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***English Linguistic Imperialism from Below: Moral Aspiration and Social Mobility*. Leya Mathew. Multilingual Matters, 2022, 191 pp.**

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As a working scholar merging academic research and teaching with real-world professional activities, my research interests center around how the English language acts as a practical tool in global communication and can be leveraged for career readiness and mobility. However, it was not until I read Leya Mathew's book, *English Linguistic Imperialism from Below* (2022), that I confronted the linguistic imperialism and cultural hegemony in my work. Mathew's exploration of linguistic imperialism (the dominance of one language over another) and cultural hegemony (the dominance of one culture over another) in the context of English language dominance in India offers insights into understanding their presence in English language education. Through a framework that can be transferable to diverse sociolinguistic contexts, Mathew explores how English became dominant in India and its profound impact on non-elites, social mobility, and language hierarchies. In the process of the study, connections between moral aspirations, social mobility, and English proficiency among non-elites attending low-fee private schools reveal how English language dominance perpetuates inequalities.

*English Linguistic Imperialism from Below's* theoretical framework challenges the idea that linguistic imperialism is solely a top-down process. Mathew's analysis is based on ethnographic research conducted in Kerala, India, drawing on various sources, including interviews with teachers, students, parents, policy documents, and textbooks. It argues that English's prevalence in post-market reform India is not just due to Western powers or elites but also because of the aspirations and desires of non-elites (individuals who are not part of the elite class, and often marginalized and excluded from the upward social mobility that comes with an English language education). The book stresses the role of morality and ethics in shaping English dominance, examining the complex relationships and desires that maintain it through consideration of specific political, economic, and social contexts.

Chapter 1, "Moral Aspiration," and Chapter 2, "Development and its Afterlives," relay the historical context in developing an education system that emphasizes the pursuit of progress and dignity. The chapters trace the impact of the Communist Party's education and land reforms in Kerala alongside the government's efforts to promote Malayalam-medium education and demonstrates how a social and linguistic hierarchy formed via socio-religious agents who facilitated a perception of an English language educational status by establishing schools for different castes.

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Chapter 3, “Temporal Migrations,” investigates the economic implications of the English-Malayalam divide in India and the perception of English-medium education as a conduit to social mobility. It looks at parents’ aspirations for their children’s English-medium education and challenges they face, such as private school costs, and explores the social and cultural contexts surrounding English schooling and development in Kerala. Chapter 4, “Social Lives of Rote,” and Chapter 5, “Scripted Lives of Communication,” challenge negative perceptions of rote pedagogy in English classrooms in non-elite settings. Mathew advocates for reevaluating rote learning’s role in English language education due to socioeconomic factors that positions it as a significant method for mothers as it is a method often relied upon by them in educating their children (p. 66). The chapters examine the impact of rote learning, coaching culture, and the challenges in implementing multilingual language policies in English medium education, taking in account the significant role mothers often play as key instigators and regulators of their children’s educations in non-elite situations. Chapter 6, “Obsessive Hope,” substantiates the significance of non-elite mothers educating their children by highlighting how the state has exploited this gendered responsibility in marginalized groups who have obsessively hoped for their children’s academic success. Chapter 7, “Mandated Resistance”, and Chapter 8, “Rote to Interaction,” present implemented reforms in Kerala to protect English classrooms from rote pedagogies. Explained is the emphasis on oracy over literacy learning and the chapters highlight pedagogies of shame that have emerged, affecting teachers and students. Mathew asserts that disparity widened for learners and parents when forced by a community of activist-educators to transition from proficiency-focused English education to oracy-based methods. Chapter 9 concludes by restating how the role of aspirations and ethical-moral actions in shaping English education, as well as the convergence of activism and transnationalization in altering norms of English proficiency, have perpetuated existing inequalities.

While the primary focus of *English Linguistic Imperialism from Below* is India, its theoretical framework and critical analysis are helpful for language educators in Japan. By critically reflecting on their language teaching methods and the complexities of linguistic imperialism, instructors in Japan can strive for more inclusive and empowering language education that aligns with their students’ and their families’ aspirations and values, particularly concerning gender and social mobility. Gender and non-elites’ role in the spread of English is a familiar situation in Japan. For instance, the phenomenon of linguistic imperialism seen in the book is observable in Japan’s language teaching industry with major language teaching companies in Japan taking advantage of females as affordable labourers, requiring minimal English proficiency from applicants interested in teaching English to children (Kobayashi, 2019). Additionally cultural hegemony is evident in teaching

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approaches influenced by western-centric, educational standards (Zeng et al., 2023) Ultimately, the book's critique of the neoliberal market-driven approach to English language teaching, influenced by economic globalization, historical connections, and socio-political relations, prompts instructors in Japan to consider alternative pedagogical approaches that empower and promote social justice.

However, the book's limitation lies in its theoretical complexity. It draws on postcolonial theory, critical applied linguistics, and feminist theory, and thus requires an accessible writing style to explain complex ideas to many readers. Mathew assumes prior knowledge of theories; as a result, she sometimes uses repetitive and esoteric language that alienates readers unfamiliar with the specialized expressions, making the text challenging to decipher. Nonetheless, for those willing to unravel these concepts, it offers an opportunity to deepen and expand understanding of the development and consequences of English as a lingua franca.

By focusing a critical lens on the moral and affective aspects of English language learning and its impact on social mobility, Leya Mathew's *English Linguistic Imperialism from Below* (2022) encourages educators to reflect on the complexities of linguistic imperialism and its implications for language teaching practices. Unlike conventional perspectives that emphasize the economic and political advantages of language acquisition, Mathew's emphasis on the agency of non-elites redirects attention to often neglected gender-related challenges in education and social consequences. Equally important, Mathew demands context-specific analysis in understanding the global spread of English. By recognizing the influence of linguistic imperialism and cultural hegemony in the Japanese language education system, educators can use this book as a resource to promote inclusive and equitable language teaching practices that empower learners and identify the diverse linguistic realities of English language education in Japan. Furthermore, the book's examination of gender dynamics and societal opportunities in English language learning can provide insights for addressing gender-related challenges in language education and promoting a more inclusive and empowering educational environment for educators, learners, and their families in Japan.

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