

**Phillipson, R. (2009). *Linguistic imperialism continued*. London: Routledge. ISBN 978 0 415 87201 0. 289 pp.**  
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Are those involved in English language teaching (poorly-paid) agents of linguistic imperialism? According to this new book by the originator of the term, we are. The publisher's blurb states that this book "brings together writings by Robert Phillipson since the publication of *Linguistic imperialism*" in 1992, which implies that it is a compendium of *all* that he has written since that date. Of course this is not the case, as Phillipson has been a prolific author of many books, chapters and articles on this topic as well as on broader issues in language policy and planning.

The book begins by quoting in full the entry for *linguistic imperialism* in an encyclopedia (Brown, 2006). Eight chapters and six book reviews (all published in the past ten years) then follow. The only exception is the first chapter, which explains the choice of the contents of the book in terms of the present-day relevance of the arguments presented in 1992, and the controversies they caused. In particular, Phillipson discusses Pennycook's (2001) *Critical applied linguistics*, pointing out the ways in which that book misinterprets his 1992 approach. In subsequent chapters he takes issue with other authors who he believes have also misrepresented his views.

Chapter 2 is a reprint of a work first published in Ricento (2002), which was essentially a critical review of three books on English as a world language (Crystal, 1997; Fishman et al, 1996; Graddol, 1997). This review enabled Phillipson to critique their "de-ideologized" attitudes by emphasizing that it is impossible to be ideologically neutral of the role of English in the new world order. He does this by citing evidence from scholars in peripheral countries which directly experience "the global dominance of neo-colonial relations policed by a handful of Western nations" (Ngũgĩ, 1993). In contrast, the third chapter on *Language policy and linguistic imperialism* focuses on the impact that Americanization (especially since the G.W. Bush administration) has had on language policies in the European Union, and the resistance to this rapid development from politicians and scholars across Europe. Here, Phillipson repeats his 1992 point that linguistic imperialism dovetails with other forms of imperialism (cultural, educational, scientific) and argues that it is now necessary for critical sociolinguists to tease out and theorize "how globalization dovetails with Americanization and Englishization" (p. 57).

In Chapter 4, Phillipson takes issue with the frequent assumption, most notably in Spolsky's (2004) *Language policy*, that his 1992 book subscribes to a conspiracy theory. Spolsky argues that the global dominance of English is merely a by-product of "the changing nature of the world ... because the remaining superpower used it unselfconsciously" (Spolsky, 2004, p. 88). To neglect the evidence contrary to this view, Phillipson claims, is itself a conspiracy of silence. He goes on to state that:

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The reluctance to countenance the interlocking of multiple agendas and the English teaching business (buttressed by the myth of these activities being apolitical) with geopolitical goals is symptomatic of a positivistic disconnection between identifiable activities and the wider picture of strategic political, and economic interests (p.76).

It is worth quoting this extract at length because it encapsulates Phillipson's thesis, one which he develops throughout the chapter with quotations from American policy-makers from George Kennan in 1948 to Condoleezza Rice in 2001.

Chapter 5 reverts to a consideration of the linguistic situation in Europe, and Phillipson asks whether English is no longer a foreign language in the constantly enlarging Union. By this, he means that the increasing dominance of English across the continent for political, economic and academic purposes poses a "threat to the language and cultures of EU member states" (p.96). Such widespread use of English has led to the notion of *English as a lingua franca* (ELF) across Europe, as elsewhere. He concludes the chapter with a strong critique of the neutrality of ELF assumed by proponents such as Seidlhofer (2004) – a point to which he returns in the next chapter but one.

In the sixth chapter, Phillipson traces the development of global English to the point where English has become "the dominant language of intranational communication in an increasing number of countries worldwide" (p. 106). He numbers amongst its "cheerleaders" Churchill, Roosevelt, the administration of G.W. Bush, organisations such as the Centre for Applied Linguistics in Washington, DC, the British Council, and individual followers (academics, teachers, parents, etc) who opt for a neutral stance because this will best suit their personal interests. Although he insists that he is not a conspiracy theorist, one of the definitions of 'conspiracy' in my *Shorter Oxford English dictionary* is "an agreement between two or more to do something criminal, illegal or reprehensible." The weight of the evidence Phillipson presents suggests that there are indeed agreements between various parties, such as the British and American governments – and between examination boards, publishers and language schools – to promote the dominance of English to reinforce and extend their political and financial agendas. Perhaps it depends on whether or not one regards this as "reprehensible".

Chapter 7, entitled *Lingua franca or lingua frankensteinia: English in European integration and globalization*, begins with a brief exploration of the history and different uses of the first of these terms, along with others such as *lingua emotia*, *lingua cultura* and *lingua divina*. This is followed by what Phillipson sees as the frankensteinian consequences of the dominance of English linguistic and cultural norms across the continent, despite the multilingual and multicultural ideals of the *partnership for European renewal* proposed by EU Commissioners in 2008. To illustrate his point, attention is focussed on the promotion of *English studies* in an

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increasing number of European universities. The many issues in this chapter are (to my mind, at least) somewhat unsatisfactorily drawn together in two tabulations of the two projects of lingua franca and lingua frankensteinia. The chapter is followed by seven comments published in the journal in which the original article was published, *World Englishes*, and a summary response by Phillipson. Frankly, I do not think that much is added to our understanding of the issues by these addenda, and they are part of what I consider to be the weakest chapter in the book.

The final chapter, *English in higher education – panacea or pandemic*, addresses the increasing use of English as the medium of education in universities, which some – and he points the finger again at Graddol and Crystal – see as a panacea to guarantee economic success in the globalised market, and for “the English language teaching business (which) has become one of the major growth industries around the world in the past thirty years” (Crystal, 2004, p. 37). Phillipson first looks at the situation in peripheral countries and then at the European context. Everywhere, with the possible exception of Scandinavian countries, he sees the overwhelming dominance of English has led the “deplorable neglect” (p. 207) of indigenous languages in academic discourse as well as a pandemic threat to academic freedom. This chapter was actually prepared as a keynote lecture for a conference in Hong Kong in 2008, and is reproduced here (as is the case with all the previous chapters) without further editing. This is a pity, as it would have been useful for Phillipson to have developed his arguments, and marshalled his evidence about this vitally important issue more fully. No doubt he will do so in the future.

However, it is the case that in most of these articles reported in this book, Phillipson does not develop a strong and coherent line of reasoned argumentation. Rather, he too often makes a telling point, provides evidence to support this point of view, and then moves away without evaluating whether those he disagrees with might have a valid argument, or critiquing his own position. Phillipson acknowledges (p. 22) that there is “a small measure” of duplication in an anthology such as this, which he hopes that will prove only a mild inconvenience. There are indeed quite a number of repeated issues, arguments, and quotations; any inconvenience can be considerably reduced if these articles and book reviews (which space has not permitted me to discuss) are read on separate occasions. My recommendation is that the readers of this book will do just that in order to savour the sharp insights put forward to support the author’s views on linguistic imperialism, and to reflect on the specific cases he discusses. One does not need to agree with Phillipson’s views, but they have been of considerable influence and importance over the past two decades, as they undoubtedly will continue to be in the future: perhaps the book should have been called *Linguistic imperialism continues!*

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