

## Literacy Stories for Global Wits: Learning English through the Literature-Language Line

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**Abstract:** This essay addresses the drastic and detrimental divide between language learning and literature characterizing the study of English in university programs in Italy. It sustains that it is high time for language learning to dovetail with literary studies to allow students to better comprehend and navigate through both the complex phenomenon of the spread of English in this era of globalization and the transcultural nature of English. An English course I taught to English studies undergraduates at the University of Venice Ca' Foscari in Italy in 2014 exemplifies one way to approach this pedagogical turn. In examining four literacy stories by J. M. Coetzee, Ngúgí wa Thiong'o, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and Caryl Phillips, the course had two aims: first, to prove that English, as with any language, is formed in relation to personal identity and the context of use in its specific culture, a basic principle often implicitly denied by the widespread structuralist and generative approaches to language; second, the course sought to see the English classroom as a microcosm connected to the social and cultural dynamics of the English-speaking world at large by using stories set in ex-colonial scenarios as mirrors casting reflections that could be illuminating for learners of English as a foreign language.

**Keywords:** literacy, literature, English, grammar, ex-colonial world

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### I. Two Steps into Global English Literacy

This article describes an English language course that I taught last year to second-year undergraduates of English at the University of Venice in Italy. The course was based on literacy stories about English-learning

experiences told by Anglophone postcolonial writers, consisting of brief narratives and excerpts from works of different genres, including autobiography, fiction, musical plays, and short stories. Among the works I used are J. M. Coetzee's *Boyhood: Scenes of Provincial Life*, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's "The Headstrong Historian," and Caryl Phillips' "A Life in Ten Chapters."

The course had two different but interrelated major goals. The first was to work on language acquisition by using a functionalist approach, allowing me both to work on language as "use" and to do so through literary texts. The second goal was to introduce the English language classroom to the dynamics of today's globalized English-speaking contexts by using the ex-colonial world as a model. Both goals tackled two critical problems with English learning at the University of Venice. The first is the decontextualized and structuralist way in which English is taught using pre-packaged course books for international students as well as specialized courses including phonetics based on Received Pronunciation (RP), generative grammar, and language variation—in the twofold form of "varieties of English" and of "varieties of text types." The textbooks and courses are based on approaches that ignore or reject the idea that language is not only normative but also "emergent" (Canagarajah, *Translingual* 68), because if on the one hand it is a fixed system of norms, on the other it is naturally open to cultural and linguistic connections that affect its structures, making these negotiable and changeable. The artificial divide between grammar rules and pragmatics—Standard English and its varieties—becomes more porous and theoretically unsustainable when one studies English in its contemporary international use across languages and cultures (Canagarajah, *Multilingual* 6–9). The second problem I wanted to tackle is the increasingly significant divide between language and literature that characterizes the study of English in Italy, despite the fact that they appear on the same curriculum and same degree in foreign languages and literatures. Students generally feel that this division is unnatural, especially as language courses resort to the technicalities of linguistics in order to emphasize the "scientific" study of the language, while literary courses do not seem to fully consider the

linguistic aspects of the texts they present. At the undergraduate level, where students are unlikely to think of pursuing a career either as linguists or as literary critics, this situation is detrimental not only to the development of language skills but also to helping students think about the role and function they want English to have in their lives.

By describing my literacy stories course, this article hopes to contribute to a global pedagogy that suits the needs of today's students for whom English is still too "foreign" a language. While perfectly aware of the crucial importance of being proficient in English, students often cannot find courses that help them to take a position in the globalized English-speaking world around them. This is a complex scenario in which two main orientations exist—that of "Global English," whose ideology and agenda shape most of the standard language courses, and that of "post-colonial" or "World Englishes" (Halliday, "Standard English" 362–63), which are mainly studied in their literary forms or as mere examples of variations of standard English employed in ex-colonial countries. As I try to demonstrate in some previous research papers (Cimarosti, "Help for ELF" and "Grading Cultural Imperialism"), colonial ideology permeates course books and textbooks for studying the English language, and this places learners in predetermined roles that barely help them develop language strategies to become intellectually independent users of English. The literacy stories course aimed to challenge this situation and to show that the curriculum needs to integrate a more dynamic and culture-based approach to the learning of English. I will first describe the way I tried to reach the two major goals explained above as two steps into the study of English as "use" and through a blending of language and literature; then, I will draw theoretical conclusions on the possibility of finding a middle ground between the linguistics and the literature divide so as to better suit the needs of students in this globalized era.

## **II. Step One: The "Use" of Post/Colonial Literacy Stories in English Language Learning**

One major aim of the literacy stories course was to encourage students to see English as language in use rather than as an abstract system of norms. The course achieved this aim by using systemic functional

linguistics as a general framework to, firstly, provide basic notions about language as “contextualised,” “meaningful,” and “functional”; secondly, focus on grammar as semantic choice; and finally, develop reading and writing skills. Below is an explanation of the way the students and I dealt with these three objectives during the lessons.

### *Language as “Contextualised,” “Meaningful,” and “Functional”*

In the first three classes I introduced the basic concepts of the systemic functionalist theory of language. We studied the notions of “text” as a minimal unit of meaning taking place as a realization of a specific “context”; we saw how there are three areas of the outside world that become language and texts—events along with things and people related to them (“field”), people’s relationships (“tenor”), and the ways in which language is used (“mode”); we examined why the linguistic articulations of these aspects of the outside world are called “ideational,” “interpersonal,” and “textual” meanings and how they combine in the text as “register”; we learned that when a register recurs as a recognizable pattern in several texts, it forms a “genre” characterizing a category of texts that have a specific function in the culture that produces them (Halliday, *Linguistic Studies* 23–64; Eggins 23–112). This accounted for all the specialized domains and jargon we studied, which I introduced through exercises that exemplified the interconnection between worlds and words.

Additionally, I presented another important aspect of “language use.” After I introduced the colonial and postcolonial settings of the stories, indicating the specific location and author of each, we focused on “language use” in the twofold form found in each story—one as “repository” and the other as “instrumental” (Thumboo 406). In the stories, teachers and textbooks that are the “arms” of a colonial policy based on standard language ideology<sup>1</sup> exemplify a “repository use” of language, whereas the young protagonists illustrate an “instrumental” approach to English by spontaneously harmonizing the language with their needs and environment.

