

**Book Review**

**Global English and Political Economy**  
(By John O' Regan, Abingdon)

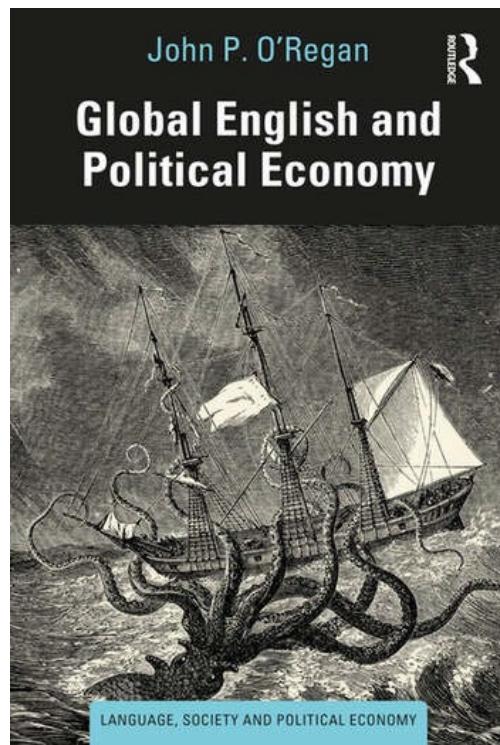
A Review by  
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*Front Cover*

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*Global English and political economy* by John O'Regan deserves to be on the reading list of those interested in World Englishes, Global Englishes, English as an international language, neoliberalism, linguistic entrepreneurship and critical applied linguistics. The author invites readers to understand the complex connection between the hegemonic position of global English and the dynamics of political economy, under study.

What is behind the global spread of English and what has led to English gaining a strong position as a world language? Through historical analysis and an interdisciplinary approach, the book offers an in-depth investigation to help answer this question. *Global English and political economy* is grounded in Marxist perspectives, the analysis of the world-systems, and the analysis of international political economy to uncover the origins and development of English as a world language. The main argument of this book is that the dominance of English is closely linked to the continuous accumulation of capital in the world capitalist system. Weaving together Marxist theories of capital accumulation and insights from the world-systems analysis, the author tells compelling stories that trace how English has 'free-ridden' in the vast networks of global capital.

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The book is characterized by its historical depth, offering the reader a nuanced account of the roots and the rise of hegemonic English. By combining an examination of the current status of English and a journey through its historical development, the book closely links English to the development of global capitalism. In addition to historical analysis, writing with an interdisciplinary approach is one of the book's strengths. The author seamlessly combines various contemporary perspectives familiar to English teachers. These disciplines include superdiversity, translanguaging, translingual practice, language commodification, World Englishes, and English as a Lingua Franca. In this way, the book provides a comprehensive examination of the multi-faceted nature of global English, and highlights its impact on different disciplinary perspectives.

The book is profound, comprehensive, and well written. It is divided into eight, coherent chapters. Chapter 1 is an overview of the theoretical frameworks and perspectives that underpin the book's stance. That is, there is a strong correlation between the global expansion of capital and the English language. The chapter looks at Marx's conceptualization of capital and its flow, classical theories of imperialism, world-systems theory, development theory, and theories of structural power within the international political economy. The basic premise of this chapter is that there is a construct of a discourse of English as standard normative model. Through this mechanism, English has been able to function as a beneficiary of the world capital, thereby establishing structural dominance over other languages for centuries.

Chapter 2 is concerned with the study of endless British imperialism over an extended period of time. The focus is on exploring the informal empire that existed alongside with formal territorial empire during the British Empire. A central concept introduced in this chapter is the idea of 'gentlemanly capitalism' as conceptualized by the renowned historians Cain and Hopkins. In this chapter, the author traces the roots of capitalism to a specific convergence of competing social, political, and economic forces. At the end of this chapter, it is argued that the convergence of these forces influenced the kind of English that Britain exported, emphasizing that this was predominantly a class-based normative standard.

