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## *English and the Discourses of Colonialism*

**Review by Daniel Linder**

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*ENGLISH AND THE DISCOURSES OF COLONIALISM.* Allistair Pennycock. London and New York: Routledge, 1998.

The cultural debate on the lingering discourses of colonialism/imperialism has touched the English language teaching (ELT) profession on two different occasions. In 1992, Robert Philipson published *Linguistic Imperialism*, and now, in 1998, Allistair Pennycock has published *English and the Discourses of Colonialism*, an analysis of how the discourses of colonialism “adhere” to the English language itself—a topic of potential interest to all of those in the ELT profession.

Pennycock combines his personal insights gained while teaching English in Hong Kong with solid academic research conducted before the territory was handed over to mainland China. He also makes reference to other East Asian former British colonies, including Australia, where he lives and works. He has concluded that within the spaces where colonialist discourse has taken place, both in the colonies and within Britain itself, certain representations of the colonizer (the Self) and the colonized (the Other) have a way of “adhering” to the English language itself, while producing and reproducing (what Pennycock refers to as “(re)producing”) each other reciprocally. This is how these colonialist discourses have remained even though the physical colonial presence has departed. These discourses of the Self and the Other become available to the speakers of English, whether native or non-native, while resistance discourses are made unavailable to those who most need them. These concepts of adherence and availability of discourses are newly introduced by Pennycock here.

*TESL Reporter* readers will enjoy chapters 5 and 6 the most. In chapter 6, Pennycock locates the source of adherent notions concerning the English language itself (the TE in TESOL), such as English as a dynamic language with a greater vocabulary and simpler grammar than others, outside the discourses of education and applied linguistics. In chapter 7, the author discusses how notions about our students (the SOL) emanate from similar sources, become fixed as a stereotype, and continue to be (re)produced through popular discourse, ELT materials, and textbooks.

Allistair Pennycock’s book only marginally mentions the U.S. as a space of

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even though Britain's physical colonies have been handed back, colonialist discourse continues. However, he leaves a gap by not studying the discourses of U.S. cultural and social colonialism. Such an analysis will be needed to fill this gap left by Pennycock.

### About the Reviewer

*Daniel Linder has taught English as a foreign language at Cursos Internacionales, Universidad de Salamanca (Spain) for the last ten years. His professional interests also include translation, a field with which he is involved as translator and member of the Institute of Linguists (London). He welcomes comments at <dlinder@gugu.usal.es> or <amateos@gugu.usal.es>.*