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### Introduction: Theorizing New English(es)

Bessie Dendrinou<sup>a</sup>, Mina Karavanta<sup>a</sup>, Bessie Mitsikopoulou<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Faculty of English Studies, School of Philosophy, Athens, Greece

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# Bessie Dendrinou, Mina Karavanta and Bessie Mitsikopoulou

## INTRODUCTION: THEORIZING NEW ENGLISH(ES)

### The double contingency of postcoloniality and globality

Englishes, new Englishes, world English(es), global English(es) are all terms which highlight the legacy of English and facilitate an obscured political agenda to legitimate and promote it as the language of technology, of engineering, of science, transport and economy, as the language 'which can rapidly evolve to meet new cultural and communicative demands' (Graddol, 2000: 6). However, it is important to assert presently that it is an epistemological error to assign to English, or to any other language for that matter, innate capabilities and characteristics. A language is not a live organism following a course of growth, decay, and death on its own – even if it has been represented as such in language studies. It cannot do anything or become something by itself; it can become neither 'pure' nor 'hybrid' on its own. Its state and status will be a result of representations and cultural practices. What a language is or is not depends on the historical and structural conditions for its maintenance and use, on the social conditions of its institutionalization, on the symbolic value attached to it and to its users, and the support mechanisms available for its development, enrichment and promotion.

In undertaking our task as editors of a special issue on 'new Englishes', we knew that we had to provide a space for essays which would not merely consent to or critique the cultural meanings and politics of English(es) as they have developed in the disciplinary practices of English language studies. This was possible so long as we embraced our alternative perspective of New English(es) and, in so doing, facilitated alternative practices. In this perspective, both New English and New Englishes are integral components of a heteroglossic mosaic, shaped today in the complex materiality of globality. Each of these components implies alliances in the borderlands where cultural, linguistic, ethnic and political identities and practices meet, cross each other and clash. The result is a new kind of hybridity, understood as the event that subverts the binary dynamic between national and international, canonical and non-canonical, centre and margin, self and other, pure and contaminated. This perspective challenges the myth of English (or of any other language) as an omnipotent language, naturally endowed with the power to proliferate, prosper and procreate incessantly, regardless of structural conditions.

Recognizing this mosaic to be an outcome of relations of power in which English, playing its role as a global and globalizing language (cf. Dendrinou, 2002), is

entrenched, and, agreeing with the position that ‘where there is power there is resistance’ (Foucault, 1990: 95), we view New English(es) as a multifarious site of continual resistances that spring from its uprooting and rerooting throughout its colonial and postcolonial history.

Critical of the cultural politics of English linked to linguistic hegemony and the colonization of the mind (cf. Ngũgĩ wā, 1986), of which the language itself is totally innocent (the blame is to be sought among those who wish to exploit the language for symbolic and material profit), we hold that English(es), new and old, are significant components of a wide-ranging, multifaceted, versatile semiotic system whose territory is constantly crossed and contested in national and transnational encounters, in culture-specific and global contexts. Each time it is contested, it enters a process of cultural negotiation and translation, resulting in decentring and denationalizing its fragments so that these may become elements of new compositions, reconstituted as ‘decentred multidetermined’ in what Nestor Garcia Canclini (2005) has called a ‘culture of transience’. The growth of the semiotic system depends on its capacity to be transformed but also to transform, to be translated and to translate. This capacity, made possible by a postcolonial globality, resists the sterile condition of acculturation as a syncretic concoction (cf. Karavanta, 2005, 2008).

