Language Studies

Language Studies:
Stretching the Boundaries

Edited by

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**CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS**

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INTRODUCTION

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As a defining characteristic of what it means to be human, the use of language plays a central role in virtually every form of human activity. From the moment when our first cries, as a newly born child, begin to mimic the melody of the speech around us, we begin an involuntary process in which language progressively ties us into our immediate community and into the wider society. Linked as we are in this way, language functions as a cornerstone in the construction of our identity amongst others and in the relationships we build. It takes a central role in facilitating every enterprise we undertake, alone or together with others, as our language enables the formulation and communication of ideas. It permits us to reflect on our past, analyse our present and plan our future, creating the central thread through our own biographies as we endeavour to make sense of the narratives of our lives. And, beyond the confines of our own personal possibilities, language enables us to take part in the transmission of our own culture, its maintenance, evolution and perhaps eventual demise in the face of rival formulations of ideas.

Given its pivotal role in virtually every action we take, it is perhaps surprising, then, that we could even consider that the study of language would have any boundaries. The notion of *stretching the boundaries*, the subtitle of this collection of papers, may thus sound a somewhat odd idea. Yet, the study of language has traditionally been focussed on language *itself*, its analysis and description, and those broader links which have been formed have most frequently been found as extensions of other disciplines – the psychology of language, for example, is often considered an extension of psychology; the sociology of language, an extension of sociology; and so on. In this sense, then, language studies, as an academic area of interest, may, historically, have imposed boundaries upon itself, perhaps in trying to carve out a discernible space as it competed for academic recognition and status as a *science*—linguistic science—largely leaving the interrelationship of language with other areas of human knowledge for others to elucidate.

Such, however, is not the nature of modern-day language studies. The field is now characterised by an intense cross-fertilisation of ideas, often from distant disciplines. Thus, an area which was once typified by a consensus over its domain of reference is now characterised by numerous, often competing frames, and a fragmentation of what is considered its research focus. Examples abound: the development of computers has brought us 'computational linguistics'; the study of politics and economics has shaped an emerging field of 'critical discourse studies'; theories of argumentation have been brought into theories of translation to establish an emerging field of 'translation quality assessment'; the formal study of language has established links with brain research and with sociology to bring us recent concepts such as 'gendered speech'; to name but a few developments. The net effect of these cross-fertilisations is that there is now considerable discussion over the parameters of language-related disciplines, particularly literature, linguistics and translation, and a profusion of work at what would once have been seen as the 'margins'. The 'centre' or rather 'centres' of interest are thus now being redefined.

It was the desire to explore some of these developments that inspired a conference, hosted at Sultan Qaboos University, Oman, in 2010. Each of the papers included in the present collection had its origins in this conference, although they have since undergone extensive debate and refinement. Together, the papers present a rich palette of themes, signalling some of the diverse work which, today, can be said to comprise the discipline of language studies. Two major points of focus divide the collection into its two sections. The first, entitled *Concepts Considered,* reviews some of the theoretical concepts which underpin different aspects of language study, while the second section, entitled *Languages Considered,* pursues the application of theoretical concepts in the context of a specific language in use.

In the opening paper of the first section, Sandhya Rao Mehta takes a broad view on the evolution of language studies. Although Mehta's main concern is with the development of English language studies, all of the themes she identifies will resonate with researchers in any language. In her paper, Mehta shows how the 'meta-narrative' in English studies has shifted from the concern I mentioned earlier, issues of language itself, towards something much more diffuse and dynamic: users of language, often in geographically diverse parts of the world, who assert a variety of Englishes, for their own purposes in an ever expanding number of contexts and modes. A major aspect of this is the emergence of 'e-English', which poses new challenges for language studies as we grapple with the analysis of virtual identities and virtual language—dynamically changing users

who equally dynamically shape new genres of language use. Mehta also points to the development of Englishes in literature, where the traditional focus on British and American literature is being forced to give way to the recognition of an expanding range of writers, from various parts of the world, now writing in English. She highlights the impact of multiple migrations, and the difficulties this presents in trying to establish precisely who is writing for which community and in which literary tradition, as transient diasporic communities lead "identities and languages [to] coalesce into increasingly complex layers" (p12).