I also proposed that “literacy stories” on the whole form a “genre” in which there is a common “register” or pattern of meaning that interweaves the three aspects of the outside world relevant to language,

characterizing the relative textual realizations. The pattern of initiation into English may be considered such a “register,” taking place in three recognizable steps. First, the protagonist pursues his or her English education in a difficult colonial environment, coming across tensions created by the clash between the inherited and the local traditions and languages. Second, the “hero” or “heroine” needs to negotiate and come to terms with severe conflicting power relationships among people. Third, the protagonist realizes his or her linguistic achievement as a happy ending represented by the postcolonial story itself, where his or her learning aspirations are fulfilled in the writer that he or she has become.

### *Learning to Read Analytically and See Grammar as “Choice”*

After discussing English as “language in use,” we read each literacy story by using a checklist allowing us to search for the specific language features where meaning is produced through a combination of the “register variables” of field, tenor, and mode and their textual “realizations.” The checklist is divided into two main parts that we used separately. We used the first part to identify the linguistic features characterizing the story and its context and to pinpoint the grammar forms or items that stood out as crucial in the organization of the text. Here is the first part of the checklist:

#### Part One—Focus on language features

A. Read the text and single out the parts that refer to:

1. Major events and issues, the place/s, the time/s, and the characters;
  2. The characters’ features representing temperament and attitudes towards other people; use of language or actions that give them a special role;
  3. The closeness of writing to speech and oral language; how many languages shape the text; if the text uses expressive forms other than language (such as images, songs, music, etc.).
- B. Go through the story again and see if there is any particular grammar word or form that seems particularly important: why do you think the writer made that choice?

This final section of the checklist's first part provides a lead-in into the literary part, as it invites students to see that the choice of words is a meaningful one, functional in fulfilling the story's goals while representing a crucial aspect of the literary text. Below is the second part of the checklist:

Part Two—Focus on literary features

Go through the text and single out:

1. Concrete (C) and abstract (A) words;
2. Words or ideas that accumulate meanings by way of repetition or association with other words;
3. Figurative language (such as metaphors, similes, etc.) or repetitions.

We completed an analytic reading of the first literacy story in class to make sure that the method and intended results were clear. Students, working in pairs if they wished, went through the text not necessarily using all the checklist indications but choosing those that the text seemed to require. We followed this exercise with a discussion and comparison of analyses. I assigned analytic reading as homework, beginning with the second literacy story, and students came to class prepared with their complete analyses for comparison and discussion. This allowed us to dedicate some time to analyze the two “contexts of situation” contained in the story, that in which the story is set and the literary message that the story conveys beyond its cultural setting. In addition, we compared the story’s “contexts” with aspects of our own English language learning situation. In the case of the first literacy story—from Ngũgĩ’s autobiography *Dreams in Time of War: A Childhood’s Memoirs*—the school system and the protagonist’s learning attitude were compared with typical ones in the Italian English-learning environment. In the case of the second literacy story—from Coetzee’s fictional memoir *Boyhood*—we compared the teaching and assessment method of the mother-tongue Irish teacher with those of mother-tongue instructors at the University of Venice.

*Writing Brief Response, Analytic, and Autobiographical Papers*

After a broad discussion of the literacy story and reflections on our learning environment, I asked students to write brief essays about the story's

contents. Students could choose from three types of writing activities. The first activity was to write a two-paragraph response paper highlighting two relevant components, and then comparing some of the story's aspects to their own learning experience. The second activity was to write an analytic paper reflecting on all the three aspects that build the story's meaning (field, tenor, and mode) and providing references proving their affirmations. The third activity was to write an autobiographical paper using the grammar forms that had been pointed out as functional in the literacy story in order to recount an episode related to learning English.

I will now refer to the readings of the stories we completed in class to briefly exemplify the meanings students and I pointed out in our analyses, and I will describe some grammar exercises we carried out along with the analyses. The first literacy story we read is an excerpt from Coetzee's *Boyhood: Scenes from Provincial Life*. The book is about a South African child's life in English and Afrikaans and the problems that threaten to destroy the precarious relationship he has with both languages due to the political situation of South African society in the 1950s which pitted English and Afrikaans against one another as they represented opposing cultural groups. The story first shows the child's joyous discovery of having a life both in English and Afrikaans, despite his underlying feeling of belonging to neither linguistic group exclusively and regardless of the fact that his experience with such a dual life contrasts with the exclusivist attitude the English and the Afrikaners express toward "their" languages. English and Afrikaners in fact identify their mother tongue with national belonging and have unconsciously absorbed a political combativeness that pushes them to wield the languages like weapons against each other. In this arena, the youngster discovers himself to be a courageous defender of the fragile middle ground where both languages live peacefully together, giving him a sense of freedom:

Because they speak English at home, and because he always comes first in English at school, he thinks of himself as English. Though his surname is Afrikaans, though his father is more Afrikaans than English, and though he himself speaks Afrikaans without any English accent, he could not pass for a moment as

an Afrikaner Yet, to his surprise, he finds himself unwilling to yield up the Afrikaans language to them One thing about the English that disappoints him, that he will not imitate, is their contempt for Afrikaans. (Coetzee 124–25)

However, once the boy goes to middle school, the linguistic conflict becomes much more pointed, as the students become victims to the methods and attitudes of an Irish teacher. Mr. Whelan hates both languages and brings into the classroom his resentment toward the violence inflicted by the British upon Ireland by being unfair with students and imposing upon them the humiliations he suffered in Ireland. He also expresses his frustration at finding himself in South Africa, paradoxically, to teach English: “Mr Whelan is Irish: he hates the English and barely conceals his dislike of Protestants. He also makes no effort to pronounce Afrikaans names correctly, speaking them with lips distastefully pursed as though they were heathen gibberish” (138). Mr. Whelan’s lessons are mostly based on Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, speeches from which the students have to recite in adequate pronunciation and about whose characters they must write most of their papers, unaware of the fact that they are puppets manipulated by Mr. Whelan’s hatred.

In such a hostile situation that threatens his creativity, the student turns into a rebel and starts filling his writing papers with the presence of a mysterious “highwayman,” whom, however, Mr. Whelan hardly notices. As a result, the boy realizes that even invention is a waste of energy, and the episode ends with the student brooding over what he would write if he could have a better reader than his teacher: “What he would write if he could, if it were not Mr Whelan reading it, would be something darker, something that, once it began to flow from his pen, would spread across the page out of control, like spilt ink. Like spilt ink, like shadows racing across the face of still water, like lightning crackling across the sky” (140).

When we came to pointing out particular grammar choices, we lingered on the use of connectors such as those present in the first quotation above. We examined why the story repeats the two connectors and uses them in opposition to each other and what meaning they convey:

“Because they speak English at home, and because he always comes first in English at school, he thinks of himself as English.” After surveying the meaning of the linking words and realizing that their repetition could have been avoided by using synonyms, we deduced that 1) their employment alongside each other represents the conflicting reasoning in the child’s mind as he tries to come to terms with his two languages, 2) the obsession of that dilemma, and 3) the fact that the simple reality of his life enjoyed in both languages resolves the dilemma, as signified through the use of a third connector, “yet,” expressing the idea that the child’s reasoning dissolves when confronted with emotional facts: “Yet, to his surprise, he finds himself unwilling to yield up the Afrikaans language to them.”

The second literacy story is an excerpt from the last part of Ngũgĩ’s *Dreams in a Time of War: a Childhood Memoir*. It tells how Ngũgĩ approached English as a child through an extraordinary teacher. Mr. Kibicho is not only an excellent teacher of the language but is aware of the importance of making English “culturally true” to his students by adapting the mandatory *Oxford Readers for Africa* to their Kenyan reality, so as to avoid arousing feelings of alienation, envy, or inferiority from foreign references that might lead to the rejection of study altogether: “Mr. Kibicho had the ability to go outside the texts and cite many everyday examples from our environment” (218). Moreover, being such an enlightened teacher, Mr. Kibicho soon recognizes Ngũgĩ’s interest in reading and nourishes it by lending him literary books. Of all the books the young Ngũgĩ borrows from the teacher’s library, Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Treasure Island* becomes his passion, and he often sings the book’s pirate song aloud with his best friend. The story’s turning point is the moment when, during the Kenya African Preliminary Exams, the close reading test happens to include a passage from Stevenson’s novel and the boy, among the few who know the novel well, gains access to the most prestigious boarding school in the country:

The passage was taken from Stevenson’s *Treasure Island*. The passage did not contain the title of the book or the author’s name. But it had signature lines and phrases: “Fifteen men on

the dead man's chest / Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum." It was probably incomprehensible to many candidates, who complained about it afterward, but for Kenneth and me, who understood the context, it was a reward for our extracurricular readings. (227)

The story ends with a long cliffhanging scene describing the difficulties the protagonist encounters trying to catch a train that finally takes him to the dreamed boarding school. As the story closes, all the images that so far represent the distant world of his English books—John and Joan's boarding school and their travels there by train—accumulate into one image of the child's fulfilled "dream," while the child's feeling of envy, which the teacher, for all his efforts, had not managed to remedy, turns into hope for the future:

All the people present assume that I am excited because of my next school; only my brother knows what I am feeling. For the first time I am going to board a passenger train, just like John and Joan, the fictional schoolkids who lived in Oxford but went to school in Reading by train. Now my time has come. Now I am doing the same thing. A train to school. A boarding school. Alliance High School, Kikuyu. It will carry my dreams in a time of war. I hear my mother's voice: Is it the best you can do? I say to her, Yes, Mother, because I also know what she really is asking for is my renewal of our pact to have dreams even in a time of war. (253)

The main grammar feature we studied in the story was how and why the text switches from the past simple to the narrative present, as exemplified in the quotation above. After surveying the usage of both tenses, we came to the conclusion that the change of tense occurs to signal a series of events that take place quickly one after the other bringing about "epochal changes," major shifts in the child's life, and a constant voice, particularly the mother's, expecting "the best" from her son's studies. In this respect, that switch to the present contains not only the mother's voice but also the Kikuyu's oral language and mentality.

The third literacy story is an excerpt from a short story by the Nigerian writer Adichie entitled “The Headstrong Historian.” It is about an old Igbo woman who, unlike her family, never converted to Christianity and her special bond with her granddaughter Grace, whom she calls “Afamefuna,” meaning “my name will not be lost” (Adichie 214). The story begins with old Nwamgba in her deathbed, stubbornly refusing to be baptized and wishing to see Afamefuna for the last time, although the girl is far away in a boarding school preparing for her exams. However, Grace turns up and the story shifts to a description of their reunion starting from the very moment when Grace enters the room, “puts down her schoolbag, inside which was a textbook with a chapter called ‘The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of Southern Nigeria’” (215), and relieved of that weight holds her grandmother’s hand instead, “the palm thickened from years of making pottery” (218). Their bond is made up of a sense of emptiness whose meaning, however, evolves to assume a positive significance as the story develops. The story represents this emptiness first in the hollow English education into which Grace seems to have precipitated, rendered through the “schoolbag-textbook-chapter” noun cluster, then in the near loss of the grandmother, and finally in the hollow space inside vases which Nwamgba’s hands have moulded for many years while making pottery. This last meaning is figuratively reflected in the shaping impact that the old woman has on her granddaughter. While looking at Grace from her deathbed, old Nwamgba seems also to be envisioning and shaping Grace’s future. The text expresses this shaping gaze through a recurring sentence that conveys the idea of the granddaughter’s adult life as contained in embryo in that moment in the past when the two women met for the last time and Grace stood in front of her fully exposed to the old woman’s loving scrutiny:

It was Grace who would read about these savages. . . . It was Grace who would laugh loudly until sister Maureen took her to detention. . . . It was Grace who, after graduating from secondary school, would teach elementary school in Agueke. . . . It was Grace who, feeling an odd rootlessness in the later years

of her life, surrounded by her awards, her friends, her garden of peerless roses, would go to the courthouse in Lagos and officially change her name from Grace to Afamenuna. (218)

The little girl's still repressed Nigerian identity is the point around which, under her grandmother's guidance and through the memory of her, Grace's future will revolve. Grace/Afamefuna will develop her hybrid identity and become a historian able to rectify the humiliating way in which the history of the Nigerian people is narrated in English history. The incantatory repetition of the phrase "It was Grace who would" introduces each stage of Grace's intellectual growth, for which the long parenthetical information inserted between the "who" and the "would" represents the expansion of her comprehension, up until Grace, in her mature life, after all her studies, goes back to her native village to reclaim the Igbo name that her grandmother had given her.

The grammar topic that we focused on was related to the grammar topic in *Dreams in a Time of War*, as we could not avoid considering the switch from the use of the past tense to that of the future in the past foregrounded by the recurring phrase "it was Grace who would." This phrase is led by a cleft sentence, which is also significant. In fact, if the recurrence of the "would" explains, even graphically, the child's future development into a mature and whole human being, the cleft sentence achieves two outcomes: it keeps the story's focus fixed on Grace's identity and it subtly refers to the fact that Grace has a fractured, divided identity, which will be mended and made whole through its evolutions throughout the years.

