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BOOK REVIEW



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Investigating Unequal Englishes: Understanding, Researching and Analysing Inequalities of the Englishes of the World, Ruanni Tupas (Ed.). Routledge (2024). x+188 pp. ISBN 9781003355885 (hbk)

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While English has become a lingua franca worldwide, it has also led to pervasive inequalities and injustices, as non-native English speakers often face discrimination and stigmatization, with their accents and linguistic variations viewed as inferior to idealized native forms of English (Tupas, 2019). The present book, edited by Ruanni Tupas, is an attempt to address the issues surrounding inequalities in the use of different English varieties. The book is organized into a preface, an introductory chapter, four parts comprising eleven content chapters, and a concluding chapter. The preface introduces the concept of Unequal Englishes (UE) as a critical framework for understanding the global spread and localization of English. In the preface, Tupas emphasizes how English changes as it enters new communities, becoming localized and pluralized. He then introduces UE as a lens to examine power dynamics and inequalities in the use of different Englishes. The introductory chapter, written by Prem Phyak, examines the perspectives of two Nepali teachers regarding English use in their local context. The dialogue between them skillfully captures the tension between their reverence for native English and speakers, and their unease with their own non-native English variety. In the chapter, the teachers' desire to emulate native norms appears to stem from a belief that their local English is somehow "artificial" or "unnatural."

Part 1 has three chapters. Chapter 1 reports on Roby Marlina's personal account of encountering elitist ideologies regarding English varieties in different sociocultural and pedagogical contexts. The author traces his academic journey from developing a program in English as an International Language at Monash University to continuing advocacy work on English as an International Language at the SEAMEO Regional Language Centre. Marlina highlights his efforts to challenge monolithic views of English and promote linguistic and cultural pluralism through curriculum development and research. Penned by Qumrul Hasan Chowdhury, Chapter 2 reports on an ethnography of English language inequalities in rural Bangladeshi madrasas, which are "Islamic

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educational institutes largely attended by people from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds” (p. 30). The author situates the study within the framework of UE, examining how access to and perceptions of English create social divisions and perpetuate inequalities in the madrasa context. The analysis of linguistic ethnographic data from two rural madrasas reveals how madrasa students and staff experience stigmatization due to their perceived English deficiency. In Chapter 3, Christian Go examines the representation of Filipino domestic workers (FDWs) in Singapore through an analysis of comedian Michelle Chong's parodic performances. The author employs UE and stance-taking to explore how semiotic resources are deployed in Chong's portrayals and what ideologies about language and FDWs are reproduced. Go's focus on Chong's performances offers an interesting case for examining how language and other semiotic variables are used to construct stereotypical depictions of FDWs.

Part 2 consists of three chapters. In Chapter 4, Manuel Vásquez, Andrés Gutiérrez, Rommy Anabalón Schaaf and Marco Espinoza deal with English speakerhood construction among Chilean speakers. The authors argue that English speakerhood is not a fixed attribute, but rather a dynamic, multifaceted process shaped by sociocultural and historical contexts. They effectively situate the discussion within relevant theoretical frameworks of inequality and social differentiation to offer a new perspective on how English language learning and use are influenced by and contribute to broader social dynamics in Chile. In Chapter 5, Junshuan Liu and Songqing Li examine the concept of UE through an intersectional lens, focusing on the experiences of native teachers of English employed in China. They argue that the existing scholarship on inequalities in English language teaching in China has neglected the multidimensional nature of these inequalities. The study employs semi-structured interviews with Chinese English language teaching administrators to explore how social categories such as nationality, race, class, regional affiliation, and gender intersect to influence perceptions of ideal native teachers of English and hiring decisions. Chapter 6, by Ribut Wahyudi, examines how Indonesian university students critically position themselves in relation to standard Englishes after taking a course on poststructuralism and deconstruction. Wahyudi conducted semi-structured interviews with three former students to explore their experiences with and perspectives on English language use. Through the students' reflections, Wahyudi demonstrates how they began to problematize dominant ideologies about correct English and negotiate their own linguistic identities.

Part 3 consists of three chapters. Chapter 7 is an introduction to the concept of UE and multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA). Julius C. Martínez effectively contextualizes UE within World Englishes as a means of examining the structural inequalities among English varieties. The strength of the chapter lies in its potential practical applications, illustrated through a concrete example from the author's research on the multimodal representations of Filipino English teachers on a Japanese online learning platform. In Chapter 8, Jayson Parba and Tomoaki Morikawa run a critical discourse analysis of UE in online English language education programs to unpack how the power relations of English varieties are constructed through the marketing and framing of these programs. The authors eloquently discuss the historical inequalities between English varieties in postcolonial settings like the Philippines, as well as Japan's evolving relationship with English education. The discussion reveals how marketing materials delegitimize Filipino English while commodifying Filipino teachers as low-cost alternatives to native speakers. In Chapter 9, Guowen Shang explores the complex attitudes towards "Chinglish" in mainland China, showing how ideological stances towards localized English both reflect and perpetuate language inequalities. The chapter traces the evolving perceptions towards Chinglish, from perceiving it as a stigmatized form of "broken" English to celebrating it as a cultural asset. Shang highlights the paradoxical official attitudes, with simultaneous efforts to eliminate Chinglish in public spaces while promoting its international spread. Further, the author effectively demonstrates how the subjective factors like affect and sentiment shape language ideologies around English in China.

There are two chapters in Part 4. Chapter 10 critically examines the traditional approach to studying Philippine English (PE) phonology, arguing that it perpetuates linguistic inequality by focusing primarily on educated elite speakers from urban centers. Annie Mae C. Berowa contends that this narrow focus fails to capture the linguistic diversity of PE across different regions and socioeconomic groups. Berowa advocates for a more inclusive, decentralized description of PE phonology that incorporates speakers from various backgrounds. Chapter 11 explores the concept of Moroccan English through a methodological approach called "epistemological polylogue." In this chapter, Hamza R'boul, Hassan Belhiah, Mohammed Guanguami and Ahlam Lamjahdi employ a collaborative online discussion format to theorize Moroccan English as a postcolonial construct, examining its potential and limitations within UE. The authors thoughtfully situate their argument within postcolonial and decolonial theories. In doing so, they open up important avenues for conducting research on localized Englishes and adopting decolonial approaches in applied linguistics and intercultural communication studies.

The concluding chapter, by Mario Saraceni, offers an insightful reflection on UE through a compelling case study of Malaysian-British comedian Nigel Ng and his alter ego Uncle Roger. Saraceni uses this example to illustrate how English varieties carry unequal social value and prestige. The author skillfully contrasts the orthodox World Englishes perspective of linguistic equality with the lived reality of speakers who navigate multiple English varieties. By "zooming in" on Ng's personal experience and "zooming out" to broader sociolinguistic contexts, Saraceni demonstrates the complex interplay between linguistic forms and social perceptions.

In conclusion, via its multidisciplinary and multi-contextual approach, *Investigating Unequal Englishes: Understanding, Researching and Analysing Inequalities of the Englishes of the World* offers deep perspectives on how English functions as both a tool of empowerment and a mechanism of oppression. The situated case studies reported in the volume provide significant insights that challenge simplistic notions of English as a neutral and universally beneficial lingua franca. The contributors effectively problematize the celebratory narratives surrounding the global spread of English (see Crystal, 1997), urging readers to move beyond a superficial appreciation of linguistic diversity and critically interrogate the persistent hierarchies within the Englishes of the world. Thus, we believe that the volume should be an essential reading for scholars, educators, and policymakers interested in promoting truly equitable and inclusive approaches to English language use and teaching worldwide.

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