To understand the hidden political agenda of the conventional definitions of ‘new Englishes’, it is perhaps important to take a step back and understand that the concept is embedded within ‘various pedagogical and disciplinary regimes of subjugation and attachment to a tradition of English Studies’ (Gunew, 2001: 730). In this context, the linguistic analysis and/or description of (new) varieties of English has been carried out in apolitical terms (for example, Görlach, 1985, 1991, 1995, 2002; Trudgill, 1984; Trudgill and Chambers, 1991) so that the findings and the consequent interpretations became the stepping stones for the promotion of English as a ‘world language’ (for example, Bailey and Görlach, 1982; Kachru, 1990; Crystal, 1997) and the springboard for the linguistic and cultural politics of English as an ‘international’ and a ‘global language’, as well as a [world] ‘lingua franca’ (cf. Jenkins, 2000; Seidlhofer, 2001). Eminent studies by scholars like Braj Kachru (1985, 1986, 1992), founded on the pioneering (but also apolitical) sociolinguistic studies regarding the English spoken in Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, the UK and the USA by prominent sociolinguists such as William Labov (1972), Joshua Fishman (1972), John Holm (1983, 1988) and Peter Trudgill (1994), provided the foundations for the development of critical approaches to English as an ‘imperialist’ or ‘hegemonic’ language (cf. Dendrinos, 1996, 2001; Phillipson, 1992, 1998; Tsuda, 1994). Such approaches are conducive to an understanding of new Englishes also as a concept invoking a history of hegemony and simultaneously referring to the economically, politically and culturally differentiated identities within global capitalism. This double contingency of postcoloniality and globality creates a need for new types of analyses, informed by the established critique of colonial discourses (Pennycook, 1998), which has also shed light on the ‘deep-seated traces of the colonial legacy’ (Buttigieg, 1999: 47).

Because of the hegemonic position of English, particularly in the 20th century (Macedo, Dendrinos and Gounari, 2004), the various terms used to refer to English(es) are invariably connected to its cultural politics (cf. Pennycook, 1994) – terms such as those referred to above, that is, English as a *lingua franca*, as a *world* or

an *international language*, and others like English as a *global language*, as a *contact language* or as a *pluricentric language*. The cultural meanings of these terms prevent us from viewing them as ideologically innocent concepts, while English as a global, an international, or a world language is a direct link to notions and practices of cultural homogenization and the elimination of cultural identities. The problem is that, sometimes, scholars opposed to or fearing English language expansionism vilify the language itself rather than the structural conditions of its empowerment. Furthermore, in mainstream English language studies, new Englishes have been defined as autonomous language varieties that emerged in former British colonies<sup>1</sup> and, supposedly, developed on the basis of a systematic pattern (cf. Schneider, 2003) that directly correlates with the formal properties of the language rather than its social functions. It is also thought to include those varieties which have been developed by 'non-native' speakers in international or 'glocal' contexts. These new Englishes are associated with English as an international language (EIL) and English as a lingua franca (ELF). These two terms are often used interchangeably. They describe EFL varieties used by speakers whose first language (L1) is not English. In other words, EIL or ELF, construed to have 'a life of its own' (cf. Prodromou, 2007a), is promoted as a variety of English in its own right – a variety that violates L1-user norms (Jenkins, 2006). Described in a deficit framework (cf. Prodromou, 2007b), it is professed to have an innocuous role as a culture-free tool of communication.<sup>2</sup>

There is an open debate in English language studies as to whether or not there is an international version of English or a lingua franca variety with features which can be described systematically, and whether it is possible to describe the special features of other territorially born Englishes, such as Euro-English or Denglish [Deutsch + English]; that is, hybrid forms of English that have developed in culturally defined territories (cf. Seidhofer, 2001). The debate rarely considers the political dimensions of one side or the other.

Territorial definitions have also provided the basis for a further distinction: that between 'new' and 'old' Englishes or non-Anglo and Anglo-Englishes. The claim is that Anglo-Englishes are different *languages*, not just varieties of a single language, spoken in settlement colonies.<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, there is a contradiction in the way that Englishes are portrayed through the relevant disciplinary practices. That is, while Anglo-Englishes are construed as autonomous languages, mainstream linguistics has described English as a homogeneous structural system with stable meanings, form and use.