The fourth literacy story that I will present here is "A Life in Ten Chapters" by the English novelist of Caribbean origins Caryl Phillips. This story had the important function of bringing what we usually consider distant colonial issues into the European English classroom and very close to our own experiences. The protagonist, who has lived in Leeds with his family since he was one, finds himself in the same difficult learning situation as in the previous stories, as institutional forms of class and racial discrimination create impediments to his intellectual growth and learning:

His is a strange school for there is a broad white line in the middle of the playground. The boys and girls from the local housing have to play on one side of the line. . . . The five-year old boy is beginning to understand difference—in the form of class. The final lesson of the day is story time. The neatly dressed children sit cross-legged on the floor at the feet of their teacher, Miss Teale. She begins to read them a tale about ‘Little Black Sambo’. He can feel eyes upon him. (Phillips 107)

Since books by black writers that tell the stories of real black people are absent in his school, the little reader becomes a writer while in search of one. Starting in primary school, when he writes his first story, he feels the need to add his own experiences and worldview to the ones already existing in British society and as represented by such children’s books as *The Story of Little Black Sambo*. To illustrate the writer’s development, the literacy story is divided into chapters, each one a brief account of a significant step in the writer’s formative years, from five to twenty-eight. This division shows how the protagonist’s life gradually becomes the stories that he writes, which English culture has previously excluded and English has so far missed out on. These are the stories of people of African descent, of which the youth only becomes aware when he travels to the United States and starts to read African American writers. Finally, as a young writer of two novels, the protagonist visits his great-grandmother in St. Kitts, and so his odyssey closes a circle that seems to give him the full sense of where he belongs, in the connections between these three places. The story ends with the writer’s realization of his ignorance about his identity and history until his illiterate Caribbean great-grandmother discloses them to him: she explains why she could not read the two novels that he had sent to her and which she keeps religiously folded in their travelling “cardboard packaging” (112), reminders of his immigration to England and of their distance from one another.

One grammar component we analyzed was the use of present, present perfect, and past tense in the story’s last chapter. We first surveyed the general usage of these tenses as well as the meanings of verbs, specifically in the present perfect tense. We then tried to find out why the text

employs them in a methodical way. It became clear that they are arranged in a precise seven-step sequence that structures the narrative, adding a dimension of meaning that we had not seen before. The tense shifts are emphasized in the quotation below:

### Chapter Ten

He *sits* with his great-grandmother in the small village at the far end of St Kitts, the island on which he was born 28 years earlier. He *has now published* two novels, and on each publication day he *has asked* his editor to send a copy of the book to his great-grandmother. But she *has never mentioned* the books and so, gingerly, he now *asks* her if she ever *received* them? *Does she have* them? When she *moves* it is like watching a statue come to life. She *reaches* beneath the chair and slowly *pulls out* two brown cardboard bundles. The books *are* still in their packaging. She *has opened* the bundles, *looked* at the books, and then neatly *replaced* them. Again she *opens* the packaging. She *fingers* the books in the same way that he has seen her finger her Bible. Then she *looks* at her great-grandson and *smiles*. “*I was* the teacher’s favourite,” she says. She *was born* in 1898 and so he realises that she is talking to him about life at the dawn of the 20th century. “*And,*” she continues, “*I missed* a lot of school for I had to do all the errands.” Suddenly he *understands* what she means. She cannot read. He *swallows* deeply and *lowers* his eyes. How could he be clumsy enough to cause her this embarrassment? She carefully *puts* the books back in their cardboard packaging and *tucks* them back under the chair. She *looks* at her great-grandson. She *doted* on this boy for the first four months of his life. The great-grandson who *disappeared* to England. The great-grandson who all these years later now *sends* her stories from England. (111–12; emphases added)

Once the young writer is in the presence of his great-grandmother, the narration switches from the historical present into the present perfect, indicating past facts or feelings whose effects or results are still evident in the present, having retained some importance. We deduce that whereas

the present perfect indicates the young man's continuing uncertainty about not receiving a reply from his great-grandmother after sending her his books, the present tense recurs to describe how his great-grandmother's actions remove all his doubts. The story then returns to the present perfect and to the days when the protagonist had sent the books to his great-grandmother, whose reception the writer can now imagine as he sees the woman take the books and hold them again in front of him, so that the present simple now also contains the past. However, his newly-acquired certainty that she has read his books is short, since the woman now gives him a startling history lesson, using the past tense, telling him that when she was a pupil in colonial St. Kitts, going to school conflicted with more practical and urgent needs. Eventually, the protagonist understands his lesson: she "cannot read." The story employs the past simple and the present to describe the woman's subtle reply to the young man's embarrassment, to describe his imagined sense of her love for him and her suffering from losing him when he left for England with his parents, and to imagine the very moment when after so many years of absence she suddenly received the books that he had written. In the last two sentences, the previously unknown past is joined to the present, providing a whole picture in which the young Phillips can now see all his previous doubts and questions dissolve. It is a new temporal space that also includes the narrative present through which the story of this special encounter unfolds. As the past and the present connect, and as the pending issue resolves, the present perfect tense is no longer necessary. The final sentence of the story does not use it when this tense would be applicable to describe a past action completed in the present, rendering the idea, the class inferred, that a "perfect present" has been reached instead.

Overall, these literacy stories enriched the English language syllabus of the course in three major ways. Each story demonstrated how the protagonist learns English while also shaping his or her identity through it, language acquisition and identity formation being evidently interwoven. Besides, the study of the grammar topics relevant to each story exemplified how grammar has a semantic meaning and is not, as it is generally believed, a system of neutral norms to be automatically

applied. Not least of all, the aesthetic value of the stories made students more prone to overcoming the difficulties of studying a foreign language; their emotional involvement with the stories contributed to making English more familiar.

### **III. Step Two: Opening the Classroom to the Globalized World of Englishes**

The second course goal consisted of opening the English-language classroom to the realities of the globalized world. In this final section I will describe how I did so by using the impressive materials that the literacy stories provided.

