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Postcolonial Moments in Language Politics: Case Studies on Multilingual Performances

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POSTCOLONIAL MOMENTS IN LANGUAGE POLITICS:

CASE STUDIES ON MULTILINGUAL PERFORMANCES

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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Indiana University of Pennsylvania

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Title: Postcolonial Moments in Language Politics: Case Studies on Multilingual Performances

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My dissertation on multilingual performance addresses language politics in relation to inter-racial, cross-gender, and border-crossing issues, all of which are pertinent to the ongoing history of postcolonialism. It is essentially a response to a crucial question in postcolonial studies, shared among prominent postcolonial scholars like Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Frantz Fanon: if a language has colonial history and has been used as a colonial instrument, what is the political status of the language after colonialism? With this inquiry as the target of my investigation, this study provides a contextual analysis of English language performance, informed by a contextual understanding of the political status of English in various contexts where English has colonial histories. I convey these contexts by developing three case studies on postcolonial drama and performative pieces in Malaysia, Singapore, and the U.S.A.

My first case study, "Politicizing English-language Theaters in Postcolonial Malaysia," articulates the potential of language performances in Kee Thuan Chye's *1984 Here and Now* that blur the distinction of ethnicity and add complexities to ethnicity as sociolinguistic identity markers. The second case study, "A Dialectic between Language and Gender Politics in Global

Gender Performance," offers critique of cross-cultural gender stereotypes through a detailed

discussion of the role of language performance in gender construction.   The third case study,

"Code-Switch Across the Borderline: Multilingual Visions in Guillermo Gómez-Peña's *The New*

World Border," exemplifies bilingual performance as a form of social activism, and how it fosters

critical dialogues with the normalization of multicultural discourse.

Each case study demonstrates a performance imperative, especially the dramatist and

performative artists' efforts to perform across cultural/ gender/linguistic stereotypes, and

negotiate various contradictions between the global, national, and local.   My analysis of these

three pieces of drama and performance illustrates the artists' performative negotiation with the

state power over the politics of language, gender, and ethnicity/race.   I conclude that the

performance artists position themselves in various vantage points of language politics, from

which they add power dynamics to the politics of gender and race/ethnicity that are prescribed

in the national discourse.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

My project on multilingual performance addresses language politics in relation to inter-racial, cross-gender, and border-crossing issues, all of which are pertinent to the on-going history of postcolonialism. It focuses on three postcolonial performances in Malaysia, Singapore, and the U.S.A., respectively. In spite of their broader historical relevancy to colonialism and its aftermaths, each case exemplifies a unique type of language performance, involving particular interactions with national and international power structures and the specific contexts in which the pieces were performed.

Devoting this project to the investigation of language performance in postcolonial contexts is based on an assumption: language is political. It is a very simple assumption, yet took me years of study to recognize its complexities, to recapture the power of language in my own life. I first experienced language as political about the age of eight, though I did not recognize it at that time. I had to switch my original home language to the one spoken at school, and practiced it with my family members at home. I was told that this was for my own good. I hardly remembered anything else about this, except a distinctive feeling, an interrupted sense of intimacy. Life went on after this for a while, and then I got used to switching between

languages and learnt to speak the same language differently. I learnt that whenever the political

regime changes, we choose a different language to speak, and this is "for our own good."

I hope to illustrate language politics in simple and less distant terms than what are usually

used by scholars and critics, as an embodiment, an embodied inquiry for years of scholarly

research. This is the fundamental aspect of my project: I understand language not merely as

content-based, aesthetically stylish, and instrumental. Instead, the forms of language (such as

accent and hybridity) matter, as well as the particular interactions that language creates within the

context. Language politics in this contextualized sense is a critical concept for educators who

are concerned with language uses on the educational stage in this globalizing world. This wider

understanding of language politics is especially crucial for those who experience language as a

political means and understand the phenomena as not unique to the individual but common

within postcolonial contexts.

Not only is language political, but also there is a necessity of performing with language

in strategic relation to the sociopolitical context. To demonstrate, I will present a story from A.

Suresh Canagarajah's personal account, a story passed down from one generation to another in

his community in Sri Lanka, a former British colony ("Negotiating Ideologies through English").

It is a story involving a character who negotiated meanings between two distinctively different

linguistic (Tamil and English) and religious (Hinduism and Christianity) communities, while

participating in a culturally specific religious ritual: a baptism ceremony to become a Christian.

The character was about to be baptized under his British teachers' witness, which is a part of his

years of English education in preparation for him to become part of a "civilized and privileged

group," and most pragmatically, to help his job application for working for the British

government the next day (Canagarajah 121-122).

Right before he is to be dipped into the water and baptized by the English-speaking

priest, he slipped and prayed to a Tamil goddess, "Lord Muruga, save me!" in Tamil, "a language

he had pretended to have forgotten long back in the school," as Canagarajah carefully notes

(121).   The character was brought up from the water and given a Christian name; while worried

about his slip of tongue, he continued to say, though he switched to English, "Oh, Muruga! If

not for Lord Jesus, I would have perished today! Praise Jesus!" (Canagarajah 122)   With his

code-switching language performance, the character saved himself without goodness's

interventions.   His baptized discourse appeals to both his communities; "he is a Christian for

the British and Hindu for his family," as Canagarajah concludes (122).

Canagarajah's baptism story demonstrates strategic negotiations with colonial power

relations through the use of multiple languages.   It is a perfect example of the kinds of language

performance I will study here.   The character's strategic language performance involves

code-switches from Tamil to English, as well as slippages and transitions between culturally

specific religious icons significant to each linguistic system. Without the language negotiation in the ceremony, the character would have lost the privileged social status that his education had been preparing him to acquire. His language performance, to a certain extent, helped him secure the material support of his social status in the colonial context. Perhaps this is the reason that the story about the necessity of language performance is well-known in Sri Lanka, as it interacts actively and bodily with collective, cultural, historical memories.

My take on the relationship between language use and embodied performance is similar to this, though the context of my exploration takes place on the "stage." I examine the type of interactions that occur in performative texts, particularly when those texts are performed in front of audiences, analyzing the language components in the written texts, which become the source of dramatic interactions, and how the language performance interacts with the performed contexts. On the whole, this project seeks to analyze how drama and performance interact with audiences through the politics of language and local practices of language use. I investigate how artistic performance invokes certain types of colonial memories, how it promotes critical awareness of the embodiment of the collective memories and their manifestations in the performed contexts, or even sociopolitical actions in response to them. Within the processes of revealing a particular form of embodiment, critical distance, and social

activism, language performance plays an important role in strategically interacting with language politics in the performed context.

Method

To explore the phenomena of language performance in postcolonial contexts, I selected three performative pieces that involve postcolonial issues unique to their sociopolitical situations but related to the larger colonial legacy. I analyze the textual/ linguistic features (styles) in these texts in relation to their written and performing contexts. As the same text can always be analyzed differently, it is important to select appropriate methods. As such, the methods I choose to analyze the performative texts are relevant to both genre knowledge and the postcolonial contexts shared among the three pieces. To facilitate my investigations, I have designed my research as *Case Studies*, adopting the analytical framework from the field of *Performance Studies,* and employing *Critical Discourse Analysis*.

Case Study

This project on the phenomena of language performance in postcolonial contexts takes the form of three case studies. The case study is one of the key research methods in doing social science research; it is "an empirical inquiry" designed to investigate "a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin 1, 13). The case study approach addresses the

difficulty of exploring specific phenomena, while engaging in specific contexts without being too deductive. As Gall et al. state, it is "the in-depth study of instance of phenomena in its natural contexts from the perspective of participants" (qtd. in Parry 77). Given the result of a case study deriving from the particular context and population targeted in the study, it is not generalizable to what is beyond the scope of this study. The result, however, is theorizable as grounded in the targeted context and population.

A case study design provides the best framework for this project, as it inquires into a highly contextualized use of language and analyzes specific power dynamics in their context, as specific as a performer on a stage. The results of my analyses based on the context of Malaysia, Singapore, and the southwest U.S.A. are not generalizable to infer the power dynamics and language politics, for example, in Nigeria. However, the individual case studies work as comparative cases, and the result of my analyses is theorizable as the performance artists' language performances in strategic relation to the particular power dynamics in postcolonial contexts, theories which are also applicable, especially on the stage of education.

Performance Studies

One of the challenges of this study is to engage an analysis within the performativity of drama, theater, and performance art, while acknowledging the complexity of specific performances, which can be multi-layered, transitory, and dynamic. Since I have to reconstruct

the face-to-face encounter of live performances without actually being there, my analysis

encompasses analytical categories introduced in Patrice Pavis's *Analyzing Performance: Theater,*

Dance, and Film. These categories aim at "bringing a past event back to life through writing in

the present" by establishing "comprehensive," "systematic," and "objective" categories of

capturing the "mise-en-scene" (Pavis 34).

My analysis of the various performances takes into consideration these existing criteria of

analysis and adopts those which are significant to the characteristics of each study. For

instance, "scenography," which includes "the relationship between "audience space and acting

space" and "onstage and offstage" (Pavis 38), is helpful for me to depict the tensions

surrounding the performance in Chapter Two. Chapter Three, which focuses on gender

construction, engages the category of "the construction of character" (Pavis 38), including the

construction of character by the artist, bodily movement, makeup, diction, and voice. Chapter

Four, on bilingual performances, takes into consideration "the choice of version for staging" and

modifications in different versions, and the locality, the interaction of spectator (Pavis 39).

Even though attention to non-monolingual performance is lacking in Pavis's categories,

the analytical framework on the whole sketched in *Analyzing Performance* is helpful in terms of

describing the phenomena of performance. My study on world drama and performance is

informed by these categories, but highlights an additional category, arguing that stylized language performance should be an additional analytical category when considering performance.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Due to the emphasis on language issues and power relations in this project, particularly as they concern governmental policy, educational theory, and academic studies, I employ critical discourse analysis as one of my analytical frameworks.   Generally speaking, Critical Discourse Analysis is a particular analytical lens into the power relations and structures involved in varied forms of human social interactions.   Examples of Critical Discourse Analysis can be found in the works of French sociologists devoted to contextual analyses of how power circulates within particular social contexts, as in Michael Foucault's *Discipline and Punish,* and the discursive nature of power, as in Pierre Bourdieu's *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste.*

Originating in sociology, Critical Discourse Analysis has been widely used in language studies and developed into an analytical method in research.   Within English Studies, it is an analytical method of interpreting texts that is distinguishable from the New Critics' version of textual analysis, which focuses on the content and the internal structure within a single text, separate from context.   In contrast to the New Critics' approach, language scholars who employ Critical Discourse Analysis do not immediately interpret the text but views a text as a data set within a larger data set.   An analysis might begin with quantifying the linguistic

elements in the text, and then the frequency of the particular language usage is translated into numerical data, whether explicitly or less formally (for example, the number of times a particular metaphor is used); the numerical data the one of the essential elements that is drawn to interpret the discourse of power, its rhetorical construct and circulation of power as manifested in the text.

Rooted in sociological practices, Critical Discourse Analysis is socially and politically committed, and entails critical awareness toward language as a contextual subject (Pennycook *Critical Applied Linguistics*; Wodak *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*). The form of language (such as the styles I discuss here) is crucial, as it often involves various forms of hierarchical power relations, being the source of oppression and contesting agency; but language, instead of being a neutral, instrumental or aesthetic tool. This critical view toward language relates closely to the main goal of Critical Discourse Analysis, as Pennycook puts it, which is to uncover "ideology," not focus on "interpretations," as is the case with most literary-critical theories (*Critical Applied Linguistics* 94).

The way that the text is analyzed in this project takes into account various sociopolitical contexts where linguistic and semiotic fields manifest. Among the variety of contexts, the history of national language policies is the most essential in each case study. My method of analyzing these selected postcolonial texts is especially informed by a particular approach in

Critical Discourse Analysis developed mainly by Ruth Wodak, called "discourse-historical"

approach.[i]   Deriving from her analyses of discriminatory discourse in Austria (such as

anti-Semitic discourse and political petitions), the approach is based on the premise that

discourse as historically situated, "produced and interpreted" and manifested as a form of

"knowledge and memory" (Wodak *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*).   It aims to trace the

discursive nature of political discourse through analyzing various social fields, involving

linguistics and semiotics, where the interconnectivity of thematically related political discourses

manifested (Wodak *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*).   As she explains, "The

discourse-historical approach attempts to integrate a large quantity of available knowledge about

the historical sources and the background of the social and political fields in which discursive

'events' are embedded" (Wodak *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis* 65).

Definition of Terms

Language politics or *the politics of English* in this study is a general term that refers to

sociolinguistic power relations in various contexts.   Throughout this study I consider two levels

of context in my discussion of language politics.   On the macro-level, the term means the

phenomena of power domination as related to the status of particular languages on a larger scale,

typically the national or international scale.   The historical formation of national language policy,

and English as a lingua franca or a world language often provide the macro-level context of

language domination in these three case studies. On the micro-level, language politics refers to situations where power dynamics emerge from stylish uses of languages or linguistic components, such as accents, phonology, metaphors, and code-switching. The politics of language in this sense have racial, cultural, economical, sociopolitical references and implications. Due to these operational definitions, "language politics" is used as a plural subject, as language politics—the power dynamics involved within language—are always highly contextualized and never static. Language is always performed multiply.

Performance is defined in two ways: the generic and the conceptual. Performance is a generic term, encompassing a variety of performance arts: drama, dance, and film, for example. Performance in this sense puts substantial emphasis on presentational aspects, such as actions, costume, and staging. Pavis's *Analyzing Performance*, which aims at objectively depicting the phenomenology of performance, falls into this category, as it provides genre knowledge and analytical aspects of drama for this study.

The conceptual definition of performance sits at the core of this study and functions primarily on the level of discourse analysis. It is often used in noun phrases like *linguistic* or *language performances*, referring to the type of performance characteristic of strategic self-positioning and awareness of the public display of speech and actions. The baptism story provided by Canagaraga in the very beginning exemplifies how language uses (Tamil and English)

represents a double discourse, being both engaging and intimate to the speaker's linguistic

communities and responsive to the larger context of power domination.   Pennycook has a

more contextualized take in developing the conceptual definition of performance.   Pennycook

is among one of the first scholars who draws this conceptual use of performance into language

studies and explicitly discusses multilingual users' language performances.   He coins a critical

term, "postcolonial performativity," which refers to language as a double-edged sword, in which

language uses being able to be productive and reflective sense (*Critical Applied Linguistics*).

Encompassing these two definitions, while differentiating performance conceptually as a form of

discourse and distinguishable from genre, helps to facilitate this interdisciplinary work and

demonstrate the possibility of where disciplinary boundaries meet.

Literature Review: Language and Postcolonial Studies

Crucial to the field of postcolonial studies is the cultural and historical continuum of the

colonial legacy.   One of the most debatable issues in this continuum is the status of a colonial

language in the context of newly independent nations.   If a language has colonial history and

has been used as a colonial instrument, what is the political status of the language in relation to

the task of nation-building after colonialism?   The correlations between language and

decolonization are addressed by revolutionary writers in the Africa continent, where many

nations were colonies of European countries.

In the following, I will analyze the works of two prominent postcolonial writers, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Frantz Fanon. My analysis will inform a position that language, being both the embodiment and the contesting agency, serves as a critical measurement of understanding the complex power relations in the postcolonial contexts. Even though this particular angle of examining the phenomena of decolonialization via language is not common in postcolonial studies, the innate understanding in postcolonial studies that language is a double-edged sword, is a high-stakes issue, a critical currency widely circulated across academic fields, especially the language studies that I introduced earlier.

In *Decolonizing the Mind*, published in 1986, Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o views linguistic colonization as a means of cultural control and argues that the first step of decolonialization should be a radical change in the use of language. It is an imperative for him to shift from writing in English to writing in Gikuyu, an indigenous language in Kenya. His novel *Caitaani Mutharabainin*, written in Gikuyu, was banned by the government; the only version published in Kenya is in English translation, known as *The Devil on the Cross* (Pelton 54). A Gikuyu language journal, *Mutĩìri*, was launched by Ngũgĩ and his wife Njeeri (Rao 162-163). Gikuyu is essential because it allows Ngũgĩ to find his readership among the Gikuyu group, especially the peasants, communicating with them through shared cultural elements (Pelton 54;

Rao 163).   In other words, Gikuyu is a political means of social mobilization.   For Ngũgĩ, the

politics of Gikuyu is absolute, as it is directly related to decolonialization.

Language politics for Frantz Fanon, a Martiniquan-Algerian writer, however, is more

flexible and attuned to varied historical contexts.   Although he shares similar ideas of

decolonialization and language as Ngũgĩ, Fanon's position on decolonization does not directly

infer an exclusion of the colonial language and culture, but involves a critical re-thinking of the

embodiment of colonial history within the self.   For example, Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*,

a pioneering work of postcolonial studies, contains detailed analyses of the mental trajectory of

colonized intellectuals in relation to the colonial history.   In Fanon's analysis, the colonized

intellectuals' self-positions oscillate; at times, they are fully assimilated, at times contest their

embodied history.   Crucial to these oscillating positions is the role of language, situated within

the historical continuum.   But unlike Ngugi, Fanon does not exclude the language of the

colonizer.   He states, "Historically, it must be understood that the Negro wants to speak

French because it is the key that can open doors when were still barred to him fifty years ago"

("The Negro and Language" 425).

Fanon's idea of decolonialization is built upon such sociopolitical realities.   After

oscillating their positions, according to Fanon, the colonized individuals eventually come to a

recognition that "the existence of a nation is not proven by culture, but in the people's struggle

against the force of occupation" (*The Wretched of the Earth* 159).   In other words, any forms of culture, such as language, do not necessary lead to the road of decolonialization; the agency of it lies within individual and community self-positioning in critical relation with the history. Speaking about the colonialized individuals, Fanon also speaks of his own self-position: "The fact that I had been able to investigate so interesting a problem through the white man's language gave me honorary citizenship" (425).   What is involved in his self-positioning is his inversion of the process of colonialism with the use of the same critical medium, language, which is the means of both oppression and contestation.   Decolonization, for Fanon, seems to derive from such a critical view of language.

Chapter Overview

My first case study, "Politicizing English-language Theaters in Postcolonial Malaysia," discusses Kee Thuan Chye's *1984 Here and Now*, the first English-language agitprop in Malaysia. I analyze Kee's strategic negotiation with language and theatrical restrictions in its performed context, in which the intertwined relations between the politics of language and race/ethnicity play an important role.   To investigate the interrelations, I sketch out interrelations between the politics of language and race/ethnicity as manifested in various language fields: the historical positionality of English-language theaters, the orientation of national language policies, and theatrical dynamics in the premier performance.   All of these fields, according to Pierre

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Bourdieu, feature structured power relations, in which normative language uses are situated; language performances have the potential to re-create a less structured "field." Such an idea resembles what I described earlier in the literature review: language as a double-edged sword. I conclude that *1984 Here and Now* has the potential to re-create a less structured "field" in its language performances that blur the distinction of ethnicity and add complexities to ethnicity as sociolinguistic identity markers.

In my second case study, "A Dialectic between Language and Gender Politics in Global Gender Performance," I inquire into the construction of gender across and within cultures, analyzing the bodily, linguistic, and cross-cultural gendered performances in Chin Woon Ping's self-performed monodrama, *Details Cannot Body Want*. While recognizing the importance of gendered body in gender performance, my analysis highlights a relatively under-researched aspect on the issue of gender construction, which is language performance. I contextualize the local and global gendered performance within the Singapore government's national discourse of gender and language. My textual analysis of this performative play investigates the role of language performance in gender construction. This is informed by Judith Butler's idea that gender is a performance and by the power of language in (re)constructing gender. I conclude that *Details Cannot Body Want* has the potential of dialoguing and alternating cultural gendered

stereotypes on the stage by exposing gendered body and sexist cross-cultural communications, which take the cultural construction of gendered stereotypes to a level of absurdity.

My third case study is entitled, "Code-Switch Across the Borderline." It explores the dynamics between multiculturalism and the politics of language in *The New World Border*, performed by Guillermo Gómez-Peña and his collaborators. I broadly contextualize the issue within the history of bilingual education in the United States, investigating the discourse of multiculturalism under the construct of national language policy. My textual analysis focuses on code-switching language performance, and how the multilingual performance interacts with audiences of different language backgrounds and how it deconstructs a monolingual model of multicultualism. I also present a contextualized case of a particular performance of the play: how the performance adds power dynamics into the performed context, where multiculturalism is appropriated as an official discourse, yet, with multilingual groups being marginalized. I am content that *The New World Border* exemplifies bilingual creativity and its performative potential as a form of social activism, given that the code-switching language performance in this piece creates de-familiarizing effects and fosters critical dialogues with the institutional normalization of multicultural discourse.

Summary

Before I move into the case studies on individual artists' creative language performance, I reflect on their efforts to creatively interact with various challenges, performing across cultural/ gender/linguistic stereotypes, and negotiating various contradictions between the global, national, and local. Each of them demonstrates a performance imperative. Thinking that the structural knowledge in these performance models provides all the answers to the diverse and dynamic power relations is itself a retroactive thought, a metadiscourse that is not simultaneously present with the immediate experience with language. As such, I consider the forms of these language performances and the surrounding politics as useful pedagogical materials, as a potential springboard for exploring language-related issues and bridging the gaps between education and life. On the whole, this dissertation demonstrates potentials of utilizing artistic creations in combination with inquiry-driven research to explore empirical language-related issues, and to provide alternative perspective of language uses, other than what are shaped by the national language policy.

CHAPTER TWO

POLITICIZING ENGLISH-LANGUAGE THEATERS IN POSTCOLONIAL

MALAYSIA: KEE THUAN CHYE'S POLITICAL DRAMA, *1984 HERE AND NOW*

"We are all recipients of manipulated truth and are manipulators ourselves."

–Kee, qtd. in Yeo 14.

Imagine a theatrical performance, played to the full capacity of the theater and surrounded by governmental surveillance.   Imagine a propagandist play in a country where censorship of artistic productions prevails.   Imagine that a group of theater artists and practitioners finally obtained the performing permit the day before the play's public performance. Imagine actors and actresses mingled with audiences and passing out political pamphlets during the intermission.   Imagine the fourth wall of the theater falling in the end, the guard characters on stage mirroring guards off stage.

