnections between neoliberalism and applied linguistics in relation to the political economy and language-related issues across the globe.)
Rubdy, R., and Alsagoff, L. (eds) (2013). The global–local interface and hybridity: exploring language and identity. Bristol: Multilingual Matters. (This volume examines how linguistic resources and practices are interlinked with re-inscriptions of identity across multiple cultural and geographical contexts.)
Sandhu, P. (2014a) ‘Constructing normative and resistant societal discourses about Hindi and English in an interactional narrative’, Applied Linguistics, 35(1): 29–47. (This article examines a hypothetical narrative of a North Indian Hindi-medium educated woman to demonstrate how the act of narrating can resist discourses elevating English over Hindi.)
References


Identity in post-colonial contexts


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