

Pauline Bunce, Robert Phillipson, Vaughan Rapatahana, and Ruanni Tupas (eds.), *Why English? Confronting the Hydra*, Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters, 2016, xvii + 285 pp., US\$189.95 (hbk).

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This second installment in the Hydra-themed series on *Linguistic Diversity and Language Rights* by Multilingual Matters continues the incisive critique on the English Language Teaching (ELT) industry started by the first book in the series, *English Language as Hydra: Its impacts on non-English language cultures* (Rapatahana & Bunce, 2012). But the main argument in both books extends a critical proposition that dates even further back to 1992 in Robert Phillipson's *Linguistic Imperialism*. Then, Phillipson discussed linguistic imperialism, a subtype of linguisticism, as a theoretical construct that accounts for linguistic hierarchization, facilitated by asymmetrical economic, political, and cultural structures and ideologies. This current collection of short articles gives updated accounts from varied voices of how ELT still functions like the powerful many-headed Greek monster in its multi-coordinated efforts to sustain English dominance at the expense of local languages and identities. But more importantly, this book narrates how different communities are confronting the regenerating heads of the Hydra.

Comprised of 24 chapters divided into four parts, this book methodically attempts to slash the multiple heads of the Hydra whose reach spans continents. Before tackling the 'heads' though, Part 1 (*The Hydra at Large*) first contextualizes the expansion of English. The chapters in this section discuss the variables that have nurtured its growth – mostly attributing it to long colonial histories as well as neoliberal capitalist market. Phillipson (ch. 2) in particular draws startling parallels between the rhetoric of Macaulay's (1835) "Minute on Indian Education" and Graddol's (2010) "English Next India" exposing how both documents, despite being centuries apart, promote myths about the necessity and superiority of English worldwide and how these discourses continue to effect structural and material consequences that favor British interests at the expense of India (and other colonized non-natives). In chapter 3, Tupas reveals how forgetting the colonial roots and politically motivated development of English in Singapore and in the Philippines is causing damaging language policies that are producing subtractive (linguistic) identities. Meanwhile, Boussebaa (ch. 5) likens the offshore call center operations to colonial relations in the past, with Western clients being the colonizers demanding 'pure' English, the well-trained employees who mimic native sounds as the elite compradors, and the remaining others 'tainted' by mother-tongue as the colonized natives without access to power.

Part 2 (*Hydra Mythology*) untangles the multiple heads of the Hydra as manifested in the manifold myths perpetuated by different branches of the ELT industry. For instance, drawing on media-reports on ELT policies related to the 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympics and on government recommendations on language education and the promotion of 'global human resources', Kubota and Okuda (ch. 6) confront two myths strongly encouraged by the English-language Hydra: the global language myth (i.e. one will be able to connect with anybody in the world via English) and the economic benefit myth (i.e. learning English will automatically translate to higher earning potential). Templer (ch. 11), by examining the case of post-communist Bulgaria, also exposes the myth of English as the language of 'democratic progress' functioning as a 'survival kit' for migrant laborers (p. 136) and the 'language of interoperability' among soldiers (p. 137). Meanwhile, other chapters focus on the myths surrounding the identity of the 'ideal English

teacher'. On the one end, this myth forces teachers to live up to this mythical teacher identity to satisfy student expectations—as illustrated by Stanley (ch. 8) in his investigation of oral English classes taught by foreign (Western) teachers in Shanghai, China, and private languages schools in Australia that cater to language-learner tourists from Asia, Europe, and South America. On the other end, this native speakerism myth also perpetuates the myth that anyone (as long as they are white native English speaker) can teach English—as discussed by Bunce (ch. 9) in her critique of the short-term commercial 'voluntourism' trend where privileged and untrained white students tour and teach English to 'deficient' but exotic host communities during their gap year. These studies reveal how governments, schools, businesses, and parents are compelled to expose their nation's future to the 'perfect' language 'as early as possible'—both of which are also myths that lead to subtractive linguistic capacities and identities of learners.

Although previous parts already discuss some interventions made to counter the Hydra, Part 3 (*Confronting the Hydra*) intensifies the discussion of the local communities' efforts to challenge the ELT Hydra and stop its many heads from poking into textbook preparations, examination practices, overseas teaching programs, and government policy-making processes. For example, taking the cases of three African countries (Cameroon, Uganda, and Ethiopia), Heugh, Chiatoh, and Sentumbwe (ch. 15) detail how the "less powerful" local languages revived through "language planning from below" are confronting the twin Hydras of English and French by championing community participation in matters of citizenship, micro-economic enterprises, and improved academic performance. Mustafa (ch. 16) also sees some promise in the efforts of a number of schools across Pakistan to resist the Hydra by offering mother tongue based education (MTBE). Rao (ch. 17) also notes the same MTBE trend and other multilingual education initiatives in India. But despite these compelling efforts, Collen and the Ledikasyo pu Travayer (LPT) team (ch. 14), in examining the linguistic hierarchies in Mauritius, do not endorse the complete slaying of the many heads of the Hydra/s. Instead, they recommend measures to prevent the Hydra/s from choking the mother tongues that will nurture the creativity, literacy, and humanity of the local community (or the Mauritians in their case). This response to the Hydra thus leads us to the last part of the book.