The relationship between language use and identity is also the concern of Sachdev, who shows how language simultaneously reflects and creates group identity. Data from street interactions in bilingual Tunisia, for example, showed how pedestrians' choice of language, when replying to requests for directions from other Tunisians, depended not only on the language of the request (Arabic or French) but also on the ethnic origin of the requester ('brown', 'white' or 'black'). Code-switching in Arabic/ French, Sachdev found, was evident with 'brown' Tunisians but never occurred with 'white' or 'black' compatriots, regardless of the language of the request. Sachdev argues that code-switching in conversation with 'brown' Tunisians thus simultaneously denoted both status (i.e. a higher level of education) and group solidarity. As Sachdev says, "linguistic choices were identity choices…permeating even the briefest interactions" (p30). This, and additional data from Canada, Bolivia, India and the Indian and Pakistani diasporas, show the strength of the link between identity and language use, a finding which, Sachdev argues, underscores the importance of supportive policies to maintain the languages of minorities.

The complexity of communication across languages and cultures is the concern of the next two authors, both of whom debate issues surrounding policies in translation. One of the key difficulties facing any translator is how 'cultural items' should be handled, in particular, how far they should be rendered 'domestic', such that any trace of the source culture is removed, or how far they should maintain their 'foreign' character— comprehensible but still noticeably 'foreign'. Dickins provides a wide ranging analysis of the approaches advocated by various theorists when encountering such items, and sets out a conceptual framework to show how these approaches stand in relation to each other. The resulting grid should provide significant support to translators who need to clarify for themselves their choices in translation. In the next paper, however, Al-Sharafi advocates a particular view in translation policy, arguing for a 'semantic' (literal) translation of items such as proverbs, rather than a 'communicative' translation which abandons any trace of the source

culture and text in favour of assimilation into the target language and culture. At stake here, for Al-Sharafi, is not simply a matter of translation efficacy. Our attitudes towards the translation of cultural items can betray a hegemonic and ethnocentric attitude towards other cultures "because if we translate in ways natural to readers, then the element of learning from other cultures will disappear" (p68).

The need to establish a framework for handling language is also a concern for the next two papers, although in quite different areas, reflecting the breadth that the field of language studies now encompasses. Mamidi presents a stimulating analysis of the problems surrounding the design of dialogue systems—that is, systems which enable humans to interact with computers using natural language. Mamidi shows how the subtleties and complexities of human speech, particularly with respect to pragmatics and language in discourse, present formidable challenges for systems design. At present, only limited success has been achieved in some domains with only a restricted set of interactional outcomes possible, but Mamidi successfully shows how our knowledge of the workings of language, both as form and as meaning, will be vital in building more complex systems capable of handling interactions with humans in an ever more flexible manner.

A very different challenge concerns Danielewicz-Betz, however, as she once again returns to the earlier themes of language and identity—this time in the context of crime investigations and the use of forensic linguistics to identify the perpetrator or victim. Like Mamidi, Danielewicz-Betz finds only limited success to date in the application of linguistic knowledge, and doubts whether we will ever be able to establish the existence of a 'linguistic fingerprint' as reliable as DNA evidence. Despite these limitations, Danielewicz-Betz shows that linguistics can play a significant role in eliminating individuals from an investigation and in ensuring accurate statements of witness evidence.

In the final paper of this section, Moody returns to many of the issues raised by earlier writers concerning language and identity in multilingual communities, but in the context of the development of programmes of study in university English departments. Much contemporary discussion in English language teaching, argues Moody, evinces a "diffusion-of-English" model which emphasises native-speaker standards in language use, a one-size-fits-all approach to teaching materials, and a failure to recognise the complexity of the need, perception and use of English in multilingual communities. University English departments, Moody suggests, are frequently characterised by a "fragmentation of courses, an emphasis on theory and knowledge over practice, misconceptions about

students' motivation and assumptions of their inadequacy" (p114), all of which positions the student as an outsider and a failure in their own society. In a strongly argued case, Moody sets out a proposal for the development of a degree programme in English studies which would more fully take account of an ecological view of English—as it is seen, used and needed in a specific community.