Conventional conceptions of Anglo and non-Anglo Englishes were born in a pre-globalized world and studied as geographically and ethnically determined varieties. Their hybridity was understood as a mixture, combination or fusion between a variety of Anglo-English and that of (an)other language(s) or a dialect(s), as the cultural product of postcoloniality. In each case the concoction is understood to surface on one or more levels; at the level of phonology, lexicogrammar and/or syntax, or at the levels of meaning (semantics) and/or use (pragmatics). It is less frequently understood to surface at a textual or a discursive level.

The conception of new Englishes in association with geographic territory is contested by one of our contributors, Allan James, but the challenge is not made in political terms. James claims that in an era of globality new English varieties are born

in new domains of cultural practice, as for example in communication technologies. In his essay, 'New Englishes as Post-Geographic Englishes in Lingua Franca Use: Genre Interdiscursivity and Late Modernity', he argues that the study of new Englishes, in works such as that by Kachru (1992), has been led by a geographic fallacy, according to which the location of the Anglophone communication is expected to be reflected in the structural properties of the new English variety. He explains that new English varieties do not necessarily develop over a long period of time within geographically defined sites but as 'post-geographic' varieties in international business, in academia, in the media and in all types of professional technology-mediated interaction, where new Englishes are used as *linguae francae* for practical purposes. The thrust of James's argument is that sociolinguistic theory must be revised and expanded to accommodate the new realities of globality and that, in addition to the Hallidayan notions of 'dialect' and 'register', the development of the notion of 'genre' is needed as a tool for analysis.

James's essay fitted well into our agenda for this issue. It was our conscious decision not to pursue papers that would rehash mainstream concepts of New Englishes or ways of analysing them. Of course, despite our agenda, articulated between the lines in the text we prepared to elicit contributions, it is quite interesting that our call-for-papers summoned, from all over the world, abstracts whose authors claim an impressively broad terrain for new English. We received proposals that interpreted the concept of New Englishes as anything from social, gender-specific and ethnic varieties of Anglo-English, to (post)colonial English spoken in different parts of Africa and Asia, to new media and technology genres, to new academic and fiction discourses, to new European Englishes viewed as creoles, to geographical varieties of English (or of another language with traces of English) which are used by repatriated or economic immigrants that bring with them the English they acquired in the environment from which they were expatriated, to texts analysing the literary production of non-Anglo authors who either wrote or were translated in English, and many more.

The proposed contributions had little in common: most of them proposed looking at hybrid forms of language varieties, genres or discourses, and a few others intended to investigate language, text or discourse occupying a transcultural/intercultural or translinguistic/interlinguistic space. Our choice of proposals was not dictated merely by the academic quality promised by the abstracts that we received, but by our conscious attempt to participate in practices of 'disobedience' to the common approach of construing English as a 'cannibalistic' language,<sup>4</sup> or a language with the unique power to devour or impregnate local cultures. We wished to detach ourselves from the practices of either mythologizing or vilifying English.

English is the language of global capital and, like global capital, while present everywhere, it may be nowhere in particular. In other words, it exists and expands because of its potential to adapt itself to new needs, circumstances and/or realities, by means of generating new varieties with a dynamic, cross-cultural and intercultural flow that demarcates the locations and sites where globality can be manifested in specific historical, political, cultural terms, within the range of epistemological conditions that allow and invite critical analysis (Mitsikopoulou, 2007). These varieties, which originate from the histories of (post)colonialism, the global reach and

rapid spread of communication technologies, embody the paradox of domination and liberation, as can be seen in a number of the papers in this issue.

The decentralizing potential of New English(es) and its concurrent investment in material forces informed both by transnational capital and national ideologies can be better illuminated through the lenses of critical hybridity and translation – two principal themes to emerge in this issue. Both these concepts are presently understood as epistemological tools but also as practices that cannot be unmoored from the material forces that engender postcoloniality and globality.