These were the visual images of the first performance of Kee Thuan Chye's political drama, *1984 Here and Now.*   The profound tension was built between the anti-government content of the play and the structural constraints that the government inflicted upon public performances.   There was also phenomenology of conflicts in the theater, surrounding presentational strategies of the play: music and dialects.   Western rock-and-roll music played in contrast to the shadow play, a traditional, local art form in Malaysia, and dragon dance: the

juxtapositions of the modern and the traditional marking a transitional period of Malaysia in history. Actors/actresses' culturally-informed language uses intentionally mismatched their physical appearances, the cross-ethnic staging adding a postmodern taste of identity to the play.

Theaters in Malaysia are not merely local institutions that produce and perform artistic works or drama. Theaters in Malaysia have political significance, serving as public spaces where power relations register. On the macro-level, theatrical performances are always avaiilable for governmental inspection. This is especially true in Malaysia, where national culture and language policies regulate artistic productions, and as a result, any publicized art works inevitably embody certain patterns of power relations prescribed in the national policies. On the micro-level, various interactions occur in theaters that create spaces for negotiating with or even altering those prescribed macro-level power relations.

Kee Thuan Chye's *1984 Here and Now* is an excellent case that demonstrates the political uses of theaters in its juggling of the different kinds of power relations between the national and the local. First performed in 1985, *1984 Here and Now* was the first English-language agitprop in Malaysia, a play that shares thematic resonance to George Orwell's *1984* in its open criticism of the Malaysian government's nationalist policies and its widening of linguistic, cultural, and economic divisions. Despite *1984 Here and Now*'s antagonistic messages, what draws attention to its public performance in 1985 is the fact that the play escaped governmental surveillance and

"drew a capacity audience for five nights" (Tan 293). *1984 Here and Now* is a representative

work of Kee, a Malaysian playwright with strong historical consciousness, who boldly articulates

in his plays the class and ethnic struggles of Malaysians, struggles long existing in the colonial and

postcolonial histories of Malaysia.

One of the leading scholars on Kee, Jacqueline Lo, in *Staging Nation* approaches *1984*

Here and Now from the perspective of cultural politics in postcolonial Malaysia. Lo explores

how the public performance of *1984 Here and Now* in 1985 manifested a local site of contestation

against Malaysia's national culture policy, which censors artistic productions with multicultural

elements. Starting in 1967, multicultural activities in Malaysia were under the censorship of

the Police Act that required performers to obtain police permits before public performance took

place (Lo 81). Particularly, the Home Minister suggested the ethnic Chinese-Malay

communities develop a "tiger dance," to distinguish itself from the traditional Chinese "lion

dance," in order to claim a national culture, distinguishable from the foreign influence of Chinese

culture (Lo 89). Lo argues that the censorship of tiger dance staged in *1984 Here and Now*

symbolizes the failure of reconciliation between multiculturalism and nationalism, as well as

Kee's parody of the state cultural policy that defers the inclusion of marginalized culture into the

national culture (90). Lo's interpretation of Kee's *1984 Here and Now* is based on the complex

positionality of theater: the mediating role that theater simultaneously plays between the national

culture policy's promotion of nationalism and cultural singularity, and the expression of

multicultural reality on the local scales. Theater, in Lo's theorization, serves   as "a field of

cultural production [that] highlights the relationship between hegemonic nationalism as it is

mobilized through national cultural policies and its apparatuses and the expressed desires of

various communities" (*Staging Nation* 7).

However, Lo's conceptualization of theater as the local contestant of hegemonic cultural

politics on the national scale, I argue, underplays another crucial element in this contestation:

language.   Thus, my own case study of Kee's political drama will emphasize the role of language

politics and how it reconfigures theaters as not only the contestant but also the embodiment of

hegemony in national policies.   Engaging the role of theaters within language politics sheds

light on the tangible moments when *1984 Here and Now* was first performed under governmental

surveillance and escaped from censorship in spite of the play's anti-government messages.   In

the following section, I will explain that it is the politics of English-language in the 80s that

provides a vantage point for the public performance of the English-language play in 1985,

enabling negotiation with the Police Act's restrictions on multicultural performances.   Most

importantly, mapping the trajectory of language politics throughout the colonial and postcolonial

histories of Malaysia enables a crucial understanding of various struggles between

multiculturalism, multilingualism, and nationalism in the postcolonial Malaysia.

Anchored in language politics, this chapter analyzes Kee's *1984 Here and Now* in terms of

how theatrical performances in English make possible Kee's interventions into the forms of

language hegemony existing in different historical frames.   I argue that it is the political charge

of English-language as a kind of double-edged sword—cutting through the politics of

colonialism and globalization, nationalism and economic benefits of industrialization—that

provides a vantage point for Kee's English-language theater to negotiate with national language

policy in postcolonial Malaysia, treating the return of colonial language hegemony in the

post-independent stage self-reflectively.

This chapter starts with a brief historical survey of language policies in Malaysia, tracing

the shifting politics of the English language through important changes in national language

policies occurring in different historical stages.   Then, it moves to the evolution of Malaysian

English-language theaters, especially focusing on theater artists' treatments of language politics in

relation to the national language policies and the colonial histories of Malaysia.   These relational

perspectives of examining the histories of Malaysian national policy and English-language

theaters aim to situate the politics of English-language within different historical frames, as well

as within two reciprocal linguistic fields: national policies and local theaters.

Next is a textual analysis of *1984 Here and Now* that employs V. N. Volosinov's

interactive, sociolinguistic perspective in the examination of linguistic signs' correlation with

racial power relations and class struggle in the play. What follows is the expansion of the "flat"

text into theatrical aspects of the text, in which the interaction between actors/ actresses and

audiences highlights the power dynamics that are part of the staged and dramatized hegemony of

the text. The transitions between two linguistic fields—from the textual to the

theatrical—create a reflexive space that exposes the embodiments of hierarchical power

structures in *1984 Here and Now*, its contexts, and its colonial pretexts. Pierre Bourdieu's

concepts of "field" and "habitus" are crucial to the transitions between the different political

entanglements of texts—intertextuality, pretext, context, and subtext (Pennycook and

Thompson 125) —and my investigation of how theatrical spaces expose, or even attempt to

change the national habitus accumulated from colonial history and its aftermath. This chapter

concludes that Kee's strategic uses of English-language theaters in Malaysia allow us to refine

(post)structuralist approaches to the imperial implications of English-language in postcolonial

countries.

A Brief History of Language Policy in Malaysia

To understand the vantage point of English-language in Kee's *1984 Here and Now*, it is

crucial to situate the discussion of the politics of the English language within the history of

language policy in Malaysia. The national language policy in Malaysia underwent several drastic

changes during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. A relational perspective looking at the

history of language policy reveals the politics of language and its fluctuation in postcolonial

Malaysia.   While Malaysia was under the rule of Britain, the British divided the colonized

Malaysia, known as Malaya, into five linguistic communities: "Chinese," "Malay," "Indian,"

"Eurasian," and "European" (Rappa and Wee 32).   These divisions according to regional and

race lines, as a result, limited interethnic communications.   Because of these divisions, English

became the link language that provided opportunities for interracial dialogues that bridged racial

and ethnic divisions.   When Malaysia gained independence in 1957, English maintained its

official status in Malaysia, as the 1967 National Language Act affirmed the "continued use of

English" (David & Govindasamy "Negotiating a Language Policy" 127).   The development of

English medium schools accelerated at this point, particularly in the year of 1962, when most of

the Chinese secondary schools were discontinued (David & Govindasamy "Negotiating a

Language Policy" 127).

In response to the government's multilingual language policy in the early stage of

independence, Malay nationalists urged the institutionalization of the Malay language as the only

medium of instruction in school.   The major force that simulated this move was the 1969

ethnic riots (a historical event that has substantial importance throughout this chapter).   Also

known as the "Woeful Wednesday," the riots occurred when the resistant group leader, Kit-siang

Li, who protested the government's ethnocentric policy, was arrested.   The imprisonment of Li

led to widespread racial rioting in Kuala Lumpur (Kee 272).   Starting in 1970, the Malaysian

government promoted the Malay language by replacing English, a common medium of

instruction for non-Malay groups, with Malay (David & Govindasamy "Negotiating a Language

Policy" 128).   The Malaysian government also enacted language policies in favor of the

domination of Malay language to equalize the social and economical disadvantages ethnic

Malaysians suffered in the colonial era (David & Govindasamy "Negotiating a Language Policy"

129).   The Constitution Act of 1971 is a good example; it "safeguards the special privileges of

the Malays—that is, Islam as the state religion and Malay as the national language" (David &

Govindasamy "Negotiating a Language Policy" 128).   By the year 1985, all state-funded schools

were converted to Malay-medium schools, and English-medium education was funded only with

private resources (David & Govindasamy "The Construction of National Identity" 57-61).

The promotion of the Malay language and the affirmation of Malay identity that lasted

for fifteen years in Malaysia, however, did not work to alleviate the Malay group's inferior

socio-economic status, as the Malaysian government had intended.   Instead, the "Malay only"

educational policy had shaped the Malay group to be less equipped with multilingual capacity,

which is an economic disadvantage for the groups seeking for job opportunities in face of the

challenges of globalization.   Not until the late 90s did the Malay government begin to loosen

the monolingual restriction in education.   For example, "the New Education Act of 1996

formally empowers the education minister to exempt the use of Malay as the medium of instruction for certain purposes deemed necessary even in schools"—thus did the prime minister of Malaysia advocate "the use of the English language on utilitarian grounds" (Wah and Kok 185).   In 2000, the Prime Minister of Malaysia openly declared the learning of English language as compatible with Malay nationalism: "Learning the English language will reinforce the spirit of nationalism when it is used to bring about development and progress for the country" (qtd. in Tsui & Tollefson 12).

The Malaysian government's promotion of monolingualism started to alter in the beginning of the twenty-first century.   The prime minister's speech in 2000 indicated that national language policy was intended to facilitate Malaysia becoming an industrialized country and to affirm the status of English language as not going against Malaysia's national identity. This change in language policy addressed the partnership between English language and Malaysian nationalism by emphasizing its contribution to the economic opportunities in the nation as a whole; however, it is essentially concerned with the Malay ethnic group's monolingual incompetency in the age of globalization.   As David and Govindasamy point out, "The Malaysian Prime Minister recently revealed [in 2002] that 94% of the unemployed graduates in the country are Malays and that they are unable to procure jobs because industrial jobs called for a high English language competency" (2005, 124).

From monolingualism in the Constitution Act of 1971 to multilingualism in the prime

minister's speech in 2000, Malaysian language policies seem "liberal" in their orientation; that is

to say, the latest national language policy of Malaysia reflects a more open attitude toward the

plurality of language uses. However, there are at least two sets of interrelated contradictions

within the history of national language policy that demand further analysis.   One is that, unlike

the Prime Minister's claims that the national language policy is beneficial to the nation as a whole,

it is evident that social mobility and improvement of economic status, especially for targeted

Malay groups, are crucial components in shaping the orientation of national language policy in

postcolonial Malaysia.   The Constitution Act of 1971 is a good example of how the national

language policy is directed to the privilege and wellbeing of a certain group.   The monolingual

policy in education that changed the instruction medium from English to Malay indicates that

education under the influence of national language policy served as a medium of social control,

protecting the Malay group in order for them to be in the elite class.

　　　According to Ruth Wodak, political discrimination usually manifests as a discourse of

separation: for example, when national policies intentionally reject the equal participation of

various social groups by setting up "insider's knowledge" as a standard that is inaccessible to

these excluded groups (" 'Us' and 'Them' " 55).   The "insider's knowledge," in the case of the

Constitution Act of 1971, is the knowledge of Malay language, a language that had more social

power in its specific context.   Under the influence of the national language policy, educational

institutions become powerful mechanism of "structural discrimination," systematically excluding

and devaluing the non-Malay-language speaking population (Burns 152-153).   Forcefully

imposed equality in the postcolonial stage via Malay-only policy, the Malaysian government not

only marginalized non-Malay groups, but also denied the basic unit of citizenship, that is, human

language rights.   The exclusion of non-Malay groups throughout the history of national

language policy is profoundly undemocratic and ethnocentric.

Another internal contradiction of the Malaysian national language policies is that the

Prime minister's speech in 2000 justified the legitimacy of English-language policy according to a

nationalist agenda.   Language policies that take into consideration non-native languages' impact

and influences on the development of national identity and that promote non-elite native

languages can sound legitimate in postcolonial states.   However, claiming nationalism is only

one of the aspects in the government's language policy; the decision of a monolingual policy, I

argue, is a discursive resolution to forcefully level the developmental differences among ethnic

groups in the domestic.

To uncover this latent aspect of Malaysian language policies—an aspect that is crucial to

understanding Kee's negotiation of language politics in his plays—it is necessary to situate the

discussions of language policies within the shifting politics of English-language in the colonial

and postcolonial stages.   As far as the Malay-only language policy of 1971 is concerned,

replacing English-language with Malay-language as a medium of instruction in education had

implications other than nationalism.   Although the English language was closely associated with

Christian missionary work and western influences in the colonial phase, it was also commonly

used among influential Chinese and South Asians, who become non-Malay ethnic minorities

after independence (Schneider *Postcolonial English* 147).   To explain, after British colonial power

ceased in Malaysia, the English language became, ironically, a local language and continued to

represent non-Malays' hybrid positionality in terms of their class, religion, and ethnicity (Yong

237).   For instance, when most of the Chinese schools were discontinued in 1967, the

acceleration of English-language schools accommodated this transitional phase in education for

non-Malay groups, and, as the result, shaped the non-Malay groups, in general, to be more

linguistically competent than ethnic Malays in English (David & Govindasamy "Negotiating a

Language Policy" 128).   As the shifting politics of English-language indicates, the replacement

of English with Malay in the Constitutional Act of 1971 involves power relations in the domestic

between the ethnic Malays and non-Malays, different than what the government had claimed:

nationalism.

On the broad level, the Malaysian government's insistence on nationalism to initiate a

departure from colonial history resonates with Malaysia's postcolonial context.   To

understand this, we can turn to Frantz Fanon, who, in *The Wretched of the Earth*, criticizes a

common symptom of intellectuals in decolonizing nations: nostalgic nationalism.   Aiming to

find a culture of national significance in a newly-founded country, these intellectuals turn to the

past and adapt the oppressed, indigenous forms of culture to facilitate the task of nation-building,

seeing them as somehow "pure" of influence from outsiders.   However, as Fanon argues, these

indigenous forms do not represent the reality of the postcolonial phase.   As Fanon states,

"These creators forget that modes of thought, diet, modern techniques of communication,

language, and dress have dialectically reorganized the mind of the people and that the abiding

features that acted as safeguards during the colonial period are in the process of undergoing

enormous radical transformations" (161).   In other words, what the intellectuals left out in their

creation of a new, decolonizing national culture is that the imposed forms of life through the

hegemonic power in the colonial era have been reconfigured as a way of life in the postcolonial

stage.

    Throughout the history of the language policy in postcolonial Malaysia, language has

been a crucial medium in establishing Malaysia's national identity.   During the initial

post-independence stage when the nation consisted of multicultural and multiethnic populations

in Malaysia—as a result of the British's colonial language policies—the Malaysian government

enacted the monolingual policy, the Constitution Act of 1971, to claim an "unified" nation,

suppressing ethnic communities' desires to form a multicultural nation.   The Malaysian

government's forceful intervention into the reconfiguring processes of national culture (language

and ethnicity), I argue, resurrects the colonial legacy, and, as Fanon points out, is a false

perception of the national reality, as if it were "flat, untroubled, motionless, reminiscent of death

rather than life" (161).   A current development in the language policy, as the Prime Minister's

speech in 2000 notes, recognizes the economic drawbacks of monolingual policy in the age of

globalization and the necessity of multilingual policy in the establishment of national identity in

Malaysia.   Kee Thuan Chye's English-language play, *1984 Here and Now*, is written and

performed during the fluctuations of language politics—the declining of monolingualism and the

rising of multilingualism—which provides a vantage point for the playwright's representation of

and intervention into various struggles between singular and plural forms of nationalism.

English-language Theaters in Malaysia: Kristen Jit's Legacy

The Malaysian government's national language policies had an immediate impact on

non-Malay groups, making their multilingual capacities a disadvantage in the domain of

education.   Fortunately, non-Malay communities developed a strategy to accommodate the

monolingual policy of 1971; for example, adding extra unofficial hours to teach minority

students English, Malay, and their mother tongues (David & Govindasamy "Negotiating a

Language Policy" 136).   The macro-level language policy not only can be negotiated by the

ethnic groups' resistant movement on the educational stage, but also can be worked through

discursively in theatrical spaces.

In the following, I will explore the dialectical relations between national language politics

and theaters.   Doing so, I try to answer the following questions: How do national language

politics enter local theatrical sites?   How do theatrical performances embody and dramatize the

hierarchy within language politics?   How do playwrights differentiate their own ways of

negotiating ethnocentricism and nationalist ideology, reinforced by the Malaysian government's

language and censorship policies?   Exploring these questions, more specifically, allows me to

contextualize Kee Thuan Chye's *1984 Here and Now* within Malaysia's long history of theatrical

interventions into the language politics, discussing his self-positioning within the changing

language politics, as well as his collaborations with the director of *1984 Here and Now*: Kristen Jit.

Appearing in Summer 2007 issue of *The Drama Review*, a collaborative piece by Charlene

Rajendran and C.J.W.-L. Wee, entitled "The Theatre of Kristen Jit: The Politics of Staging

Difference in Multicultural Malaysia," underscores the pivotal role of Kristen Jit and his political

uses of theater within the theater histories of Malaysia.   The distinctive Krishen Jit is a theater

director, critic, and scholar, whose legacy involves various stages of experiment with theaters of

different language media (Rajendran & Wee 15).   Jit's theatrical experiments start with his

directing of English-language theaters during the 1950s and the 1960s, shift with his move to

Malay-language theaters during the 1970s and the early 1980s, then return to English-language

theaters in the 1980s, and finally to multilingual theaters (Rajendran & Wee 13).   Jit's choice of

linguistic medium in theaters is closely related to the politics of language in different political

climates.   Right after the independence of Malaysia in 1957 and before the 1980s, the national

language policy was in favor of the Malay groups, which resulted in the domination of the Malay

language.   And afterward, the national language policy became more acceptable toward

English-language and multilingualism.

Within the history of modern theater in Malaysia that has been dominated by the

monolithic categorization of theatrical languages, Jit is one of the few theatrical practitioners in

Malaysia who is unaffected by the tradition of linguistic divisions in theaters and instead

promotes both English and Malay theaters (Tan 291; Rowland 15).   Unlike the majority of

English-speaking elites in the 1970s, Jit devoted himself to Malay-language theater; in 1970, Jit

directed Usman Atway's Malay play, *Matinya Seorang Pahlawan*, whose translated English title is

*The Death of a Warrior: Jebat (*Rajendran & Wee 14).   The play portrays a representative figure of

a "traitor" in Malaysian history, Jebat, as the hero who challenges feudal authority in Malaysia

(Rajendran & Wee 14).   Atway and Jit's collaboration provides a new historical perspective to

open up the nostalgic tendency in Malay-language theaters that preserves the static value of

tradition.   However, their efforts to challenge the enclosed Malay traditional values were

outweighed by the persistence of "nativist tendencies" in Malay-language theaters and were

unsuccessful, as it was common that Malay directors were in charge of the production of

Malay-language plays (Rajendran & Wee 15).   It was an uncommon position that Jit, as an

Indian-Malaysian, chose to be involved in Malay-language theaters during the 1970s and the early

1980s, a time period that marked a tense relationship between Malay and other ethnic groups, as

the result of the interracial riots in 1969.

    In the 80s, English   was less burdened with its colonial history and became acceptable

as a "local language," given that the Constitution   Act of 1971, which was concerned about

English's foreign influences on the establishment of nationalism, reached its end in the early 80s

(Rajendran & Wee 16).   In this context, Jit seized the shifting politics of English to contest the

dominant Malay language and Malay values, and promote non-Malay ethnic groups and values.

Jit co-founded the Five Arts Centre, with which he directed a few crucial English-language plays,

including Maniam's *The Cord* in 1984 (Rajendran & Wee 16).   *The Cord* invokes the history of

pre-independence oppression by presenting "the subaltern psyche of the Indian-Malaysian

plantation laborer within the larger cultural climate of a modernizing and thus increasingly

less-impoverished Malaysia" (Rajendran & Wee 17-18).   The major character in *The Cord* is a

Tamil labor worker who immigrated from South India and is deprived of language rights and

citizenship (Rajendran & Wee 17-18).   In this case, the cooperation between Jit and Maniam

extended the critique of domestic oppression and class struggle in the colonial era to the postcolonial stage.   English-language theater, for both Jit and Maniam, served as a "conductive medium" in the articulation of interracial class struggle that continued throughout the history of Malaysia (Rajendran & Wee 16).   English-language theaters provided a vantage point for Jit to articulate these socio-political inequalities, preventing the racialization of Jit's ethnic background as an Indian-Malaysia, a crucial disadvantage that had caused Jit's previous experiment with Malay-language theaters to be unsuccessful.

Jit not only shows his intent of integrating Malaysian theaters fragmented by language divisions, but also utilizes the politics of language as a vantage point to articulate "marginalized aspects of being Malaysian," addressing existing hegemony within internal structure of monolingual theaters (Rajendran & Wee 20).   When working in Malay-language theater, Jit is critical of its exclusive and orthodox orientation, whereas, when working in English-language theater, Jit is cautious of its colonial history.   Jit's ultimate goal is not merely promoting Malay-language and English-language theaters in separation, but multilingual theaters.   This ideal was realized by Jit when he directed *Us: Actions and Images* in 1993.   The play juxtaposes personal narratives of different ethnic groups' interracial marriages, and contains linguistic varieties—English, Malay, and Chinese—that designate the sociolinguistic identity markers of these narrators (Rajendran & Wee 20).   Jit's multilingual theater in the 1990s articulates the

national reality of cultural diversities, a marginalized aspect caused by the monolithic construct of language, culture, and ethnicity under the influence of monolingual policy in 1971.

As is clear from the trajectory of Jit's theatrical experiments, Jit constantly stays on "the margin of the nationalist agenda" without running afoul of the national language policy, while successfully breaching various hierarchies in language, culture, and ethnicity in his later stages of experimentation. Jit's flexible responses to the existing language politics derive from his insights of integrating theatrical performances with the public discourses on "postcolonial nationhood and cultural integration" (Rajendran & Wee 15). Kee shares similar positionality with Jit, as the success of *1984 Here and Now*'s public performance indicated that Kee seized the turning point of national language policy in the early 80s and made good uses of the emerging English-language theaters to unravel language hegemony existing in the pre- and post-independence histories of Malaysia. Attending to the mainstream position and subverting its orthodox culture from the within, Kee and Jit's unique position is distinguishable from the first generation of Malaysian multilingual playwrights.

