

國立清華大學 105 學年度碩士班考試入學試題

系所班組別：外國語文學系 乙組（語言認知與教學組）

考試科目（代碼）：英文閱讀與寫作（3403）

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*請在【答案卷、卡】作答

Directions: The following passage is taken from a short introductory article in a special issue of *L2 Journal*. Please (1) read the passage, (2) provide a summary of 250 to 300 words, and (3) write an original essay in response to what you have read. In the essay, you can, for example, criticize the ideas in part or in general, further develop aspects of what the author says, apply the ideas to English teaching in Taiwan or to your own experience as an English learn/user/teacher, or possibly combine these approaches.

WHAT HAS NEOLIBERALISM MEANT FOR SECOND/FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION?

Before diving into how this special issue engages with these goals, it is important to interrogate how neoliberalism has intersected with second/foreign language education. As neoliberalism permeates every social sector, it manifests through the propagation of neoliberal keywords such as accountability, competitiveness, efficiency, and profit (Holborow, 2012). While it is not surprising to hear these terms in corporate offices around the world, we find it slightly alarming to hear them in reference to schools, teachers, and students. According to Macrine, “formal and informal education on a global scale has become the major force in producing subjectivities, desires, and modes of identification necessary for the legitimation and functioning of a neoliberal society” (forthcoming, p. 4). Second/foreign language education, like education more broadly, has not only been influenced by neoliberalism; it has been responsible for reproducing many of its discourses. The coercive impact of neoliberalism for second/foreign language education is readily observable at multiple levels:

1. Language as a technicized skill
2. Culture as a commodity
3. Language teachers as expendable and replaceable knowledge workers
4. Language learners as entrepreneurs and consumers
5. The creation of a global language teaching industry
6. The emergence of new linguistic markets: Global English

We address each in turn.

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1. Language as a Technicized Skill

One effect of neoliberalism has been in the framing of language as a commodified, technicized skill (Duchêne & Heller, 2012; Heller, 2010) and of individuals as human capital, developed through the acquisition of skills. Thus, in the ideology that Kubota (2011) refers to as “linguistic instrumentalism,” language skills lead to social mobility and economic development, and language becomes essential in order to compete in the global economy. Since this view transforms language into monetary or symbolic value, decisions about which languages to teach and to learn; when, where, and to whom languages are taught; and how to teach them depend on the market. Language programs thus become an easy target in the face of budget cuts (e.g., Foderaro, 2010; Hu, 2009) because some languages are evaluated as less useful or unprofitable whereas others give learners distinctions. Kubota (2011), however, problematizes the discourse of linguistic instrumentalism by showing that these touted “benefits” don’t always translate to material advantages but contribute instead to increased social stratification, a finding that will be echoed in several papers in this issue.

2. Culture as a Commodity

As language becomes a job skill, akin to knowledge of spreadsheets or word processing, culture is increasingly mythologized (Barthes, 1972) as an ahistorical and frozen product used to market nation-states and to encourage learners to cultivate desires to consume. For example, the Eiffel Tower becomes the symbol of Paris that denotes the romantic atmosphere of the city. Food such as pasta, tacos, sushi, and kimchi are introduced as the representation of authentic, traditional culture. Natural environments including mountains and beaches are not simply to be appreciated but to be viewed as commodities to be developed, advertised, and sold. This conceptualization of culture implements a tourist gaze (Kramsch & Vinall, 2015; Urry, 2002; Vinall, 2012) in the classroom and reinforces global power hierarchies.

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3. Language Teachers as Expendable and Replaceable Knowledge Workers

With changes to how language and culture are perceived under the influences of neoliberalism, the teacher's role has changed as well. Teachers are no longer salaried professionals who cultivate learners psychologically, socially, and intellectually and who help them to become more mature individuals. Rather, teachers are increasingly contract workers paid by the class who are responsible for generating learners with language skills and for playing a role as tour guide (Kramsch & Vinall, 2015). This converts them into expendable and replaceable knowledge workers, as demonstrated by the increasing reliance on part-time adjuncts in language classes and in higher education in general (Ellis, 2013; Machado, 2015; Schmidt, 2015).