The ‘newness’ of New English(es), as portrayed in this issue, is inscribed in the hybrid concatenation of transgressive and contaminating forces that oppose the myth and politics of purity, which affirm a single culture’s exclusive access to an unprecedented history of linear development and progress. Moreover, New English(es), as presently construed, call for praxes of translation that go beyond the concept of writing back or interpreting the colonized from the ontological and political perspective of the coloniser. Instead, they operate as processes of critical interruption that expose the violent practices of the bodies of empires literally (on an economic, social and political level) and figuratively (on a narrative level) devouring the world of the colonized in what Susan Bassnett (1999: 5) succinctly calls ‘the shameful history of translation’. These praxes of translation explore the zones of discomfort of what Homi Bhabha calls the ‘Third Space’ (Bhabha, 1994: 38–9). Bhabha here refers to that liminal space in every culture where its contradictions but also creative potential arise, where western and non-western narratives and constituencies critically coexist in conflict and harmony. Bhabha’s analysis of translation in ‘How Newness Enters the World’, the last chapter of his groundbreaking *The Location of Culture*, analyses this operational value of translation:

And the sign of translation continually tells or ‘tolls’ the different times and spaces between cultural authority and its performative practices. The ‘time’ of translation consists in that movement of meaning, the principle and practice of a communication that, in the words of de Man ‘puts the original in motion to decanonise it, giving it the movement of fragmentation, a wandering of errancy, a kind of permanent exile’ (Bhabha, 1994: 228).

Bhabha’s (1994: 228) definition of translation as the ‘performative nature of communication’, namely as the site of cultural difference, is indissolubly connected with his notion of the hybrid as the embodiment of ‘incommensurable elements’ that reveal the ‘regulation and negotiation of those spaces that are continually, contingently, “opening out,” remaking the boundaries, exposing the limits of any claim to a singular or autonomous sign of difference – be it class, gender or race’ (Bhabha, 1994: 219). The embodiment of this ‘something else besides’ or ‘in-between’ (Bhabha, 1994: 219) that stands between the colonial past and the postcolonial present, namely, between the hyper-reality of the homogeneous and pure (cf. Chakrabarty, 2000) and the reality of the heterogeneous and the contaminated, is the site of this ‘newness’ whose entrance into the world requires a praxis of translation that celebrates and at the same time challenges the ‘unstable elements of linkage’ and the ‘indeterminate temporality of the in-between’ (Bhabha, 1994: 227). In view of this complexity and the politics of representation that it engages (cf. Covi

et al., 2006), translation operates as a political praxis that responds to the 'need for a global analysis of culture' (Bhabha, 1994: 216) and reads the disjunctive temporalities and 'discontinuous historical realities' (Bhabha, 1994: 217) of globality. It thus critically engages the creative potential of what Bhabha calls the 'Third Space' as the liminal site of hybridity that is informed by the disjunctive continuity between the history of colonialism and the neocolonial practices in the era of global capitalism.

The 'indeterminate temporality' (Bhabha, 1994: 227) of hybridity runs the danger of being reduced to a 'linguistic culturalism' (Cheah, 1998: 299) or a 'cultural hybridization' if conceptualized on an aesthetic or symbolic level that 'side-step[s] the constraints and tendencies of politico-economic processes by reducing them to cultural-significatory practices' (Cheah, 1998: 298). Pheng Cheah's critique of this reading of hybridity reveals the always already constituting and constituted 'unevenness of political and economic globalization' (Cheah, 1998: 300) and complex materiality of globality. If translation is to operate as a political praxis that responds to the 'need for a global analysis of culture' (Bhabha, 1994: 216) and reads the disjunctive temporalities and 'discontinuous historical realities' (Bhabha, 1994: 217) of globality, then it has to engage this complex materiality of globality and, in the case of New English(es), the double contingency of its 'newness', now disseminated around the world. In this light, hybridity is manifested as a subversive praxis of dwelling – in epistemologies and communities – that challenges the ideological policies of homogenization and counteracts the dominance of monolingualism through the practices of translation, interdiscursivity and interculturality.