Despite their similarities with Kee and Jit in terms of politicizing Malay-language theaters and elevating it onto the national level, the first generation of multilingual playwrights utilized Malay-language theaters as a site of contesting colonialism, emphasizing the singularity of national identity by the use of indigenous language. Starting from the mid-1960s, multilingual

playwrights such as Edward Dorall, K. Das, Lee Joo, and Patrick Yeoh were engaged in the task

of decolonization and did not embrace "imported" western forms of modern drama that they

believed were alien to the local Malaysian culture.   Even with these playwrights' bilingual

capacities in English-language and Malay-language, they chose to compose literature in Malay

with Malaysian traditional forms of drama (Yeo 9; Yong 236).   These playwrights intended to

bridge the separation between Malay and English theatre groups; however, their theatrical

practices perpetuated the division of theatrical languages, as they were still restricted by the

existing linguistic boundaries in theaters that promoted the inherited cultural values.

Moreover, their approach of essentializing relations between Malay nationalism and Malay

language furthers the legacy of colonialism, being no different from the nationalist ideology

embedded in Malaysian government's language policy.   On the contrary, Jit, aware of the

persistence of linguistic hierarchies in certain political climates, attempts, though unsuccessfully,

to alter the language hierarchy in the Malay-language theaters in the 1960s.

The second generation of Malaysian multilingual playwrights, such as Kee, differs from

their predecessors in their singular association of national identity with theatrical language, and

their recognizing the political use of English-language theaters in articulating multiple forms of

ethnicity, culture, and language as the reality in the post post-independence Malaysia.   Even

though Malay-language theater gained its legitimacy in national theaters and was commissioned

by the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry producer did not dedicate Malay theaters to any particular function of socio-political critique, but rather produced a nostalgic nationalist agenda (Jit "Unveiling the Hidden Flaws" 185-186).   Contrastingly, in the 1980s, when the politics of English were distant from colonial history and shifted to represent the positionality of ethnic groups, English-language theaters facilitated voices from the margin.   Kee's *1984 Here and Now* is a good example in this, as it unravels the hegemony of cultural and language national policies, speaking on behalf of the multicultural and multilingual populations. Even though English-language theaters stood in "the margins of the national consciousness" in the 80s, it became an intercultural medium to address the national realities silenced by the monolingual national policy: that is, the linguistic, cultural, ethnic hybridity of Malaysia (Jit "Need to Nurture English Playwrights" 169).

Jit's theatrical experiments in the 80s and the 90s involved collaborations with multilingual playwrights like Kee who viewed English-language theaters as a crucial medium in addressing the "transition between the forces of East and West, and of tradition and modernity" (Jit "Need to Nurture English Playwrights" 170).   Kee Thuan Chye's English-language plays—*1984 Here and Now*, *The Big Purge*, and *We Can **** You, Mr. Birch*—skillfully articulate inter-ethnic conflicts in the domestic realm, while taking transnational, colonial history into the account of the politics of English-language use.   *1984 Here and Now* is the best illustration of

Kee's hybrid position, in that it contains linguistic variations of standard English-language. These linguistic variations in accent, pronunciation, and syntax, serve as a means to disrupt the polemic construction of English-language between colonial and postcolonial stages.   I will discuss this in my textual analysis.   The intent to de-stabilize the boundaries of culture, language, ethnicity, and national identity was evident in the first theatrical production of *1984 Here and Now* in 1985; the director of the play, Jit, had Malay-speaking actors and actresses perform the role of Chinese-Malaysians in the play, obscuring the essentialized ethnic lines of national policy, and showing them to be divided by skin color, spoken language, and national histories (Lo *Staging Nation,* 85).   In other words, Jit's stage directions further emphasize Kee's hybrid positions by approaching the monolithic constructions of language, culture, and ethnicity in postcolonial stage from a postmodern perspective.

Re-reading the Locality of English-Language Theaters: A Bourdieuian View

Although the top-down and bottom-up models of discussing the mutual influences between national language policy and local theaters are useful to trace various changes in the politics of English, such a paradigm regards the macro and micro-levels as if both were autonomous, originating in isolation and from different roots.   To further investigate the overarching, shared historical forces between national language policy and local theaters in Malaysia, I employ Pierre Bourdieu, a sociolinguist, whose theoretical framework built upon

"field" and "habitus" is useful to breach subjects often perceived as the dichotomized, or the unrelated, such as national language policy and theaters, literature (text) and life (the contexts and the pretexts of a literary work).

According to Bourdieu in *Language and Symbolic Power*, linguistic performances inscribe social power, which, paradoxically, is predicated on the speakers' social relations in particular spaces, or "fields." A "field" is defined by Bourdieu as the "structured space of positions" which conditions and, at the same time, displays the normal language uses of particular social classes, called the "linguistic habitus" (14). In the Bourdieuian concepts of "field" and "habitus," language is both the mechanism and agency of power display. On the one hand, the social power that language designates is situated within the structured positionality of "field"; on the other hand, language performances have the potential to detour from normative language uses, or "habitus," by creating a less structured "field" of less programmed power relations, as to alter the static mechanism of power registered in language norms. Using Bourdieu's theoretical framework, we can interpret that the national language policy in Malaysia, for example, creates a linguistic "field" on the national scale and affects the receptions of certain language uses. As the constitutional Act of 1971 that requires the replacement of English-language with Malay-language filtered through educational medium like national examinations, it endowed the Malay language with more social power than English. During the eleven years when the

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monolingual policy was in effect, the constructed values of the two languages and linguistic features were also embodied in language users, and thus created a new linguistic habitus in Malaysia.

We can also consider theatre in these terms—as a conjunction of fields and habitus. Subordinated to the national linguistic field, however, the local theatrical field created by Malaysian playwrights such as Kristen Jit and Kee Thuan Chye serves as a medium for intervening in the linguistic habitus that has been constructed by the monolingual national policy. The linguistic habitus, shaped by the national language policy in the 60s and the 70s that essentialized links between Malay language, Malay ethnicity, and Malay nationalism, creates obstacles for interethnic dialogues and the transference of multilingual/multicultural elements in social realms.   Seizing the turning point of the government's interest in the economic benefit of English-language in the 80s and the 90s, during which the power of monolingualism gradually declined, Jit and Kee make good uses of the legitimate power of English language.   Instead of blindly following the national language policy and reproducing in theatre and drama the symbolic power of English-language in economics, Kee and Jit participate in creating a new linguistic habitus that better represents the reality of the nation, a habitus that is multicultural and multiethnic.

In the following sections, I will demonstrate the dynamic relations between "field" and "habitus" by underlying overarching links between the text of Kee Thuan Chye's masterpiece, its contexts, and its pretexts. What kinds of power relations are embedded within the linguistic features of the characters (or, habitus) in the play? How are the characters' embodied habitus revealed or confronted during theatrical performances (or, field) of the play? Conducting a Bourdieuian reading of *1984 Here and Now* and its performance allows a glimpse into the fluidity of power relations and how it operates in the text.

Linguistic Signs in 1984 Here and Now: A Sociolinguistic Analysis

Kee's *1984 Here and Now* is about two characters, Wiran and Yone, whose romantic relations develop as they negotiate and reveal their habitus, i.e. the embodied ethnic, social, and political differences that structure their lives. Wiran, who makes a living by publishing newspaper, is so-called a "bread-and-butter journalist" (255). At the same time, Wiran is observant of the dominating Party's censorship of multicultural activities among Prole members, whose socioeconomic status is lower than that of the Party members. Wiran is one of the characters who undergoes dramatic transformations in the play. Feeling sympathetic with the Prole members' oppressed situation, Wiran falls in love with a woman named Yone, who shares with Wiran her past experiences as an oppressed Prole member. Wiran's romantic relations with Yone transform his sympathy toward the Prole members into actions; Wiran devotes

himself to form a resistant group, "the Brotherhood," that unifies the Proles and those who

support democracy and the freedom of expression to fight against the sociopolitical inequality.

However, in the end, the Brotherhood fails, as Wiran and those who involved are captured.   At

the end of the play, audiences know that it is highly suspicious that Yone's romance with Wiran

is political, as she has been playing the role of the go-between the political parties. .

It is better *not* to read *1984 Here and Now* from a psychoanalytic perspective,

overemphasizing a Freudian or Lacanian critique of emotional attachment and love as

transference effects in the analysis of Wiran's sympathy toward Yone's traumatic experiences.

Such poststructuralist, psychoanalytic approach to language, though informing certain aspects in

Wiran's dramatic transformation in the play, limits the scope of the analysis within the individual

psychology.   For the purpose of this study on world drama and the politics of English-language,

a sociolinguistic analysis of Wiran and Yone's dialogues and interactions in the text, as well as a

Bourdieuian reading of the text, its contexts, and pretexts are necessary.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, language is a social code that sheds light on

individuals' diverse backgrounds and contexts.   As subtle as linguistic variations like accent can

be, they indicate the speaker's distinctive history and social background.   As V. N. Volosinov, a

Russian Marxist linguist, states in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language,* accent is an "ideological

sign" that has no internal values (19).   To Volosinov, "all ideological accents are social accents"

(22).   In other words, it is through the processes of socialization, through different "social

interests" in the interactions between different linguistic communities that determines the

ideological value of linguistic signs (23).

Volosinov's emphasis on the interactions of verbal signs in the social realm is particularly

crucial in identifying characters' embodied linguistic habitus and the involved power relations in

1984 Here and Now.   During Wiran and Yone's first encounter, differences in their language uses

and class status manifest.   The first time when they met, Wiran comments on her spoken

English: "For a Prole, you speak the language very well.   Except for your accent" (260).   "Lots

of Proles can speak it well now," Yone responds (260).   Obviously, Wiran assumes that Yone's

accent is a definitive linguistic feature that reveals her as a Prole member, since most of them

speak (English) language comparatively different than a Party member does.

Wiran's observations of linguistic differences—between Yone and other Prole members,

and between Party and Prole members—are not without ideological value.   That said, Wiran,

who is a mainstream journalist, comments that Yone as a Prole speaks good English except for

having an accent.   To put in another way, if Yone would have spoken English with no accent,

Wiran would not assume her to be a Prole.   But, why do linguistic variations become a

determinative feature in constructing Wiran's categorizations of people?   Where do ideological

values of linguistic variations come from?   Why do the ideological values of the linguistic

variations closely associate with the social class, being a Prole and a Party member?

For Volosinov, verbal interactions refract social (dis)interests, or the "market," in the

linguistic sign (23).   From Volosinov's interactive sociolinguistic perspective, the value

judgments attached to Wiran and Yone's embodied language uses also reflect the collective,

sociopolitical realities in *1984 Here and Now*.   In this dramatic piece, the embodied linguistic

characteristics, or linguistic habitus, such as accent, pronunciation, and syntax, are markers of

characters' identities: political stance, class, and ethnicity.

Linguistic differences designate two polemic political stances that set the major conflicts

in *1984 Here and Now*: the Party and the Prole.   The Party members speak in standard English,

dress in uniforms, and are nationalists who advocate establishing a nation of a singular race,

culture, and religion.   The Party members' linguistic aestheticism contrasts the linguistic

hybridity of the Prole members.   The Prole members speak English with culturally-informed

linguistic variations, such as colloquialisms ("la", "lah", "Haiya"), pronunciation ("doan"= do

not, "dam"= "they"), and syntax ("Ya, bring more bad luck only. I orso cannot game. Look at

my card, all split") (257).

The Party-dominated nation depicted in *1984 Here and Now* regulates or even censors the

cultural activities of the Prole members.   The Proles are often interfered with by Party members

and asked for "permits" during activities that involve cultural heritage, such as drinking beers,

playing Marjun games, and performing a street tiger dance (257-258).   The Proles are made

aware of social separations as inevitable, and show their powerless position to override the

Party's domination, and censorship on artistic and cultural practices.   On the contrary, the Party

members play the roles of police or government officers in charge of the implementation and

enactment of policies.   The head of the Party, the Big Brother, appears on stage through the

TV screen, announcing up-to-date cultural regulations.   The omniscient presence of the Big

Brother suggests the power of the surveillance.

Staging Hegemony and Resistance in 1984 Here and Now

Having the broader power relations in mind, it is necessary to note that the intricate,

interrelated power relations, running through the trajectory of political parties, language, cultural

productions, and ethnicities, might not be recognized by characters until the very end of the play.

This is why Kee depicts most of the characters as being caught by and participating in power

struggle.   As an intellectual, Wiran, who is critical of the authoritative regime and existing power

hierarchies, fails until the very end of the play to recognize that his personal relations with Yone

have political implications.   What triggers Wiran to participate in the resistant group against the

political hegemony is both his affection toward Yone, and more politically accurate, his sympathy

toward what Yone represents, that is, the struggle of Prole members.

In the authoritative political situation portrayed in *1984 Here and Now*, power relations are more complicated than absolute opposition and domination. Even for a resistant group like the Brotherhood speaking on behalf of the Prole's social oppression against the Party's domination, its internal integrity and bondage of membership are ambiguous. When Wiran asks Jumon, one of the leaders of the Brotherhood, "Who's behind this movement?" Jumon answers, "Nobody knows. We have to be careful, you see. But the membership is made up of Party members as well as Proles" (258). Jumon not only doesn't know what the Brotherhood consists of, but also holds an ideal that the organization would unify individuals of partisan differences. Being arrested and imprisoned in the end, however, Jumon denies his leadership in the Brotherhood. Jumon tries to excuse himself from being the opponent of the Party by accusing Wiran:"That's [Wiran's] the one you should be taking, not me! He's the one that's against the Party. He was one of the rebel leaders. He's the one you want! Take him, not me!" (268) Kee's characterizations of Jumon and Wiran, in my opinion, suggest individualistic futile efforts in participating in social resistance and the ultimate negotiation with or even submission to the dominating power.

From the perspective of the Party member, the forming Brotherhood and its anti-government agenda neglect the hierarchical power relations in the larger socio-political contexts. A government minister and friend of Wiran's, Shadrin criticizes Wiran and the

Brotherhood's effort to initiate revolution: "If there is going to be any radical change in any policy, it must come from the Administration. It won't come from you or any so-called social reform movement" (271). Shadrin questions how grassroots organizations like the Brotherhood have a better chance to initiate social movement than the governmental administration. Shadrin's suspicion of the Brotherhood's capacity to start social revolution because of its illegal status, in my opinion, is rather critical.

But, as Bourdieu reminds us in *Language and Symbolic Power*, power never exists within a vacuum or is never under the absolute ownership of an individual; the social power that a linguistic performance symbolizes derives from the linguistic performance's structured position in a particular space, or field. In the case of the Brotherhood's public demonstration, its attempt to equalize the social discrimination against the Proles is conceptually sound in terms of social justice; however, its anti-government orientation within the context where hegemony prevails undercuts the social power of the resistant group and its potential to initiate a change. In other words, it is the social position of a social organization that grants its power of legitimacy to initiate social change in support of the Prole members. In Kee's portrayed state of dictatorship, the Brotherhood's social movement indeed has less chance to succeed, given its internal ambiguous nature among its members and its structural disadvantage in the public sphere.

Not only is the resistant power of the Brotherhood ambivalent/ ambiguous, but so is the

power of the Party. Even though the Party takes control of social policies and censors

multicultural activities, most of the Party members, surprisingly, have no physical presence in

1984 Here and Now. Audiences only see symbolic representations of the Party members on

stage. For instance, the setting of the play features a portrayal of the head of the Party, the Big

Brother, projected on a screen, as if he is observing progressions of the play. Also, throughout

the play, the Big Brother's commentaries of the political situations are broadcast via an on-stage

television set: "We will not compromise the peace of this nation or allow another Woeful

Wednesday to happen. The people must always be on guard against the threat posed by the

Kloots" (267). If we recall, "Woeful Wednesday" refers to a crucial event in the history of

Malaysia that racial riots was resulted from violent confrontations between the government's

imposition of racial unity and multicultural groups' protest against ethnic hierarchy (272). The

Big Brother's political messages are consistent in the play that the nation should learn the lesson

of the Woeful Wednesday to avoid the occurrence of any racial riots and be united in opposition

to the Kloots, or what it represents communist threat. These symbolic presences of the Big

Brother entail a superstructure whose political ideologies exert influences on characters watching

the broadcasting: "It's already six, Big Brother is making an important announcement. Switch on

the TV" (256). The Party's censorship of multicultural activities, and the visual and verbal

presentations of the Big Brother on stage reproduces power hierarchy in *1984 Here and Now*, shaping general perceptions, such as Wiran's, of the "mainstream" political stances, language uses, and physical appearances.   In other words, the power of the Party is constructed via the public displays of language uses, dress codes, and physical appearance, as if these were essential categories of distinguishing individuals.

The omnipresence of the Big Brother, ironically, calls attention to the material supports behind him.   The Big Brother's second appearance in the secret meeting of the Party is, once again, symbolic.   Both of the Big Brother and two party members are staged as shadow puppets, or a traditional Malay art form called, "wayang-kulit" (266).   As Kee's stage directions indicate, the puppets are controlled by "human characters behind a large screen" and their dialogues are "delivered in heightened manner, their physical mannerisms broad, puppet-like" (266).   With the emphasis of the inhuman, mechanical characteristics of the dominating party, Kee's non-realistic, symbolic, representational strategy of the Party members suggests its dominating power as not absolute, but being mediated and recreated through material possessions and productions.   Contrasting the visual and audio representations of the Big Brother in the earlier scenes that display language norms and announce censorship policies, the use of the artistic performance informed by local culture, I argue, lays bare the constructions of the verbal and visual representation of the dominating social norms—dressing code, language uses, and political

stances—by emphasizing the "heightened manner" in the utterance of the performance and satirizing the illusive, shadowy nature of the Big Brother's symbolic presence in the play.

Given Kee's juxtapositions of the hierarchical, at the same time, arbitrary constructions of power relations, are oppositional politics, as represented by the Brotherhood in an authoritative state portrayed in *1984 Here and Now*, destined to fail? Jumon and Wiran contrast in their responses to the prospect of resistance after the Brotherhood fails. Jumon expresses his pessimism about social resistance whereas Wiran tries to persuade him that it is merely social power that imprisons them and that power cannot change their thoughts and their dedication to social movements. Wiran claims, "Jumon, they can make you say anything but they can't make you believe it. They can't get inside you. They can't change the way you feel" (268). Differing from Jumon, Wiran understands power relations as not being static; for him, what legitimates the Party members' power and discriminative policies is the political power.

At the very end, the only social power Wiran has is the power of language, curiously, reversing the hierarchical, polemic construction of language politics established so far between the Party and the Proles. Wiran addresses directly to audiences sitting and watching the play:

Are you all going to sit here and do nothing? The hope of this nation lies with you! Are you going to sit here and it go to the dogs? Stand up! Stand up and unite Party members, Proles, whoever you are wherever you are. Speak up for your right. This is a democracy. Stand

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up for your freedom, for racial equality and integration, for humanity and justice, for truth, for a

nation capable of greatness! (272)

Wiran's urgent speech to the audience reminds them that they are spectators of the play,

breaks through the aesthetic framework that theatricality establishes, and more importantly,

stimulates the audience's response. Audience is demanded to take actions, no longer being

recipients and observant of the previous theatrical performances, such as watching the television

broadcasting of the Big Brother's speech, the tiger dance, and the shadow play. Kee ends the

play with Wiran's final speech, indicating a special effect this action carried: audience responses.

"The police come after WIRAN. It is up to the audience to react as they wish—whether to betray him or protect

him. Blackout" (the author's emphasis) (272). The last action of the play demands actions from

the audience, denying their aesthetic identification with characters in the play. For an

interactive play like *1984 Here and Now,* whose ending is dependent upon audiences' reactions,

true protagonists are among audiences, not the characters.

Theatrical Dynamics: Habitus, Pretexts, Intertextuality

What is the purpose of expanding theatrical boundaries into audience's seats and then

closing up the internal structures of the play? Why would Kee consider audience reactions as

crucial parts of theatrical performances? As discussed before, on-stage performances in local

theaters are equivalent to the Bourdieuian "field" that have the capacity to redirect and intervene

the "habitus," directly affected by the linguistic "field" of the national language policy. A textured reading of habitus in *1984 Here and Now* delineates characters' embodied differences in linguistic features, social status, political stances, and unequal power relations. Expanding theatrical performances from on-stage to off-stage, in which spectators are prompted to join the performance. This move, taking a Bourdieuian stance to explain, signals the emergence of another "field" with different "structured space of positions" (Bourdieu 14). The last scene of the play, where Wiran urgently addresses audiences while being chased by police, inaugurates a *very* different field that contrasts with the preceding power relations on the national and local levels, including the governmental surveillance's control of mass media and the grassroots' contestation via multicultural public performances. It creates a field of opportunity that empowers audiences to redefine the failure of the Brotherhood, either in their action or in their mind after the blackout, adding theatrical dynamics to the representation of language norms, and the staged hegemony and resistance seen so far in the text.

Many playwrights and theater practitioners employ interactive performances with a political agenda. In "Theatrical Nationalism: Exposing the 'Obscene Superego' of the System," Steve Wilmer details theatre artists' use of the tactic of "subversive identification" to expose and contest cultural nationalism in the twentieth-first century. Coined by Christopher Schlingensief in Austria and Janez Janša in Slovenia, "subversive identification" refers to the

over-exposure of the "obscene nature" of politics in performances, intending to subvert

audiences' identification with the staged hegemony and to engage them with the opposition

(Wilmer 86). For example, Schlingensief's Vienna performance project in 2000 dramatizes

attitudes toward immigration in Austria. Right after the election of a collated government of

right-wing members, Schlingensief created an event in an outside, public space, where he placed

twelve immigrants in a big container, with a right-wing political slogan attached on the outside,

"foreigners' out" (qtd. in Wilmer 83). The fate of these immigrants, whether to stay in or leave

the container, to be deported or to be accepted as a citizen, depended on audience voting and

interactions with the performance (83). Audiences have to guess which one of the immigrants

in the container is a real refugee, or simply an actor/ actress playing the role (83). Activities in

the containers were broadcast via the internet; audiences could watch the performance and vote

online (83-84).