In the second section of the collection, *Languages Considered*, a number of writers discuss many of the concepts raised earlier, but in the context of research into specific languages. The section opens with a paper by Geoffrey Leech which chronicles the changing nature of English grammar. Noting that many native speakers of English believe that standards of grammar use are "deteriorating", Leech argues that it is more helpful to see changes in grammar as adaptations to new influences and new possibilities in communication. Drawing on extensive data taken from corpora representing a full generation of language users—approximately 30 years—Leech presents intriguing findings which show how, for example, modals such as *may, must, need(n't), ought to,* and *shall*, are becoming much less common, while forms such as *be going to, need to* and *have to* are increasing in use. Leech argues that there are three forces at work here: *grammaticalisation* (in which lexical phenomena evolve into grammatical phenomena), *colloquialisation* (in which spoken habits infiltrate written forms) and *Americanization* (in which American English grammatical constructions become more common in British English). Before language teachers rush to redesign their syllabi, however, Leech suggests caution: these changes are happening very slowly, although attention should always be paid to frequency of use. In this, corpora offer vital support to language teaching professionals, he argues.

Jonathan Wilcox also provides a historical perspective on language, but to a much more distant point—that of the Anglo-Saxon tale of *Beowulf*. Wilcox's paper presents a fascinating account of just how far language studies can be stretched, as he unites the three fields of literature, language and archaeology to 'dig for new meanings' in the poem. Examining Seamus Heaney's controversial translation of the poem, which incorporates language references to Catholic Ulster, Wilcox shows how choices in translation prove central to a positioning of the poem within contemporary postcolonial concerns and contested claims to the past. Just how contested the past can be was clearly brought to the surface by the discovery of the Staffordshire Hoard—a treasure trove of Anglo Saxon booty found in a field in 2009. In his account of local reactions to the find, Wilcox shows how a fictional history was woven around the objects, to create the image of the region's glorious past. For Wilcox, this was largely

prompted by "present-day Britain's awkward status within a postcolonial world" in which it "lacks a clear sense of independent and unifying nationhood" (p160). In interpreting these reactions, however, Wilcox shows how the language of *Beowulf* and Staffordshire Hoard illuminate each other, allowing a closer reading of the significance of both the poem and the hoard, and suggesting that fragments of an Anglo-Saxon past—whether linguistic or material—can be deeply revealing of contemporary desires.

In the next paper, Quassdorf also shows how the literary language of the past may be used for contemporary purposes, as the original writer's intention is recast to meet the modern-day user's purpose. Quassdorf takes the reader through a new database, *HyperHamlet*, which allows cross-referencing from Shakespeare's play to samples of modern language, to show how people draw on quotations, and relocate the sentiment expressed. She shows how frequently quoted lines from the text may come to deviate from the contextual, pragmatic and formal qualities of the original, thus achieving a growing independence from the source and a conventionalisation of use. She suggests users "relocate, re-apply and even misuse his words" such that they become part of the *langue.* In this way, we can see how Shakespeare has contributed to much to the shaping of English, as has so often been claimed.

Gaudio is also concerned with notions of incorporation, but this time *from* English into another language—Italian—in the form of anglicisms. The challenge for Gaudio is to find a basis for the translator's decision-making in the face of anglicisms in the source text—should they be translated, glossed or left as they are? Rejecting an 'ethical' approach which considers issues of a 'domesticating' or 'foreignising' translation (cf Dickins and Al-Sharafi, this volume), Gaudio argues that the correct basis for translation is to look at what users actually do with the language. Anglicisms need to be analysed to determine if they are unincorporated, semi-incorporated or fully-incorporated into the target language, and an objective decision can then be made on the need for translation or glossing. To support this analysis, she argues for the cross referencing of parallel corpora from the source and target languages. Drawing on the multilingual versions of the *Official Journal of the European Union,* Gaudio gives a number of examples of anglicisms in Italian and shows how an informed decision about translation can now be made.

Al Harrasi makes extensive use of corpora in his paper to analyse how one particular metaphor—the Arab world as a human body—is used in online discussions. His analysis is set within a conceptual theory of metaphor, which presents metaphor as a device through which we map one

domain of experience, usually a concrete experience, on to another domain, normally an abstract one. Citing numerous examples, Al Harrasi shows how political discourse is peppered with references to human organs, bodily ailments, and medical procedures as a way to analyse the political difficulties which the Arab world faces. The point which Al Harrasi stresses, however, is the significance of this linguistic ideological framing and the implications it has in directing any action which is undertaken. The body politic metaphor, he argues, "leads to the dismissal of real political phenomena" and an emphasis on a fictional homogeneity which can "marginalize or even eliminate political entities that are different from the majority" (p202). Clearly, such metaphors work in the interests of some and against the interests of others.