Most of the essays in the issue directly or indirectly critically analyse this double contingency that informs the dissemination and various practices of New English(es). They reveal how New Englishes pluralize, resist and live beyond English as a homogeneous language, even as their histories are interpolated by its economy that sums up the history of imperialism from colonial to neocolonial times. While a couple of the essays here imply that the presence of New English(es) deterritorializes and transmogrifies the mainstream practices and concepts linked with English as a hegemonic language, they also articulate the danger of the monolingualism that is inherent in the Englishness of these varieties.

R. Radhakrishnan's 'Is Translation a Mode?' articulates the danger of understanding and proposing New Englishes as the comfortable and soothing name of the variety of the same. By reconstellating<sup>5</sup> Walter Benjamin's reading of translation and definition of pure language in 'The task of the translator' with Jacques Derrida's *Monolingualism of the Other* and 'Des Tours de Babel', Radhakrishnan articulates the dystopic danger that underlies the praxis of translation, especially when it claims to be open to the untranslatable, the latter conceptualized as the indelible mark of the works of a 'pure language'. Setting up a non-dialectic dialogue between Benjamin's use of 'pure language' and Derrida's invocation of translation as 'another name of the impossible' that oscillated between the possibility that '[i]n a sense, nothing is untranslatable' but '*in another sense*, everything is untranslatable' (Derrida, 1998: 57) (emphasis in original), Radhakrishnan interrogates the metaphysical and universalist notions that belie the politics of translation and language, especially within the global context. By complicating Benjamin's often too comforting withdrawal to a notion of 'pure language' through Derrida's insistent post-humanist critique of the politics of language as a politics of location, Radhakrishnan challenges the double

forgetting that an uncritical invocation of globality generates: in whose name and language is this globality assumed? By forgetting that it 'matters from whose perspective the world is being realized as One' (Radhakrishnan, 2003: 103) that this question reveals, and acting upon that forgetting, New Englishes could then be a rather soothing camouflage for the hegemonic role that English plays at the expense of other minor and marginal or subaltern languages including other Englishes. In other words, New Englishes might be a euphemism for the submission of the varieties of English to the linguistic, cultural and political domination of English. In the name of a variety that resists the domination of one language through its plurality, New Englishes might very well be proliferating the hegemonic politics of English instead of resisting and living beyond it.

A very different concern related to the topic of translation is articulated in Alastair Pennycook's contribution to the issue, entitled 'English as a Language always in Translation'. The author questions the narrow view of translation as the 'mapping of items from one code to another' (pp. 33–47), and suggests that in using language one is always entering a process of translation. Arguing, then, that English is always a language in translation, Pennycook supports the view that English has rarely been approached in the context of other languages; instead, he notes, the problem with global English today is that it is approached as a monolingual enterprise. He identifies two main conditions that have affected the way English language pedagogy has developed over the last decades, imposing restrictions on the role of translation in English language teaching. The first is related to economic and political agendas that promote monolingual methodologies and teaching materials worldwide, eschewing the complexity of understanding language education as a project of translation. The second addresses two key ways in which the global spread of English has been described and resisted. As the author suggests, the question of diversity of meanings is not to be found in a defence of national language and cultures, nor in a description of English as a *lingua franca*, nor even in a focus on plural Englishes as these all recognize a language core which remains unchanged. A crucial point here refers to our understanding of the notion of diversity. The European focus of multilingualism, for instance, promotes for Pennycook a view of glossodiversity, without however advancing at the same time semiodiversity. On the contrary, the argument continues, language educators should contribute to diversity not only by promoting multilingualism, but most importantly by exploring the breadth of meanings in a language using translation as an important tool, thus enabling students to enter what Pennycook refers to as the 'traffic of meaning' where ideas, notions, symbols, discourses and genres circulate.