Chapter 3 contains a detailed historical account of 'the Pax Britannica', the British world economy, and the outbreak of World War I. It examines the political economy of global English, covering the period from 1850 to World War I in 1914. This chapter expands on the history of British capital expansion and the symbiotic relationship with English as it 'free rides' on this expansion. The discussion offers insights into the expansion of capital and the structuring of English in different regions of the world, including Japan, Latin America, India, China, and Africa. The narratives then continue to the expansion of English in Africa, by examining the phenomenon of railroad imperialism and the global transportation of English made possible by railways. The chapter concludes that structuring policies of English in China, driven by British railway development projects, played a central role in this process of transformation.

Chapter 4 deals with the political economy of global English, by focusing from World War I to the late 1970s. This period marks a significant shift in power-- from a world-system dominated by Britain to the United States. This chapter examines the period between 1870 and 1918, which is characterized by the transition of hegemony as Britain's influence declines. The years, from 1918 to 1945, are referred to the 'incubus period,' during which the expansion of US capital and the development of a political economy of global English. The remaining sections of the chapter are devoted to the various phases of this transition, including the US-led establishment of the post-war 'Bretton Woods' governance system after 1944, Cold War decades, communism in East Asia, and the role of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan in a strategic anti-communist alliance. The chapter ends with a description of US capital networks in Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East after 1945 and mentions the global dominance and 'seignorage' of English.

Chapter 5 focuses on the role of 'capital-centric' English in the world-system in a contemporary period. The chapter recounts how English capitalized on the US-led transinstitutional management of global debt crises, from the 1980s and 1990s to 2007-8. The chapter highlights how international debt crises in Latin America and Asia led to paradigm shifts in English education policy. English-mediated structural programs became a central component of US-initiated policies to address global sovereign debt. In addition, China's 'open door' policy during this period also helped reinforce this situation. The financial crisis of 2007-8 not only reinforced the global dominance of English but also demonstrated how English and its grammar-oriented form had evolved into a structural effect in its relationship with capital.

Chapter 6 looks at the 2020s, the 'American Century', in particular. This chapter charts the status of English at a time when US hegemony was declining while China was exerting increasing influence over others. In the face of China's increasing power, this chapter examines the future of the US-led world capitalist system in terms of China's potential role as its successor. In this context, the chapter discusses the chance of Mandarin Chinese displacing English as the structural lingua franca. The chapter concludes with an overview of the main challenges and obstacles to China's role on the world stage.

Chapter 7 shifts the focus to more recent perspectives on conceptualizations of English from different contexts. It attempts to understand why the standardized forms of English continue to dominate despite the emergence of different forms and diverse uses of English. This chapter introduces concepts familiar to readers in English education field. It describes in detail the concepts of superdiverse translationalism, ownership, commodification, resistance, and linguistic hybridity. The chapter also discusses superdiversity, translanguaging, translingual practice, and includes paradigms such as World Englishes and English as a Lingua Franca. The chapter concludes that in the face of multiculturalism and manifestations of English diversity, normative standardized English, which is structurally privileged, still endures. This phenomenon reaffirms the close link of normative English and the power of capitalism.

Chapter 8, the book's conclusion, considers the possible effects of the worldwide crisis of capitalism and the current global dominance of English in its standard normative structure. It invites readers to reconsider the current state of the world capitalist system and how capitalism is responding to its challenges. Beyond the linguistic issues, this chapter also discusses the social issues, namely global inequality, and environmental problems. Finally, this chapter contains a critical analysis of the world capitalist system. The main argument is that we need more alternatives to deal with the problems of capitalism.

To summarize, *Global English and Political Economy* is a profound and thought-provoking book that adds depth to our understanding of global English. The critical approach and the applied linguistics perspective run throughout the book. The theoretical foundations are well laid out, making the book accessible to advanced students and teachers in applied linguistics and related fields. The book not only contributes to academic discourse but also encourages critical reflection on the future development of English in a rapidly changing world. The book offers a new perspective on the interrelationship between linguistic capital and the global political economy.

## References

O'Regan, P. J. (2021). **Global English and Political Economy**. New York and London: Routledge.