In the final paper in the collection, Buckton-Tucker brings us back to the issues surrounding the teaching of language, echoing one of the main themes of the collection: that language rightfully belongs to its users. Drawing on an innovative technique known as 'textual intervention', she gives us many examples of how students can be engaged in taking ownership of their reading and their writing. Through the use of the technique, which involves students in rewriting or extending literary texts according to their own interpretation or cultural context, Buckton-Tucker shows how students may simultaneously develop a better understanding of a literary genre, improve their language skills, and find their own voice as creative language users.

Taken together, the papers in this collection provide an absorbing, rich array of subjects touched by the centrality of language. Encompassing themes from the study of social psychology, translation theory, computer science, forensics, educational policy, language change, archaeology, and literature, to name but a few, the collection shows that a concern with the role of language continues to expand through cross-fertilisation with a limitless number of other disciplines. For the field of language studies, this has meant that issues which once would have been considered marginal have now become central, as the boundaries of relevance continue to be stretched.

SECTION I

CONCEPTS CONSIDERED

CHAPTER ONE

WHO IS STRETCHING WHOSE BOUNDARIES?
ENGLISH LANGUAGE STUDIES
IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

SANDHYA RAO MEHTA

Abstract

Exploring one of the most significant features of language studies at the turn of the twenty-first century, this paper examines the way in which the centres of English speaking communities have expanded to include a variety of participants in geographically diverse parts of the world. It also points to the increased focus on the use of language in the virtual world, making possible the creation of parallel communities online, as well as other technologically driven forms such as texting and instant messaging. This study traces the way in which the focus of research has shifted from the nature of language itself to the changing nature of the English speaking world and the impact it has had on the language as well as its literatures. The implications of these emerging findings on related areas of ELT and classroom methodologies are then discussed to identify ways in which language teaching could be linked to rapidly changing research.

Keywords: English language studies, speech communities, English and the internet, blogging, texting, postcolonial English, circles of English

Introduction

In an iconic scene in the famous children's tale *Alice in Wonderland*, Alice wanders into the Mad Hatter's tea party where it is suggested that they ask riddles to pass the time. The first riddle "Why is a raven like a writing desk?" starts off an intense conversation that points to the

complexity of language formulations, meanings and representations in the real world:

> "I'm glad they've begun asking riddles–I believe I can guess that," She added aloud.
> "Do you mean that you think you can find out the answer to it?" said the March Hare.
> "Exactly so," said Alice
> "Then you should say what you mean," The March Hare went on.
> "I do," Alice hastily replied; "at least–at least I mean what I say–that's the same thing, you know."
> "Not the same thing!" said the Hatter. "You might just as well say that "I see what I eat" is the same thing as "I eat what I see!"
>
> (Carroll, 1865, p. 81)

Long viewed as an example of linguistic and philosophic cleverness, this conversation continues to highlight the dynamics of language and the relations between word and meaning and the disorder behind the seemingly ordered world of Victorian society. More significantly, at a linguistic level, it also points to the dialectic relationship between word and meaning, 'language and reference' (Flescher, 1969) that continued to dominate philosophical and linguistic studies at this time with their focus on the relation between syntax and semantics as well as sign and signifier. While the repartee takes place in the Freudian world of Alice, or, Carroll's subconscious, it is indicative of the dynamic world of word play that also characterizes the way in which modernism came to be involved with studies in language use.

Modernism and Language Studies

Modernism's preoccupation with form and meaning and the changing phenomenological emphasis on the word have been constantly seen as the central terms of reference in language studies in the twentieth century. Influenced, in turns, by scientific studies of the human mind (leading to cognitive theories of language), of psychology (leading to psycholinguistics) and studies in emerging sociology, language studies came to be defined by the way in which it could be learnt, used and taught as an unchanging commodity whose intrinsic value remained fundamentally unchanged. This was largely coupled with research based on Harold Palmer's 'methods teaching' (1924), Skinner's behaviourist studies (1957), Piaget's developmental psychology (1971), Vygotsky's social constructivist theories (1962) and reworkings of power in language use as construed by Fairclough (1989) among many others. While the central conflict in

language emerged as the struggle between the Chomskyian notions of 'universal grammar' (1965), Pinker's idea of latent language (1984) and the more essentialist, Arnoldian approach of language being itself beautiful and essentially ennobling, the predominant approach remained, to a large extent, the division between language and speaker, text and reader, even commodity and consumer.

