

Linguistics in a Colonial World: A Story of Language, Meaning, and Power
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Linguistics in a Colonial World by Joseph Errington examines the role of language in the colonial project and the effect of European colonialism on the languages of the colonized. In addition, he analyzes the way in which the colonized 'subaltern' elite adopted methods of colonial powers to create a discourse of empowerment but later as a tool to maintain their own domination. This text adds to a growing field of academic theory, post-colonial theory, joining the work of writers such as Homi K. Bhaba (2004), Gayatri Spivak (1988), and others. The author examines the colonial archive and examines dictionaries, grammars, and related texts created during the colonial period.

Chapter 1, *The Linguistic in the Colonial*, introduces readers to the key concepts of the book and outlines some of the major topics covered in the chapters that follow. Errington does well to outline some of the more important historical events related to language and colonialism. He introduces his view that many linguists in the colonial period were servants of imperial power, facilitating communication between the center (i.e. the colonizer) and the periphery (i.e. the colonized). These linguists took the sounds of colonized languages and transcribed these sounds into their own phonetic alphabets. Secondly, these linguists cannot be separated from their 'social biographies'; that is, their affiliation with groups and histories rooted in their imperial powers, often legitimizing their work.

Chapter 2, *Early Conversions, or, How Spanish Friars Made the Little Jump*, examines the role of religion and the missionary in colonialism. The chapter examines how the laity transcribed languages to locate the subaltern into a hierarchy of development in terms of spirituality and politics. Next, the chapter examines this hierarchy more broadly to show how it reaffirmed the colonizers' ideological portrayal of the Other. Third, the chapter outlines the simplifying strategies the laity took to represent the complex languages of the native population. Errington refers to the term 'symbolic violence' to describe the roughshod manner in which missionaries phonetically transcribed the languages of the subaltern into the script of their own language.

Chapter 3, *Imaging the Linguistic Past*, examines the role played by academics to write linguistic histories for their own language to support their belief that the lexical, syntactical, and phonological system of their language was superior. Errington examines the work of the linguist Johann Herder (1744-1803) who believed that languages of the periphery were unpolished. Herder's work is just one example given by Errington as a means of representing the connectedness of linguists' work at this time in furthering the legitimacy of Empire. The chapter continues by examining the philological tradition of comparative linguistics and its role in Empire.

Chapter 4, *Philology's Evolutions*, elaborates on Chapter 3's overview of the field of comparative linguistics during this period. Errington introduces the reader to some of the key intellectuals of this time such as Friedrich and August von Schlegel, Wilhelm von Humboldt, Franz Bopp, Jakob Grimm, and August Schleicher. These scholars would succeed in making the study of language highly political and polemical. Errington points out that although these academics did not directly work for the goals of the colonial project, their work was used to develop and legitimize the strategies of colonization. According to the author, these scholars did, however, intend to use their work for the development of nation-state building for the speakers of German.

In Chapter 5, *Between Pentecost and Pidgins*, the author examines in more detail the relationship/history of lay missionaries and the colonial project. Missionary figures played a unique role during this period due to their intimate encounters with both the colonized and the colonizer. Missionaries served as tools for the colonizers' standardization mission; that is, they introduced cultural tools such as language, religion, and schooling that enabled locals to recognize a sense of 'sharedness' between them and the colonizer.

The author addresses three principle issues in Chapter 6, *Colonial Linguists, (Proto)-National Languages*. First, Errington provides examples of how linguists in the Belgian Congo and Netherlands East Indies (NEI) Malay worked to consolidate power for the colonizers. Second, the author identifies the tensions caused by this attempt by the colonizers at 'civilizing' and controlling the colonized. Lastly, the chapter aims to detail the way in which subaltern languages developed a hierarchy of dialects with prestige versions developing, in some cases, for the first time. The colonized first adopted the language of the colonizer, and later, used the language of the colonizer to their own advantage.

In the last chapter, *Postcolonial Postscript*, Errington asks the critical question: Is the work that linguists are doing today leaving the colonial past behind or just furthering the mission of Empire? The author also addresses the issue of language attrition caused by globalization and modernization in this chapter. Work of new missionary groups like the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) is also evaluated. Lastly, the author examines the debate over whether to save endangered languages or not, and leaves the reader with questions to answer related to the future of linguistics in this post-colonial, globalized world in which we live.

Errington draws references from writers of the colonial period (e.g. Nietzsche) and modern philosophers (e.g. Derrida, Foucault). One weakness of the work seems to be Errington's oversight in the last chapter of subaltern writers' voices. To his credit, he does refer to work by Frantz Fanon (1963) but neglects the work of others such as Albert Memmi (1974, 2006) and Aimé Césaire (1955). Errington also misses an opportunity in the last chapter to discuss the work of important contemporary writers such as Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak. Despite these omissions, Errington offers the reader a brief, but well-researched, analysis of the language's role in colonization in less than 200 pages.

Bhabha, H.K. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge.

Césaire, A. (1955). *Discourse on Colonialism*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Fanon, F. (1963). *The Wretched of the Earth*. London: Penguin Books.

Memmi, A. (1974). *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. London: Earthscan Publications Ltd.

Memmi, A. (2006). *Decolonization and the Decolonized*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Spivak, G.C. (1988a). *In Other Worlds*. London: Routledge.