The political use of theater as a site of criticism in Schlingensief's project is evident, as it

attempts to show "the excess of cultural nationalism" (Wilmer 86) and to ironize Austrians'

arbitrary perceptions of immigrants by dramatizing the contrasts between reality and

performances. Employed the strategy of "subversive identification," Schlingensief's project

also raises the issue of hermeneutics, in which audiences' political stances come into the

interpretations of a public performance. As Wilmer observes, Schlingensief's project was

interrupted by a group of leftists who conflated the theatrical space with a socio-political one,

destroyed the stage prompts, and claimed to rescue the "imprisoned" immigrants (84).

From a Bourdieuian perspective, Schlingensief's performance piece in Vienna

exemplifies that the power of interactive theatrical performances depends on exerting influences

on audiences, exposing their habitus, or even attempting to recreate it.   In Kee's case, similarly,

expanding theatrical spaces into audiences' seats re-creates power relations in a different "field,"

inviting audiences not only to cause changes to the staged hegemony in *1984 Here and Now*, but

also to reflect upon audiences' collective "habitus."

1984 Here and Now was produced in 1985, an era that still carried the baggage of

interethnic and intercultural conflicts from Malaysia's (post)colonial histories.   The linguistic

habitus of Malaysia in the 80s was largely influenced by the Constitution Act of 1971, which

demanded the use of Malay as the only medium of instruction in education.   As my analysis has

shown, this monolingual policy denied the language right of non-Malay groups, and the

embedded nationalist agenda contradicted the multicultural and multiethnic realities in the

post-independent era.   The enactment of the monolingual policy was a reaction to the racial

riots of 1969, or the "Woeful Wednesday," an important historical event Kee footnotes in *1984*

Here and Now.

These accumulated ethnic tensions were the aftermath of British colonial policies in Malaysia that "entrenched the separate economic, social, and cultural development of the ethnic communities in Malaysia" (Rappa 33). During British rule, immigrants were brought in Malaysia, called Malaya at the time, as labor and participated in the task of industrialization (Lo 54). With the employment of many immigrants as workers in cities, the economic gaps with Malay peasants increased, as the result of the imbalanced regional developments between city and country (Lo 54). Among these immigrants, Chinese in particular was often identified as the source of oppression of Malay peasants because of their "entrepreneurial" roles between the colonial government and the local people (Rajendran & Wee 18). Despite the colonial government's effort to unite different ethnic groups with English-language, its colonial policy divided the Malaysians' inhabitants into five linguistic communities became an obstacle to interethnic communications (Rappa 32).

The Cord, the English-language play by Maniam and staged by Jit in 1984, reflects the juxtapositions of racial discrimination and class hierarchies, or the social habitus in the 80s. Invoking issues of race and class inequalities in Malaysia's (pre)colonial histories, Maniam depicts the psychological trauma of an Indian-Malaysian plantation laborer, who immigrated to a new country, was deprived of citizenship, and suffered from economic oppression in the context of industrialization. The profound historical consciousness in *the Cord*, I argue, represents voices

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from the subaltern, that is, the Indian-Malaysians as the true victim of the industrialization of

Malaysia in the pre-independence stage, and of the Malaysia government's nationalist policies

that increased racial discrimination.

What exacerbated the tension between the ethnic Malays and the Chinese-Malaysians was

the international political conflict between the Britain colonial government and the communist

China. Led by the Malayan National Liberation Army (MNLA) against British domination in

Malaysia, the insurgency movements was supported by the communist China and mostly by the

ethnic Chinese in Malaysia, whereas the Malay nationalists in fear of a state "dominated by ethnic

Chinese" supported the British troops ("Malaysia Emergency"). This communist-supported

insurgency movement was defeated by a British-supported counter-insurgency movement in the

end. The colonial government's ideological battle with communism then transferred into the

postcolonial era and became another factor that increased ethnic divisions.

All of these complicated, interrelated pretexts in the aftermath of British colonial policies,

including the linguistic, cultural, class, ethnic divisions, are integrated in *1984 Here and Now.* The

one-sided portrait of communist threat to the unity of the nation in the colonial era, for instance,

is recaptured by Kee in the play as the core of the Big Brother's ideological commentaries on the

danger of the "Kloots" (267). Also, the play's intertextual connections with these colonial

pretexts can be seen in the Party's censorship of the Proles' Chinese-influenced cultural activities

in public, such as the tiger dance and Mahjong.   The Proles' low social status and

"non-standard' linguistic features signify their immigrant or non-native status; the correlations

between language and class also resonate to these colonial habitus.

As the theatrical performances of *1984 Here and Now* expose the linguistic and social

habitus in the 80s that audiences might embody, Kee discursively contests colonial language

hegemony and its return in the postcolonial era.   The double positionality of English-language

theater—both the embodiment and the contestant of hegemonic language politics—I argue,

derive from Kee's unique, rich sense of histories.   Instead of having a totalitarian view of history

or viewing the movement of history in the Hegelian dialectic, Kee describes history as "an

ever-flowing stream," running deep through the past, present and future; all of the historical

stages enter the "moving water in fluent juxtaposition or colliding opposition" (qtd. in Yeo 18).

Conflicts from the remote past have never gone away; instead, they are reconfigured into the

habitus of the present and transferred into the future.   As Kee clearly explains, "If you think

some aspects of the past are bad, think again. The present is no better. The identities of the power

brokers will change, situations will differ but the power play for the advancement of self-interest

does not. History repeats itself. Nothing is new except what is forgotten" (qtd. in Yeo 19).

Conclusion: Rethinking the Politics of English Language

Throughout the history of national language policy in Malaysia, language politics has been a nationalist instrument in denying the citizenship of immigrants and predetermining the social status of non-Malay ethnic citizens. As in the Constitutive Act of 1971, the national language policy promotes Malay language as the standard form of literacy in education, which engulfed class division between the Malay ethnic and non-Malay groups. Such context is where the habitus of Kee's *1984 Here and Now* registers, with the representation of linguistic differences and their resonance with social class and value. In the portrayal of *the Cord*, for instance, class division is in fact a recurrence of class oppression that the British colonial government exploited immigrants' cheap labors within the trend of industrialization. In the beginning of the twenty-first century, as the Prime Minister of Malaysia noted, global economy and the internationalization of English language apparently caused a change of direction in the Malaysian government's long-lasting nationalist language planning bundled up with monolingualism. The issue of economy and capitalist accumulation will continue to take part in Malaysia's postcolonial struggles over hegemonic forces. One of them is the power inequality within the seemingly equal multilingual orientation in the context of Malaysia, which in turn demands further research on the geopolitics of language, extending language planning as involved with colonial legacy and nationalism into metropolis and international organizations.

In *Linguistic Imperialism,* Robert Phillipson argues that the politics of English is determined by the static and hierarchical power structure, established in the histories of colonialism. The global spread of English, according to Phillipson, reproduces such imbalanced power relations, for instance, between native and non-native speakers of English (NSE and NNSE). A poststructuralist turn in language politics in the 60s and the 70s complicated the structural approach to the imperial implications of English language. For example, Elana Shohamy, in *Language Policy*, investigates language politics in the contexts of national language policies; what include are formations of governmental language policy and its implementation in the local via institutional agency. Reversing the imposition of power from the top-down, Shohamy illuminates how various resistant acts in public spheres and educational settings add dynamics to the assimilative nature of national language policy.

This case study of Malaysian theater artists' interventions into the language politics aims to refine, rather than to counter, the (post)structuralist approaches to English's imperial implications in two ways. First of all, the politics of English-language, though they are historically situated, is nonetheless static, structured, and absolutely anchored in colonial histories. As my analyses demonstrated, English language in postcolonial Malaysia in the 80s is an advantaged medium that the playwrights utilize to voice the non-Malays' subaltern positionality, which is different from the colonial context, in which English-language is a cause of class

oppression and racial separation.   Taking into account the shifting politics of English language

provides a crucial understanding of how an anti-government play like *1984 Here and Now* escaped

censorship in relation to Kee's strategic positioning within various gaps of power relations in the

80s.   Secondly, this case study reconfigures the colonial politics of English-language in the

theatrical performances of Kee's postcolonial drama.   The public performances in theaters, as

shown in my analyses, expose the embodiment of (post)colonial language hegemony, while

stimulate critical (re)thinking of the habitus, or the impasse of colonial history.   I argue that

theatrical performances provide an elastic field that enables a historically situated analysis of

language politics in local theaters, widening poststructualists' top-down and bottom-up model in

space.   The power of performance is an issue that Chapter Two takes up.

CHAPTER THREE

A DIALECTIC BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND GENDER POLITICS IN

GLOBAL GENDER PERFORMANCE: CHIN WOON PING'S *DETAILS CANNOT*

BODY WANTS

A group gathering.   Gourmet food on the table, mostly homemade: chicken fried Mi-Fun, tea-leaf eggs, chips with guacamole dip, lasagna, garden salad, Eat 'n' Park smiley cookies.   She chatted while she stood waiting in line.   "You Asian women long for company. You cannot stand being alone."   Something spoiled a friendly conversation.   "No. We feel comfortable in groups and alone," she said with dignity, demanding her conversation partner's restatement.   A mocking smile appeared on his face.   She saw it, and out of irritation she restated her view with a rising tone, probably hoping to be heard by others.   Yet casual conversations continued in the room. No one intervened; no one seemed to notice.   But the line began to move.

Cross-gender and cross-cultural communication occur every day.   The case in discussion here is more political than it seems to be: semi-private conversations in the potluck of a multicultural group.   The geopolitics of gender comes into the play in this, perhaps more than the two speakers themselves were aware of at that moment.   Both proposed a generalizing, cultural imaginary of gender that was in conflict with the other.   Their conversations were not dialogic; the participants retained their own subjective positions and were thus incapable of

carrying the issue to its critical maturity. There could have been critical inquiries as to the construct of that individualist view ("You Asian women long for company. You cannot stand being alone"). For instance, to what extent do popular registers of cultural ideologies (such as Confucianism in which women have to obey their father before marriage, their husband and son after marriage) and even ancient, extinct cultural practices (like foot binding) reinforce particular cultural assumptions of gender that imply Asian women are never independent, never free? Also, there is less room for social intervention to open up the semi-private circle, most likely because no one was an "Asian-looking woman" except her and no one else would risk in speaking on behalf of or representing the gendered cultural group.

One of the major contesting fields of such cultural imaginaries and stereotypes is postcolonial studies. Edward Said in *Orientalism* examines the representations of the East in various cultural productions such as music, literature, and art. Said exposes the ideological ground of the West's orientalist discourse and shows that its systematic depictions of the East as the racialized other, the "savage," "exotic," "immature" in fact relate closely to the West's "civilizing mission" in introducing "democracy" and "Christian culture" to convert Islam, which is "the last monotheistic religion" in the world (*Orientalism*).

Said's intention is not to recreate a dichotomy between the West and the East; rather, it is presented as a counter-hegemonic discourse attempting to decentralize the colonial discourse

and its domination in the representations of the cultural other. Said's discourse is similar to the

counter-discourse in the above-stated cross-cultural incident ("No. We feel comfortable in

groups and alone"), in terms of disputing particular misrepresentations of the cultural other that

engenders from particular speaking positions (for Said, "the Muslim" and for her, "Asian

Women"). However, both are limiting to their particular positions, insufficient to initiate a

collective reconstruction of cultural representation.

The position of "political correctness" (or counter-hegemonic discourse) was one of the

core issues at the 2007 PMLA conference, where a group of postcolonial scholars had a

roundtable discussion, debating "the end of postcolonial theory," the field's foundations, and its

future prospects. Among them, Gaurav Desai identified one of the major obstacles in the field

as its own "political orthodoxies" that "have often dictated and limited the parameter of its

thought" (643). Considering alternatives to move the field forward, Fernando Coronil calls for

the field to establish more "earthly alliances" in its theoretical ground, allying itself with

"mundane foundations," and connecting "[h]orizontal exchanges between sites of imperial

domination" (637). The gap between postcolonial theory and postcolonial reality, according to

Coronil, was a part of Said's critique of the field: it did not "efficiently recognize the persistence

of colonialism, imperialism, and 'structures of dependency'" (Yaeger 637).

This chapter on gender, and this dissertation as a whole, aims at responding to these postcolonial scholars' critical initiations to extend postcolonial theory and thought to various empirical sites, and to investigate the structural power dominations in the postcolonial context. Among the existing postcolonial scholarship, I consider one issue crucial to further the legacy of postcolonial studies.   It is performance.   Gilbert and Lo's "Performing Hybridity in Post-colonial Monodrama," for instance, emphasizes the potential of theatrical performances in the decolonizing of stereotypical cultural representations of gender.   Drawing from Homi Bhabha's idea of hybridity, Gilbert and Lo argue that theater has the potential to form a "dialogic communication" between the performers and their spectators, and thus is equivalent to Bhabha's critical notion of a "'third space" that allows "a degree of ambivalence into the act of communication between culture" (qtd. in 7).

Thus, the aim of this chapter is to explore theatrical/ public performance as a potential space of critical reflection, mediating various cultural assumptions of gender in postcolonial contexts.   The postcolonial contexts in this chapter politicize the theatrical dynamic as constructed in relations to broader sociopolitical contexts, both the embodiment and contestant of different forms of hegemony.   The specific question I ask is this: to what extent do multicultural language performances in postcolonial contexts such as Singapore reconstruct hierarchical power relations of gender?

The literary text I have selected to facilitate this particular investigation is the Singapore performance artist Chin Woon Ping's monodrama, *Details Cannot Body Wants*. The play is a global gender performance, crossing cultural and linguistic boundaries; it was first performed in Singapore in 1992, broadcasted in Australia in 1996, and staged in New York in 1997 (Gilbert 275). The play is especially rich in its theatrical devices, including the use of gendered body and culturally-informed language performances, exposing vectors of gender hegemony such as the cultural and the linguistic. The play is an astute piece whose theatrical devices are themselves engaged forms of sociopolitical practices that take into account the (geo)politics of gender and language in Singapore. The play is an excellent example of how postcolonial performance can be attuned to power relations in sociopolitical arena, and the potential of performance in generating critical reflections and dialogues with current issues regarding cross-cultural and cross-gender communication.

This chapter starts with a historical analysis of the politics of language and gender in Singapore from the late twentieth century until recent times. I explore the Singapore government's domination of power through gender, investigating its influence over the public performances of a renowned national feminist organization (AWARE) and a state-founded airline (SIA). I also conduct a discourse analysis of two distinctive national language policies, the Speaking Mandarin Campaign and the Speaking Good English Movement, from which I

delineate a genealogy of language politics.   The purpose is to show to what extent the

government plays a significant, almost definitive role in shaping the politics of gender, which

contrasts with the simultaneity of the national language policy's domination on the macro level

and successful resistance on the micro level.

The complex interplay between gender and language politics marks the sociopolitical

location of the performative piece and is crucial to the following textual analysis.   My analysis of

Chin's global gender performance draws from Judith Butler's analysis of gender performativity.

I emphasize the materiality of the play, especially Chin's intentional usage of standard English

(instead of the local variety of English) as a major linguistic medium that stages a significant

move toward global gender performance.   While a Butlerian analysis pierces into the discourse

of gender construction via bodily performance in the work, a sociopolitical analysis illuminates

Chin's language usages as strategic means that take accounts of the language politics surrounding

the play.   This chapter concludes with the geopolitics of English-language and discusses how it

serves as a potential, performative vantage point to address the structural power inequalities in

Singapore, as exemplified in *Details Cannot Body Wants.*

The Genealogy of Nationalist Discourse in Gender and Language

In *The Routledge Concise History of Southeast Asian Writing in English*, published in 2010,

Rajeev S. Patke and Philip Holden examine English drama in Southeast Asia, focusing on their

thematic explorations of gender, race, and class, in relation to the politics of English language.

Patke and Holden generalize the phenomena of the English drama, stating, "Interlinguistic and intercultural performances have problematized the notions of English language and Southeast Asian drama" (190).   This is informed by their analysis of a Singaporean playwright, Haresh Sharma, whose work *Rosnah* depicts a Malay woman's intercultural relationship with her British boyfriend.   Sharma underscores the female character's negotiation of self-identities with different cultural communities through linguistic performances, such as code-switching from "formal Singapore English, to Singlish and in and out of Malay," all of which constitute a "linguistic continuum that reflects the everyday use of language in Singapore" (198).   Linguistic hybridities and transnational linguistic performances in a Southeast Asian English drama, as exemplified in *Rosnah*, expand the homogeneous construct of linguistic and cultural components in "English language and Southeast Asian drama."

Working within a transnational framework of Southeastern Asian drama, Patke and Holden conclude that, between 1990 and 2008, English became a dominant linguistic medium in Singapore's theatrical productions (202).   They attribute the rise of English-language theaters in the 1990s to the following factors: "The growth of English as a lingua franca, increasing audiences through greater economic affluence, government policies stressing investment in creative industries, and a partial relaxation of overt censorship mechanisms" (195).   English

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language emerged as a theatrical medium in the 1990s, which, interestingly, was the time that witnessed the growth in "gay, lesbian, transgender and bisexual communities" and public articulations of sexuality and homogeneity, in spite of the government's normative regulations of publicizing these issues (195, 199).   The simultaneity in the increase of English-language theaters and the manifestations of public gender critique (as the male versus female, binary hierarchy) in the forming of LGBT communities indicate their intricate relationship with the geopolitical context, in which English emerges as the global, link language, and has the potential of becoming a localized language medium and informing alterative gender expressions.

However, Patke and Holden's survey of Singaporean drama between 1990 and 2008, I argue, overlooks the structural domination of power involving gender and language, such as the global rise of English language, local linguistic vitalities, and popularization of gender issues in Singapore.   Specifically, there is no mention of the disjuncture between English as a global language and local English varieties that have been well-researched in language studies (Rappa and Wee 94-103; Pakir 167-169).   The politics of English language is treated as if it were a textual construct, mainly drawn from the transnational linguistic performances in selected pieces of Singaporean drama, instead of situating the language within diverse sociopolitical contexts. Similarly, there is a lack of further exploration in the developments of feminist voice in relation

to the regulations of gender issues in the domestic and the emergence of English-language on the global stage.

To address these gaps within the current scholarship, in the following I investigate how the Singapore government plays a crucial role in the structural domination of gender and language and their systematic intertwining. Tracing the developments of language policies and local feminist movements in Singapore since 1990, I reconstruct a nationalist discourse that exposes the government's regulations of gender and language. I have no intention to provide full descriptions of gender and language histories, but to highlight structural inequalities and local resistance in the realms of language and gender. My purpose in utilizing two variables, gender and language, to construct the nationalist discourse, is that the two issues, despite their correlations, are often addressed separately in the construction of nationalist discourse (Heng; Rappa and Wee). By integrating language and gender, I provide a more holistic view of the structural domination of power in Singapore, expanding from a singular construct of nationalist discourse, based upon language or gender. Most importantly, contextualizing nationalist discourse within the geopolitics of language adds a dynamic view to the structural domination of gender in the domestic. Examining language politics' manifestation on the global stage in relation to the construction of nationalist discourse will facilitate later discussions of Chin's play and its linguistic performances and interventions into the gender politics in Singapore.

Nationalist Discourse of Gender: AWARE and Singapore Airlines

In the following, I present a contextualized discussion of the nationalist discourse of

gender, which informs my later textual analysis of *Details* and its surrounding contexts, such as

the government's policy toward a feminist performance. Moreover, the constructed national

discourse, allows me to foreground my argument that the geopolitics of language, instead of

domestic gender politics, has the potential of performing gender critique in Singapore. In "'A

Great Way to Fly': Nationalism, the State, and the Varieties of Third-World Feminism,"

Geraldine Heng delineates the genealogy of feminist movements in Singapore, using the example

of the Association of Women for Action and Research (AWARE) and examines its orientation

and development under the constraint of nationalist discourse, though not, as I will discuss

below, in terms of language politics. During 1982 and 1987, feminist movements in Singapore

first started with informal, collective efforts among women, addressing domestic Issues related

to women's issues, and providing marginalized group with community services (Heng 44-45,

note 263-264).

Among the diverse organizations in support of women is the distinctive feminist group

AWARE. Founded in 1985 by a group of liberal and leftist feminists, AWARE was notable for

its confrontational critique and political commitment on the national stage (Heng 40-41, 44, note

363). AWARE states its founding principle as aiming "to campaign for gender equality in a

coherent and consistent way, basing its arguments on research and a thorough understanding of the issues" (*AWARE* par. 13). As a research-based organization, AWARE in its initial stage openly contested public stereotyping and discriminatory gender images. In 1989, for instance, AWARE "develop[ed] new guidelines to curb sex discrimination in advertisements" (*AWARE* par. 24).

However, 1987 witnessed a tensional moment between AWARE and the Singaporean government. Two of AWARE's founding members were suspected of conducting communist activities that threatened national security and were arrested in 1987 under the Internal Security Act (Heng 40). Not only did AWARE show no resistance toward the imprisonment of its members, but the president of AWARE in 1992-1993 announced a change in the approach of the group, stating that "the label 'feminism' frightens many people. 'People see feminists as unhappy, ugly, and single. Feminism is a lonely cause. You are always met with disagreement and disfavour. I prefer the term 'women centredness'" (qtd. in Heng note 363). The president of AWARE seems to indicate that a revision of the organization's rhetorical strategy had to be made, shifting to be less antagonistic and more accommodating to local conceptualizations of gender.

From that time on, AWARE intentionally avoided political engagements in conflicts with "the controlling and manipulative force" of the Singaporean government, expanding its

definition of feminism beyond particularities of race, ethnicity, sexuality, and developing more community-based activities," (Heng 42, 45). AWARE's development follows similar patterns of earlier local organizations in providing services for women's domestic well-being, revising its previous rhetorical strategy in advocating a feminist imperative.   As stated in AWARE's current mission statement, it is devoted to "removing gender-based barriers," "providing feminist perspective in the national dialogue," and "contribut[ing] to these changes in laws and policies in Singapore" (*AWARE* par. 5, 9).   Also in its archive, AWARE recounts its historical achievements as being crucial to these goals.   This includes "changes to police handling of rape cases" in 1994, "protection for victims of domestic violence" in 1996, "accord[ing] same citizenship rights to the children of Singaporean women as the children of Singaporean men" in 2004, and "address[ing] gaps in Singapore's legislation on [human] trafficking" in 2006 (*AWARE* par. 19).