In the last two decades of the twentieth century, these links between words and meanings began to assume more complex layers of possibilities, coinciding with a variety of changes in the political, social and cultural spheres. If a single reason could account for the shift from the hitherto defined areas of communication to language as empowerment, the gradual way in which the globe was becoming 'flat' (Friedman, 2005) in many senses of the word, could be a significant one. The shift from language as something that could be simply learnt, to one that could change, be used, re-used and in fact, even re-created, can perhaps be seen as the most significant movement in the years leading to the new millennium. Forces such as the rise of postcolonial societies, increasing movements of people and goods, expanding communication channels and of course, the software revolution can be seen to re-define the way in which language studies have emerged as empowering the user, the end-consumer, thus redefining its usage, very often pushing the boundaries of language itself to create new movements and new worlds (such as the virtual one). Nowhere is this shift more apparent than in the way in which English itself has been re-defined to align it with the changing world.

English in a 'Flat' World

In very clear terms, the metanarratives of English language studies have shifted focus from being centred around well established issues of speech, grammar and vocabulary to one that is dynamic, shifting and open to a variety of emerging trends, however fleeting or permanent they may be. In this context, perhaps, an important question which arises is, who exactly defines the boundaries in language studies and who stretches them? However debatable this issue may be, it is possibly inarguable that the major onus of changing the ways in which English is being viewed in the contemporary world rests primarily on the individuals who are actually using it, both across geographical as well as virtual spaces. That the English language has spread far wider than ever before in its thousand year history has been established by a variety of studies including those of David Crystal and David Graddol. An important reason for the shift in focus from viewing English as a static whole to varieties of "Global

English" (Crystal, 1980) is the perceptible shift in the character of the language itself. Graddol, in a study conducted in 1997, established that, while native English speakers could, in fact, reduce in absolute numbers given the rapid fall of population among them and the corresponding rise in the population of Mandarin and Hindi speakers (Graddol, 1997, p. 5), it is the perceptible shift of English being used as a second, third and even foreign language that has established it as the most widely spoken language in the world at the turn of the new millennium. Graddol comments that

> …in many parts of the world today, as English is taken into the fabric of social life, it acquires a momentum and vitality of its own, developing in ways which reflect local culture and languages, while diverging increasingly from the kind of English spoken in Britain or North America.
>
> (Graddol, 1997, p. 4)

Peter Strevens takes up Crystal's concept of the number of English speakers by stating that "…the figures tell us that while English is used by more speakers than any other language on Earth, its mother tongue speakers make up only a quarter or a fifth of the total" (Strevens, 1992, p. 28). The sheer variety of speakers has been well documented by a number of studies in various parts of the world, initiated by Braj Kachru (1982) and taken up by Cecil Nelson (1996), Peter Strevens (1992) and Yamuna Kachru (2008) among many others. Braj Kachru's interpretation of this widening of the centres of English takes the form of the expanding circles in which speakers belong variously to the first, second and emerging circles (Kachru, B. 1982, p. 356). This division is re-interpreted by Tripathi (1998) by removing the implicit codes of race and region from these circles and Modiano, whose focus shifts to the way in which English speakers from outside the centre communicate with each other. Jennifer Jenkins shows how Modiano re-formulates English speakers as those inhabiting a centre where the speakers are able to communicate proficiently in English as an international language with the second circle consisting of those who speak English as a first or second language. The third group includes those who are learning English and the fourth, those who know no English at all (Jenkins, 2003, p. 22). In this model, the movement, of course, is inwards, towards language proficiency.

This substantial shift in language studies from its historical focus on its own forms and meanings (or lack of them), to the ever widening possibilities of language use that has defined the first decade of the twenty-first century is a shift that may be indicative of the way in which the agenda for future research may also move. The implications of such

shifts are equally profound, for, with the shift in agency from the language itself in its multiple manifestations to its users in their various identities, the paradigms of English studies continue to be re-defined. At this social level, the dialectics of language studies are most clearly indicated in the shift from the common coinage of 'peripheral', 'marginal' and/or 'other' (Kachru, 1982) to the more flattened and less geographically explicit concepts such as 'pluricentricism' and the very simple 'Englishes' or the all-pervasive concept of 'Global English'. In this way, the trend towards the empowerment of agency appears to reach its logical purpose, for, if there is one underlying feature that can embrace the various currents of English as it continues to be used across the world in a variety of ways and for various purposes in the real and virtual world, it is the focus on the individuals who have managed to push themselves from being perceived as marginal to becoming identified as, at least, one of the centres. Although it may be an exaggeration to say that English is being re-created, it may not be very far from the truth to assume that people affecting these changes come from, literally, different parts of the worlds, and in fact, increasingly belong to another world altogether–the virtual one.

The Emergence of e-English

Research in various areas of language application in the last few decades has implicitly recognized the power of language users to expand the boundaries of their own creations. This is most in evidence in the creative uses of English in the media as well as in the virtual world of the internet. Aptly referred to as the "post-literate culture" (de Castell, 1996, p. 398), this focus on the way in which technologies have redefined communicative forms for universal consumption has been a part of many current debates on language use. English, again, remains at the centre of this debate as it is the language in which most software was created and the language in which commercial activities primarily take place. As recently as December 2011, the number of people using the internet in English was estimated to be around 537 million as opposed to its closest competitor, Chinese, whose users totalled 444 million (Discovery news, Dec. 29, 2011, np.). The internet, using as it does, various different forms of language, mostly informal, redefines the way in which language could be used as a mode of expression when used in the context of blogging, chatting and texting.

While the use of technology in the process of language learning was a common strategy in the middle of the twentieth century with language laboratories relying on tape recorders and microphones, the internet added

a whole new dimension to this encounter by becoming more interactive, bringing the participant to the centre of the language process (Singhal, 1997). The internet allowed for a sudden transformation of the 'learners' enabling them to create communities and multiple identities, further enabled by the anonymity offered by the wireless medium. In a society where individuals negotiate effortlessly between the virtual and real worlds, the communities themselves are redefined as they cross the geographical boundaries of states and nations, crossing over even the borders of social and political hierarchies. Media studies such as those of Durant and Lambrou (2009) trace the notion of 'secondary orality' as being manifested in the early twentieth century media of television, radio and telephone but then point to the subsequent rise of the internet as an important stage in the development of communication platforms. They suggest that

> [t]he internet revolution has also moved media language towards multimodal kinds of textual organization. In multimodal discourse, images, written text, music and sound combine and function together. But these changes are as yet incomplete. We don't yet know how they will develop or turn out.
>
> (Durant and Lambrou, 2009, p. 5)

The way in which television language, and more recently the registers on the internet vary has been extensively worked on in terms of the terminology used (Graddol, Cheshire and Swan, 1994; Swales, 1990) as well as through studies on specific uses of language, in particular media related situations (Van Dijk, 1985).

This coalescing of genres made possible by the internet feeds into animated forms of discourse that may never be able to be labelled using a specific register. Best exemplified by blogging, the internet has become a significant example of the way in which language continues to be stretched across vocabulary choice, narrative techniques and sentence structures (Rettberg, 2008). Studies on blogging examine the way in which personal narratives and responses emerge as particular voices reacting, not only to a given article, but also to each other as the correspondence progresses. Humour, it is believed, very often becomes part of the thread of reactions to blogs, as also insults and personal attacks in the blogging world (Durant and Lambrou, 2009, p. 135). Research in the various areas of language applications in the virtual sphere have indicated the way in which expressions change as they move from face-to-face discourse to the more anonymous ones conducted online (Crystal, 2001; Baron, 2008; Wright and Street, 2005).

While much of the conversation in the virtual world remains between individuals who choose to stay behind changing identities, the more creative possibilities of such a conversation remain largely unexplored. Commonly referred to as 'netspeak', the language of the internet is increasingly seen to be an attempt by particular communities to establish specific identities that may often be inaccessible to the mainstream world. Studies in this area include one that looks into the way young girls create closed groups using "interactive writing and the exchange of additional digital information, such as image files and web addresses…enabling these young people to develop sophisticated and marketable skills" (Merchant, 2001). Another one explores the issue of teenagers' negotiation of identities through language. Using a variety of sources such as Robin Lakoff's and Deborah Tannen's work on gender and language, a conclusion regarding strategies of language is arrived at:

> A study of 2692 messages of internet discussion groups finds that groups dominated by females tend to 'self-disclose' and avoid or attempt to reduce tension (Savicki, 1996). Similarly, Herring (2000) finds that women are 'more likely to thank, appreciate and apologise, and to be upset by violations of politeness' (Herring, 2000). In contrast, discussion groups dominated by males tend to use impersonal fact oriented language (Savicki, 1996) and males seem less concerned with politeness and sometimes violate expected online conduct.
>
> (Huffaker and Calvert, 2005, np)

Whatever the quality of writing and responding in the blogging world, it doubtless inspires tremendous creativity and literary inventiveness. By being able to go beyond the limitations of customary rhetoric, online communities have been able to create ways of expression that are novel in their ideas, sharp in their immediacy and focused in their content. Whether this will remain an established form of communication and whether the English of the anonymous online community will integrate itself into accepted language codes may remain controversial and temporarily unsolvable. Crystal's characteristic response to these emerging trends could perhaps point to a possible way of looking at these developments. In an interview with the BBC in 2010, he reacts to the changing use of English on the internet by saying, "[t]he internet is an amazing medium for languages. Language itself changes slowly but the internet has speeded up the process of those changes so you notice them more quickly" (Crystal, 2010).

Texting in English

Nowhere is this speed in communication strategies more apparent than in the way in which technology merges with the traditional form of literature to create completely new versions of established literary forms. Texting, unlike the broader possibilities of the internet, is known only for its brevity and resulting 'corruption' of grammar and spellings. Studies including those of Brown-Owens (2003) and Lenhart et al. (2008) have dwelt extensively on the effects of texting on the levels of English accuracy in direct response to Lee (2002) who condemns texting as an example of the "continuing assault of technology on formal written English" (Vosloo, 2009, np). Vosloo's study on the effects of texting on school children explores the way in which the creative use of language could lead to a wider sense of creativity and educational possibilities, forcing educationists and the community to broaden the definitions of what it means to be literate. By incorporating studies which show that children have an increased sense of the way in which language functions and understand the connections between sound, word, meaning and text, Vosloo attempts a critical analysis of texting for classroom instruction. This is corroborated by Bernard (2008) whose study of texting in classrooms throws up widening opportunities for using this technology for comprehension purposes, to get a quick grasp of course material and a way to deconstruct and decipher sophisticated texts. Her example of using the entire Shakespearean play *Richard III* to be written in texting language may be viewed as creating a challenge which would test some of these skills.

Englishes in Literature

While the long term sustainability of these strategies of combining literature and technology may be suspect, they do point to the very real possibilities of the way in which the borders of language studies have been pushed beyond the limitations of previously conceived margins. The theoretical overlapping of literature with technology is another manifestation of English being re-created and re-used by a widening group of writers for whom English is at once the language of choice but is also the only possible language to address a wider audience. Writing in English is very often a political statement, not bereft of associated problems such as loss of native languages. In a postcolonial, postmodern world, English has become central to the debate on identity and nation. To a large extent, however, the experiments of colonized nations with literary productions in

English tend to produce works which reflect on changing societies in a way that centres the experience of those margins.

In the larger canvas, English literature has extended well beyond the limits of British and American writing to include, within its purview, a rapidly expanding range of writers from various corners of the world writing in varieties of English. This is largely because ideas of centres and margins have been gradually disappearing in the literary context owing to the difficulty of identifying specific communities in any particular geographical or literary tradition. This is nowhere more relevant than in present day diasporic communities where identities and languages coalesce into increasingly complex layers. Examples of multiple migrations include Indians who moved to Uganda in the early part of the twentieth century and then re-migrated to England following the political turmoil of the 1960s or of the migrations of Chinese who moved to neighbouring countries such as Hong Kong and subsequently migrated to America or Canada (Braziel and Mannur, 2003). The effect of these multiple migrations on the consciousness of the creative writer and the language in which they choose to write has been extensively explored (Rushdie, 1992; Loomba, 1998; Boehmer, 2005). The consequences of the linguistic choices made by such writers have been variously seen as being laudable (Chandra, 2000) or pandering to the international market (Mukherjee, 1996). In this sense, Arjun Appadurai's notion that "the new global cultural economy has to be seen as a complex overlapping, disjunctive order, which can no longer be understood in terms of existing center-periphery models" (Appadurai, 1989, p. 324) is particularly apt in diasporic literatures.

Which language to use in writing the postcolonial tale was an issue widely discussed and debated upon by a number of creative writers of the post-independence era of the 1950s. Their voices were famously represented by the Kenyan writer Nguigi who, in his *Decolonising the Mind* (1986), argued that English could no longer remain the primary medium of expression and that continuing to use English would be a continuation of colonialism. Nguigi's stand, while being lauded by a number of regional writers, had to be compromised upon, as the realities of expressing and marketing within a local market could not achieve the kind of international recognition sought by a majority of writers. Salman Rushdie joined this debate and became one of the many 'metropolitan' writers to choose to write in English. As he explains:

> Those of us who do use English do so in spite of our ambiguity towards it, or perhaps because of that, perhaps because we can find in that linguistic struggle a reflection of other struggles taking place in the real world,

struggles between the cultures within ourselves and the influences at work upon our societies.

