Monolingualism and Linguistic Exhibitionism in Fiction
Anjali Pandey
302 pages, 2016, USD $100 or £65 (hardcover)
Macmillan Palgrave

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This important book by Dr. Anjali Pandey places her among the pioneers of linguistic and interdisciplinary research into the multilingual stylistics of postcolonial, or—as Pandey defines the period following "9/11" (in 2001) and the financial melt-down of 2008— post-global, literature in English. The study examines ways multilingual content from "other" languages are presented and how these strategies are influenced by mass production, popular tastes and the exigencies of transnational publishers, themselves under the hegemonic sway of the UK and the USA. She takes stock of an array of extant approaches from which she borrows and fine-hones her own analytical tools, to delve into several interconnected language issues of the utmost pertinence in the 21st century, as the world's languages vie for prominence or struggle to survive in the face of the global hegemony of a few.

Pandey's ambitious study further examines the economics and implications for world languages of the culture of literary awards for English. Her main focus is on works published in the decade from 2003 to 2014, written in English by five transnational writers with roots in the Indian subcontinent who have been winners or nominees for the most prestigious awards.

The literary-linguistic and the socio-cultural phenomena Pandey describes are evolving fast and furiously, yet until now have received surprisingly little scholarly attention, least of all at the crucial interdisciplinary nexus of sociolinguistics, micro-linguistics, cultural studies, postcolonial theory and political and economic influences. The most prominent forerunners here must be Chantal Zabus' seminal work on the representation of African languages in Europhone West African fiction, *The African Palimpsest: Indigenization of Language in the West-African Europhone Novel*, (1991; 2007); and for the merchandising ideology underlying the award-culture, that of Graham Huggan: *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (2001). My own book, *Emerging Traditions: Towards a Postcolonial Stylistics of Black South African Fiction in English* (2011), inspired by Zabus,' traced the impact of historical, cultural and political changes on the stylistics and multilingual content in black fiction in English.

Pandey develops insightful, broad-based arguments regarding both causes and effects of the stylistic choices under scrutiny. She shows how the literary-linguistic and the socio-cultural phenomena that she addresses through her analysis of instances of multilingualism in the writings of multicultural authors writing in English reflect and sustain Western hegemonic monolingual preferences and complacency. They

are thus inextricably linked to the galloping hierarchization of languages and, she suggests, even contribute to accelerate language extinction in a context of multiple global interconnectivities. Pandey focuses particularly on the domains of transnational book publishing and marketing in the global context of neoliberal expansion of capital; she perceives the effects on multilingual stylistics of the mass manufacturing principles of Taylorism, and how the awards culture cunningly entices authors to play into the hands of these quite unliterary interests.

The first two of eight chapters present the macro-context of linguistic exhibitionism: the first gives an outline of the place of languages in the post-global era, and the second, an overview of the history and significance of award-cultures. Chapter Three, the richest seam in this literary-linguistic goldmine, defines linguistic exhibitionism and fulfills the promise to theorize multilingual inclusions and provide a proper classificatory framework, with rich discussion. The four remaining chapters are case-studies of works by prize-winning authors, each duly analysed using the newly established theoretical framework.

Chapter One, "The Place of Languages in the Space of Post-Globalism," presents the notion of linguistic exhibitionism and its relevance in the real world, revealing its political ramifications. In the most literal sense, it is how twenty-first-century powers pay homage to a fellow hegemonic language at major international events. Both English and Chinese were showcased in the extravagant American exhibit at *The 2010 Shanghai Expo*; and although Hillary Clinton made a linguistic blunder in Russian, the compliment she had paid was still paramount. The main point of such "momentary multilingualism" is cosmetic, diplomatic, in effect underscoring the importance of monolingual normativity.

In a context where supranational entities, be they private corporations or public institutions, are gaining ascendancy, alliances are sought with linguistically similar states, as witness to the twenty-first-century expansion of the Anglosphere. Pandey observes that the English language has accrued the most attraction power in the neoliberal paradigm, while also enjoying its reputation as the depoliticized language of neutrality. The Anglo-American hub of the Anglosphere is thus able to reap the advantages of both "pride" and "profit" in cultural commerce.

This first chapter broaches the pivotal paradox of how, through linguistic exhibitionism, multilingualism is subverted by the hegemonic code: tokenism plays the antithetical role of simultaneously recognizing and trivializing minor languages, reinforcing existing asymmetries and hegemonic status. The linguistic econometrics of translation also indicates a retrenchment of one-way flows from dominant to "subaltern" cultures. Thus we see how, in an ever more deterritorialized world, it is Anglo-American publishers who dominate the post-global multi-billion dollar book industry, specializing in a world-wide "cultural commodity." In the post-global scenario, colonization has been replaced by transterritorial expansionism where

cultural products have become "soft power," the pretty face of political and commercial dominance.

