

Jonathan Webster (ed.), *Collected Works of Braj B. Kachru*, London: Bloomsbury, 2015. Vol I Pp. ix + 270; Vol II Pp. viii + 236; Vol III Pp. ix + 282

Reviewed by MARIO SARACENI, University of Portsmouth

Braj Kachru is one of those scholars who, like his mentors J.R. Firth and M.A.K Halliday, have made, during their careers, a fundamental contribution to defining entire fields of research, while also developing paradigm-shifting analytical frameworks that have underpinned scholarship in those very fields. This three-volume collection of Kachru's papers offers a timely and comprehensive overview of his work, particularly concerning the development of the World Englishes paradigm (see Saraceni 2015 for a critical analysis), and the opportunity to appreciate how his ideas developed over the years. Apart from its intrinsic value, this is especially important given the fact that what inevitably happens with scholars of this calibre is that, as their work gets cited, it is also increasingly read *indirectly*, i.e. via the writings of other academics and researchers who have incorporated, and perhaps slightly reinterpreted, the original concepts in their own scholarship. Over decades, this can produce something approximating a 'Chinese whispers' effect. Although lacking the radical transformations that occur in the popular children's game, in academia this can result in a degree of simplification in the ways somebody's ideas are synthesised over the years. Such a process of simplification may result, for example, in emphasis being placed on certain aspects of a scholar's complex analytical system, while other aspects are overlooked. This is one more reason why the present collection, edited by Jonathan Webster, is particularly important and valuable.

The volumes include a total of thirty-three papers, covering a period of 25 years, going as far back as 1976. Volumes I and II essentially follow a chronological order and trace the evolution of the World Englishes paradigm, Kachru's major contribution in sociolinguistics. Volume III, interestingly, is more thematically organised around the topic of multilingualism and language contact, an aspect of Kachru's work that is perhaps less well-known compared to the publications directly dealing with World Englishes.

The very first paper in the collection, 'Models of English in the Third World: White Man's Linguistic Burden or Language Pragmatics?', marks the first important step in the development of what was later to become the World Englishes analytical framework. In this mile-stone paper, Kachru responded to an earlier paper by Prator (1968), who in turn had denounced what he considered a 'heresy' in applied linguistics, namely the suggestion made by Halliday et al. (1964) that the choice of the variety of English to be taught as a foreign/second language did not need to be restricted to British or American English but could include other regional varieties too, since English was 'no longer the possession of the British, or even of the British and the Americans, but an international language which increasingly large numbers of people adopt for at least some of their purposes' (Halliday et al. 1964: 293). This was at the time a revolutionary idea,

and Prator's paper was a vehemently conservative reaction to it. His argument was that regional varieties of English were simply not intelligible enough and their adoption as models in the classroom would be detrimental. In particular, he asserted that he was "firmly convinced that for the rest of the English-speaking world the most unintelligible educated variety is Indian English" (1968: 473).

In his paper, Kachru, who considered himself a speaker of Indian English, offered not only a response to Prator's linguistic conservatism, but also an outline of those principles which were to become tenets in World Englishes: (a) the conceptual and ideological disconnection between the English language and a single ethnic and cultural group, (b) the recognition of the cultural and linguistic validity of regional varieties of English, (c) the notion that intelligibility is a dynamic process rather than a static product inherently present (or not) in languages and varieties, and, (d) the necessity to abandon a colonial mentality in relation to the presence, the roles and the uses of English in the world. These principles, outlined in this historically important paper, formed the core of the World Englishes paradigm, of which Kachru can rightly be considered the founder.

The other papers in Volume I cover a considerable amount of ground, and discuss issues ranging from the need of formal descriptions of new varieties of English to the importance of distinguishing the pragmatic functions of new varieties of English from those of 'old' varieties (e.g. British or American English), the necessity to adopt more egalitarian attitudes towards new varieties of English, the power – or, to use Kachru's term, the 'alchemy' (chapter 6) – that the language has in the world in terms of the opportunities it offers as well as the potential threats it poses, and the implications that the pluralisation of English into Englishes has for learners and teachers.

