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Prescott, David (ed.) (2007). *English in Southeast Asia. Varieties, Literacies and Literatures*. Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. Pp.374.

Reviewed by  
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This commemorative volume contains contributions to the ESEA (English in Southeast Asia) Conference in the past decade. Nine countries or territories have been actively involved in this annual event: Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, The Philippines, Australia, Hong Kong SAR, New Zealand, Thailand and Indonesia. The book is divided into three parts and 17 chapters: 'Varieties' (Part I, chapters 1-6), 'Literacies' (Part II, chapters 7-12) and 'Literatures' (Part III, chapters 13-17). It covers a wide range of countries and topics.

In the first chapter, Deterding reports on variations in monophthong vowels of three ethnolinguistic groups in Singapore (Chinese, Malay and Indian). Speech data were collected from the reading of the 'Wolf' passage by 41 female students (25 Chinese, 12 Malay, four Indian). Then 12 extracts were played to 20 students (13 Chinese, 7 Malays) who were asked to identify the speaker's ethnic identity. The findings show that Chinese speakers were mostly correctly identified (94%), followed by Malay speakers (85%), and Indian speakers (57.5%). Deterding then compares the vowel measurements of Singaporean subjects with those of speakers in other parts of Asia (Malaysia, Brunei and Hong Kong), and found them rather similar, suggesting the emergence of a regional lingua franca.

Based on select "international contemporary words" and "Asian words" appearing in eight dictionaries, Butler discusses the need to update regional English lexicons (e.g. dictionaries in Asian Englishes) and the difficulties involved in establishing legitimacy of locally emerging English words. Toward the effective distribution of regional English lexicons, one major obstacle is local community users' reluctance to recognize that the words listed truly reflect their language. The tension between 'interlanguage errors' and 'legitimate usage' results in a "tug of war on usage and lexicon" (p.36). Butler argues that the publishing of Asian English dictionaries helps community users of English to see that locally emerging words are legitimate expressions in

their own right. The paper ends with a brief discussion of the Asian English dictionary projects, with more success reported in Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei, The Philippines, and Hong Kong, but less so in India.

Moody examines the influence of American English and British English in Asian varieties using the free and downloadable ICE (International Corpus of English) Asian corpora (Singapore, India, The Philippines and Hong Kong), which consist of both spoken (60%) and written (40%) texts. Moody hypothesizes that except for ICE-PH (The Philippines, dominated by American English), all others are dominated by British English. The verb morphology of 15 verbs was selected for scrutiny (e.g. *spelt* vs. *spelled*; *dreamt* vs. *dreamed*; AmE: *got*, *gotten*). The results confirm the hypothesis, in that Indian English and Singapore English tend to follow British spelling, while American spelling is more evident in Filipino English. However, in Hong Kong, a former British colony, only 42% of the verb forms followed British spelling. Similar tendencies were found in the spoken text sub-corpora. A comparison of the use of conjuncts (e.g. *hence*) in the ICE Asian corpora was also conducted, with Brown Corpus and ICE-GB as the baseline. The findings led Moody to surmise that rather than following strictly British or American English norms, Asian characteristics proper to the region are emerging.

In two separate chapters, McLellan and David compare Malay-English code-switching (CS) patterns in Malaysia and Brunei (Chapter 4), and provide evidence of nativization of Malay words in Malaysian English (Manglish) and Bruneian English (Chapter 5). The summary review of CS research is subdivided into three parts: 'descriptive linguistic studies', 'sociolinguistic code-switching research', and 'studies of code-switching and language shift'. Each part discusses examples from both Malaysia and Brunei, and ends with the authors' appeal for future research. One point of theoretical interest is whether linguistic segments characterized by CS constitute a third code independent of the 'parent languages'. The authors seem to be sympathetic to this view.

As shown in both Malaysian and Bruneian newspaper data, the nativization of Malay expressions (e.g. religious terms, people, music, food, etc.) is typically preceded by a stage of flagging. Interestingly, the flagging devices in Malaysian and Bruneian newspapers are not the same. Where no flagging is found (i.e. unflagged), the nativization process is arguably completed, for the Malay expressions in question are already perceived as part of the lexicon of the local English variety.

Kirkpatrick investigates communication strategies of successful EFL

speakers from ASEAN countries based on audio recordings of six group discussions (group size 3 or 4), all subjects being teachers of English attending professional development courses at RELC in Singapore. All ten ASEAN nations are represented. The findings show a wide range of 'general-purpose' communicative strategies (see Appendix on p.137), suggesting that effective ELF speakers typically rely on collaborative communication and are highly sensitive to their interlocutors' face. The communicative strategies include: 'lexical anticipation / suggestion / correction'; 'don't give up'; 'request repetition/clarification'; 'let it pass'; 'spell out the word'; 'repeat the phrase'; 'signal topic change explicitly'; 'paraphrase'; and 'avoid local or idiomatic terms which are obscure to interlocutors'. All this leads Kirkpatrick to conclude that being good at cross-cultural communication, "multilingual English speakers who are used to ELF communication represent valuable linguistic and communicative classroom models" (p.134). One implication for classroom teaching is for bilingual teachers of English to focus on "collaborative cross-cultural communication" (ibid.).

Part II ("Literacies") consists of six chapters (7-12). Towndrow reviews the literature on the effectiveness of CALL software and digital language learning resources. Despite some positive evidence, there is little consensus of what has been achieved, and that there continues to be an "evaluation debate" largely because the evaluation criteria in the CALL literature are too technical and esoteric to non-specialist language teachers. Towndrow then discusses future challenges posed by new technologies and ICT tools which have "the potential to change language teaching and learning environments fundamentally and immeasurably" (p.150), e.g., using Skype in the classroom to connect users in distant locations and engage them in conversational practice. Other new technologies discussed include blogs, YouTube, and wikis, which allow learner-authors to display their work to international audiences across time and space. Towndrow concludes that, when evaluating CALL software and digital language learning resources, ELT teachers in Southeast Asia should go beyond judgmental and empirical criteria (Table 1, pp.146-7) by adopting a problem-based approach, taking into account learners' agency outside the classroom.

Prescott discusses the challenge faced by Southeast Asian countries aspiring to be 'knowledge nations' and 'information societies': the need to equip their citizenry with information literacy (IL) skills needed for critical thinking and life-long learning. After clarifying IL characteristics and those of traditional literacy, Prescott reviews the state of IL development in ASEAN

countries (including Hong Kong), and concludes that much remains to be done. While the development of IL infrastructure is understandably a function of the economic well-being of the locality in question (e.g., Singapore truly lives up to the name of a 'knowledge-based economy'), one recurrent problem is confusion between 'computer literacy' and 'information literacy'. This confusion often arises despite clear education policies and goals, typically with national and university libraries playing an instrumental role toward the development of sound IL skills.

Darasawang outlines the history of English language teaching in Thailand from the reign of King Rama III (1824-1851), focusing on the impact of socioeconomic and political change on recent ELT reforms in the Thai education system. To meet the challenge of globalization, communicative language teaching methodologies and learner-centeredness through self-access and project-based learning are emphasized. Among the latest developments are international and bilingual programmes at the tertiary level. The chapter ends with a brief discussion of ELT developments in Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos, and a prognosis of ELT practices in the region.

Cheng discusses the tension between linguacultural heritage and identity in the national medium-of-instruction policy in Malaysian schools ever since the country's independence in 1957. After progressively institutionalizing Malay (officially 'Bahasa Malaysia' or 'Bahasa Melayu') as the teaching medium from primary to tertiary education, and by the same token re-positioning English as an "important second language" for decades, from 2003 English is adopted as the medium of instruction for teaching Science and Mathematics from Standard One (age 6), including in National schools for Chinese and Tamil pupils. Problems arise at higher levels where some Science and Mathematics lessons are conducted in Malay, others in English. This policy is set to be reviewed in 2008.

After briefly examining the multilingual situation in Southeast Asia, Chittravelu argues that the research potential of a large number of themes pertaining to multilingualism in the region has been under-researched. The author points to a number of areas where more work is needed, such as 'the position of mother tongues of minority groups', 'awareness creation through statistics on minority and other languages', 'the relative tenacity of different minority languages', 'influence of ambient languages on one another' (e.g. code-switching), and 'Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia'.