Part 4 welcomes the possibility of *Resistance and Cohabitation with the Hydra*. The critical balance that must be set in this cohabitation is expressed in different ways, from the highly personal family sphere as in the case of raising bilingual children (Demont-Heinrich's ch. 19) to national measures to reverse and equalize the effects of the English Hydra as in the case of China (Gao and Rapatahana ch. 22). Literature and literary practices are also tapped to strike a kind of subversive cohabitation: Martinez (ch. 18) having grown up struggling with her Mexican-American selves and not being able to satisfactorily verbalize either 'legitimate' Spanish or 'standard' English, realizes the importance of ambiguities and contradictions of the mestiza identity in Chicano literature. Meanwhile, Rapatahana (ch. 24) deliberately flouts the English language Hydra of 'standardized' English in his two poems "king's english" and "sloop of discourse" to further his anti-colonialist and postcolonialist sentiments. Dynamic cohabitation, even if with discomforts, is also apparent in critical self-reflection by both the white English teacher (Edge ch. 20) and the non-white non-native English teachers (Jordão ch. 23). In the context of the 2003 invasion of Iraq, Edge starts to question her role as an EFL teacher, wondering if she is one of the "second wave of imperial troopers" (p. 232) meant to forcibly invoke consent from non-native subjects. Jordão likewise identifies TEFL as Hydra and attempts to rescue Brazilian teacher educators from being 'second-level Hydras' (p. 261) who uncritically reinforce traditional (i.e. Western) concepts of English learning and teaching, no matter how incompatible they may be to local contexts. She instead campaigns for a gradual unlearning of

privileges and the learning of how “to live comfortably in the discomfort” of the Hydra (p. 261). The critical themes raised in all of these compelling studies are synthesized in the afterword that ultimately dares us to realize a more “equitable linguistic world order” (17).

This book is a critical addition to the growing scholarship favoring multilingualism and challenging the dominance of one particular language at the expense of the others. And this is a critical point in this book—it does not attack English per se, but rather confronts any Hydra—that is, any language that overpowers others and forcefully strips other possible identities and voices. In fact, some chapters (Coleman ch. 4; Collen & LPT ch. 14; Heugh, Chiatoh, & Sentumbwe ch. 15) also critique French or some dominant local language that suppresses other languages. Hence, as efficiently synthesized by Kabel in the afterword, the aim here is to “build local linguistic capacity while adopting a pragmatic approach to English” (279). Instead of a rejectionist attitude towards English, Kabel encourages efforts to curb the subtractive propensities of the English Hydra to ensure sustainable and diverse language ecologies.

And in order to achieve this goal, there is a need to get to the root of the problem—in Greek mythology speak, it is to singe and seal the wounds left by cut off head/s to prevent them from regenerating. In this case, the studies show that we can ‘slay’ curriculum plans, assessment tools, and pedagogical methods again and again with our grassroots resistance efforts, bi/multilingual policies, pedagogical reformations, and symbolic confrontations. But if we do not dismantle ELT knowledge structures or Western-centric assumptions, our efforts will be for naught.

And that leads us to another crucial point in this book. In a sense, this book is a testament of not just one Herculean entity slaying the Hydra, but the necessity of multi-thronged efforts of different communities simultaneously exercising their linguistic and cultural agency. This idea is emphasized by the book’s encompassing approach, accommodating both prose and poetry, both analytical scholarly works and deeply personal accounts, and perspectives from both native and non-native English speakers across continents. This serious effort at inclusivity/diversity allows for a more varied readership and underscores the relevance of language matters not only to language specialists or educators. Our institutional (and resistant) policies and practices on language have very real consequences for everyone—whether one is a policy maker, a school administrator, an artist, a soldier, a tourist, a parent, or simply a learner.

Lastly, consistent with its critical stance, it is commendable how this book is likewise critical of its own position of enunciation/resistance. Early on, series editor Skutnabb-Kangas admits the irony of this subversive collection being written *in English* and published in the main lair of the beast, the United Kingdom. But he also quickly defends thus: “Such is the power of the global publishing industry and the pervasiveness of English-language hegemony that this critique needs to emanate from within its very realm” (p. xxi).

Perhaps in time and with the continued consciousness-raising efforts as those recorded in this book, another installment in this *Linguistic Diversity and Language Rights* series will be published in multiple languages. And better yet, it will no longer be Hydra-themed because there is no more beast to slay?

References

- Phillipson, R. (1992). *Linguistic imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rapatahana, V., & Bunce, P. (2012). *English language as hydra: Its impacts on non-English language cultures*. Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters