1 Glocalization and Grobalization: Critical Issues in English Language Teaching and Teacher Education in East Asia

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1.1 GLOBALIZATION: THE GLOBAL AND THE LOCAL

As a number of scholars have pointed out, globalization, in the sense of blurring national and geographical boundaries, has a long history. However, in terms of the establishment of a new economic order characterized by open markets and free trade, globalization began in the 1940s with the establishment of new institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the precursor to the World Trade Organization (WTO), based on the belief that global integration is more likely to bring about peace and prosperity to all. Much of the discourse of globalization was centred on economic policies that argued for deregulation, privatization, marketization, and free trade. The focus on political economy also led to the view that globalization is an expression of global or transnational capitalism (Roudometof, 2016).

The geopolitical origin of globalizing forces has led some scholars to argue that globalization is mainly a homogenizing force characterized by Western domination, as evidenced by the adoption of westernized ideology and culture, typified by the United States, as the norm for the rest of the world (see, e.g., Barber, 1995; Latouche, 1996). Globalization has been depicted as essentially westernization and Americanization typified by *McDonaldization*. Others, however, have pointed out that the popular understanding of

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globalization as linear expansions of political and economic powers is simplistic and that the process is more dispersed. For example, Appadurai (1990) points out that cultural homogenization occurs in tandem with cultural heterogenization and that the tension between the two is central to the globalization process. In a similar vein, Friedman observes that cultural fragmentation and homogenization are two constitutive trends of global reality (Friedman, 1994).

The subtitle of this volume, 'Global Challenges and Local Responses', presupposes the duality of the global and the local and suggests that there are potential tensions between the two. Therefore, before we outline the challenges and common critical issues confronting jurisdictions covered in this volume, it would be pertinent to review two different perspectives on globalization which are relevant to the discussions, namely the concept of glocalization propounded by Robertson (1992/2000) and the concept of grobalization propounded by Ritzer (2007).

1.1.1 Glocalization

Robertson (1992/2000) draws attention to the social and cultural dimensions of globalization and defines the concept of globalization as 'the compression of the world and the intensification of the consciousness of the world as a whole' (p. 2). He questions the polarization of the local and the global and the perception of the world as the local resisting the hegemonic global. He observes that '[r]ather than speaking of an inevitable tension between the local and the global it might be possible to think of the two as not being opposites but rather as being different sides of the same coin' (Robertson & White, 2007, p. 62). In the sense that globalization involves the reconstruction of the local, the latter, in Robertson's view, can be considered 'an *aspect* of globalization' (Robertson, 1994/2012, p. 196, original emphasis). For him, 'globalization has involved the simultaneity and the inter-penetration of what are conventionally called the global and the local, or – in more general vein – the universal and the particular' (p. 196). Robertson adopts the term glocalization, which originated from the Japanese term *dochakuka* and became the business buzzword in the 1980s as a marketing strategy to advertise and tailor goods and services on a global basis to the needs of different local markets in the world. He proposes that *globalization is inherently glocalization* – as soon as an external practice is adopted locally, it goes through local interpretation and adaptation (Robertson, 1992/2000). Hence,

it is not possible to have the practice transposed or transplanted wholesale; *it becomes glocal* (see also Robertson, 1994/2012).

Robertson (1995) criticizes the 'cultural imperialism' (Beck, Sznaider & Winter, 2003) and the *McDonaldization* (Ritzer, 1993/2000) theses that focus on cultural homogenization as neglecting a critically important aspect of the globalization process, which is heterogenization. He argues that cultural messages that emanate from the West, or from the 'centre', are received and interpreted in a variety of ways by different local groups, or the 'periphery'.

1.1.2 Grobalization

Robertson's conception of glocalization has been interpreted in various ways by scholars. Some elucidate his position as highlighting the fact that both the global and the local are participants in contemporary social life and that the future is not determined solely by macro-level forces but also by groups, organizations and individuals operating at the micro level. Others criticize his treatment of globalization as 'monism' and that the complete enmeshing of the global and the local does not address the interaction between the global and the local and how the relationship between the two is reconfigured within time intervals (Roudometof, 2016, p. 392).

Ritzer, a major critic of glocalization, points out that there is an overemphasis of glocalization in the globalization literature and a lack of critical orientation and effective treatment of the power relationship. In his view,

> [G]localization implies a smooth and harmonious relationship between the global and the local. They seem to mix together peacefully with little or no conflict and with no sense that one is seeking to impose itself on the other . . . [T]here is no sense of power in the process of glocalization, especially the fact that nations, organizations, and corporations have the capacity to, and do in fact, impose themselves on local geographic areas. (Ritzer, 2012, p. 896)

Similarly, Thornton (2000) points out that, in obliterating the duality and tension between the global versus the local, 'Robertson's "glocal" amounts to an inoculation against further resistance . . . [and that] inadvertently, this version of the glocal serves capitalist globalization by naturalizing it, rendering it acceptable by rendering it numbingly familiar' (p. 83).