Jones takes stock of the 20-year bilingual education system in Brunei, which he regards as only half way through a 40-year cycle (or two generations)

before the system could be reliably assessed for its relative success or failure. After outlining the background to the introduction of the system in 1985, Jones scrutinizes the earlier concerns and fears as documented in the papers contributed to the 'Bilingualism and National Development Conference' in 1991 (BAND91). These include 'postcolonial identity and status of English', 'nationalism vs. nationism', 'issues pertaining to the effective implementation of bilingual education' (e.g. the number of qualified teachers of English), 'parental fears', 'cultural fears', and 'politico-ideological fears'. Two tables capture the contrasts between 'then and now' (see pp.254-5). Jones concludes that "many of the original worries and fears are now a thing of the past, but there is a pressing need to get classroom pedagogy right and to ensure that more school pupils are able to benefit from the education system" (p.257).

Part III ('Literatures') consist of five chapters (13-17), covering English language writing in different genres (e.g. literature and news discourse) and channels (in print and on the web). Chin outlines the vicissitudes of English language literature produced in Malaysia dating from the 1940s to the present, focusing on 'the revival of [English] language and literature' (p.267) and 'the new generation writers' (p.275) in the decade 1996-2005. She recounts how the ups-and-downs of the sociopolitical atmosphere of creative writing in English among Malaysian writers reflect the government's language policy, which until recently promoted Malay and the community languages of other ethnic groups, to the detriment of English. The list of key contributors and their works are especially valuable to readers interested in English language literature in Malaysia.

Based on the questionnaires collected from 1,077 university students reporting on their reading of literature in English during their high-school studies, including required readings and readings out of their own interest, Pefianco Martin laments that both types of readings are clearly dominated by English literature of American or European origin, and that not a single work by Philippine writers was reported. This alarming finding is supplemented with an analysis of the curriculum competencies set for high-school students (Years 1-4) and an email interview with an official at the Bureau of Secondary Education in the Philippine Department of Education. The analysis leads the author to conclude that "literature education in The Philippines continues to propagate colonial interests" (p.301).

Using a genre theoretical framework to analyze news discourse in various genres related to the 2004 general elections in Malaysia, Hashim and Hassan show how the discourse structure and rhetorical styles of a text are skilfully

crafted to convey the writer's stance and ideological perspective. The data consist of newspaper articles, editorials, briefs and visuals from the same newspaper *New Strait Times* in March, 2004. The analysis covers a wide range of communicative purposes, which are often implicitly embedded in various rhetorical and linguistic features, including cartoons where e.g. a positive image of the Malaysian Indian Congress Party (MIC) is subtly promoted by an overhead caption appearing in large letters ("MIC's The Young Ones") alluding to an oldie: *The Young Ones* by Cliff Richard (p.333).

Using newspaper data in the ACCENT (Asian Corpus of Computerized English Newspaper Texts) corpus, Bolton investigates how 'globalization' and 'English' are perceived in select Asian countries. He first shows the most frequent 'global' post-collocates in five Asian newspapers – in Hong Kong, India, Malaysia, The Philippines, and Singapore respectively – before examining the discourses of globalization and English therein. He found that while there is little doubt that English is the preferred 'global' language at different stages of development in electronic communication, people in Asia tended to react to McLuhan's slippery concept of 'global village' differently depending on their local concerns and cultural values.

In the last chapter, Gupta examines the extent of Anglophony in official websites of the 10 ASEAN nations (accessed in February, 2007), and found that with few exceptions (notably Myanmar), English is widely used in the key domains of government and education. She also found a 'hierarchy of Anglophony', with English being more commonly used for internal purposes in some ASEAN nations (notably former British colonies) than in others. In terms of extent of variation, despite minor divergence in spelling and usage patterns, which Gupta regards as "differences of preference rather than categorical" (p.357), the formal features of English across ASEAN websites are remarkably similar. This high degree of unity of 'Standard English' is attributed to a loose consensus of elite users, suggesting that "codification of English follows practice, rather than determining it" (p.357). She then conducted a Google search of online texts for comparison, both formal use of English in ASEAN government websites, and informal use of English using keywords such as *gotta*. Interesting findings are listed in the conclusion.

Given the scope of investigation, range of topics, and the number of countries studied or implicated within its covers, this book is a welcome addition to the burgeoning literature on the spread of English in Asia. It represents some of the finest research outputs of scholars who share similar concerns for the sociopolitical, ethnolinguistic and/or educational dimensions

of the impact of English on various Asian localities. (2,369 words)