This cultural soft power (and its underlying linguistic hierarchies) is buttressed by highly regarded academic institutions, as English is increasingly coveted as the language of prestige and success… an instance of "fractal recursivity" (19). Shifts in the value, i.e. perceived usefulness, apportioned to languages, affect their ranking in the hierarchy of linguistic preference. Beyond the Anglosphere new markets are blossoming, particularly in India where there are local languages with huge readerships. A bilingual Booker Prize-winner whose mother-tongue is, say, Bengali, with 190 million speakers, thus taps into the global economy of cultural prestige, producing transnational linguistic capital, commanding markets in two major languages of the world. A brief analysis of Neel Mukherjee's *The Lives of Others* serves as an example of micro- and macro-linguistic strategies and language hierarchization.

The second chapter, on "Award Cultures" and "Prize-winning in a 'Flat' World," outlines the recent evolution of literary prizes and concomitant prestige. In the race for books with immediate financial impact, publishers are constantly on the look-out for exciting new writers. Transnational or multicultural writers have broad global appeal. All aspects of culture, including linguistic diversity, are seen as commodities with symbolic value for marketing and prestige.

In the same light, prizes are seen as instruments of prestige and market domination. The number of literary prizes awarded in Britain and the USA has increased exponentially in the last few decades. They are a means of control whereby the Centre positions itself as arbiter of quality. The most illustrious prizes have academic experts on their juries, literary "worthies" whose much-mediatized neutrality and independence guarantee the prestige value of their judgement which, in the longer term, affects canon-formation too.

A significant theme running throughout the book is the nefarious effects on literature and language diversity of market-driven publishing practices at various levels. Best-selling writers are poached from the smaller, local publishers that brought them to success by the big corporations. Successful authors are forced to relinquish their artistic freedom, Pandey argues, in a context of cold-blooded "editing" which is often barely disguised "taylorization" or customizing. When it comes to the micro-linguistics of multilingualism, a formulaic rebranding of aesthetic content in literary form for commercial purposes seems to have instigated a norm of shallow multilingualism. The chapter goes on to develop the ramifications of the profit motive —in the search and subsequent customizing of "authenticity" from the Periphery, which has led in the case of India to lucrative literary outsourcing notably through shark-like literary agents.

It comes to light that the predatory practices of poaching, co-optation, exploitation and institutionalized cultural mimicry echo imperial and colonial practices and reflect hegemonies that are more than linguistic. This lucid cultural-political slant on transnational

publishing practices, heralded in the introduction as a "social justice issue," is one of the great strengths of Pandey's book.

Chapter Three, on "In-visible Multilingualness," is the theoretical hub of the entire work, where the promise to provide a thorough-going framework grounded in "literary-sociolinguistics" to theorize micro-linguistic multilingual strategies is amply fulfilled.

In her definition of "linguistic exhibitionism" in literature, Pandey cites and enriches previous uses of the term, to better represent the multilingual materiality found in twenty-first-century transnational writing. Shallow multilingualism is specified as mainly lexical and cosmetic while deep multilingualism, rarely found now, is discursive, syntactic and often untranslated. The author describes how indigenous languages are disparaged and English set up as the norm. This leads to a complex of "Englishing" strategies and ways of subverting "other" languages to conform to market-driven monolingualism in fiction.

By bringing to her analysis a variety of contextual perspectives at the "macro" level, drawing on an array of disciplinary fields, Pandey gives the well-worn terms macro-linguistics and micro-linguistics a new lease on life in the service of what she refers to as "interdisciplinarianism."

Pandey's approach to interdisciplinarianism is a two-way street. This key chapter proposes a literary-linguistic ethno-methodological framework, devising a taxonomy of forms of Linguistic Exhibitionism with relevance for the humanities, especially literary stylistics. It supplements and refines the "abrogation/appropriation" model of postcolonial studies and provides tools of explanatory rather than merely descriptive potential. This preliminary framework does not yet, to my mind, embed the notion of degrees or continua that Pandey suggests would be a useful addition—what she calls a "cline-based framework."

The classification of strategies is presented in two flow-charts, reflecting dynamic linguistic processes. The first breaks Linguistic Exhibitionism down into three types, Abrogation, Appropriation and "Englishing," each then subdivided. Englishing, a term Pandey has enriched to cover ways in which multicultural writers spotlight English in a positive light, completes the earlier model. The second flow-chart has a total of 34 sub-categories.

Despite so many often esoteric labels, to the adept of post-colonial literary linguistics the chart clarifies certain characterizations: for example that the strategies merging at the "deep multilingualism" node belong to the opaque, oracy-oriented, anti-translational branch of Appropriation.