Heng's mapping of the national and local feminist groups' trajectories in Singapore from 1985-1993, reveals a parallel in the feminist movements' orientations in being flexible and adaptable to sociopolitical dynamics in the local.   AWARE, which was once the national organization of the collective, feminist voice, changed its confrontational directionality against the state and instead engaged within local community services.   This implies an attempt to lessen the structural gender exploitations and inequalities that are embedded in the nationalist

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discourse without running against that discourse as such.   AWARE, as a feminist group, does

not perform feminism through radical and contestatory social actions, and from the perspective

of western feminism, it seems submissive and lacks subversive power; however, its localizing

orientation, as Heng puts it, is a "strategic position of Third-World feminism" (34).   By

avoiding an explicitly and expressively feminist position, which is considered by Singapore

authorities as being of "foreign origin and influence," AWARE frees itself from the possible

accusation of "antinationalism," a learned lesson from its swift change in orientation as the result

of two members being accused of "communist," antinationalist work (Heng 34, 40).

Heng's historical analysis of AWARE highlights its flexible performance strategies that

allowed the feminism-committed group to negotiate with the structural domination of gender.

This sociopolitical power dynamics contextualizes Chin's *Details Cannot Body Wants*, as I will

discuss in my textual analysis, in which the English performative play interacts with the

structured power relation in a similar fashion, not subverting the state power, but performing in

relation to it, oscillating between the state's fixed construct of gender image and a trasnational,

alternative construct of gender.

To further investigate the nationalist discourse's construction of gender and its

manifestation on the international stage, it is worthwhile to draw attention to Heng's "'A Great

Way to Fly.'"   Heng's article borrows its title from a business slogan of Singapore Airlines

(SIA), a "state-affiliated airline industries throughout Southeast Asia," and is an astute critique of

the state's manipulation of sexualized, female images as "socioeconomic resources" (31-32).

Within the highly competitive business of traveling carriers, SIA's marketing strategy is to feature

female flight attendants as the airline's predominant figure to fly with: "a great way to fly" with

"the Singapore Girl" (Heng 38).   However, there have been cases of sexual harassment of

female flight attendants by male passengers of various occupations and nationalities sent to the

Singapore law courts.

SIA is only one of the cases of how female gender stereotypes have been manipulated to

gain economic profits for the nation.   Other examples include prostitution in Thailand and the

Philippines and domestic workers from Philippine, Thailand, Indonesian, and Sri Lanka.   These

transnational activities bring benefits or "maid levy" for the governments (Heng 32; Burns).

So, there is a similarity in Third-World feminism's development under the constraints of

nationalist discourse that reinforces culturally gendered stereotypes on the global stage.   Heng

concludes that nationalist discourse is the most deep-rooted, which will be useful for my later

contextual interpretations of the governmental regulations toward performance art.

Third-World feminism's "strategic position" is the adaptation of "the nationalist mantle"

through various avenues: "seeking legitimation and ideological support in local cultural history,

by finding feminist or protofeminist myths, laws, customs, characters, narratives, and origins in

the national or communal past or in strategic interpretations of religious history or law" (Heng 34).

As insightful and thorough as Heng's historical analysis of the role of nationalist discourses in the construction of gender is, the "strategic position" in her conclusion operates within national boundaries and depends upon the strategic use of national histories, as it draws feminist discourse and archetypes from the national histories. Rather than seeking in retrospect for successful feminist discourses to cope with the structural domination of gender, what I am suggesting here is to explore recent developments in nationalist discourse in other potentially contestatory fields. Language politics is one of the contesting fields that designate less structured and more dynamic power relations, where an alternative strategic position might be found (Bourdieu). In the following, I examine the (geo)politics of language, which, as mentioned in the previous chapter, is by no means static and less structured by the nationalist discourse, from which I discuss the nationalist discourse's construct of language politics and their mutual influences.

Nationalist Discourse of Language: Language Campaign and Movement

To contextualize the linguistic performances in Chin's work, including the uses of standard English and Singalish, it is crucial to examine Singapore's language politics, especially the power dynamic between the two linguistic forms. A fundamental part of language policy in

Singapore is "English-knowing¨ and "ethnicity-based bilingualism¨ (Pakir; Rappa and Wee 103; Schneider 156), which means that English is a required official language with an "assigned mother tongue,¨ according to one's ethnicity: Malay, Mandarin, or Tamil.   For instance, the official mother tongue among the Malay community is Malay, Mandarin for the Chinese group, and Tamil for the Indian group (Rappa and Wee 83).   English is the medium of instruction in education, and students from primary, secondary, and college levels must have their mother tongue as the second language (Rappa and Wee 83).   Such an "officially assigned" policy created controversy for families of multiethnic heritages; a child of a "mixed parentage" officially inherits his/her father's ethnicity, and therefore will be assigned a mother tongue associated with the father's heritage (Rappa and Wee 84).

National language policy is the manifestation of the nationalist discourse of language. The type of multilingualism in Singapore is a very special kind, one that does not recognize maternal parentage and plural forms of ethnic identity in the ethnicity-based language policy. Also, by assigning English as the official medium in educational settings, and Mandarin as the mother tongue of ethnic Chinese groups, the Singapore government imposes a nationalist discourse on diverse language uses, regulating certain language usages and shaping particular perceptions toward certain languages.

Examples of how nationalist discourse of language represses linguistic diversities can be seen from "The Speaking Mandarin Campaign¨ and "The Speak Good English Movement,¨ two official and significant language movements in Singapore history (Rappa and Wee).   First started in 1979 and still ongoing in Singapore, the Speaking Mandarin Campaign aims at promoting standard Mandarin to reduce other Chinese dialects among Chinese ethnic groups, such as Cantonese (Rappa and Wee 91).   Based on the assumption that a standard language has the capacity of unifying an ethnic group, the campaign privileges the aesthetic qualities of standard mandarin over the "vulgar" dialects that designate low social status (qtd. in Rappa and Wee 91).   From a sociolinguistic, Marxist perspective, the value judgment attached to a language is essentially a construct of sociopolitical dynamics (Volosinov).   It is worth noting here that the binary construct of linguistic values, "aesthetic¨ versus "vulgar," does not refer to the phonetics of a language, but designates the class status assigned to certain language uses.

The Speaking Mandarin Campaign co-exists with another national language movement, the Speaking Good English Movement, started in 2000 (Rappa and Wee 94; Rubdy 348).   The movement can be traced to the report of Goh Chok Tong, the second Prime Minister of Singapore.   In his report, published in 2000, Tong targeted the local varieties of English, namely, Singlish, and refers it as "pidgin English,¨ "incomprehensible,¨ and "handicap¨ (qtd. In Rappa and Wee 94-95).   Tong's speech, attempting to determine the sociolinguistic values of

Singlish and its difference from standard English, can be understood as the manifesto of the

Speaking Good English Movement.   Compared with the Campaign that addresses local uses of

Mandarin, the Movement is intended to unify diverse English language uses on the national

scale.   To reinforce the English standard in educational settings, the Ministry of Education

implemented plans such as "revising the English language syllabus to make the teaching of

English to be more rigorous¨ and "a sixty-hour course for 8,000 teachers leading to certified

skills in teaching English¨ (Rubdy 348).

I argue that linguistic standardization, as in the official language campaign and

movement, exemplifies the structuring mechanism of the nationalist discourse and its

implications for degrading and discouraging linguistic diversities.   Wee and Rappa's detailed

analysis of the orientation of language policies, among other resources, adds to Volosinov's

Marxist view of language politics within a nation a transnational perspective, bringing it in

contact with the geopolitics of language.   As Wee and Rappa state, the orientation of language

policies reveal the government's "instrumental view" of language in the construction of Asian

modernity, that is, maintaining Singapore's Asian culture roots via formal Mandarin and

economic competency through formal English (81).

The national language policies, I argue, restrict diverse language uses in the expression of

self-determined identities to standard languages that are officially assigned and recognized for

their particular utilities to instruct modernity for the nation.   The nationalist discourse of language, limiting potential links between language uses and identities, received significant local resistance.   While the ongoing, yet relatively flexible, Speaking Mandarin Campaign promotes a cohesive sense of Asian culture value through formal Mandarin, it deprives the language right of the speakers of Mandarin dialects, depriving their "emotional attachment" to their ethnic heritages embedded in the languages (Wee and Rappa 92).   So does the Speaking Good English Movement devalue the local variety of English; the movement does not take into consideration of the fact that English has merged with other local languages and becomes a mother tongue.

Embodying the complex dynamic between the national discourse of language and local resistance, however, Chin's play expands the structural domination of language in Singapore into the geopolitics of language.   The linguistic performances in *Details* are, I argue, strategies in staging the politics of gender identity.   For example, the use of English in the play refers to gender identity informed by Chinese culture, an influential culture not only in Singapore but also in other Asian countries, and the use of Black English stands for an alternative construct of gender identity informed by a distinctively different cultural history.   It is thus important *not* to interpret the linguistic varieties as the authentic representation of language uses in Singapore. Instead, the English varieties in Chin's play are performing strategies that reveal different cultural constructions of gender identities via different linguistic media.

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Synthesis

Contrasting *The Routledge Concise History of Southeast Asian Writing in English* that neutralizes the government's structural domination of gender and language, I conclude from the above genealogies that language and gender are both used as instrumental means to gain economic profits. Capitalism becomes a crucial part in the nationalist discourse through the geopolitics of gender and language: 1) the government's manipulations of the culturally informed, gender stereotypes, as in the case of Singapore Airline, and 2) the imposition of linguistic formalism/ standardization (global English) to eradicate local varieties of English (Singlish), such as in the 2001 Speaking Good English Movement.

With the similar instrumental goal of attracting the transnational flow of capitalism to Singapore, however, the nationalist discourse of language and gender operates on different levels (domestic and international) and interacts differently with the geopolitics of gender and language. The geopolitics of gender in Singapore, I argue, replicates the unequal gender politics in the domestic sphere. The reproduction of domestic gender inequalities on the global stage also shares a similar, domestic construct of gender, in which gender image is a cultural construct and is attuned to culturally-informed gender stereotypes.

Unlike the geopolitics of gender, whose power relation is homogeneous to the nationalist discourse of gender, the geopolitics of language is less structured by the politics of language in

the domestic (the nationalist discourse of language). Especially with a linguistic medium's

instrumental role to gain economic profits, the geopolitics of language exerts great influence on

the Singaporean government's decisions of language policies.

Formal English and formal Mandarin, as in the Speaking Good English Movement and

the Speaking Mandarin Campaign, serve distinctive, functional purposes in the nationalist

discourse of language, reinforcing "double narratives of Asian modernity": that is, standard

English is a communicative medium in the promotion of technological advances and economical

profits in Singapore, and standard Mandarin serves as a linguistic medium for the preservation of

Asian cultural heritages (Wee and Rappa). The geopolitics of Mandarin, here, share similar

power relations with that of national language politics, in which Mandarin is the repository of

Chinese culture, and by extension, the representative Asian culture on the global stage. The

geopolitics of Mandarin takes a less dominant role than that of the geopolitics of English, as seen

in the Speaking Good English Movement's mandatory nature and implementation.

The geopolitics of English has been used by the Singaporean government to oppose

local varieties of English. The nationalist discourse of language declines Singlish as a formal

usage of English and insists on strict distinctions between official language (English) and mother

tongue (Singlish) (Wee and Rappa), despite the fact that the status of English in Singapore has

been oscillating between being an official language and a mother tongue, being a global language

and a local language.   Singlish demonstrates local linguistic vitalities, a mixture of formal and

local varieties of English.   The linguistic hybridity in Singlish reflects multiethnic populations in

Singapore, a far better linguistic medium than the language policy, in which the assigned mother

tongue policy restricts ethnic groups within their own linguistic and cultural habitus.

The geopolitics of language, as stated in the previous chapter, fluctuates in the era of

globalization and thus has the potential of influencing the orientation of national language

policies.   As the politics of language fluctuates, so does the nationalist discourse on language, as

it is constructed around the instrumental, market value of a language.   For example, the rising

economic value of English and Mandarin does impact the orientation of a national policy that

promotes both languages.   Given the fact that the geopolitics of language are dynamic and have

the capacity of transcending from the homogeneous construct of culture, I argue that the

geopolitics of language can serve as a strategic medium in deconstructing the nationalist

discourse of gender, whose cultural construct of gender has the tendency to stereotype the

female image for the promotion of economic profits.

Textual Analysis: from Butlerian and Sociolinguistic Viewpoints

I have explored the structural domination of gender and language as manifested in the

structural inequalities between the Singapore government's language policies and local resistance,

and between the government's manipulation of gender and feminist organization's negotiation.

The politics of language and gender are just as vital to the following (con)textual analysis of

Chin's work on gender and language performances. The (geo)politics of language, in particular,

adds a sociolinguistic aspect to Butler's idea that gender is a performance, illuminating the power

of language in (re)constructing gender. In the following, I explore how the gender performance

in Chin's performative piece subverts gender authority, both textual and contextual, and how the

language politics of the piece reproduce unequal power relations of gender and participate in the

reconstruction of gender knowledge system.

Chin's *Details Cannot Body Wants* is a monodrama and a piece of performance art

consisting of four movements, entitled respectively "Details," "Cannot," Body," and "Wants."

The play features the playwright's self-performance of various gender constructions that are

explicitly indicated in the title of the four pieces. "Details" explores the idea that so much

depends upon miscellaneous material supplies that create socially and culturally acceptable

gender behaviors. In "Cannot," gender is constructed by gendered restrictions and rules, which

are culturally specific. In the intercultural scene, culturally informed gender stereotypes are

highlighted. While the first two pieces emphasize socio-cultural elements of gender

performance, there is an element of global gender performance in the last two pieces, performing

non-culturally specific gender scenarios. "Body" stages various gendered sensitive situations,

such as breast examination and breast inflation, and demonstrates performances of gendered

bodies through linguistic expressions of bodily intensity, sensations, and intimacy. The last

piece, "Wants," constructs gender from a temporal perspective of gendered desires. The

historical narrative sums up the previous gender constructions in relation to material supports,

cultural and social conventions, and essential/ maternal desires.

Physical and linguistic performances are both crucial means in Chin's gender

construction. For example, in "Wants," the female character puts on "a maternity dress" and

performs gendered desires to become a mother: "I wanted my body to become more of me,

more of nature, more of myself. I wanted to be overtaken by a seed, by an idea I did not plant.

Was that too much to ask? Other women had it, why couldn't I? I wanted to be diminished by

fecundity, to be engrossed with fertility" (284). Also, in "Details," Chin intentionally makes the

character's first presence on stage naked-looking, wearing a "skin-colored leotard" (276), but she

is not naked. The female character drags her miscellaneous items onto the stage: "kitchen

implements, groceries, cereal boxes, items of clothing, shoes of all kinds, credit cards in a long,

fold-out plastic roll, potted plants, make-up kits in huge vanity cases, stuff animals" (276).

Appearing burdened on the stage, the female character gives a powerful statement that lays bare

the significance of gender construction:

Details, details. I weep for details. Without details, I am annihilated. A

lipstick smear appears on the wrong side of a lip, on the writing side of a

cheek. A touch on the hand is just a little too long… Does that mean I

am desired? Please let it mean I am desired. Yesterday I weighed one

hundred and twenty pounds. I stopped eating rice altogether. (276)

The physical and linguistic performances are not always in harmony; there exist tensions

between the two performance elements. "Cannot" has a scene where stage actions contradict

with a recital of memorized cultural doctrines regarding gender: "Cannot jump (*jumping*)" (278).

Another example can be found in "Body" where the gendered body is undone by the linguistic

performance's power of negation: "I am not my breast I am not my chin I am not my arms I am

not my neck I am not my womb I am not my lips I am not my breasts" (282). These tensional

moments, I argue, destabilize gender construction and convey the female character's resistance

against the playwright's critique of gender construction. These presentational strategies can also

be considered as stage effects that cast invisible theatrical walls surrounding spectators,

reminding them the performance framework of the piece.

Staging gender politics via physical and linguistic performances, these performative

snapshots capture the feminist texture of the play. In the introduction to Chin's play, Helen

Gilbert notes that it is a "deconstructive" project that destabilizes "patriarchal power" (274).

Intriguingly, though it lacks highly sexualized content, the piece was rated by the government as

restricted to adults, the first R-rated play in Singapore's history (Gilbert 273). The official

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explanation from Singapore's Public Entertainment Licensing Unit, as Gilbert reports, is that the "adult language" and "taboo gestures" in the script warranted the rating (273). I argue, instead, that what the government restricted was not simply the language and gestures, but its public performance and its unconventional expression of gender in the specific context of Singapore. This latent aspect in the government's discourse has to be historicized when the play was first performed in 1992, a time when the government's policy specifically targeted performance art.

Since 1990, the Singaporean government has evaluated the legitimacy of public performances based on the producer's self-rating, replacing the original policy of requiring them to obtain police permits. Some scholars think that this created a space of opportunities for performance practitioners and artists, whereas others think that the rating processes of a performance involve "self-censorship" (Holden and Patke). According to my previous analysis of the national feminist group AWARE that suggests a deep-rooted nationalist discourse of gender, I would argue that this is a form of ideological censorship, attempting to keep under control performance's influence on the public, especially performances of strong feminist spirit like Chin's.

As indicated in the website of Singapore's Public Entertainment Licensing Unit, the "DPS [demerit point system] will enable the licensee to know the number of demerit points that will be awarded against him for any breach of licensing conditions" and the goal is to "exercise

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self-discipline as graduated penalties in the form of warning, imposition or forfeiture of bank guarantee, curtailment of operating hours, suspension or cancellation of license will be taken against him if he continues to chalk up more demerit points" ("Compounding & Demerit Points System Under Public Entertainments & Meeting Act"). The system, effective only for "live performances" and inapplicable for performances of less political implications such as "talks, magic shows or fashion shows," does not suggest a censorship-free state on regulating performance arts ("Compounding").

The background knowledge about the institutional structure in Singapore leads to an understanding of why the government gave Chin's play a restricted rating, providing us a more comprehensive account than its official discourse. It is not only about textual language; the government found the performance itself, public and gender performance, threatening and subversive. If the play exposes the society's systematic construction of gender in public spaces, rating the play as restricted will theoretically limit young people's access to the play and, more importantly, its influence on youths' minds about the systematic inequality of gender.

The government's rating of the play as R-rated thus illustrates the fluidity of meaning registered in the R-rated label. Chin's R-rated play in Singapore, even though lacking overt exposure of a sexualized body or display of violence, would have been received differently in other places than in Singapore, where the national discoruse of gender is deep-rooted in history,

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as discussed earler in the historical development of AWARE.   Another example of why it is

necessary to interpret an R-rated production based on sociopolitical context can be drawn from

the documentary *This Film Is Not Yet Rated.*   It portrays a group of small studio or independent

film makers' perspective of how the rating of movie productions in the United States solely

depends on the arbitrary decisions of the rating board, the Motion Picture Association of

America (MPAA), where neither the compositions of the members nor the criteria of the

processes of voting are publicized.   While investigating the non-transparency of the rating

board, the film contrasts different perspectives of looking at film ratings.   For parents,

educators, or the general public, film ratings provide guidance of choosing films for various

purposes.   Contrastingly, for movie producers, the rating limits the marketability of a film, as

"the difference between NC-17 and an R rating can be millions of dollars," said the box office

analyst, Paul Dercarabedian.   What we see in both *Details Body Cannot Wants* and *This Film is Not*

Yet Rated is that, instead of being a universally recognized indicator of adult content, the meaning

of the R-rated work has to be conceptualized within the specific measurement of performance

art in its context and understood as being highly arbitrary.

To unfold the subversive power in this "R-rated" play, in the following, I utilize modified

Butlerian analysis of gender performativity to analyze Chin's project of deconstructing gender

authority.   In Judith Butler's account, gender is a performance, meaning that the forming of

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gender depends upon the act of "doing," repeating the "socially shared and historically

constituted" acts (162-163).   Butler anchors her analysis of gender constitution particularly

within stylized repetitions of bodily performances, including "acts, gestures, the visual body, the

clothed body, the various physical attributes" (154, 164).   While these bodily manifestations of

gender performance provide crucial angles for my analysis of the culturally informed gender

performance in "Details" and "Cannot," Butler's inadequate engagement with linguistic

performance falls short in "Body" and "Wants," where a global orientation of gender

performance and the geopolitics of language are present. Therefore, my analysis of Chin's work

emphasizes linguistic performance in relation to bodily performances.   Establishing such a link

provides dialogue with Butler's theory of gender constitution.

     However, Butler's critical points dovetail with several scenes in Chin's work where

gender is constructed via bodily performance.   "Details" is one of them.   In this piece, the

female character describes her "lessons" about socially acceptable presentations of her gender,

such as smiling without showing her teeth and sitting with "knees pressed straight together"

(277).   Not only is bodily performance crucial, as Butler stresses, but linguistic repetitions of

gendered rules are also powerful aspects of gender constitution.   The dialogue demonstrates the

female character's practice in responding with her gendered codes:

     Would you like another piece of cake?

(*Primly, Demurely*) No, thank you.

Does it hurt?

No, thank you.

Can I show you my hurt?

No, thank you.

Would you like to go?

No, thank you.

Would you like to come?

No, thank you. (277)

From a Butlerian perspective, it is precisely the repetition in performing physical and oral

routines that constitutes gender.   More importantly, these rigid repetitions of actions and

expressions emphasize a type of gender performance that is performing under constraint, the

one without alternative gender discourses than what is prescribed in the specific gender

conventions.

The following episode from "Cannot" situates Butler's theory of gender constitution

within cultural contexts, illustrating gender as cultural performance. "Cannot" starts with a

gendered performance concerning a distinctly Chinese cultural practice that is mostly associated

with ancient times: foot binding.   The female character rises from the stage, mimicking her

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grandmother and performing walking with her feet bounded.   She describes the action

aesthetically and with Chinese culture references: "as dainty as lotus buds" and "like a willow tree

swaying, poetry in motion" (278).   Despite the aesthetic quality in the feet binding that she

describes in her nostalgic narrative, the harmonious relation between her narrative and

performance is disrupted by a child's persona.   The female character performs a five-year-old

girl, asking for paternal permission to go out.   "Cannot" is the response.   "Everything I want

to do for boys only.   Cannot go here, cannot go there, cannot even know why cannot" (278),

she states.   While reflecting upon the gender specific rule and the binary construct of gender

categories ("for boys only" as opposed to girls), interestingly, she reacts differently to the rules in

her gender performance.   Note in the following passages that she recites gender rules that are

culturally specific, while performing *against* them.