#### *Global Englishes and Identity*

After working on each literacy story, we dedicated an entire lesson to studying some aspects of the histories of English in the countries where the stories were set, discussing issues related to language that had come up while analyzing the stories. After reading Coetzee's literacy story, I briefly introduced South African Englishes—their histories and varieties—and also explained how English was taught in the “settler colonies” or dominions (including South Africa, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand) and gave some general information about the history of ELT and its teaching policy (Pennycook, *Cultural Politics*; Phillipson). This information allowed students to see how Mr. Whelan is not a singular case but rather represents a specific category of teachers who reluctantly joined the profession, sometimes with no training, in order to escape critical situations and sometimes even persecution at home in the United Kingdom. I explained that such issues, as well as the socio-political situation in which English was taught in the years before and after the Second World War, were part of Coetzee's own learning and teaching experience as a young man, as he recounts in the second part of his “fictional autobiography” *Youth* as well as in an autobiographical essay, “Remembering Texas.”

Coetzee's story provided an easy starting point for a discussion on the possibility of “living in two languages” and the way one can (or cannot) come to terms with both worlds. This topic also allowed us to reflect on

the fixed idea with which current students still grow up in Italy, that one can have only one mother tongue whose presence should disappear as one uses another language, English in this case, in proportion to one's proficiency in that "foreign" language. I took this opportunity to argue that this has not been the established perspective in most parts of the world and that it is an approach to language that developed in Europe in connection with our cultural tradition and history (Canagarajah, *Translingual* 19–24).

Ngũgĩ's story led us to learn about the history of Kenyan English. We were lucky to be able to invite to our class the Kenyan journalist and writer Tony Mochama, who talked about his English learning experience. Of great interest was his disagreement with Ngũgĩ's notorious critical position on writing in English and Ngũgĩ's consequent decision to write in Kikuyu. Having only read his literacy story, students knew nothing about Ngũgĩ's criticism of English in Kenya, because his story, in fact, describes his English education and the way Mr. Kibicho administered it in very positive terms. Regarding identity, Mochama discussed the issue of young Kenyans' attitude toward English and the fact that they seem to ignore its colonial past in their eagerness to board the train of globalization. Rather than the colonial legacy of English, the problem that today's Kenyan students have to tackle, Mochama pointed out, is the lack of prepared local English teachers and an appropriate educational system. Since one of Mochama's short stories touches on these issues, he read us a passage from his novel, *Princess Adhi and the Naija Coca Broda*, and left us a copy of his book.

Adichie's story is set in Nigeria, so we briefly looked at the history of Nigerian English in order to focus on the colonial language policy in the "invaded colonies" (such as Nigeria and Kenya). We also touched on how Nigerians began to write in English, hence translating their culture into this new language and concurrently producing changes in British English, once it was introduced and gradually diffused in the society, predominantly through literature. Therefore, English became a local language alongside several others and functions as an African transnational lingua franca (Thumboo 409–16). The language and identity issues that we discussed in relation to this story were the role of cultural

roots and values in English learning; how important are traditions and rootedness to one's original community when one uses a globalized language that seems to take the speaker away from her or his cultural specificity? Students had two different reactions. The Italian students in the class were pretty much convinced that one should be immersed in British culture and momentarily avoid any interference with one's origins as this would facilitate learning English. International students (from Albania, Kosovo, Ukraine, Russia), however, sustained that closeness to their traditions strengthened their will to learn other languages, both Italian and English. It may be that physical distance from home created the need for these students to remain attached to their origins, and that the recent political tensions in those areas have fuelled a tendency to consider nationalism an important value.

Phillips' story led us to study the use of English in the UK. Specifically, I focused on the traditional way in which the history of Standard English is generally taught as evolving in three stages—Old English, Middle English, and Modern English—which students knew well from having studied it in high school. I explained how this simplified version of the history of English was invented in the second half of the nineteenth century and how it suited the political project of inventing an “Anglo-Saxon” ethnicity to unify the white English people around the colonized world under the same flag (Young 177–95). We discussed the issue of “diasporic identity” that people develop using English, as in the case of Phillips. Here the discussion turned to the importance and modalities of studying and working abroad and how this impacts people’s identities and careers as well as the real chances one gets to fully integrate into the adopted country. Experiences of emigration to English-speaking countries, including Britain and Australia, came up, where the examples that students gave were all based on the principle that, no matter how long an emigrant has lived in a “foreign” country, he or she will never fully belong to it by virtue of having a different native culture and language.

This part of the course was founded on the theories and pedagogies of the four models of English developed in the last twenty years—Global English, World Englishes, English as Lingua Franca, and Lingua Franca English—and on my attempt to find an alternative or complementary

approach to the course on the varieties of English that has been taught in Venice for the last seven years. Global English is the most traditional of the four models. It considers British Standard English as the benchmark for correct use and sees its development in the UK as the only history of the language. By contrast, the World Englishes model represents the perspective developed by scholars from ex-British and American colonies and is based on the idea that in these countries English developed new roots and uses so that variation from the standard norms is legitimate. English as a Lingua Franca is based on the principle that, because the majority of English users today are non-native speakers, English can be used in very flexible and even incorrect ways if the purpose is to communicate across languages in so-called communities of practice such as international work meetings. Finally, the Lingua Franca English model is characterized by the “translingual practices” by which English is used according to its standard norms but alongside other languages, which may be visibly present in the texts or perceivable through the way non-British cultural contexts change the standard use of the language, yet preserve a correct standard use of the grammar.

The idea of doing a course using literacy stories from the postcolonial world was intended to provide an alternative to the second-year course on the varieties of English, which is still in use. This course blends the technicalities of structuralist sociolinguistics with the typically Victorian approach to the varieties of English theorized by Global English scholars who see the history of English as rooted “at home” in the UK and expanding “overseas,” in the ex-colonial world. The underlying ideology of the course places British English in the centre, with its three-staged canonical history leading to the codification of the Standard, and it places all the satellite varieties on the margins in an implicit hierarchical order. The course indirectly determines the value of the postcolonial varieties of English by their proximity to the centre and unwillingly sympathizes with the old Darwinian colonialist principle of the survival of the fittest. A clear instance of this traditionalist approach can be found in the main textbook required for this course, *English: One Tongue, Many Voices* by Jan Svartvik and Geoffrey Leech. In a rather clumsy attempt to hide the enthusiasm for British English and its cultural tradition, Svartvik

and Leech dedicate a whole section of their book to explaining that it was not for any particular linguistic merit that English became the world language. Rather, “its success story” (6) is based on the colonial dominance of the British Empire and on the subsequent economic and scientific power of the US (6). This is a recurring claim made by Global English scholars like David Crystal, who coined one of the typical Global English refrains, claiming that English “happened to be in the right place, at the right time” (78). The metaphor Svartvik and Leech use to talk about the inevitable dominance of English, however, reveals the neo-Victorian nature of their reasoning. They compare “this astonishing global phenomenon” (Svartvik and Leech 7), “this fantastic story” (7) of the worldwide diffusion of English to the survival of dinosaurs in the Jurassic era and the superiority of homo sapiens in the evolution of the species (9). Such metaphors indirectly reveal the real reason behind Global English scholars’ belief that English has triumphed as a world language over all others, for they anchor the contemporary diffusion of this language to the racialist theories of Victorian ethnology and anthropology that fuelled imperialistic discourse and justified the eradication of less powerful languages and ethnicities.<sup>2</sup> Similarly (though more explicitly), historian of the language Robert King employs the same evolutionist approach and concludes his passionate historical account of the way English happened to conquer the world thanks to its genetic combativeness, by describing the good luck of contemporary postcolonial writers who have the privilege of writing in English:

The British Empire is now gone What remains is the English language, a gift to the world, a way of speaking, a mouth to millions of people on this globe, often to people who would not be able to express themselves if not for English English is one of the natural means by which gifted writers express themselves in countries once under British rule. (27–28)

King then closes his essay by quoting T. S. Eliot’s *Four Quartets* in order to emblemize the overarching idea expressed in his essay: it is only on British soil and in the ethnic legacy of the Anglo-Saxons that the roots of English as a world language are to be found.<sup>3</sup> It is an appropriate quote,

in tune with the purist view of the English tradition around which Eliot collocates the Anglophone countries in his famous essay, *Notes Towards a Definition of Culture* (Eliot 111–24).

By contrast, alternative models of English such as World Englishes and especially Lingua Franca English as elaborated by Alastair Pennycook and Suresh Canagarajah conceive of English as a hybrid contact language in which learners gain proficiency through the growing ability to conciliate discourses and identities across other languages and cultures (Canagarajah, *Translingual* 68–75). From these latter perspectives, English is not only conceived as a world language but as “worldly” in the sense of the term coined and still considered crucial for this century by Edward Said (*Humanism* 48–49). For Said, colonial languages like English are always used in tight relation to their colonial culture, so that when English is taught it becomes a Trojan horse bringing colonial attitudes and references alongside its grammar (Pennycook, *English* 19–29). By following Said’s insights, applied critical linguists have closely scrutinized the English language classroom and started to develop a critical pedagogy (Pennycook, *Critical* 114–42), a resistance literacy that on the one hand analyzes and lays bare the politics of ELT expertise and on the other helps students develop “translingual” negotiation strategies to create their identities in English from their multilingual or bilingual cultural situations (Canagarajah, *Critical* 105–24). Such global English pedagogy bases its learning theory and strategies on postcolonial writers’ use of English as well as on poststructuralist and especially postcolonial critique, and so it has started to change the traditional way of studying and using the language (Pennycook, *Language* 29–37). It is a semi-literary orientation that instructors have recently adopted to teach the language by making use of literatures in English, thus giving an unprecedented space to the role of identity in English language learning.<sup>4</sup>

The challenge confronting global pedagogy today, therefore, is the reformation of ELT altogether as applied critical linguists have been doing for some twenty years by opening language studies to critique and to the influence of postcolonial literatures. Evolutions of the idea of “worldliness” in relation to English learning in the work of Pennycook, from *The Cultural Politics of English as an International Language* (1994)

to his most recent book *Language and Mobility* (2012), offer insight to this project. In *English and the Discourse of Colonialism*, Pennycook explains how ELT has always been at the heart of colonialism, playing a central role in diffusing a certain type of English use rather than the “language” as a system of norms to be neutrally applied, and how that enterprise has continued “under cover” through its lexico-grammar and the range of cultural associations that come with English and activate colonial discourse in the language classroom. Learning English today, therefore, even in non-ex-colonial countries, often implies mechanical acquisition of the self-other dialectics that is conflated with the teaching practice because discourses concerning the higher value of British English compared to other standards imbue lesson topics and exercises, causing students to absorb colonial ideology alongside the grammar. In this respect, Pennycook has sustained that both the historicity of the colonial dialectic and the close relation between colonial history and ELT should constitute basic materials for English learning at any level of proficiency and in any context, because even current course books are often based on materials that mix popular culture and colonial discourse celebratory of English rather than on technical principles of applied linguistics (Pennycook, *English* 2, 19, 22).

Canagarajah's ground-breaking 1999 monograph *Resisting Linguistic Imperialism in English Teaching* has an explicit twofold goal: to confront the self-other dialectic inherent in language teaching, whose traditional practices often hinder learners from establishing an authentic bond with the language; and to develop a way of using English that is more representative and true of the students' long familiarity with it, in the belief that consciousness can make space for more than one language and accommodate a wide and complex identity. Canagarajah's volume employs quotations from postcolonial literary works as lead-in epigraphs to strengthen the pedagogical lesson that each chapter develops, clearly indicating a path into English learning whose end is to make the language one's own. He quotes lines from Derek Walcott's poems more than once. For instance, at the beginning of a chapter titled “Resistance to English in Historical Perspective” (Canagarajah, *Resisting* 57), the poetic lines from “North and South” work like an icon suggesting the

real possibility of aiming at a Janus-like approach to English, where one is able to distinguish its past from its present use and fuse both to achieve one's own purposes: "It's good that everything's gone, except their language, / which is everything" (qtd. in Canagarajah, *Resisting* 57). Some other famous lines introduce the chapter "Conflicting Curricula: Interrogating Student Opposition." These verses from "The Schooner Flight" highlight the enriching complexity of possessing more than one language and one culture at once:

I'm just a red nigger who love the sea,  
I had a sound colonial education,  
I have Dutch, nigger, and English in me,  
and either I'm nobody, or I'm a nation. (qtd. in Canagarajah, *Resisting* 79)

The combination of the World Englishes and the Lingua Franca English models formed the theoretical principles on which I based my literacy stories course. The former gave me access to the wide and variegated postcolonial realities where English has been a contact language for centuries. The latter provided the rationale to legitimize the use of postcolonial critique in language learning in countries like Italy that have no direct connection with British colonialism (Canagarajah, *Negotiating* 202). In this way, the Lingua Franca English orientation has provided a view of language potentially free of the traditional structuralist divides—monolingual versus multilingual acquisition, grammar versus pragmatics, cognition versus context—and therefore apt to valorize difference in today's lingua franca world (Canagarajah, *Multilingual* and *Lingua Franca English*).