In reading the following four chapters of case-studies, where Pandey uses the framework in her analyses of specific novels, the non-initiate (specialists of other disciplines) will gradually make sense of the labels and levels, and perceive their relevance and the finesse they allow.

The author proceeds to chronicle and explore a number of different strategies through a range of scholarly accounts of forms and functions of multilingualism. There seems to be consensus among

scholars that shallow multilingualism is becoming the norm, even allowing for microlinguistic strategies of "familiarization." Certainly this is apparent in the prize-contenders' writing, as Pandey has eloquently explained. Yet this is perhaps where the limits of her corpus become apparent. For while she deplores the damage being inflicted upon indigenous languages and, indeed, the wider world of writers everywhere by mass market-oriented cultivation and customization of award-winners, she has purposely excluded from the realm of her consideration the vast number of little-known writers and poets around the world, some writing in their own language, some in English, who fall outside, resist or reject the norms that the transnational publishing industry seeks to impose.

Chapters Four to Seven are case-studies, each of a winning or short-listed work of fiction by a prize-winning author originating from the Indian Subcontinent. The works are: *The White Tiger* by Aravind Adiga (Laureate of the Man Booker Prize, 2008), *Brick Lane* by Monica Ali (Shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize, 2003), *Unaccustomed Earth* by Jhumpa Lahiri (Frank O'Connor International Short Story Award, 2008) and *The Enchantress of Florence* by Salman Rushdie (Longlisted for the Man Booker Prize, 2008).

These thought-provoking chapters put into practice and further develop aspects of Pandey's proposed framework for Linguistic Exhibitionism. Beyond micro-linguistic analysis, each novel is discussed with relevance to a particular concept: "Outsourcing English" for Adiga's novel, "Curried English" (a Rushdie expression) for *Brick Lane*, the "Trajectory of Language Death" in Lahiri's collection of short stories and "Linguistic Insecurity and Linguistic Imperialism" for *The Enchantress of Florence*. Although each work has been chosen because it exemplifies Linguistic Exhibitionism and spotlights English, Pandey skillfully brings major topics of sociolinguistic debate into her discussions, as well as criticism of the authors. (The chapter on Rushdie, though uncompromising, is brilliant.) She criticizes the role that each of the four writers plays in undermining their ancestral languages and promoting English.

Here again, one perceives the limitations of a corpus of prestigious award-winners, entered by mostly transnational publishers and pre-selected on extremely limited criteria: one would hardly expect to find linguistic resistance in such a coterie! Indeed, we learn in the early chapters that most transnational prize-winners are from the diaspora rather than the actual countries of the Periphery.

The Conclusion begins with a cogent discussion of the potential uses of Linguistic Exhibitionism and the proposed theoretical framework. Pandey reflects again on the place of multilingualism in literature as creative commerce, making the case for more expansive readings; and gives examples of linguistic spectacles reminiscent of those in Chapter One. At last, after a couple of pages mulling over the question of whether or not books (by which is clearly meant fiction) have influence over culture, we come to the pithy final section on typification strategies which does, indeed, summarize the main findings of the work.

The linguistic and literary strategies through which prize-winning twenty-first-century authors purvey an increasingly normative multilingualism display three main trends. The first is a tendency to homogenize, using mainly shallow multilingualism to privilege linguistic familiarity, fronting English with corresponding invisibilization of other linguistic presences. The second is linguistic valorization, or asymmetrical linguistic valuation within or across texts, where diglossic opposites of various kinds and thematization of language are used to exalt English and denigrate multilingualism. The case-studies showed many ways of doing this, from the subtlest strategies to overt, even strident, acts of englishing.

The third and final tendency is towards linguistic peripherization, where authors prefer to use truncated, transliterated or "told" multilingualism, forms which make linguistic diversity quite invisible rather than to give the other language presence by showing or transcribing it. Furthermore, within the stories and characters themselves, parochialism is contrasted to cosmopolitanism, backwardness to modernity, sustaining the notions of privilege and superiority associated with English and of lesser worth for other languages.

Pandey concludes that the works she has analysed bear witness to a trend of "augmented monolingualism" that, she claims, differentiates them from comparable writing of the twentieth century. The global massification of publishing markets coupled with the predicted rise in the percentage of the global population who will be middle-class lead Pandey to suppose that the market for works by transnational authors in an ever flatter world will grow. While she allows for the possibility of "deep multilingual inclusion in the unwritten novels of the future" (266) and quotes Glissant's defence of the right to "opacity" (275), there is no escaping that the overall propensity of the book is towards pessimism for linguistic diversity.