To redress the overemphasis on glocalization in the globalization process, Ritzer argues for the need to attend to the homogenizing impact originating

from hegemonic forces. He proposes the concept of 'grobalization', which he defines as the 'imperialistic ambitions of nations, corporations, organisations, and the like and their desire, indeed need, to impose themselves on various geographic areas' (Ritzer, 2007, p. 15). According to Ritzer, the *growth* of power, influence and, in many cases, profits is a driver of such an imposition, hence the term '*gro*balization'.

Ritzer contends that the processes of globalization is a continuum with glocalization and grobalization as its two poles. He argues that the interaction between glocalization and grobalization is found everywhere: '*In the real world, there is always a combination, an interaction, of glocal and grobal processes*. Anywhere one looks in the world, one sees *both* the glocal and the grobal' (Ritzer, 2007, p. 20, original emphases). He further points out that transnational corporations often promote the grobalization of culture under the guise of globalization. He criticizes James Watson's well-known study of how McDonald's has become central to the lives of people in East Asia for focusing on how it adapts to the local and ignores the ways and the extent to which it imposes on the local (Watson, 2006). He points out that by doing this, 'Watson is excluding from consideration at least half of what is needed to understand fully globalization' (Ritzer, 2007, p. 149). The adaptation made by McDonald's, according to Ritzer, 'is clearly a grobal force that must adapt to local realities, and in the process it moves toward the glocal end of the grobal-glocal continuum' (p. 153).

Both conceptions recognize the coexistence of homogenization and heterogenization. However, it seems that glocalization highlights the interconnectedness of the global and the local and the pluralistic ideas of heterogeneity and tends to minimize the hegemonic impact of the 'centre' over the 'periphery' and its homogenizing effect. Grobalization, by contrast, focuses on the tension between the two and the imperialistic and homogenizing effect of grobal forces (see Ryan, 2015, p. 2022).

The outbreak of COVID-19 in China in late 2019 that soon developed into a pandemic in early 2020 and governments' responses to the pandemic by border closure and protectionism, mainly in medical gear, pharmaceutical as well as food supplies, have thrown into sharp relief the tension between the global and the local, so much so that political leaders have declared that we are reaching the end of the globalization cycle.[1] The extent to which the pandemic will impact on globalization is as yet unknown, but there is little doubt that the unmistakable global-local tension has deepened the deglobalization trend (Irwin, 2020).

1.2 POWER RELATIONSHIP IN GLOBALIZATION PROCESSES

Power relationship is an important dimension in globalization processes, as Ritzer has pointed out and as discussed in the previous section. This is particularly pertinent to English language education and teacher education, given that the ownership of English has always been in the hands of Western powers. In one of the first volumes on the impact of globalization on English language teaching (ELT), Cameron and Block (2002) observe that globalization has changed the conditions of English language learning in that the destabilization of the old order has opened up new opportunities for those in 'periphery' communities (or the 'subaltern', a preferred term). However, they also raise a highly pertinent question: 'how far does globalization change the terms in which we debate issues of language and power?' (p. 6). Conceptions and discourses of postmodernism, in which glocalization is key, criticize the notion of linguistic and educational imperialism and challenge the thesis of the cultural domination of the West over the rest as representing a static view of sociocultural processes and overemphasizing the homogenizing process. Canagarajah (2002), however, echoes Ritzer's criticism of the postmodernist view as having the tendency to create the illusion of a democratic and harmonious global environment. He points out the fact that cultures, languages, and identities are fluid and unstable does not preclude the domination of powerful cultures, languages, and identities over others.

So the question is, based on the global challenges posed to governments in East Asia, the local responses and their impact on teachers and teacher educators, how far have globalization processes redressed the unequal power relationship between the English-speaking West and the non-English-speaking rest? Since the turn of the century, there has been a backlash against economic globalization in tandem with a backlash against cultural globalization. This is evident not only in the United States and Europe but also across the rest of the world, for example in the emphasis on promoting national identities and cultures to the outside world in Asian countries. The rise of neonationalism (Gingrich & Banks, 2006) is characterized by xenophobia and the preservation of national cultural tradition, epitomized by the slogans 'America First', 'make America great again', 'China dream', and more recently 'make Britain great again' as well as the rising support for populist parties in European countries. The global rise of neo-nationalism has been accentuated by the impact of COVID-19 pandemic, as a number of observers have noted (see, e.g., Tisdall, 2020; Rachman, 2020;

cited in Bieber, 2020, p. 1). This is evidenced by the increasing reports of anti-Chinese and anti-Asian discrimination and racism directly or indirectly associated with COVID-19, particularly in the United States, but also in Europe and Australia, ranging from verbal and physical assaults to denial of service (Jeung, 2020, cited in Bieber, 2020, p. 6). Such discriminatory sentiments and behaviours have been very much spurred by the rise of China as a global power and its rivalry with the United States for global leadership. What impact does this rise in neo-nationalism have on ELT and English language teacher education (ELTE) in the region?