### *Postcolonial Critique and Literacy Stories*

My work on the literacy stories led me to compare and contrast the stories' narrated Englishes and the way postcolonial critics have theorized the use of English in postcolonial literature as well as the way they have analyzed English studies curricula in the ex-colonies. The result of this cross-examination provided more insights on the benefits of creating courses based on a blending of language instruction and literature.

Although a global pedagogy in English requires a twofold engagement with both the English language and its literatures, such a partnership appears less than appealing to the traditional giants of postcolonial critique. Gayatri Spivak's essay "The Burden of English" opens and closes with a view of contemporary students of English whom Spivak portrays as uninterested in English literature and apathetic toward the complexities of texts, let alone the analysis of colonial discourse. These students study English for the sake of the future remuneration a knowledge of the language would yield and, in fact, continue with the English classes with a business-like cynicism that results from the approach of a "demoralized" society in which English majors indifferently become call-centre agents (Spivak, "The Burden of English" 35–56). However, rather than exploring this new form of cultural alienation occurring in and through English classes, Spivak considers the situation beyond her analytic skills—and probably beyond what is required from her—so from all this she turns away and offers the usual superb lesson on colonial discourse as latent presence in literary texts that colonizes the students' minds. Her argumentation does not consider that these students are perhaps far from concerned about the colonization of their minds, since they are too busy trying to learn English and keep up with the linguistic requirements of their globalized culture. Spivak stands by Ngũgĩ's old position and teaches a lesson centred on the need to develop critical reading skills that "should" make one aware of colonizing figurations at work in literary texts and on the agency that one "should" earn from understanding it. Overall, her lesson is unconcerned with the intellectual disfiguration taking place through the global economic forces that make students eager to acquire English "per se" and with the fact that the university complies with this need. She sees both of these forces as antagonists to her engaged critical approach: "[T]he counterargument here is the cynicism of students in a demoralized society, where English learning at institutes of tertiary education has given way to call centers, in a way unimaginable by Ngugi Wa Thiong'o in the 70s" (Spivak, "The Burden of English" 56). Spivak, therefore, refuses to engage with the language-literature divide that she sees as most problematic. She fails to consider that colonial discourse is most effectively at work in the English

language class, where, however, she believes that students “engage actively with the mechanics of the language” (35) in politically neutral terms compared to the more demanding work necessary in the English literature class, where students should be engaged in “a slow transformation of the mind” (38).

Bill Ashcroft takes a similar position in his postcolonial critique, basing all his theory of English on the tenet that a “bewitching confusion” has long overshadowed the crucial difference between the “language” and “language use,” implicating colonial discourse (*Caliban* 2–6). In the age of global English, he believes that postcolonial scholars must turn to the insight of linguists in distinguishing the “language code” from its “use,” the *langue* from the *parole*. “Confusing” the two, as most scholars do, he sustains, means extending the long-confuted belief that signifier and signified correspond, that word and reference perfectly overlap (3). Such an old assumption, he concludes, dismisses the transformations of English that postcolonial writers have accomplished in the last decades, proving that conceiving English as “use” rather than the “language code” is the key to gaining a command of it in order to pursue one’s own interests and ends: “A global language such as English, inflected with locally produced variations, can become a key mode of empowerment” (6).

There are two main problems, I think, with Ashcroft’s theory. First, it sustains that, according to the consolidated scholarship of Western linguistics, the basic difference between *langue* and *parole* has long been sanctioned and that it is only with this latter that we experience language as realization. However, he writes ambiguously about the two principles, equating them with British Global English and postcolonial local variations respectively, thus inscribing a powerful new colonial discourse that regulates the politics of English on an updated, global level, following the previously explained monolingual orientation towards language, which developed in Europe alongside the rise of the idea of the nation (Canagarajah, *Translingual Practice* 19–24). When Ashcroft argues that “language can be changed, to be used in different ways of talking about the world” (*Caliban* 5), he implies that British English and its native standards can be adapted to postcolonial variations. Even when relying

on solid linguistic principles, on which basis he disapproves of the way postcolonial critics—like Spivak—continue to “confusedly” insist that English “embeds” colonial discourse, his appreciation of the linguistic achievements of postcolonial literatures based on the liberating “use” of the “langue” turns out to emphasize the self-other dialectic that has long characterized the history of linguistics and its applied disciplines.<sup>5</sup> Ashcroft writes:

The success with which post-colonial societies have transformed the English language, through literature and other production, is one of the most striking outcomes of the three centuries of British colonial adventurism. But the extent of that transformation is rarely sufficiently acknowledged because it disturbs the stereotypical binary relationship between colonizer and colonized. (*Caliban* 13)

The problem with Ashcroft’s critique is that it proposes to use a generalized and even objective approach to language but ascribes limiting and biased references to its defining terms. The following claims, for instance, contribute to a liberating view of English in this globalized era, were it not that by “language” Ashcroft seems to mean British Standard English: “Language has its own practical existence in the *parole* within which the usage of members, rather than the supervenient system of a priori referentiality, determines meanings. This becomes particularly true of English in which the notion of a standard ‘code’ is dismantled by the continuum of practices by which the language is constituted” (*Post-Colonial* 65).

The second problem with Ashcroft’s theory, closely related to the first, is the dismissal of the organic relation between language and culture, which he rather sees as arbitrary and, as such, comparable to the link between words and their referents. By contrast, a functionalist approach to language explains that language use does have an organic relationship with culture, which enters language use and affects the system of language as a whole through the three aspects of contextual reality mentioned: field, tenor, and mode. This is a theory by which functionalist linguists have managed to bridge the literary and the language worlds

and to take them, connected in this way, into schools from elementary to university levels (Martin and Rose 21–43). Functional linguists have also criticized the way varieties of English are analyzed by World Englishes scholars who, like literary critics such as Ashcroft, tend to emphasize the role of localized uses of single words or language chunks and neglect to consider the text as the minimal language unit that produces sense. It is in the text, therefore, that cultural and linguistic difference has to be examined.<sup>6</sup>

In his most recent book of criticism, *Globalectics* (2012), Ngũgí sustains that English as a global language should be seen as inherently related to the dialectics that have historically informed this language from colonial times. The neologism of the title is representative, he explains, of the way the colonial master-bondsman antagonism that developed in the teaching of English now regulates the teaching of English everywhere. This is because the unequal bondage is inherent in the use of the language, the conscious command of which may not alone lead to liberation, a lesson postcolonial literatures teach extensively. He emphasizes that the self-other dialectic of colonial discourse has always been at the base of the schooling system, which since colonial times has not ceased to produce its effects to maintain the status quo at the expense of the majority of the population. In this respect, schooling has remained unstirred by the emancipatory climate brought by postcolonial literatures, since these are taught at higher and advanced levels of education, while language acquisition is taught at lower levels. The old relation that binds master and bondsman, he claims, has long given way to a less obvious unequal relation in which the master “depends in lordship” and the servant is “independent in bondage” (Ngũgí, *Globalectics* 27–28). This is because the “workforce” remains poor whereas the “parasite classes” maintain the control of the common wealth. People are schooled into the acquisition of this very hierarchy, because while one studies and works for upward mobility, the language policies in curricula and teaching methods work to maintain the existing conditions. If the Caliban-Prospéro and Friday-Robinson dialectic has become politically invisible, it is still effectively at work in one of its places of origin—the English language classroom.