Cannot tend (*bending forward, backwards*)

Cannot bend

Cannot jump (*jumping*)

Cannot hump (*making motions of copulation*)

Cannot cut

Cannot strut (*doing a flamboyant Black strut*)

Cannot watch

Cannot scratch (*scratching groin*)

Cannot flub (*falling down*)

Cannot rubba dub

Cannot start

Cannot fart (*squatting as if to make a fart*)

Cannot whinge

Cannot cringe

Cannot fly (*making aeroplane motions, arms out*)

Cannot cry (278-279).

Here, the two uncoordinated performance elements create a space of resistance against gender authority, though authoritative gender doctrines persist. "The possibilities of gender transformation," according to Butler, "are to be found in the arbitrary relation between such [performative acts] in the possibility of a different sort of repeating in the breaking or subversive repetition of that style" (154-155). If we follow Butler's mapping of performance's deconstructing potential of gender, while taking into consideration the cultural construct of gender in Chin's work, I argue that these highlight intercultural performance's possibility in exposing gendered acts' "arbitrary relation" with social agency, from which subverts gender authority's instituting power of gender.

However, Butler's analysis falls short when it comes to language performance, as is clear in the intercultural, multilingual scene in "Cannot," which demonstrates linguistic performance's potential in finding alternative gender discourse. In order to perform cross-cultural and cross-gender communications between three characters in this monodrama, Chin utilizes both physical and linguistic presentational strategies: putting up different colors of facial profiles to represent racialized physical appearances, and adapting gendered, racialized speaking voices. For instance, performing a male character who approaches a female character, Chin shows audiences a "black profile," speaking in "a deep, husky voice": "Hello Doll. Where you from? I'll bet you're lonesome, aren't you? I bet I know what you want. I know *all* about you. How about some hunky chunky company? How about it, lovely dove?" (280). Chin then shows the audience an " 'Oriental'" voice and posture, with white profile" and responds what audience would expect from an Oriental voice in a sexual escort: "Hai. Watashi karimatsu. Arigato gozaimas. Me China Doll, me Inscrutable Doll, me sexy Miss Saigon, me so horny/so so horny/ me love you long time" (280).

Audiences might find the interracial interaction infused with racial and gender stereotypes, as the "Black" persona represents male sexual escorts and the multilingual persona represents female acceptance of those in "Oriental" cultures, including Japanese, Chinese, and Vietnamese women. However, it is crucial to note that the "Oriental" and "Black" voices are

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not intended to be authentic representations of cultural gendered discourse.   Taking a close

look at the juxtapositions of multilingual components of the text, we will find that the utterances

are not dialogues by nature, but intended to be stereotypical linguistic performances.   As Chin

explicitly shows in her stage direction, the response contains a mixture of stereotypical passages

of Asian women's simplistic greeting phrases and rap songs (280).   In other words, the use of

language styles here is much like the mimicry of a woman's walk when her feet have been bound.

Also, Chin hints on the stereotypical nature of gendered image, indicating that an unconditional

acceptance is what one is "supposed to reply," not what one "REALLY WANT[S] TO SAY"

(280).   This is done as if the cultural stereotypes of gender outweigh the true expression of the

self.

What is the purpose of performing gender conventions (adapting the physical, vocal, and

linguistic features of the characters performed) and then revealing the stereotypical,

non-expressive nature of the very performance?   The purpose, I argue, is to show that gender

acts are always performances under constraint.   Instead of being an autonomous,

self-expressive response, the gender discourse here is mainly a linguistic performance,

constructed in relation to socio-cultural stereotypes of gender.   Butler's thesis provides a

theoretical explanation of gender performativity: "gender is instituted through the stylization of

the body," bodily acts that are "internally discontinuous" (154).   The obvious discontinuity

between the utterance ("you're supposed to reply") and the internal discourse ("BUT WHAT

YOU REALLY WANT TO SAY"), sheds light on "the arbitrary relation" between the

performing acts ("'Oriental' voice and gesture," and non-confrontational response in Asian/

Oriental languages).   The distinunction, to Bulter, foregrounds an opportunity of "gender

transformation" (155).

To show another possibility of responding, the female character acquires a different

persona, presenting the audience a "black profile" and using "loud, sassy black mannerism and

tone" (280).   "Quit messin' round with me and mah sistahs you hear? We don't want yo jive

talk an yo bullshittin. You know what's yo problem? You ain't got no RESPECT, that's yo

problem" (280).   To respond differently, more provocatively and directly, demands a different

speaking persona deriving from a different cultural context.   Therefore, I argue that the staged

cross-gender and cross-cultural interactions should be interpreted as a linguistic performance, a

strategic means to show what Butler calls, "a different sort of repeating" (155).

If gender is a cultural construct, the above linguistic performances create a vantage point

where "socially shared and historically constituted" (Butler 163) gender conventions are

unavailable in the intercultural interactions. These interactions subvert gender, showing it to be

culturally specific and, more importantly, language-based. Through the use of multilingual

performances as a strategic means to expose the cultural constraints of gender, Chin shows the

possibility of alternative gender discourse, which is less conventional and more self-expressive.

Therefore, the use of a multilingual performance in the intercultural scene illustrates how much

gendered discourse is deeply rooted in language, so that to deconstruct gender stereotypes

demands a cross-cultural, multi-lingual experience with a shift in language use, crossing gender

convention in the specific culture.

The multilingual performance in "Cannot" is a pivotal moment that signals a different

type of gender performance and, more importantly, a different use of language power. The

linguistic performance in the previous scenes (such as the oral repetition of cultural regulations

of gender) is subordinated to bodily performances or, more precisely, embodied gender

authority.   Not until that cross-cultural and cross-gender scene does the power of language

performance fully emerge on the stage as Chin's major deconstructing medium that destabilizes

the cultural construct of gender.   The emerging power of language also facilitates the following

global move of gender performance in "Body" and "Wants."

"Body" creates various non-culturally specific performative situations, such as breast

examination, sexual intercourse, breast inflation surgery, and hand amputation, which represent

the constitution of gendered subjectivity in relation to body politics and material supports

(281-282).   What distinguishes this piece from others is the power of language.   The female

character's powerful narrative negates her embodied gender (her beautiful, yet, artificial body) in

order to regain her subjectivity.   Even though silicone inflates her chest, and nail polish makes

her hands tender and pretty, she refuses to identify herself with her body parts: "I am not my

breasts I am not my chin I am not my arms I am not my neck I am not my womb I am not my

lips I am not my breasts" (282).   Her subjectivity is gradually awakened as she starts to inquire

into an important construction of her gender: the male gaze.   The character reflects on the

female body being a passive recipient of male's actions and emotions: "Over and over man

writes on it his imagination, his bewilderment, his inadequacy, his potency. Over and over, he

writes on it his punishment, his wrath, his magnanimity, his fickleness" (281).

Interestingly, "Wants" constructs gender and materiality from a temporal perspective

of female desires.   The female character shows how her wants change overtime.   At first, her

desires are not gender specific.   Speaking in "Cantonese accent," she wants to please the elderly

and possess her own goods, more importantly, not feminine good as in "details."   As she

narrates, "I wanted a ball. I wanted a Swiss army knife. I wanted a purple alligator. I wanted a toy

truck. I wanted a flyeater. I wanted a pet turtle. I wanted a Halloween costume. I wanted a tent. I

wanted a neon sign. I wanted a set of encyclopaedias. I wanted an antique commode. I wanted a

Dutch oven. I wanted a brass toilet seat. I wanted chocolates" (284).

Her non-gender specific desires are transformed into gender specific ones, as she puts on

"maternity dresses" (284).   She desires what is common among her gender: "Other women had

it, why couldn't I? I wanted to be diminished by fecundity, to be engrossed with fertility. I

wanted to join the ranks of those who knew secret pain and secret pleasure" (284).   As the

female character performs growing up and reaching maturity, what she likes, whether it to be

abstract or concrete ones, becomes gendered.   The temporal narrative here defies gender

essentialism and shows the disciplinary power of socialization: how the process of socialization

constructs gendered needs and perceptions.

What is crucial in "Body" and "Wants" is that language usage inaugurates a dialectical

relationship with the constitutive elements of gender, as stated in the previous pieces, including

material supports, culturally specific gender conventions, body politics, etc.   The two pieces

highlight language's deconstructing power, departing from the previous language usage that

highlighted local, culturally specific gender performance.

Throughout this play, Chin conveys her gender critique mainly with standard English, as

mentioned earlier, a linguistic form carrying more sociopolitical power in Singapore.   The local

English varieties, such as Singalish, and local languages like Malay, Tamil, and Chinese are also

present in the play, appearing frequently in stage directions to indicate accent variations, chorus,

chanting, or sound effects.   While the frequency and situations where standard English and

dialects are used remain consistent in the play, there is a distinctive shift in the role of language

involving in gender constitution.   In a culturally informative piece like "Cannot," expressions

like "as dainty as lotus buds" and "like a willow tree swaying" (278) highlight the cultural

reference in the linguistic medium, which contextualizes the play within the cultural construct of

gender. Instead of being a symbolic, constitutive means of gender authority and a culturally

specific gender performance, standard English in "Body" and "Wants" is used to perform

general gender phenomena and non-culturally specific situations. Curiously, standard English

with accents (such as the Cantonese accent in "Wants") represent ethnic voices (such as

Cantonese accent), a local component in the global gender performance.

Taking the above Butlerian and sociopolitical analyses as a whole, Chin's *Details Cannot*

Body Wants constitutes a subversive gender authority from its live physical and linguistic

performances. The body politics in the play, exemplified by the naked-looking female character

in the setting and the mimicry of cultural rituals such as walking with feet bound, contextualizes

Butler's performance theory within cultural terms and further expands our understandings of

gender as a cultural construct. In addition to Butler's theory of gender performance, I have

highlighted something she does not consider: the linguistic performance in the play. As in the

scene of intercultural and multilingual interaction, the linguistic media provide alternative

constructs of gender, performing gender conventions across culture. The geopolitics of

language manifests itself in the linguistic composition of the text, including standard English as

the main linguistic medium and dialects and multilingual forms as the major presentational media

in chorus and music.   The cross-cultural and hybrid language forms both serve as crucial

deconstructing means of gender and signal a global orientation in gender performance.   This

analysis adds to Butler's theory the fact that not only bodily performance, but language

performance plays a significant role in initiating alternative gender discourse and subverting

gender authority.

Conclusion

Details Cannot Body Wants exemplifies a critical use of English that raises awareness

toward the politics of language and gender, of "English as a culturally embedded social practice"

(Mirhosseini 315).   As illustrated in the second Prime Minister of Singapore's 2000 speech, the

Singapore government promotes standard English to remedy the "incomprehensible" and

"handicapped" qualities of Singalish. Such position is the mainstream of English language

education intended to reinforce the goal of communication in English and view it as an

"apolitical international lingua franca" (qtd. in Rappa and Wee 94-95; Mirhosseini 315).   Quite

contrastingly, the use of standard English in Chin's play is a reconfigured discourse of the

national language policy; with its cultural reference and metaphors of gender, it interrogates the

local construct of gender or, if you will, serves a social critique of the cultural construct of

gender.   The reconfiguration of discourse to a large extent is done through language

performance, through the performativity of language and gender identity.

To convey her critique of the monolithic cultural construction of gender in Singapore, Chin employs two theatrical media: physical and linguistic performances. Language uses and body presentations have real ramifications in generating dialogic relations in performances, as these are two of the most immediate gendered and cultural identity markers in the social arena where cultural assumptions of gender are often filtered through. In the play, however, neither of them is a homogeneous construct or the presentation of definitive characteristics of gendered, cultural identities.

Linguistic and physical performances take the form of hybridity in the play, which destabilizes the idea that gendered subjectivity/ positionality is bound to social identity markers such as the linguistic and conventional bodily/ visual presentation. Another example of the heterogeneous construct of theatrical means is staging the presentational processes in performing a character of specific cultural and gendered positionality. To perform an Asian female character, Chin puts up a "white profile to audience" and speaks with accented "Oriental voice and posture" in a manner of excessive politeness; whereas a Black male character is performed with "black profile," speaking of a sexual escort in "deep, husky voice" (279-280). With the shifts in visual presentations and linguistic features, it momentarily changes gendered, cultural positionality. So, what does it mean, for example, to be the Asian female character as

distinguished from the Black male character?   Are meanings registered in the linguistic and

physical markers adequate in performing the diverse ontological statuses?

Of course not.   Generalizable social markers always fall short in capturing ontological

complexities.   These questions might emerge in the cross-cultural, cross-gender performance, as

the fluid meanings of gendered, cultural positionality/ subjectivity are directed by the oscillating

of theatrical devices, especially the linguistic features in conveying accented identities.   What

does it imply to perform an Asian female identity, as distinguished from that of a Black male

identity, with the culturally-specific linguistic and physical presentations?   The swift change of

positionality as the result of linguistic performances marks a tentative critical space in dialogue

with cultural assumptions of gender in the audience's mind.

On the one hand, performance has the potential to contest gender hegemony in the

temporary theatrical space; on the other hand, it is subject to the amorphous gender hegemony

that involves a government's role in influencing cultural perceptions of gender.   As shown in

my contextualized discussions of Heng's analyses of Singapore Airlines (SIA) and Association of

Women for Action and Research (AWARE), the Singapore government controls public

presentations of gender on national and international levels.   The government's political

censorship of the national feminist organization (AWARE) restricts its national performativity to

communal practices; the government's marketing strategies of the stated founded Singapore

Airlines involves the manipulations of cultural stereotypes of gender. Chin's feminist play, given a R-rating, is yet another example of the embodiment of the national discourse of gender in cultural productions, as the rated category to a certain extent controls the public's perceptions and limits the accessibilities of Chin's transcultural, feminist discourse.

Language politics plays a significant role in postcolonial writers' negotiation of domestic censorship, and their critique of stereotypical constructions on the international level. Chin's particular positionality, in this regard, can be discussed in relation to that of the two prominent postcolonial authors, Chinua Achebe and Ngugi Wa Thiongo. Achebe's work, one of the most representative postcolonial literatures in the United States, *Things Fall Apart*, employs standard English while alternating its linguistic system. For example, Achebe indigenizes the naming system of the characters (me) and represents the sociolinguistic power relations through "code-switching" between standard English and the native language (Pelton; Bamire). Language, for Achebe, is a medium to claim agency in self-representing "literary Africanicity," as he states firmly about the necessity of self-representation: "'African peoples did not hear of culture for the first time form Europeans; that their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty, that they had poetry, and, above all, they had dignity'" (qtd. in Pelton 55).

Ngugi's position in choosing his medium of contestation is rather different. His use of Gikuyu, a local dialect, in his "Kamiriithu theater project" for example, has a particular concern with class empowerment via engaging peasants in the performance (Pelton 53). As Ngugi puts it, performance is not just "an isolated aesthetic even for the cultural elite" but as a crucial part of communal practices (Pelton 53). However, Gikuyu, the linguistic medium that Ngugi uses, runs against the discourse of the Kenya government. One of his novels, *Matigari*, originally written in Gikuyu, was censored by the government and the only version of the novel available in Kenya is in its English translation (Pelton 54). In Ngugi's case, it is the use of the indigenous linguistic means that claims "cultural autonomy" and thus initiates "the healing process of colonialization" (Pelton 55).

Chin's performative play encompasses the positions of both Achebe and Ngugi. The play shares similar concerns as in the works of Ngugi, in which the use of linguistic media is itself an engaged form of social practices, despite the government surveillance surrounding their works. Also, the play resembles to the work of Achebe, as both involve self-representations of the particular culture, and by extension, a critical rethinking of stereotypical representations of culture and its derivatives in cross-cultural communications. Oscillating between the local and the global, Chin's play provides a transcultural discourse of gender construction.

As stated in the above, this study aims at finding an alternative discourse for decentralizing cultural stereotypes of gender, one more dialogic than counter-hegemonic discourse, in postcolonial contexts and discusses how linguistic performances create such potential.   Chin's performative play provides a transcultural discourse of gender construction, staging global gender performance while critically engaged with cultural gendered rituals/ performances.   Although standard English is the major linguistic usage, it is often infused with culturally specific metaphors and references, and can be used by artists such as Chin to construct a gendered positionality that is both culturally specific and generalizable.

CHAPTER FOUR

CODE-SWITCH ACROSS THE BORDERLINE: MULTILINGUAL VISIONS IN GUILLERMO GÓMEZ-PEÑA'S *THE NEW WORLD BORDER*

"[T]he power of language [helps] us constantly reinvent ourselves, and that to me is the

essence of performance art"

Guillermo Gómez-Peña

("Chihuahuas, Rockeros, and Zoot Suits" 190)

We often define national borders through militant, territorial metaphors and

technologies: nationality, home, electronic wires, atomic bombs, and security check points.

Borders are also historical. Whether the border between the U.S.A. and Latin America, or those

on the continent of Africa, borders have witnessed the history of war and colonization, and its

apparently irredeemable geographical, racial, ethnic, and linguistic separations.   In the tradition

of Latino and Chicano literature, border-crossing is almost always described in relation to

physical separation from the homeland; the existential ruptures that it creates seems to rob one's

abilities to articulate and formulate a new identity.   Gloria Anzaldúa's Borderlands/ La

Frontera, consisting of a mixture of literary genres (narrative, poetry, autobiography, theory) and

languages, is a classical example of this.   Using metaphors that are also quite realistic, such as

"chainlink fence," "barbed wire," and "iron sky," Anzaldúa describes the borderlands she lives in

as marked by the "violent clash" between the two worlds and its confinement: "This is my home/ this thin edge of/ barbwire" (1-3). "Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe," Anzaldúa writes (3). To be more exact, borders guard the safety of different groups of people in different contexts. Residents of these borderlands "[d]o not enter" realms beyond the barbwired borderlands, as "trespassers will be raped, maimed, strangled, gasses, shot"; "the only 'legitimate' inhabitants are those in power, the whites and those who align themselves with whites" (Anzaldúa 3-4). Through the lens of Borderlands/ La Frontera, the concept of borders implies a forceful transformation; border-crossing implies submission to supervision under governmental surveillance and homogenization of culture, language, and identity.

Borders never cease to exist after border-crossing, even on the journey home. They are persistent because they are amorphous, constructing human perceptions of "otherness" in a variety of ways. Here's a constructed narrative, about a fictional but typical border-crossing person I'll call "A," that illustrates this point. Because she went to school far from her homeland, A would have to travel back home across a continent, across an ocean, and through many border security check points. By the time A arrived at yet another, though her last security check point, she had her luggage and passport at hand, passing quickly through a "citizen" line. However, though she was home, she was still elsewhere. When meeting her

family, A started to talk—but A had to stop herself just in time not to speak in a foreign tongue.

Despite the inevitably late hour of her arrival, A's grandma always woke up at midnight to greet her and welcome her home.   As she discovered, A was not the only one who felt this sense of foreignness; A's grandma asked her, "How come you still speak our language?"   A reassured her grandma, "Of course, I was born here."

"When in Rome, do as the Romans do"; when at home, speak the home language.   As simple and normal as this may sound, A's language performances—using the local variety of language to converse and speaking of the place of origin to reconnect with her family—are strategies to cope with existential inquiries that the border-crossing has brought her.   A's grandma expected her who traveled from another part of the world to be different, but was surprised to find her being fluent with her home language.   A, on the other hand, does not want to be viewed as different in front of her family members after crossing borders, and performs with language to re-claim a sense of familiarity and belonging in relation to her home community.   The dynamics within the relations between A and her grandma, to a certain extent, are structured by and performed according to the concept of borders and the effect they have in terms of imagining two different worlds within worlds that in fact overlap.

In the experienced world, borders define human perceptions and identities.   Though in the eyes of border artists, borders look different—they do not present ultimate knowledge about

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human experience but are themselves constructed.   In English is Broken Here, Coco Fusco, a

Chicana border artist, introduces us to an art installation entitled Border Door, by Richard Lou,

which conceptualizes the way borders construct human perceptions of the world (150).   The

artwork is set in a wide open field, a desert place without any physical border.   An iron door

and frame are installed there, the door half-open.   Through the door, one can see an open field,

the same one that surrounds the door.   With an iron door in an open field, there now exists a

border, both physical and conceptual; the door frame constructs human perceptions and

relations accordingly.

It is not Lou's concern to create a borderless world, nor a world of permeable borders.

Romanticizing borders with an essentialist critique of borders and their separation risks

depoliticizing borders, risks drifting into an imagined past when there used to be a non-separated

open field. Instead, it is crucial to note that the physical existence of the iron door is less

important than its conceptual function.   It is an epistemological framework we use to categorize

human experience, especially to have a sense of control over unfamiliar human experience.

Border Door sheds light on borders, in which the epistemological framework (iron door)

outweighs the significance of the ontological continuum (open field).   So does the

epistemological lens of borders in the above constructed narrative present a discourse that is

much more powerful than family bonds in influencing that particular human interactions and relations.

If the importance of border-crossing is only pertained to a subjective position and relevant to artistic explorations, its manifestations in linguistic characteristics or language uses, however, have profound sociopolitical ramifications. A good example of this is the current educational policy in the state of Arizona. On April 30, 2010, The Wall Street Journal revealed that "[t]he Arizona Department of Education recently began telling school districts that teachers whose spoken English it deems to be heavily accented or ungrammatical must be removed from classes from students still learning English" (Jordan). The education department has sent officials to evaluate teachers' English fluency on various aspects, as Jordan reports, including "comprehensible pronunciation, correct grammar and good writing." In a K-8 school of a Hispanic community in Phoenix, where half of the teachers are native Spanish speakers, state auditors have reported that the influence of the teachers' native language (Spanish) on their English pronunciations, such as pronouncing "violet" as "biolet" and "think" as "tink" (Jordan). Teachers using non-standard language are ordered not to continue working in classes for non-native English speakers by the State (Jordan).

The anti-accented English teacher policy in the state of Arizona requires students with limited English only taught only teachers who are highly fluent in the English language, such as

speaking English without an accent (Jordan).   The policy that regulates the standardization of language uses is significant within the educational history of Arizona.   It signals a great change in the criteria of language used in teacher recruitment; it contrasts to the policy in the previous stage when bilingual education was the aim, and the State hired hundreds of bilingual teachers, or even recruited them from Latin America (Jordan).   Bilingual teachers hired in the Bilingual Education era were of great educational values in their experiences of crossing linguistic or physical borders, and their bilingual capacities.   However, they are now evaluated based on the criteria of monolingualism, in which traces of border-crossing manifested in language uses, such as accents and pronunciations, are now seen as unacceptable.