In exploring the global challenges faced by governments in East Asian jurisdictions and their responses to these challenges as far as English language teaching and teacher education are concerned, I shall draw on the two different perspectives of globalization outlined in Sections 1.1 and 1.2, namely glocalization and grobalization, and the power relationship in globalization processes to make sense of the interaction between the global and the local. I shall discuss the major critical issues that are commonly shared by the ten jurisdictions covered in this volume. I shall reflect on what implications these critical issues have for ELTE in the concluding section.

1.3 HEGEMONY OF ENGLISH

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the unprecedented rapid spread of English has been most strongly felt in East Asia. However, how that has been responded to by different governments varies due to their different sociopolitical contexts, the stage of their economic development, their cultural traditions, and their historical legacies.

1.3.1 Continued Dominance of English in Former Colonies

In former British colonies, such as Singapore and Hong Kong, English has continued to play a very important role in all aspects of the lives of their citizens. In Singapore, English was intentionally adopted after independence as the working language for government and business and the language for achieving national unity and harmony in a multilingual and multi-ethnic country. Despite the official discourse of promoting multilingualism and linguistic diversity, English has been accorded the status of the first language (L1) of the school and has become the sole medium of instruction in schools, decimating Chinese, Indian and Malay medium

education. 'Mother tongues' have been relegated to school subjects, taught in isolation from English, and from each other, and their use in the classroom has been sanctioned rather than taken as part of a student's 'multilingual repertoire' (Cenoz & Gorter, 2019, p. 132) (Silver & Bokhorst-Heng, Chapter 2, this volume).

In Hong Kong, unlike in Singapore, efforts have been made by the government, after the return of sovereignty to China, to redress the importance of English over Chinese through its trilingualism (English, Chinese, and Cantonese) and biliteracy (English and Chinese) language policy and to *reconstruct* Chinese identity through its mandatory mother tongue education in basic education (Tsui, 2004, 2007). However, so far the position of English remains unshaken: English has been retained as an official language and the language of business. Despite the elevation of the status of Chinese to be on a par with English, the latter remains the primary source of reference for official documents; the Chinese version is often a translation of the English version. English medium education remains the preferred medium for parents and schools. This is evidenced by the government's succumbing to public pressure after twelve years of implementing the controversial mandatory mother tongue education through the so-called 'fine-tuning' of mother tongue education policy to allow more flexibility for schools to adopt English as a medium of learning (Harfitt, Chapter 3, this volume).

Similar to Hong Kong, but on a much more intensified and massive scale, the Malaysian government, since independence from British rule, has tried to resist the continued dominance of English and to forge national unity and identity not only through legitimizing Bahasa Malaysia as the national language and introducing a common Malaysian curriculum but also, more drastically, ten years later, through the reversal of English medium to Malay medium education, all the way from primary to university levels. However, the strong demand for graduates with high levels of English competence, intensified by English being the lingua franca for science, technology and business across the globe, has led to subsequent reversals and modifications of the policy for a number of times, with the most recent being the Dual Language Programme, which, somewhat similar to the 'fine-tuning' policy in Hong Kong, allows flexibility for adopting English as a medium of instruction (EMI) for science and mathematics (Too, Vethamani & Kabilan, Chapter 4, this volume).

In the Philippines, English has played a key role in education, government, and all important domains in society ever since its colonial days. It served as the language for unifying the multilingual archipelago for nearly half

a century (1898–1946) under American rule. The domination of English over vernacular languages persisted for some time after decolonization. English continued to be the sole medium of instruction in schools until nearly thirty years later when tensions over the unequal power relationship between English and the vernacular languages led to the formulation of the bilingual education policy in 1974 which stipulated that both English and Filipino be adopted as media of instruction in basic education. However, as Tupas (2008) points out, although the bilingual education policy was symbolic of the resistance to neocolonial dominance, it has not really replaced English as a symbol of power and prestige (see further elaboration in Section 1.4.1). This can be seen from several attempts, albeit unsuccessful, to overturn the bilingual policy by introducing the 'return to English' house bills which mandated that English be used as the medium of instruction for all subjects at all levels and the language of all government and entrance examinations to schools and universities (Lorente, 2013).

1.3.2 Learning English as a National Mission

In jurisdictions which have not been subjected to British or American colonial rule, the intensified demand for English, as an integral part of intensified globalization, is a more recent phenomenon. The urgent need to equip its citizens with this global literacy skill has led governments in these countries to elevate the importance of acquiring English skills as a national mission. This applies to Japan, which has been an economic power for some time, and also to China, which has recently become one of the economic and political superpowers.