The third paper on the topic of translation is by Alessandra Rizzo, who writes on 'Translation and Language Contact in Multicultural Settings: The Case of Asian Migrants in Sicily'. Rizzo's article provides a theoretical account of an Indian-Anglo-Italian variety which has been developed by Asian immigrants in multicultural Sicily to serve both communicative and social integration needs. She argues that this new English variety has been built upon a process of relexification during which Asian immigrants translate their local idioms into English by keeping their native syntactic structure in the English sentence and by incorporating a mixture of Sicilian-Italian words. Given their limited competence in Italian, the use of English which they learnt as a consequence of the British colonization of India has served a pragmatic purpose. The use of this specific hybrid variety of English has become, according to the author,



a source of linguistic and cultural renewal and has transformed both the immigrants themselves and the new world into which they have moved. It is also recognized that the contact of English with another 'strong' language, in this case Italian, produces structural pressure on this language and local dialects. In her attempt to conceptualize the interface between the (Asian) source and the (Sicilian) target culture at a micro-level, Rizzo draws on Lawrence Venuti (1998) and suggests that the translation of the local idiom into English can also be seen as a process of foreignization, where the cultural other is not erased but manifested. At the same time, the argument continues, this type of hybridity may also be approached as a cannibalistic practice which devours the host culture and transforms the target language. It is suggested that both relexification and cannibalism constitute resistive practices against a monolingual society allowing non-native speakers of English to explore new areas of cultural and linguistic innovation.

The topic of hybridity, not linguistic but cultural hybridity this time, is the focus of Graham Holderness's article, entitled 'Silence Breeds', in which he discusses Sulayman Al-Bassam's rewriting of Shakespeare as an 'unusual hybrid cultural form' that shapes a trajectory beyond the trodden path of the postcolonial revision of the western canon. Al-Bassam's texts were first written in English from the perspective of Arabic concepts through which Shakespeare is interpreted, before being translated into Arabic. This double appropriation of English and Arabic languages, textualities and cultures is a representative case of transculturation that raises the question of cultural imperialism and hegemonic practices in the global era of multiple crossings and cultural transfusions. The Arabic constituency is thus represented not as an imitator but as a transforming force of some of the most fundamental premises of the western tradition as they are founded and articulated in the Shakespearean tragedy. The hybrid form of Al-Bassam's theatrical productions intertwines two diametrically opposed worlds and asks important questions concerning the current stage of politics. What happens when this New English springs from the site of the other, the Muslim other, often perceived by the West as the enemy?

Cultural and discursive hybridity is also the focus of Eleni Haviara-Kehaidou's 'The American Black Play as a New Genre of English'. This essay provides a critical analysis of American theatre through the subversive discursive practices of the black play here represented by the African-American playwrights, Adrienne Kennedy, Amiri Baraka, Ntozake Shange, August Wilson and Suzan-Lori Parks. By charting the historical, political, social and textual affiliations that underlie the work of these authors, Haviara-Kehaidou discusses the ways the black play operates as a genre that decolonizes American theatre even as it is disjunctively connected with its ideologies and institutions. Critical of the agenda of an assimilating multiculturalism and resistant to the myth of a monocultural American identity, the black play articulates, performs and stages histories of a poly-cultural and intercultural America that cannot be contained and restrained by its exceptionalist rhetoric. Haviara-Kehaidou develops the argument that the black play offers representations of hybridity that permeate not only its aesthetic form, language and characters but also American history and culture, which are not linear narratives but sites of disruptions and disjunctions as the history of the African diaspora that inheres in them reveals. Thematically, she maintains, the black play constitutes instances of politically sensitive explorations of African-American identity construed as hybrid. The black play is thus viewed as a new genre of English which is understood as an instantiation of a disruption in the monolingual and monocultural

official narrative of cultural memory that reveals a matrix of social, historical and political forces that come into encounters not to melt into each other – the idea of ‘a happy and soothing multiculturalism’ that the author interrogates – but to find alliances in the borderlands where cultural, linguistic, ethnic and political practices meet, cross each other, and clash.