Like Volume I, Volume II also opens with a paper of particular historical significance in the development of World Englishes. In 'The Second Diaspora of English', Kachru describes the spread of English in the world by adopting the term *diaspora*, formed by the Greek morphemes *dia* ("through") and *spora* ("seed"), to illustrate how "The "seeds" of the language were "spread" in enormously diverse sociocultural environments, and the resultant varieties of the language show this diversity' (Volume II, p. 6). In his continued efforts to demonstrate differences both in the forms and the in the functions of English around the world, Kachru used the concept of *diaspora* to explain that there have been different dispersions of the English language outside the British Isles. Fundamentally, one diaspora brought English to North America, Australia and New Zealand, following the movement of English-speaking populations who settled in these territories as they were annexed to the British Empire, while the other spread English in places that had been subject to a different type of colonization, primarily aimed at exploitation rather than settlement (for a full account of these phenomena, see Schneider 2007). The importance of this distinction is not just a matter of geographical and historical accuracy, but primarily has to do with sociolinguistic description. While 'first diaspora' varieties developed largely independently from

the influence of other languages and cultures (as the original inhabitants in North America, Australia and New Zealand had been almost entirely wiped out), 'second diaspora' varieties emerged within rich and diverse sociocultural environments, e.g. in the Indian subcontinent, the Malay peninsula, Nigeria, East Africa, etc. where different ethnicities, cultures, religions and languages co-existed side by side. It has been here that, in Kachru's own words, 'the English language has come out of its traditional Western fold and has acquired many new linguistic conventions and cultural and literary traditions' (Volume II, p. 29).

Another reason why this paper is particularly important is that it is one of the first to include a graphical representation of the three 'concentric circles of English', possibly the best known visual metaphor of the spread of English in the world. In this model, each 'circle' represents 'the type of spread, the range of functions of English in a region, the types of literary creativity and experimentation, the patterns of acquisition, and the depth of penetration of English at various societal levels' (Volume II, p. 8). The 'circles' model has been extremely influential in this area of sociolinguistics and, although it has attracted criticism in more recent years (Bruthiaux 2003, Yano 2009), it remains a fundamental reference point for anyone studying issues related to the forms and functions of English in the world. It is worth noting that, even before adding a graphical representation of it, Kachru had illustrated the 'three circles' model in another seminal paper, 'Standards, Codification, and Sociolinguistic Realism: The English Language in the Outer Circle', included, somewhat unexpectedly, in Volume III of the collection.

The rest of Volume II includes papers that, stressing various aspects of World Englishes, call for a paradigm shift in our conceptualization of English in the world. Kachru invites us to re-think notions such as the supposed novelty of the wrongly labelled 'new Englishes' and the linguistic richness and creative possibilities that bilingualism and multilingualism offer. The underlying concept in most of the papers, however, remains the general point that plurality is the key to understanding a vast sociolinguistic phenomenon that the singular 'English' would simply be unable to capture. 'The Speaking Tree: A Medium of Plural Canons' is a particularly powerful piece, where Kachru addresses common misconceptions about the roles and uses of English in the world, namely that the primary function of English is to enable people across the globe to communicate with native speakers of English and to learn their cultures, and that non-native Englishes are essentially deficit varieties, representing a deterioration of the language, which only native-speaker teachers can rectify.

Volume III is thematically centred on the topic of bi/multilingualism. This is an area of Kachru's scholarship that unjustly has had somewhat less prominence compared to his work more explicitly devoted to World Englishes. In a period where 'super-diversity' (Blommaert 2010), 'translingual practice' (Canagarajah 2013) and language hybridity (Rubdy & Alsagoff 2013) have become mainstream in sociolinguistics, it is extremely interesting to (re-)read Kachru's papers on, for example, the dynamic interplay between languages in multilingual societies. This

is particularly important for the serious researcher and scholar who wishes to have a comprehensive grasp of how ideas have evolved over time and who does not want to be too easily seduced by what might sometimes be presented as ‘cutting-edge’ or ‘breakthrough’. The papers in this third volume, therefore, constitute a definite strength in the collection.

Indeed, all the papers are well chosen, without doubt. With an author as prolific as Kachru, it must have been a challenge to select and, especially, to exclude papers. Nevertheless, it was surprising to see that ‘Teaching World Englishes’ (Kachru 1992), which provides a set of suggestions for including World Englishes in the language classroom, was not included. Also, given the nature of the publication, it would have been very interesting to include Kachru’s early work on Indian English, such as ‘The Indianness in Indian English’ (Kachru 1965), for example. However, even with the inevitable omissions, this is undoubtedly a very useful collection of many of Kachru’s key papers, which will prove invaluable to both researchers and students of sociolinguistics and World Englishes.

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*Author’s address: School of Languages and Area Studies,
University of Portsmouth, King Henry 1st Street, Portsmouth, PO1 2DZ,
mario.saraceni@port.ac.uk*