If situated in a wider context, the state policy is the enforcement of language standards in education put forth by the federal "No Child Left Behind Act" in 2001, which "redirected federal moneys formerly stipulated for bilingual programs toward English language acquisition and immersion programs" and "students learning English must be instructed by teachers fluent in the language" (Jordan; Cervantes-Rodríguez and Lutz).   The significance of the Arizona's policy lies on the state's advancement of the federal initiation in defining specific criteria of teacher evaluation, which was left undefined by the federal government (Jordan).

This state policy affects not only the careers of "accented" English teachers, but also the language education of ESL (English as a Second Language) students in the public schools, whose

population (150,000) accounts for 12% of the population in the public schools as a whole

(Jordan).   The barring of "accented" English teachers from teaching ESL classes creates a

distancing effect between Spanish-speaking teachers and students, which is widely criticized

among language experts and educators.   The Department of Linguistics at the University of

Arizona, for example, issued a proposition on May 26, 2010 in support of the "accented"

English teachers, stating, "It is our position, based on decades of scientific investigation into the

nature of language, and of language acquisition and learning, that such a policy undermines the

effectiveness of the teaching and learning of English by non-native speakers and may lead to

additional harmful socioeconomic effects" ("Teachers' English Fluency Initiatives" 1).   In the

proposition, the Department of Linguistics at the University of Arizona advocates

language-related educational issues in the following: 1) the educational benefits of a shared first

language between teachers and students ("Teachers whose first language is Spanish may be able

to teach English to Spanish-speaking students better than teachers who don't speak Spanish"),

2) the exposure of linguistic varieties ("speech styles, dialects," and "foreign-accented speech") as

beneficial to language acquisition for both native and non-native speakers of English, 3) the

representation of "foreign accented speech" as "harmful" and as a criteria of evaluating teacher

quality in the policy, which is a reinforcement of "linguistic bias" and harmful "linguistic

profiling" in the U.S.A. ("Teachers' English Fluency Initiatives" 1).

Following the Department of Linguistics at the University of Arizona, The American

Association for Applied Linguistics (AAAL), a professional organization concerned with

language use and social activism, issued a resolution on February 2011, called "AAAL Resolution

Against Discrimination on the Basis of Accented Speech."   The drafting of the "Resolution"

directly addressed the issue of accents in relation to teacher qualifications in Arizona.   As it

states, "Policies that . . . propose accent as an aspect of teacher competence, such as those

recently considered in Arizona, must at minimum present criteria for assessing accent.   In any

case, such criteria for measuring accent should be presented to the public and academic

communities to evaluate their scholarly soundness and appropriateness for judging teacher

competence ("Resolutions").

The aim of this chapter, on the whole, is to discuss language activism in artistic

interventions as a critical response to the issues raised in the border crossing narrative, Lou's

work, the case of Arizona, and the issues raised by those fighting against state policy in that same

state.   As I'll show, many of the issues are primarily a matter of binary concepts and their

deconstruction.   Self-positioning within binary oppositions such west versus east; foreign

tongue versus mother tongue, foreign accents versus the standard, ungrammatical versus

grammatical are an "old-fashioned binary model of identity," based on "the notion of identity

[…] linked to language and territory" (Gómez-Peña, "Chihuahuas, Rockeros, and Zoot Suits"

208). I will analyze a performative art piece, The New World Border, to address the above

epistemological/ ontological divides of borders (both physical and conceptual) as causing

hierarchical binary oppositions in two ways.

On the one hand, this performative piece constructs a heterogenic world, in which

borders are no longer valid to conceptualize cultural, linguistic, and national differences. The

piece challenges people's perceptions that the border is a thin line and everything beyond the line

is a singular construct of language, culture, and identity. On the other hand, it creates a

theatrical effect of border-crossing through language performance. Major elements of language

performance in the work include code-switching between English and Spanish. The bilingual

play subverts the hegemonic force in the construction of borders, which is, the state power. By

subverting monolingualism, the playwrights/performers lead audiences to be critical of

government-sanctioned discourse of borders that restricts monolithic construct of identity to

geographical and linguistic borders. Through such code-switching language performance, the

playwrights lead audiences to cross linguistic borders, to experience the defamilarizing effect that

a different language system brings, from which the performance inverts the epistemological/

ontological hierarchy that sheds a different light on conceptualizing border-crossing experiences.

The bilingual border-crossing performance, most importantly, communicates across the

dichotomy constructed by borders, opening up inquiries of borders and not restricting them among those who experienced it.

The text I have selected comes from the Chicago premier in 1994, the one based on a collaboration between Coco Fusco and Gómez-Peña. Among the various versions of the performance, language politics plays an especially significant role in this 1994 performance. The performance text was produced with a "Glossary of 'Borderismos,'" a reference to words and phrases in the text. What the glossary includes is a series of special terminologies, such as "Culti-multuralism," "Hanging chickens, Los," and "Spanglization" (Gómez-Peña "The New World Border" 121, 122, 124). Each term presents a critical response to phenomena in border crossing and ideological positions in constituting culture, language, and ethnicity. The most important terminology, also at the core of the textual analysis, is "culti-multualism," defined as "An Esperantic Disney worldview in which all culture, races, and sexes live happily together. Coined by Post-Chicano antropóloco Robert Sánchez" (Gómez-Peña "The New World Border" 121). Inverting the prefixes and suffixes of "multi-culturalism," the terminology is a critique of the current multiculturalism, in which cultural diversity does not necessary suggest equality in the social arena. The intertextuality of the glossary underlies the active role of language. By inventing new language uses, the playwrights reverse power relations rooted in history and recreate new power relations in representing current issues.

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Also, this version of the performance highlights the active role of language in its

pre-performance.   Before the performance starts, the performers had their audience gather in

the lobby where the performers dressed themselves in multicultural costumes ("ritual face

makeup, Aztec chest piece, Afro-centric wig" 124), interacted with them in Spanish, and

segregated them according to their "racial background and level of bilingualism" (Gómez-Peña

"The New World Border" 125).   What does this imply?   In this case, the pre-performance

established a critical momentum toward the performance by bringing in a crucial, yet often

ignored component of multiculturalism: language.   Gómez-Peña and Fusco allow audiences to

experience multiculturalism from a critical distance through language performance; that is, they

make use of bilingual and hybrid expressions (code-switching), a non-conventional criterion in

the larger sociopolitical contexts of their work, a standard practice in the performance.   Such an

experiential approach in the theatrical intervention is far more engaging and effective than

approaches of cultural critics, such as Edward Said in *Orientalism* and Christopher Balme in

Decolonizing the Stage, who critique the inadequacy of cultural productions through argumentation

and advocate establishing an alternative analytical framework.

The creative use of language politics and bilingualism sheds light on my textual and

contextual analyses of *The New World Border*.   The anchoring point of my textual analysis is

code-switching and its effect.   Code-switching is a literary device in works such as Gloria

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Anzadula's *Borderland/La Frontera*; the linguistic mixing in the work is categorized by Andrea A.

Lunsford as "mestinza rhetoric," a type of multicultural rhetoric that negotiates the frequent

dichotomizing construct of self and the other and bridges various divides in a border-crossing

experience.   Also, code-switching is defined as "a verbal skill requiring a large degree of

linguistic competence in more than one language, rather than a defect arising from insufficient

knowledge of one or the other," and is a significant language usage among bilinguals and

immigrants (Cashman 360).   In this chapter, I discuss code-switching in terms of the mixing of

language or linguistic components, and also the discourse that it represents: a unique linguistic

field accessible among the bilinguals.   As a performance strategy, code-switching creates

different avenues when performers interact with audiences of monolingual and bilingual

backgrounds.   In this study on the discourse of postcolonial drama/ performance, I use

bilingualism and code-switching interchangeably; my interchangeable use of the terms is based

on the assumption that code-switching is a form of bilingual discourse.

In the following, I construct a history of language politics based on the development of

bilingual education in the U.S.A.   This section provides a broader sociopolitical context for the

public performances of *The New World Border*.   Synthesizing the language politics of this

performance in terms of the reception of bilingual education policy contextualizes how bilingual

usages were perceived on the "educational stage" when the play was performed on its own stages.

In my textual analysis, I focus on the juxtaposition of two types of code-switching (the authentic and the performed authenticity of language) and how it blurs the distinctions between authenticity and purposefully theatricalized performance—much like Richard Lou highlights the distinctions between the actual iron door and the conceptual boundaries it creates in the field. It is from the code-switching language performance that I form a critical dialogue with discourse of multiculturalism. For my contextual analysis, I discuss the social function of theatrical performance: how theatrical performance interacts with the context, especially how it emulates power structure in the context. I select two versions of its performance, analyze their particular dynamics with their contexts, and discuss the epistemological lens that language provides in relation to the ontological status of multiculturalism. This case study concludes with the promotion of critical multiculturalism through language politics.

Language Politics in the United States: A Brief History of Bilingual Education

On October 12, 1996, Latino and Latina groups marched on the streets of Washington, D.C. The peace demonstration in the capitol of the U.S.A. aimed at organizing a "national network" that was built upon a "grassroots base" of the Latinos and Latinas (Hernández 518; Borgman and Constable). Its main agenda was to vocalize for the rapidly growing Spanish-speaking community about 30 millions in the nation to claim their human and legal rights (Hernández; Constable). The organizers estimated that about 25, 000 people participated

in this march; some traveled from California, Texas, Arizona, Illinois, and New York on buses,

and some had driven through the night to join the rally (Constable).   The march started from

Meridian Hill Park on 16th Street NW and then marched slowly down 16th Street to the Ellipses

(Constable).   In the demonstration, one of the significant markers was bilingual (English and

Spanish) signage and speech.   The group chanted in Spanish, "We are here; we're not going,"

and held bilingual signage in the march, such as "We didn't cross the border! the border crossed

us!", "Somos un Pueblo Sin Fronteras", and "Aqui Estamos, y No Hay Paz" (Constable;

Hernández).

Why use bilingual signage, instead of that in English, the national language of the U.S.A.

in the demonstration?   Taking a look at the message conveyed in the bilingual signage reveals

the politics of language involved in the *bilingual* choice.   The demonstration signs construct a

less well-known narrative of this ethnic group's particular "border-crossing" experience: "We

didn't cross the border! The border crossed us!", "Somos un Pueblo Sin Fronteras" ("We Are a

People Without Borders"), "Aqui Estamos, y No Hay Paz" ("Here We Are, and There is No

Peace") (Hernández 518-520).   The grassroots perspective of borders expressed in the signs

("We didn't cross the border! The border crosses us!") contrasts to a large degree with the

nationalist construct of borders based on warfare.   For the rally did not express any nationalist

alliance but an alterative perspective of history, regarding their "border-crossing" experience to

be involuntary and as the result of national territorial cessions.

The demonstration is, thus, a poststructural response toward "border-crossing," in which

history plays a central role, involving the historical tension between the U.S.A. and Latin

America.   The border between Latin America and the U.S.A. has been politicized according to

nation and the region's "imperial relation," that have developed from the histories of United

States's war with Mexico (1846-1848) and her intervention in the conflict between Spain and

Cuba (Spanish-American War 1898) (Cervantes-Rodríguez and Lutz).   The hierarchical relation

between the U.S.A. and Latin America has been widely spread, becoming one of the factors that

has highly politicized the "Anglo/ Hispanic differentiation" (Cervantes-Rodríguez and Lutz).   A

concrete example of the racial hierarchy is a lack of human rights for legal immigrants to defend

for themselves as a group unless they become American citizens: as Constable reports, "In the

last two years, record numbers of legal residents have been applying for U.S. citizenship, in part

to defend themselves against anti-immigrant sentiment and legislative proposals" (A1).

In the 1996 demonstration, contrastingly, the history of the irredeemable national border

was de-centralized, as the bilingual usages serve as a political means of social mobilization among

the group to claim for equal human right as other residents of the nation.   The politics of

bilingual language performance is a means of claiming basic human rights in their present nation

state and, in this context, suggests not so much the Latino and Latina's bi-nation linkage as the cultural diversity they bring in the country, a discourse that is part of the "democratic ideals" of the U.S.A. (Ong 138).

Although the United States has never been a country without cultural diversities, before the second half of the twentieth century, collective efforts to promote language varieties beyond English have been limited to certain regions. On the educational stage, German was used in states and regions such as Ohio and Indiana, French in Louisiana, and Spanish in New Mexico during the 1700s and 1800s (Cueto "Bilingualism and Biculturalism" 178). The incorporation of ethnic groups' native languages as the media of instruction at schools has been focused on teaching European languages, especially accommodating immigrant students of European descent. Not until 1968 was there a national educational policy that acknowledged all immigrant students' linguistic heritage and performances as a basic human right, regardless of their country of origin and the country's geopolitical relation with the U.S.A. The Bilingual Education Act in 1968 was the first nationwide, federally initiated policy that prescribed a welcoming gesture toward language diversities.

The passage of the Bilingual Education Act (or Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act) in 1968 was fostered by the Civil Right Movement of the 1950s and 60s, most importantly, its "anti-segregating" spirit (Crawford). The basic intent of the Act was

to include linguistic minority students under the protection of human and civil rights (Crawford; Macías, MacDonald, and Carrillo 173).   The Bilingual Education Act, as Crawford points out, is rather "ambivalent," missing the specifics of educational goals, such as whether the aim of bilingual education program to be "assimilative" or "maintaining"; its emphasis on equal human rights is under the political wave of the Civil Rights Movement.   Even though the educational policy was a political decision more than a pedagogical one, it had important effects on the educational stage (Crawford; Macías, MacDonald, and Carrillo 173).   The primary impact of the Act is that it prohibits English as a mandatory language of instruction in public schools and protects non-English speaking students' choice in using their native languages (Macías, MacDonald, and Carrillo 173; Cervantes-Rodríguez and Lutz).   Secondly, it encourages "multilingual usage" and maintains language diversities (Macías, MacDonald, and Carrillo 173). Thirdly, by recognizing this diversity, it recognizes the "national visibility" of Spanish-speaking Latino and Latina (Macías, MacDonald, and Carrillo 173).   The *inclusive* nature of the Title VII language policy not only promotes language diversities but also acknowledges equal participations of ethnic groups within the nation.

The Civil Rights Movement continued to foster the development of bilingual education in the 70s through law enforcement and the courts' interpretations of the Act (Macías, MacDonald, and Carrillo 174; Crawford).   Subsequently, federal and states resources have been

stabilized and the infrastructure of bilingual education have been established (Macías,

MacDonald, and Carrillo 174).   Home to many Cuban exiles, Dade County, Florida, took the

initiative in 1973, declaring both Spanish and English as the official languages and allocating

large amounts of money for bilingual education (Macías, MacDonald, and Carrillo 173).   There

were also significant developments in teacher training and bilingual education curriculum on the

national scale.   In 1976, eleven states established a system of multi-lingual teacher certification

with specific qualifying criteria; in 1978, the office of Bilingual Education published *Competencies*

for University Programs in Bilingual Education that includes governmental guidelines for bilingual

education with specific pedagogy, materials, and curriculum designs (Cueto, "Bilingual Teacher

Training"182).

In the 1980s, however, there was a congressional attempt to make English the only

official language and to eliminate bilingual education from public schools (Macías, MacDonald,

and Carrillo).   Federal-initiated bilingual education started to lose the support of representatives,

state and municipal governments.   This was true even in places where bilingual education had

been substantively developed.   As mentioned earlier, Dade County, Florida, which has a

nation-wide reputation for pioneering bilingual education program that has consistently

benefited local immigrant students, issued a restriction in 1980 on the use of state funding,

mandating that it could only be used for English-language based teaching (MacDonald and Nilles 15; Crawford 64).

This was part of a larger movement. The English-Only Movement was launched in the mid 1980s, demanding English as the only medium of instruction in education. The monolingual movement challenges bilingual education on various levels; it assumes, for one, an assimilative model of education, an assimilation of ethnic groups' language diversities into the dominant language, English. However, the movement in support of monolingualism met local resistance, especially from multiethnic and multilingual groups. For example, in 1985, the Miami-based Spanish American League Against Discrimination (SALAD) promoted an alternative solution to the assimilative model of language with a model they called "English-plus"; that is, the group advocated developing both native and English language proficiencies as beneficial to immigrant students (Crawford 56). This proposed bilingual model and its effectiveness, however, are marginalized in the political decision of how education policies are made, and only relevant to language experts and educators. (Crawford 56). The fundamental differences toward language, whether viewing "language as a problem" in the assimilation model or "language as a resource" in the developmental model, from a historical perspective, point toward the lack of consensus in the Bilingual Education Act in 1968; the ultimate goal of the Act,

whether to assimilate immigrants to be monolingual, or to maintain their bilingual capacities, was undetermined (Crawford).

With the nationwide promotion of monolingualism, in the 1990s, bilingual education was highly marginalized and even restricted on the educational stage. Late in that decade, several states with huge Spanish-speaking populations, such as California, Massachusetts, and Arizona, enacted laws restricting bilingual education. California's Proposition 227 is exemplary of a restrictive law that limits the length of bilingual education program to one-year span and does so in a way that intends to eliminate bilingual programs from public schools (Macías, MacDonald, and Carrillo 15; Santiago-Irizarry 472; Wiley). Adding to the national English-only movement and individual state's outlawing of the Bilingual Education Act is bilingual groups' voting against bilingual education. In 1998, Proposition 227 was passed in the state of California that requires "all children in California public schools shall be taught English by being taught in English" (qtd. in Crawford 60).

Proposition 227 appropriated language politics in ways that are appealing to the residents of California. First of all, the language of the proposition highlights the failure of bilingual education and positions itself in opposition to it: "the public schools of California currently do a poor job of educating immigrant children, wasting financial resources on costly experimental language programs, failure over the past two decades is demonstrated by the current high

drop-out and low English literacy levels of many immigrant children" (qtd. in Crawford 60).

Secondly, the monolithic model of language it promotes—"the English language is the national

public language of the United States of America and of the state of California"—is a

continuation of the national English-only Movement (qtd. in Crawford 59).   Thirdly, building

upon the powerful discourse of the national language movement, it establishes an intricate

relation between language proficiency and social class: "immigrant parents are eager to have their

children acquire a good knowledge of English, thereby allowing them to fully participate in the

American Dream of economic and social advancement" (qtd. in Crawford 60).   The overall

geopolitics of English is the last factor that voters in California voted in favor of,   English being

described "the leading world language for science, technology, and business, thereby being the

language of economic opportunity" (qtd. in Crawford 60).

The decline of bilingual education in the 1990s and the rise of a national English-Only

movement illustrate the nation state's influential power over language use.   The fact is that the

English-Only Movement based on a political decision without any significant pedagogical

understanding, was able to re-shape the sociopolitical climate toward bilingual education and

become a significant factor in the passage of California's Proposition 227. The most recent

development of language policy is the case of Arizona in 2010, which also follows this

"top-down" trend.   As a reinterpretation of the federal "No Child Left Behind" signed into law

in 2002 (Cervantes-Rodríguez and Lutz 546), the state policy imposed quite arbitrary criteria of judging teaching quality, such as "accent" and "standard," which especially worked to the disadvantage of Spanish-speaking English teachers.

From the history of language politics as manifested through the changing reception of bilingual education in the U.S.A., but in particular the recent backlash against it, I reach several conclusions. Even though the U.S.A. has no centralized educational system, unlike Malaysia and Singapore, movements or language policies on the national scale, to a large extent, affect the states' decisions and the general public's receptions toward language usages. A good example of this is that the government's language policy and movement play a significant role in the history of bilingual education; the implementation of bilingual education is fostered by the 1968 Bilingual Education Act, whereas the English-only Movement in the mid 1980s foresees its decline.

Also, the history of bilingual education reveals that, most of the time, educational policies that concern language are made due to the political climates; pedagogical concerns were not the determinative factor of how language policies were enacted in the 1980s. Despite the fact that language policies are made mostly on political grounds, different types of language policies have drastically different sociopolitical implications. A monolingual policy that standardizes a singular language has the potential of limiting the exercise of collective language rights on the

educational stage, which inevitably establishes a social hierarchy, sending out an explicit message

regarding who is the racialized minority (Wiley; Schmidt; May). On the contrary, a language

policy that encourages the development of language diversities can better foster the democratic

ideal of what it really means to be a "multicultural" society (Ong 138). Thus, the brief history

lays out a hypothesis: the linguistic position underlying a language policy (whether the monolithic

or plural model of language) has the potential of serving as the crucial indicator of racial status.

It is my effort to contextualize the following analyses in relation to the history of the

language politics in the U.S.A. The specific racial power relations and language politics in

border states, involving the paradox of the demographic majority being the linguistic minority as

in the case of California and Arizona, is generalizable to be of similar power relations in other

border states, such as New Mexico, the micro-level context for Gómez-Peña and Sifuentes's

performance in 1997. Also, the monolingual orientation in 1990s until the present provides a

macro-level context for Gómez-Peña and his collaborators' various performances of the

bilingual piece, *The New World Border*, in 1994 and 1996.

My analytical lens into the linguistic features of *The New World Border* and its performed

contexts is informed by the artists' subversion of the nation state's power in control of language

politics. In their performances, they utilized bilingual performance to establish a different

social hierarchy than that presumed by monolingual policy. This type of political intervention,

attempting to empower the grassroots, is a totally different type of political intervention than

what is inscribed in the massive, imposed, and highly political nature of the government's

language policy.

Textual Analysis

The New World Border is an excellent performative piece that allows me to contrast a

textual reading of the play with an analysis that takes into account its theatrical dynamics.   For

example, in the performance, Coco Fusco and Gómez-Peña intentionally mistranslate certain

lines, even using made-up languages.   While readers have a structural understanding of this

aspect through stage directions that indicate the speech is a mistranslation, spectators of the

performance don't have this knowledge.   Audiences cannot anticipate the non-traditional use of

language until they experience it: the defamiliarizing effect of language.   Such theatrical

experience is significant, as it conceptualizes the experience of border crossing.   What it entails

is a transformative effect that defies a sense of intelligibility in looking at the world from a

subjective perspective.

Readers and audiences interact with *The New World Border* differently, and this structural

difference is the motor of this textual analysis.   It aims at bringing language politics in dialogue

with multiculturalism, which is often depoliticized as cultural diversities and appropriated by the

discourse of capitalism.   Such dialogue is conveyed through a contrast between a textual reading

and an analysis of the effect of language in a theatrical performance. The effect of language performance allows an alternative interpretation of culture than in a textual reading.