The arrayed collection of essays about New English(es) should be matched with the cultural and linguistic assortment of writers in this issue. The issue editors’ first language is Greek and, though each of us has built a strong relationship with British or American English in our academic lives, Greek is the language through which we experience the social, the personal and the political. One of our authors, Eleni Haviara-Kechaidou, was born into Greek but Arabic was one of her first languages also as she was born and brought up in Egypt. She never lived in an Anglophone country for any length of time, but her academic career, as a professor in American literature, obliges her to produce in English, while her career as a playwright allows her to enjoy writing in Greek. The second female author, Alessandra Rizzo, is an Italian speaker who, like other academics in English Studies programmes of universities around the world, is also expected to publish in English and participate in the global market of academic goods, increasingly produced in English and dominated by Anglo discursive practices, ways of thinking and concepts born in Anglo linguocultural spaces. R. Radhakrishnan holds the particularly complex position of a bilingual heritage that binds together Tamil and English, Indian and US cultures. The backgrounds of these authors and the languages in which they are embedded reveal the complexities of developing epistemologies and articulating discourses of critique in English. Needless to say, those who are not in a position to follow the dominant practices cannot ‘play the game’. In academia as in other institutional domains, English is implicated in mechanisms that structure inequality. Whereas up until a few decades ago academic exclusion was largely due to ethnicity, gender and class, now it depends heavily also on access to English. Those who do not have it are therefore either totally excluded from the field of western academic production and the global/western publishing market or are marginalized.

This journal is a European – not British, American, Australian or Canadian – site for scholars in English Studies, most of whom are not L1 speakers of English. The problem that the general editors are confronted with then is whether or not to ask contributors to use a rhetoric and writing conventions linked with one of the Englishes. Consistency calls for a single British English format and, as a result, the original language of the authors may become invisible. Fully aware of this, the present issue opens a conversation between authors and voices that are not Anglo: Haviara-Kechaidou and Rizzo’s first languages (Greek and Italian respectively), and Radhakrishnan’s bilingual background in Tamil and English meet and converse with each other as well as with Holderness, James and Pennycook’s voices that respectively and symptomatically reveal the positions of the British and Australian cultural subjects. The general editors’ decision to Briticize the copy met our, the issue editors’ need, to denaturalize this choice, especially since the theme presently is New English(es) – one of the many being European or global academic English – and invite a reconstellation of texts and positions that reflect upon the political, cultural and linguistic practices of New English(es) and English through a double perspective: the perspective of their own particular ‘voice’ characterized by the other languages and cultures that they speak and inhabit and the gained perspective of their encounter and

conversation with the other epistemological and discursive analyses that this special issue brings together. This double perspective that this special issue affords responds to the double contingency of postcoloniality and globality in which New English(es) are embedded. By inviting positions that critique this contingency, we propose that a journal of this sort should allow space for the linguistic and cultural identities of the contributors to surface. English is not 'owned' by its British, American or Australian speakers. Its ownership has become transnational, as though this is the price it has to pay for its transnational expansion.

The global-local tension does not occur only at the level of cultural and political organization. It also occurs as part of the English language debate among the enthusiasts and the sceptics regarding the use of English as a world lingua franca. The latter are concerned about users of English who do not violate the set rules but they make their own and they are not careful about keeping the standards. Moreover, they fear that the more English takes on local forms and is led to diversity and fragmentation, the greater the danger of English becoming a useless 'tool' of communication and an ineffective means for the production of culture. As we bring our editorial to a close, we will not join this debate. No person or persons can take the future of a language into their hands. They cannot fully control language, its status or use. Language and culture follow the path of their 'history' of the future. The cultural resources of English and its intellectual property are dependent on the economic, political and imaginative powers of its users.