(Rushdie, 1992, p.17)

With the language wars of newly independent countries of Africa and the Indian subcontinent having been largely settled, the focus in postcolonial literary studies has shifted to the way in which English continues to be changed in the writings which emerge from these parts of the world as well as from the immigrants who have taken their language to a predominantly English setting in the west. In significant ways, Chinua Achebe, Salman Rushdie, Wole Soyinka and Anita Desai have used language to effectively comment on, and transform the imperialist perception of English by accepting and using it in uniquely different ways, re-creating literary genres and transforming the language. It is not an easy struggle, as Rushdie presents through an internal dialogue in his novel *Shame*, in a conversation revolving around the idea of whose histories and whose languages must be privileged in a narrative:

> Outsider! Trespasser! You have no right to this subject!...I know; nobody ever arrested me. Nor are they ever likely to. Poacher! Pirate! We reject your authority. We know you, with your foreign language wrapped around you like a flag. Speaking about us in your forked tongue, what can you tell but lies? I reply with more questions: Is history to be considered the property of the participants only? In what courts are such claims staked, what boundary commissions map out the territories? Can only the dead speak?
>
> (Rushdie, 1983, p. 184)

The dilemma of the narrator above points to a major issue in postcolonial approaches revolving around the question of whose stories must be told and in whose language. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffins in their iconic book on postcolonialism *The Empire Writes Back* (1989) suggest that these tensions regarding English as used by post colonial writers are solved by writers in two ways, either by 'abrogation' or 'appropriation' (p. 38) with the former being rejected as being an imposition of language over a former colony and the latter being a way in which a language (in this case, English) could be used by a society as a medium to express divergent interests and concerns. Increasingly, as Ismail S. Talib (2002) and other critics like Afzal Khan (2000) point out, literatures beyond English need to be brought to light and contextualized outside the paradigms as established by English literature but, as long as English remains a potent language, writers use it, transform it and in fact, re-form it to adapt to local contexts and audiences. The spin-off of these

varieties is being increasingly seen in humanities departments across the world shifting from using the label of 'English Literature' to 'World Literature' (Damrosch, 2006). It is thus inevitable that this shift in English usage would have wider implication for the way in which it is being taught in the classroom, along with associated problematics of accents, choice of vocabulary and assessment.

English in the Classroom

The expanding sphere of English speaking communities and its various manifestations has had a tremendous impact on the methodology of English language teaching in the classroom. Teaching itself has become a very carefully used term, with many writers preferring more neutral terms such as 'English in the classroom'. Following Foucault's work on power and knowledge (Foucault, 1980), the pedagogical concerns of teaching English in classrooms have increasingly been seen as expressions of power and establishing personal agendas. Alaistair Pennycook's notion that schools cannot be seen as neutral sites where a curricular body of information is passed on to students (Pennycook, 1994) has been taken up by a variety of researchers whose primary attempt is to dismantle power equations within the classroom and create possibilities for learners across the margins to participate in the learning process. Much of the research on ELT is presently guided by Braj Kachru's classification of English speakers in expanding circles, as opposed to the linear division of centres and margins. Shifting from the late twentieth century focus on 'communication competence' (Hymes, 1972, p. 269) contemporary studies focus more firmly upon issues pertaining to varieties of English. Such studies include those of J.L. Dillard (1972), Robert Phillipson (1992), Michael Clyne (1992), Peter Strevens (1992) and Plat, Weber and Ho (1984) among many others. Many studies have used the theoretical implications of these works to relate them to ELT classrooms in terms of speaking, writing and assessment. Many of the areas of ELT have been considerably explored, including the central concern of using canonical English texts to teach English at the 'peripheries'. Issues such as the place of world English in the English classroom (Peterson and Coltrane, 2003) and those of language competence among teachers, particularly the distinction between "genetic nativeness" and "functional nativeness" (Kachru, B. 2005, p. 12) have continually been addressed with the intention of arriving at common areas of agreement. These issues have even been institutionalized, particularly by agencies such as Cambridge ESOL which has gradually begun to recognize widening concerns