For this reason, today's education in English should concentrate not only on Spivak's "worldliness"—the way colonial discourse spread out alongside the diffusion of colonialism ("Can the Subaltern Speak?" 128)—but also and especially on "the use of the master's language by the bondsman" (Ngũgĩ, *Globalectics* 39), as achieved by postcolonial literary works "which realized the *worldliness* English contains and turned English to their use and purpose. A universalizing synthesis" (39; emphasis added). The "worldliness" of English that Ngũgĩ speaks about is more than the awareness of colonial discourse. It includes Said's lesson on the interconnectedness of worlds that should be the main foundation for today's English learning, one that can only be fully acquired through literature because its English is made of "a simultaneous relationship to something else, that is neither colonial nor postcolonial: a texture composed of all the marks left by the struggle between master and bondsman. A new synthesis" (Ngũgĩ, *Globalectics* 51). Today's English is "the organism where the blur and fusion happened and national belonging and roots melted and fused" (52–53). Accordingly, a contemporary education in English should be based on that major change and on the language lessons stemming from it, "[a] structural shift able to balance the national and the global" (57).

Against the grains of these tenets of postcolonial critique, the literacy stories have foregrounded some important truths about English learning. First, the English language classroom is not a place where students learn the "mechanics of English," as Spivak prefers to believe, but a social space where the negotiation of one's identity in English is at stake in a far deeper way than in the literature class, because language learning involves forms of mimicry that impact body and mind. Second, the literacy stories contradict the main theoretical assumptions of Ashcroft's theory. Set in the contact zone between the classroom and the local societies of the settings, the stories show two forms of language use—one encrusted with colonial discourse and one both performed by the protagonists' relation with English and embodied in the postcolonial Englishes of the stories. Equally important, the stories demonstrate the organic relationship between language and context, not only due to English's potential contact with oral languages and their practice of "embodying" their

referents but as a structural fact that concerns language use in general.<sup>7</sup> Finally, the stories contradict Ngũgĩ's critical position about English learning in Kenya, showing that colonial education was also resourceful for the precise reason that—if unwillingly—it passed on the treasures of its literary works, which allowed English learners to appropriate the language and change it to suit their purposes.

In this respect, the blending of language learning and literature in the literacy stories provides their most important lesson for readers. As Ashcroft claims in reference to the power of postcolonial literature, “literary writing appropriates, perhaps more forcefully than any other form of language use, the representational and re-creative power of language. This power is crucial for ideas of identity, whether personal, national or cultural, because identity is never ‘revealed’ nor ‘reclaimed’ but constructed as part of the social experience of language itself” (*Caliban* 13). For this reason, the English language classroom would greatly benefit from the inclusion of literature not as a mere reading text (or worse, one to be dissected through analytic interventions that destroy its imaginative meanings) but for the full enjoyment of its literariness. For the student of English as a “foreign” language, this means to enter the transformational sphere of “relexification,” where the resources of both language and literature work together and the learner can absorb English as a “register of communication able to bridge across English and one’s mother tongue” (Zabus 314–15).

Access to global Englishes means facing the widths of cultural differences. These differences may well become the “gaps of meanings” that Ashcroft writes about and which he considers the most interesting aspect of postcolonial literature when he writes that “perhaps the most fascinating and subtler aspect of the transformative function of post-colonial writing is its ability to signify difference, and even incommensurability between cultures, at the very point at which communication appears” (*Ashcroft, Post-Colonial* 81). Differences may well also be the “middle ground” that Chinua Achebe refers to when defining the postcolonial wisdom of his Igbo culture, “home to doubt and indecision, of suspension of disbelief, of make-belief, of playfulness, of the unpredictable, or irony” (5–6). And in an English language classroom open to a globalized

scenario like this, one really gets the chance to let one's English go and take the form that best suits it.

## Notes

- 1 Jenkins has extensively explained how standard language ideology has long permeated textbooks and course books, which are typically used to teach and learn English as a second or foreign language. These books promote the superiority of British Standard English over all other standards of the language. See Jenkins 31–64.
- 2 Graddol has harshly criticized the triadic way in which the history of English is traditionally told and to which Global English scholars have now added a fourth stage of development, corresponding to the history of the spread of English in the world. Graddol sustains that, because the traditional history of English is a construction of the Victorian age and is drenched in the colonialist ideology of those times, it is utterly inappropriate for describing the pluricentrism that characterizes the development of English in different parts of the world. See Graddol 58–59.
- 3 “Our beginnings never know our ends,” wrote T. S. Eliot. How far we have come from those early days when German and Scandinavian warriors descended on the south of England, unloading their languages. But as Eliot also wrote, ‘In my beginning is my end’ (King 28).
- 4 For a significant instance of the use of identity in English language learning, see the approach used in Hawkins and Nunan and Choi.
- 5 Pennycook provides a thorough account of the way colonial discourse has varied over the centuries from the early colonial period to the present in *The Cultural Politics of English as an International Language*.
- 6 World Englishes scholarship has recently been criticized for analyzing the varieties of English at the levels of the sentence, word, and sound, against the basic principle of systemic functional linguistics—the basis of World Englishes studies—according to which language can only be analyzed using texts that have a full meaning. See Mahboob and Szenes 580–84.
- 7 Ashcroft has extensively explained the reasons for and the processes that produce the strong effects of native oral languages on English in the varieties of Englishes produced in the ex-colonial countries. He has also explained that oral cultures have a specific view of language that deeply and visibly influences their use of English (Ashcroft, *Caliban* 125–42).

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