## Notes

- 1 Each of the former British colonies has a different political linguistic history, yet they all institutionalized English not through political force but through hegemonic processes and language policies, including English-medium education that was a prerequisite for employment in colonial government. Today English is an official language in these settings, which retain their multilingual ethos of communication, but it exists in a complementary fashion with other indigenous, vernacular or standard, local languages.
- 2 For a problematization of the concept similar to our own see Robert Phillipson (2007, forthcoming). For discussions concerning the impossibility of separating language from culture, see Bessie Dendrinos (1992) and Gunther Kress (1990). Both view language as social practice and explain that the use of discourse, materially configured as genre and text, cannot be apolitical or a culture-free practice.
- 3 Old or Anglo-Englishes must be distinguished from the Englishes that developed in the former colonies where the indigenous languages were suppressed and/or extinguished.
- 4 This term is inspired by Jean-Louis Calvet (1974) who spoke of French colonial policies as 'glottophagie'.
- 5 By reconstellation, we mean the theoretical gesture of wrenching texts and discourses out of their 'native' or original context and thrusting them into unfamiliar and previously untried theoretical terrains and encounters, thereby creating a new constellation of relations and affiliations (re-constellation). See Theodor Adorno's analysis of 'constellation' and his reading of Walter Benjamin's *Origin of German Tragedy in Negative Dialectics*.

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**Bessie Dendrinou** is Professor of Sociology of Language and Foreign Language Education at the Faculty of English Studies, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and is interested in socially accountable applied linguistics. She has published widely not only in Greek and English but also in Spanish, Portuguese and French. One of her books, *The Hegemony of English* (co-authored with D. Macedo and P. Gounari), published by Paradigm Publishers in 2003, won the 2004 AESA (American Educational Studies Association) Critics' Choice Award. In 2005 this book appeared in Spanish, under the title *Lengua, Ideología y Poder: La hegemonía del inglés*. (Crítica y Fundamentos 4. Barcelona: Editorial Graó), and in 2006 in Portuguese, under the title *A Hegemonia da Língua Inglesa* (Lisboa: Edições pedagogo). Researching issues of 'interlinguistic' literacies for European citizenry, her latest book, *Policies of Linguistic Pluralism and the Teaching of Languages in Europe* (co-edited with B. Mitsikopoulou), was published by Metachmio Publishers and the University of Athens, in 2004. Since 2003 she has been deeply involved in developing a new 'glocal' suit of language examinations for European languages. Address: Faculty of English Studies, School of Philosophy, Panepistimioupolis Zographou, GR – 15784 Athens, Greece. [email: vdendrin@enl.uoa.gr]

**Mina Karavanta** is a lecturer at the Department of Literature and Culture, Faculty of English Studies, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. She has specialized in Critical Theory and Postcolonial Literature and holds a PhD in Comparative Literature from the State University of New York at Binghamton. Her published work includes articles in the fields of Comparative Literature, Critical Theory and Cultural Studies, and translated poetry and theory from and into English and Greek. She is a member of *Travelling Concepts* in ATHENA II (European Thematic Network of Gender Studies). She is currently working on a book about the concept and praxis of community and co-editing a collection of essays entitled *Edward Said and Jacques Derrida: Humanism and the Global Hybrid* (2008, forthcoming) with Professor Nina Morgan. Address: Faculty of English Studies, School of Philosophy, Panepistimioupolis, GR – 15784 Athens, Greece. [email: minaka98@otenet.gr]

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**Bessie Mitsikopoulou** is an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of English Studies, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. Her research interests are in the areas of critical discourse analysis, educational linguistics, new technologies in education, critical and digital literacies. She has participated in several research and EU projects and has been coordinator of English language teachers in Greek Second Chance Schools since 2004. She is the co-editor of *Literacy in English: Curriculum, Methodological Suggestions, Educational Materials* (with L. Sakelliou-Schultz, Ministry of Education, Athens, 2006); *Policies of Linguistic Pluralism and the Teaching of Languages in Europe* (with B. Dendrinos, Metaichmio Publications and the University of Athens, 2004) and *The Periphery Viewing the World* (with C. Dokou and E. Mitsi, Parousia Publications, Athens, 2004). She has also published in peer reviewed journals such as *Language & Education*, *Journal of Language and Politics*, *Language Learning and Technology*, *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*, *ELT Journal* and *Journal of Applied Linguistics*. Address: Faculty of English Studies, School of Philosophy, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Panepistimioupoli Zographou, GR – 15784 Athens, Greece. [email: mbessie@enl.uoa.gr]

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