4. Language Learners as Entrepreneurs and Consumers

Rather than following their desires to learn new languages and cultures, learners are pushed to choose languages that will make them more competitive, as what language one speaks and what culture he/she embodies demonstrates how marketable the person is. Thus choosing and learning a language becomes an act of investment in itself. Within the classroom, though, students also practice participation in the market. Textbooks emphasize routinized, truncated dimensions of language used in a particular setting (e.g., travelling, business interaction) and stereotyped/essentialized culture. This process trains learners to reason through social phenomena as transactions and to become good buyers and shoppers (Williams, 2010). Ultimately, by managing their "enterprising-self" (Rose, 1998), learners are heartened to maximize their self-interests (Stigler, 1981) and contribute to the global economy with their language skills.

5. The Creation of a Global Language Teaching Industry

While language and culture teachers are treated as expendable and replaceable knowledge workers, paradoxically, language teaching has become highly profitable and increasingly privatized. The global language teaching industry presents language in

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prepackaged, standardized forms in response to the needs of the free market. Rosetta Stone, for instance, advertises that they teach more than 30 languages around the world online (or through a CD) and that one can be fluent in a language in three months. In addition to these corporations, nation-states, including Mainland China (through the Confucius Institute), Germany (through the Goethe Institut), France (through the Alliance Française), and the United States continue to invest large amounts of resources to promote their languages and cultures globally. Ragan and Jones (2013) estimate that in 2012 alone, the global English Language Teaching (ELT) industry was worth over \$63 billion. Pennycook (1998) argues that the ELT industry, which makes huge profits through the production of teaching materials and tests, continues to be linked to colonialism in both theory and practice.

6. The Emergence of New Linguistic Markets: Global English

The five previous categories contribute to the creation of a linguistic hierarchy in which particular languages become invested with greater power, value, and influence. This is exemplified by the current status of English as the global lingua franca. Yet the global expansion of English is full of paradoxes and contradictions. Some scholars take the perspective that the spread of English has been a neutral, and even positive, process, simply a consequence of being “in the right place at the right time” (Crystal, 2003, p. 10). In this view, English is seen as liberating and empowering; a democratizing force in the world (i.e., Friedman, 2000); and a way of evening the playing field by providing greater access to knowledge and opportunities to all those it reaches. Language learners see English as a key to a better life and imagine that by learning English they will gain social mobility and greater opportunities. Here English is framed in largely instrumental terms, as a technical skill that can “open doors.”

Yet, as May (2011) points out, “the argument for English as a neutral, beneficial, and freely chosen language rests specifically upon a synchronic, or ahistorical, view of it” (p. 212). A more critical perspective on the global spread of English sees it as intimately tied to and developing from histories of colonialism (Pennycook, 1998), linguistic imperialism

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(Phillipson, 1998, 2009), and complex processes of globalization (Gray, 2002). From this view, there is an inherent contradiction between democracy and the imposition of a neoliberal economic or political order, which ends up privileging elites (Sonntag, 2003) and leading to further social stratification (Phillipson, 1998) and linguistic as well as cultural homogenization. This, in turn, results in cultural loss (Sonntag, 2003) and threatens the vitality and survival of local languages (Nettle & Romaine, 2000; Pennycook, 1994).

May (2011) argues that English is ideologically linked with modernity and modernization and is supposed to facilitate a type of global citizenship, which he calls, in scare quotes, “cosmopolitanism.” Yet these ideologies “fail to address the relationship between English and wider inequitable distributions and flows of wealth, resources, culture and knowledge— especially, in an increasingly globalized world” (May, 2011, p. 213). This is exemplified in the experience of individuals who learn English in hopes of moving to an English-speaking country like the U.S. and are not granted access. Niño-Murcia (2003) writes that the “irony is that the rhetoric of free trade, global market and capital flow comes together with tightening frontiers to prevent human flow” (as quoted in McKay, 2010, p. 96). Ultimately, the question of whether and to what extent the global spread of English is democratic or hegemonic, whether and where it liberates or oppresses, and how much and under what circumstances it empowers or threatens has different answers depending on who is being asked.

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(References deleted for space considerations)

Passage taken from:

Bernstein, K.A., Hellmich, E. A., Katznelson, N., Shin, J., & Vinall, K.(2015). Critical perspectives on neoliberalism in second/foreign language education. *L2 Journal*, 7(3), 3-14