In Japan, mastering English has been touted by the government as critical to 'the country's power in international politics in the twenty-first century' which 'will determine whether the country will rise or fall'. English has been promoted as a 'strategic imperative' and a national project to which people of all ages and from all walks of life not only are expected to contribute but have a 'moral obligation' to do so (Yoshida, Chapter 7, this volume). In China, ever since the open door policy in 1978, English has been considered very important to the economic and technological advancement of the country. The importance of mastery of English by professionals has been elevated to something of 'political significance'. Now that China has become one of the biggest economic powers in the world, English has not become any less important; quite the contrary, it is seen as part of the realization of the China Dream (Wen & Hong, Chapter 6, this volume).

In countries which have been making rapid economic advancement, English figures equally prominently, if not more so. For example, in South Korea, since the mid-1990s, raising the English proficiency of the whole nation has been considered to be essential for achieving the goal of '*segyehwa*' (globalization) on the national agenda (Shin, Chapter 8, this volume). In Vietnam, since *Doi Moi*, the open door policy, in 1986 which opened up the country to market-oriented economy, English has been positioned officially as vital to nation-building and international integration, 'serving the cause of industrialization and modernization for the country' (Vu & Phan, Chapter 11, this volume).

In Thailand, though the intensive promotion of English is relatively recent, the importance accorded to English can be seen from the proposal by the Ministry of Education to make English the second official language (Watson Todd & Darasawang, Chapter 10, this volume). For Taiwan, staying connected to and forming an alliance with the rest of the world is crucial for its survival and English is an essential medium through which this can be achieved (Yeh & Chern, Chapter 9, this volume). Recently, English has also been proposed as a second official language at top government level in tandem with a plan to turn Taiwan into a bilingual country by 2030 (Nguyen, 2018).

1.3.3 English as the De Facto Foreign Language and a Second Official Language

In some jurisdictions, 'foreign language' is a euphemism for English. In Japan, Vietnam and Thailand, official discourses and curriculum documents lay down requirements for learning foreign language(s) without specifying which language, although it is shared knowledge that foreign language means English. In Japan, it was not until the turn of the century that it was made explicit in official documents that English was not *just* a foreign language (on a par with other foreign languages) but '*the* international lingua franca'. Such statements were often cautiously prefaced by stating competence in Japanese as a prerequisite for learning English. It is only in a most recent curriculum document (*Course of Study*) that it is explicitly stated that 'in principle' English should be selected for foreign language classes (Yoshida, Chapter 7, this volume). The political sensitivity of the issue can be gleaned from the fact that the Shinzo Abe government had to make use of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics to legitimate the speeding up of reforms in English education in schools. Although it is as yet unclear how far the postponement of the Tokyo Olympics to July 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on the

implementation of these reforms, it is unlikely that the status of English as *the* most important foreign language will be compromised.

In several jurisdictions, proposals have been put forward to make English a second official language, including Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Taiwan and Vietnam. In Taiwan and Vietnam, the proposal was made at top government official level as recently as 2018. However, as Phillipson (personal communication) points out, more often than not, such proposals have been made with little understanding of language policy issues and what an 'official' language entails. In the first two jurisdictions, the proposal was dropped because of strong objections from the respective communities on the grounds that such a proposal would undermine national and cultural identities (Yoshida, Chapter 7, this volume; Shin, Chapter 8, this volume; see also Tsui & Tollefson, 2007). In the case of Thailand, the proposal was also dropped on the grounds that it would give the wrong impression that the country was colonized in the past (Watson Todd & Darasawang, Chapter 10, this volume).

1.4 THE POSITIONING OF ENGLISH IN EDUCATION: A POLITICAL BALANCING ACT

We have seen from the preceding discussion that the tensions created by the importance accorded to English vis-à-vis the national language and by privileging English over vernacular languages are palpable. Decisions regarding *language-in-education* policy are political balancing acts. The various decisions and compromises made by governments in the region illustrate how the latter have navigated the tensions and how they have tried to resolve the paradox of promoting English for national advancement while protecting the national language and maintaining linguistic harmony among the local language(s) and the cultural identities of their own people (see Tsui & Tollefson, 2004, 2007; Tollefson & Tsui, 2018).

As far as *language education* policy is concerned, decisions on which language(s) should be taught at which school levels and which language(s) should be given more curriculum time, more weighting in high-stakes examinations and used as the medium of instruction for which subjects are politically charged. Decisions made concerning any of these aspects have important implications for ELT and ELTE.

Except for former British colonies in which English has been introduced at primary level and substantial curriculum time has always been allocated to the teaching of English, all other jurisdictions have made moves to introduce