

the cultural aspects of the model, assuming that it can accommodate culture. When Schneider talks about convergence (e.g., 55), for example, he seems to refer mainly to formal components. He does not subsequently address the possibility that a convergence in form need not be accompanied by a convergence in cultural values, or not to the same extent. As studies of Singapore English have suggested, Singapore English makes use of mainly English forms but not uncommonly in ways that express Chinese rather than “Anglo” values (e.g., Wong, 2004, 2008). In other words, there can be observable convergence in form without any convergence in cultural values. When Schneider says that “the histories of PCEs can be viewed as processes of convergence between these two groups” (31), I can only assume that he refers mainly to formal convergence, not cultural convergence. For the case of Singapore, his discussion therefore represents a rather myopic view of the real situation.

Notwithstanding these reservations, this book reopens a number of important and interesting topics for further discussion or debate: accommodation theory (in terms of both formal and cultural components of a language), exonormative stabilization, and nativization, with respect to language contact situations. Given that the model undeniably has some explanatory power, the book also blazes a trail for further research into sociolinguistic universals of language contact situations. I would highly recommend this book to scholars and students of sociolinguistics, historical linguistics, psycholinguistics, language change, language policy, and even related areas in psychology, sociology, and anthropology.

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INVITED RESPONSE TO JOCK WONG

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First, I would like to thank Dr. Wong for his insightful and supportive review of my book. At the same time, I am grateful to the editor for being given an opportunity to clarify a few minor points of disagreement.

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There are two points in the review in which statements from my book are slightly misrepresented. I do not believe or claim that phase 2, “exonormative stabilization,” is the most interesting one in the emergence of Postcolonial Englishes. This is clearly phase 3, “nativization,” and I explicitly say so. The phrase quoted in the review stands in the section on phase 2, but at the end of this section, pointing forward to the following one: I explicitly say this is the “kick-off” of the most interesting process of “structural nativization” (39), in phase 3. Furthermore, undue weight is given to the claim of “universality” of my model being applicable “whenever a language is transplanted,” by quoting this phrase twice in the review, and only the first time with its necessary qualifier “it appears”: I do consider the possibility of parallel cases in the diffusion of Latin, Romance or Slavic languages (68–70), but I would be hesitant to overgeneralize this claim, and I state that “wider applicability [would be] a matter of speculation” (68). There may be parallels to other cases of languages being transplanted, but there will also be differences; this issue needs further empirical investigation.

In a few more cases my line of thinking seems to have been misunderstood. I fully agree (and I say so on 156–58) that the distinctive form of present-day Singaporean English emerged amongst Singaporeans and not in direct contact with British people, mainly in the mid to late 20th century and not earlier, and as a consequence of the government’s bilingual language policy (if only indirectly). Even when the vast majority of British settlers left, the language, and contact with it, no doubt remained (as a native language of the Eurasians and the working language of policy makers, for instance) and was transmitted continuously. Also, I agree that cultural convergence is worth looking at in greater detail; I do not focus on it but I mention it (47, 88–89) and certainly would not exclude it.

What we will not be able to resolve here, I suspect, is the issue of attitudes towards “Singlish” and, correspondingly, its legitimacy and its possible future. As every Singaporean knows, as I do say explicitly in the book (158, 160), and as I had a chance to witness again at many debates at the Regional Language Conference in Singapore in April 2008, this is a highly controversial and hotly contested issue: The government firmly resists and decidedly condemns this dialect and its use, while there is also no doubt and plenty of evidence (some of which I quote) that many (and of course not all!) Singaporeans cherish and defend it and view it as a marker of a local identity. This represents a classic case of a conflict between overt and covert prestige. Wong chooses to adopt and defend the government’s prescriptive position, while I hold that this is only half the reality, ignoring the enormous covert prestige that Singlish undisputedly enjoys. And unlike Wong, I am convinced that in the long run covert prestige, being closer to people’s real attitudes and hearts, is likely to be more powerful.

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