In the literary world of The New World Border, the borders that used to define human activities, including the national, cultural, and linguistic, become elastic. In this world of new borders, there is no monolingual national policy. Language uses are no longer government-sanctioned. For communicative purposes, instead, the government (FUSR) broadcasts cultural programs in seven languages to reach audiences of different language backgrounds (123). Language is diversified not only because of ethnic hybridity but also the popularization of technology and new generational language users. For example, the new generation, the "global culture cyborgs," uses "one language, a blend of Spanglish, Frangle, and Portunol, spiced with calo and borderismo borrowed from Chinese, Tagalo, corporate, and media jargon" (134).

In the text, there is no definitive national entity. Military forces do not have to guard these national borders; there is no border to guard against, nor are there separationists to fight against. The U.S.-Mexican border, a highly political border known to the audiences in the twenty-first century, is dissolved; the disappearance of the border is manifested in the U.S. and Mexico merging into the "Federation of U.S. Republics" (128). Within the newly constituted republic, however, cities seek for autonomy and independence from the political union; for

example, Baja California and Hong Kong together become the hub of "tourist kitsch" and Tokyo and "Lost Angels" together form an economic unit, governing "the financial operations of the Pacific Rim" (130). In this imagined transnational world, national mechanisms that have dominated the postcolonial world since World War II are weakened; the governing power of nation is challenged by the automatic development of local cities. Political borders are constantly reconstituting and in tune with lifeworld dynamics.

The disappearance of distinctive national borders in the text corresponds to the homogenization of metropolitan cultures across nations. Metropolises such as Toronto, Manhattan, and Mexico Cida, become identical in their cultural differences (128). The multicultural elements in the metropolises become homogeneous, instead of being characteristic of its unique culture, consisting of a mixture of particular demographics and historical developments within the nation. Metropolises are no longer unique in their specific forms of cultural diversities and there emerges the borderization of metropolises ("major metropolises have been fully borderized" (playwright's emphasis) (128). In this imagined transnational world, what the territorial unity border can claim is shrinking and the homogeneous zone of metropolitan culture is expanding.

What underlies the homogenic multiculturalism is the capital flow, or more specifically, the transnational trade of cultural artifacts. For example, the Federation of U.S. Republics

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(FUSR), the political organization representative of the mainstream, promotes "free art trade"

that one can receive a multicultural artifact by "mail order" and "travel across the entire

continent in a weekend by visiting an expo" (which I assume is a cyberspace exposition) (135).

Cultural artifacts have a functional purpose, which allows their consumers to travel across

cultures through geographical differences and through space.   Art as cultural artifact in daily

usages not only facilitates cross-cultural communication but also a form of historical memories.

For instance, "the greater Tortilla" symbolizes "[t]he legendary U.S.-Mexico borderline and as

tourists' "sentimental souvenirs" (128).   The textual reference, shopping malls as the "mall of

obliviation," also implies the materialization of memories in the form of art.   Art is an

aestheticized register that provides buyers with a sense of integration to smoothly move across

time, space, and cultural differences.

The political implication of art is understated in the text, underscored by the discourse of

capitalism.   This objectification of cultural diversities in the free-trade of art will be

re-politicized and critiqued through language performance, which I will return to in later analysis.

While art buyers can receive multicultural products by mail order and "travel across the entire

continent in a weekend by visiting an expo," they do not know that what mediates the circulation

and production of art works is the government.   The government controls the broadcasting and

the interpretation of art, as "the role of the military has been reduced to guarding banks, TV

stations, and art schools" (128). It implies that the constituting power of this type of culture is a "government-sanctioned transnational media culture" (135).

Through an overview of the textual content, we know that, if they have technology and capital, the residents of this imaged new world do not have difficulty in crossing national, linguistic, and cultural borders. However, what is lacking in the textual reading of the play is the effect of performance. To understand the play requires not only the intelligibility of the text, but also the performance effect, which language plays a significant role. In the performance language translation is not always available and accurate, and is not merely a convenient tool to gain substantial understandings of the performance. The performance constantly involves (mis)translation. To a large extent, it consists of code-switching within and between sentences, and in dialogues, shifting between languages without a sense of completion in meaning delivery. Take the following passages for example.

GP/DRUGGIE: Ay, your past is gone for good; my past is gone for good… help me! Estoyperdido….

CF: (Interrupting) Translation please!

GP: … al norte de un sur inexistente. Me captas caverniícola, mex-plico?

CF: Translation please!

(*GP does Neanderthal sounds.*)

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CF: (Angry) Translation please!!

GP: OK, OK. Spanish lesson #5. Falsa democracia?

CF: Translation please! (*Someone from the audience translates.*) (132)

There is no consistency in character development and plot progression from the previous session to the above quoted passages.   This dialogue takes up at least three different topics, shifting from a commentary related to the title of the play ("your past is gone for good; my past is gone for good"), primitivist performance (performing "Neanderthal sounds"), and initiating a language lesson ("Spanish lesson").   What matters here is not a sense of intelligibility that language conveys but the effect in language performance: code-switching.   First, GP code-switches between sentences and ends his line in Spanish.   Then, there occurs interpersonal code-switches with GP's speaking in a foreign tongue and CF's constant demand in English, "Translation please!"   GP's language performance in postponing language translation provokes an angry, emotional response from CF, as the stage direction indicates.   More importantly, the effect of code-switching promotes responses from the audience (perhaps an actor/actress in disguise) to fulfill CF's urgent need in understanding a foreign tongue.

The dynamics between the two performers highlights the effect of code-switching.   As GP performs code-switching between sentences without a sense of completion in conveying meaning, CF plays a role as a spectator of GP's language performance, demanding language

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translation.   CF's performance demonstrates the effect of code-switching, which is a sense of

discomfort in crossing language boundaries and in moving out of a common, monolingual

comfort zone.   In the following script, the code-switching theatrical performance continues a

similar momentum in suspending meaning.

GP: *Sexual Democracia?*

CF: Translation please!

GP: *U.S.A. te usa…*

CF: Translation please!

GP: *Censura no-escultura…*

CF: Translation please!

GP: *Un Mexicano en E.U. es como un turco en Alemania.*

CF: Translation please!

GP: *Guera—moment guera…*

CF: Translation please!

GP: *Me cago en el Nuevo Orden Mundial…*

CF: Translation please!

(*GP says something in tongues.*)

CF: Translation please! (133)

The quoted passages start with a similar code-switching dynamics, oscillating between

GP's language performance in Spanish and CF's demands in English translation.   However,

there is a shift in the code-switching pattern and effect.   The code-switching pattern in here

goes beyond the existing language systems (English and Spanish) to undistinguishable language

uses, as GP speaks in tongues.   It leaves no room for translation, and this time no one offers a

translation, which is a major difference from the previous passage.   Playing with language at the

end once again highlights a performing gesture, in which language serves no communicative

purpose and conveys no intelligibility.   There remains a defamilarizing theatrical experience in

border crossing, crossing language and linguistic borders.

Code-switching has a distancing effect for monolingual audiences, but at the same

time, it is an engaging discourse, regardless of audience's language backgrounds.   In

"Negotiating Ideologies through English: Strategies from the Periphery," Suresh Canagarajah

analyzes code-switching between English and Tamil in a communal ceremony, discusses how

each language engages specific audiences and presents as strategic positioning within the context.

Code-switching in the above passages serves a similar function.   When using English, CF

addresses to the English-speaking audience and voicing their needs in being left out as outsiders

of GP's speech.   When GP speaks in Spanish, he draws Spanish-speaking or bilingual audiences

in a completely different discourse.   Spanish-speaking or bilingual audiences could pick up

phrases that imply a commentary on the role of ethnic group in American multiculturalism, such

as "...to the North of a nonexistent South. Do you get me, cave dweller, am I being clear"(… al

norte de un sur inexistente. Me captas caverniícola, mex-plico?), "A Mexican in the USA is like a

Turk in Germany"("Un Mexicano en E.U. es como un turco en Alemania"), and "False

democracy?" ("Falsa democracia?").   Both the designated languages are engaging discourses,

regardless of their various linguistic backgrounds.

The code-switching effect, sometimes engaging and sometimes creating distance,

critically interacts with the presentational aspects in the performance that suggests a sense of

"primitiveness."   Coco Fusco and Gómez-Peña both wear "ritual face makeup" along with

other costumes, such as "Aztec chest piece," "snake boots," "Afro-centric wig," and "tropical

glasses and masks" (124).   The stage setting is designed to create a "ceremonial" and "bizarre"

space with a "human skeleton" and "chickens with feathers, head and feet" hanging on the stage

(124).   Gómez-Peña performs grotesque rituals, praying to and addressing the dead chickens

from time to time, in front of the "fifty votive candles" that "divide the stage from the audience"

(125).

If the play were consisted of solely primitive cultural performances without the

oscillating engaging/disengaging effect of language performance, the primitive costumes and

props would most likely become "collectable" culture objects that make cultural diversities

completely accessible and performing the cultural other conveniently intelligible. The language

performance allows audiences to interact with the play differently than readers would. Readers

are more likely to identify themselves with the textual content, in which culture is introduced

through "Free Trade Art." In a textual reading of the play, culture is objectified as aesthetic

artifacts and purchasable; cultural experience is transmissible, as one can "travel across the entire

continent in a weekend by visiting an expo" (*The New World Border* 135). Contrastingly,

audiences experience the effect of code-switching, which is, an experience of defamiliarizing a

monolingual perspective in looking at multiculturalism as commodities of cultural differences.

To summarize, *The New World Border* is good example of how Gómez-Peña and Fusco

redirect audiences to re-politicize multiculturalism through a critical usage of language, in which

language is both the embodiment of power and an active tool to emulate the discourse of power.

In an interview with a Latino philosopher, Eduardo Mendieta, Gómez-Peña discusses the role of

language "in culture, personal identity, in the politics of exclusion and oppression" (550).

Gómez-Peña states that, in the current interest in multicultural diversities and the emergence of

many "self-proclaimed experts of Otherness," there is a lack of interest in discussing "tensions

and clashes of cultures" and "issues of power and privilege" (549). By creating a bilingual field

in the performance, performing code-switching and segregating audiences according to their

"degree of bilingualism," Gómez-Peña and Fusco guide audiences through a border-crossing

experience, in which the political implications of multiculturalism cannot be easily dismissed.

Contextual Analysis

The New World Border is not only a performative text, but also a contextualized

performance. Gómez-Peña and his collaborators have been touring around the U.S. and

performing this piece. They have been producing different versions of the play in response to

specific power dynamics in the performed context (Gómez-Peña "The New World Border"

120). In the following, I discuss two versions of the performance: one in 1994 and another one

in 1997. Both versions highlight Gómez-Peña and his collaborators' different positioning

strategies and interactions with the immediate contexts they performed from an engaged

position. Analyzing the contexts of the two performances demonstrates the social function of

theatrical performances and the positionality of theaters.

The 1994 version of *The New World Border* is based on the collaboration between

Gómez-Peña and Coco Fusco; it is a prototype performance that has public accessibility and

national visibility. It is a timely response to the crisis of multiculturalism in the U.S.A., as

Gómez-Peña states: "[t]he backlash against multiculturalism started to spread into academia,

mass media, pop culture, mainstream politics and suddenly matters of race and gender were seen

passé" ("Chihuahuas, Rockeros and Zoot Suits" 194). Its critique of multiculturalism in the

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U.S. through code-switching language performance and performed authenticity of culture, as introduced earlier, is widely circulated through various channels. The performance was broadcast live on a local radio station, later adapted into a television program and produced as performance script in academic journals (*The New World Border* 120). It is not a performance in isolation, but a part of a large performance project, "The Year of the White Bear," consisting of performative pieces, such as "Couple in the Cage," and a series of art installations. This large project was selected to perform in the 500th anniversary of Columbus's discovery of America. The first performance of the play in 1994 signals collective efforts among artists of color in the nation to raise critical awareness of how culture is being appropriated in the U.S.A.

In contrast to the 1994's national appearance, the performance in 1997 is a local performance, situated within the particular power relation in the local. Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Roberto Sifuentes were invited by an individual producer to perform *The New World Border* piece in Santa Fe, California, with the local museum as the sponsor of the performance. It was a city where its "official" culture contrasts with social reality. Even though Santa Fe is a city of major Mexican and indigenous cultural influences, residents of Mexican and indigenous populations have low social status in the community (Gómez-Peña "Communities of Despair" 152). Multiculturalism, in Santa Fe, is commodified as a "theme park of Indian and New Mexican culture (without Indians or Mexicans)" (152). Gómez-Peña and Sifuentes's visit was

the first time that Latino/Chicano artists performed in the city, where there had been

performances characteristic of European cultures. The social hierarchy in the context led to a

dilemma of this invited performance: they as Latino/Chicano artists were invited to perform in

this context with European descendents being the intended audience, who could afford a

performance ticket.

What manifests in the context of Santa Fe is the crisis of multiculturalism, as in the 1994

performance, in which multiculturalism is appropriated as cultural diversities without the

participation of ethnic groups. In the 1997 performance, Gómez-Peña and Sifuentes made

special arrangements to emulate power relations in the local. First, they secretly got in touch

with local artists and activists, getting insiders' perspectives of the social issues, such as "land

rights, housing, police brutality, and environmental racism" (152). They called for ethnic

groups' participation in the performance and reserved tickets for them that they couldn't afford.

They kept these arrangements secret. Unlike in the 1994 performance where they segregated

audiences according to their bilingual competency in the pre-performance, audiences are

segregated in the reversed order of the social structure: to enter this Latino/Chicano

performance, the artists privilege indigenous New Mexicans, then the Mexicans, the Hispanic,

and lastly the "cultural other" (153). Due to the pre-arrangement, the performance was packed

with artists and activists of color who outnumbered the European social elites. Lastly, they

added an impromptu, an "open mic" section at the end of the performance, and invited artists and activists of color to talk about the "dark side" of this town. This added section transfers a theatrical performance to a town meeting, restoring voices from the ethnic groups to the "official" culture of Santa Fe (153).

Taking the 1997 performance as a whole, the ways Gómez-Peña and Sifuentes frame the performance, including the pre-arrangement, pre-performance and post-performance interactions, are based on careful contextual analyses. In Gómez-Peña's reflection of the power structure in this context, he refers this group of people as the "communities of Despair," living in an environment where the (anti)immigration law deprives people of color "medical benefits," language rights in speaking Spanish in workplace, and shows no support in relieving the situation that Latino students' decreased enrollment by 40 percent ("Communities of Despair" 147-148). They perform the piece in a way that provides a platform of expression and renders agency back to the community. They create an inverted social class in the theatrical performance: the Mexican and indigenous community become the privileged group who takes over the stage at the end, whereas audiences of European descendent, the elite group in the context, are marginalized. By inverting class structure in the performance, the artists emulate power relations that control the discourse of multiculturalism and engage within local context from an engaged position.

According to Jacquline Lo, the locality of theater is found in its mediating role between

the local and the national.   If the local is the embodiment of the national hegemony, social

activism exemplified in theatrical performances requires a national advocacy as in the 1994

performance and a local engagement within the community as in the 1997 performance.   Both

performances of *The New World Border* foreground the role of language as a form of social

activism and local engagement.   The original performance in 1994 introduces a new linguistic

category onto the national stage, that is, "bilingualism," to evaluate the level of multicultural

literacy in response to the appropriation of multiculturalism as objectified cultural artifacts and

without the participation of ethnic groups.   Bilingualism, the crux of this performance, acts to

create a border zone that only allows the access of the bilinguals and claims a distance from

monolinguals.   It is by standardizing code-switching bilingualism that facilitates the objective

that Gómez-Peña identifies in an interview with a Latino philosopher: "to make the audience

members or the readers experience how it feels to be partially excluded, to be minorities in their

own city, foreigners in their own country, even if only for the duration of the performance"

(550-551).

Performing the same text again in 1997, Gómez-Peña and his collaborator localized the

connections between language and culture established in 1994.   They integrated language,

culture, and local identity.   The impromptu "open mic" section, where Mexican and indigenous

groups shared their concerns with the community, reconnected their cultural identity to the community.   Language plays a big role in the empowering process of the sociopolitical minority; as ethnic groups presented on stage, they also staged their culturally informed language varieties, which repositioned them as major contributors in Santa Fe where multiculturalism has gained official status.   The onstage performance of the local activists and artists of color, on top of the code-switching language performance in the main performance, promotes hybrid forms of language as a standardized language practice in the Santa Fe community, a self-proclaimed multicultural place.

Conclusion

This case study of *The New World Border* illustrates dramatic subversion of social hierarchy.   It delineates various performing strategies that make this performative piece a socially engaged performance in the empowerment of multiethnic groups.   Specifically, the code-switching language performance in this piece creates a defamilarizing perspective for monolingual audiences in being the spectator of the primitive cultural performance.   It is through standardizing a non-monolingual framework through code-switching that the performance decentralizes monolingual audience through language politics, and within the duration of the performance re-positions them as the minority of their own country.

The power relations in the performed local context, as in the 1997 Santa Fe performance, is generalizable as a critical dialogue between language politics and the state of American multiculturalism. As Gómez-Peña states,"[t]he backlash against multiculturalism started to spread into academia, mass media, pop culture, mainstream politics and suddenly matters of race and gender were seen as passé" ("Chihuahuas, Rockeros and Zoot Suits" 194). American multiculturalism has become a corporate business, a constructed discourse that appropriates multiethnic groups' cultural diversities, yet excludes their participations in a multicultural society. What the 1997 performance demonstrates is that language variety is a crucial social agency for genuine multiculturalism; Gómez-Peña and Sifuentes's strategic language performance that positions multiethnic groups as the linguistic majority in the performance initiates an empowering stage for multiethnic groups to claim their residency and ownership of cultural diversities in the local community. It is the lens of language diversities and activism that enables an alternative, epistemological lens in promoting a critical multiculturalism.

One can even go further to state a researched-informed hypothesis, stressing the critical angle that language politics bring into a sufficient understanding of multiculturalism: there is no coincidence between a monolingual model of education and the constructed discourse of multiculturalism that excludes sociopolitical participations of multiethnic groups. Besides the case of Sante Fe in New Mexico, the state of Arizona is another example where multiethnic

groups are disempowered in a border state featuring cultural diversities.   As mentioned earlier,

the monolingual policy in Arizona State disqualifies accented Spanish-speaking English teachers;

the bilingual ethnic group who is the demographic majority, yet, is marginalized by the state

language policy.   Such a monolingual turn in education, shifting from the previous bilingual

model of education, further exemplifies language politics as one of the most important critical

parameters of the status of multiculturalism.

AFTERWORD: TOWARD A CRITICAL LITERACY EDUCATION

Where shall we go from reading texts?　Where does textual analysis allow us to see, to inquire?　These questions have always been present during the course of composing this dissertation, and inspire me to write beyond the scope of text in order to answer them.　Textual analyses, stemming from the first-person, intimate reading experience, but informed by theory, are moments of personal, if socially and politically informed, interaction with the work. Though the method generates a multiplicity of interpretations and is a common practice in literary studies, I believe that to make it pedagogically sound and more applicable to the general goal of literacy education requires two frameworks: discourse analysis and global contextualization, both of them focusing on the politics of language use.　In the following, I illustrate these two frameworks with what I did in this dissertation.　While reflecting on various pedagogical approaches in literary studies, my ultimate goal is to suggest potentials of carving out a common ground, concerning critical usages of literature in literacy education.

The first framework is re-conceptualizing textual analysis on the discourse level.　What this dissertation demonstrates is how dramatic pieces interact with their specific contexts in public performances.　My case studies contain analyses of performative, literary texts produced in different regions: Malaysia, Singapore, and the United States.　Each study consists of analyses of artists' stylish language uses (accented English, culturally-informed gendered language, and

code-switching), and discusses these textual features in relation to the performed contexts (their regional and national locations, censorships towards artistic productions, the playwrights' positionalities toward particular sociopolitical issues, and language policies).   These discussions aim to examine the locality of the texts in the sociopolitical realm and beyond individualistic reading experience.

The usage of literary works I am proposing here is teaching students to make connections between textual features and their contexts, teaching them power dynamics and relations instead of literal and intuitive readings of texts.   This is, however, by no means new. Approaching literary works from the locality of texts—the aspects of reception, production, and circulation—are typical ways of conducting research in various subfields (Avant-Garde Studies, Postcolonial Studies, Cultural Studies, Performance Studies) and are common grounds of various theoretical stances (New Historicism, Marxism, Poststructuralism/ Foucaultian).   The only value of emphasizing this particular level of discourse in a literary analysis is that it has been lost within the strata of various research stances in literary studies.   Reading literature on the level of discourse with critical attentions to its political stances and implications, particularly as it relates to the politics and policies of language use, to my knowledge, has never been acknowledged as a shared research method in the field and organized as a teaching agenda.   There is no reason that discourse analysis relating to language as an extension of textual analysis should not replace

textual analysis that has been criticized, yet standardized in literary studies for centuries

(Downing, Hurlbert, and Mathieu; Ohmann; Readings).

The second framework is establishing the linkage between the locality of text and the

global context in a literary analysis. This dissertation, on the whole, is a discussion of the

politics of English language on the global scale and their various manifestations in local

performances. By analyzing the performance effects of English in three performative pieces, I

come to a conclusion that the politics of English language are far more complex than just being a

lingua franca, a world language. The politics of English language are not static (Pennycook)

and can only be generalized in a highly contextualized sense. For instance, Chapter One

exemplifies the Malaysian government's dilemma, concerning the conflicting historical and global

statuses of English language. Historically, the politics of English are deep-rooted in colonialism,

whereas in today's global context, the potential of economic growth and opportunities that

English language brings affect the directionality of national language policy; for example, in

Malaysia. The case of Singapore in Chapter Two, however, shows the flip side of such local

and global dynamics. Even though it served as a colonial means in the history of Singapore,

English has been adapted as one of the major national languages through bilingual education.

The localization of English language in Singapore produces Singalish, the local variety of English,

as the result of language interactions and exchanges. In spite of the local negotiations of the

politics of English language, on the global stage Singalish is not yet a well-recognized variety of

English.   Chapter Three demonstrates a different language field other than government's

language policy where the negotiations of the politics of English take place.   The case of Latino

and Chicano performance in the U.S. exemplifies individual negotiations of language politics via

code-switching.   This type of language politics concerns negotiating self-meaning and

self-positioning in relation to different language communities across national borders, taking into

account of the politics of languages (Spanish and English) on both global and local levels.

The ability to discern language politics beyond the government's construct and how such

politics are filtered through nationalist discourses is crucial to literacy education nowadays.

This view is clearly distinguishable from the old pedagogy in literacy education, which, as the

New London Group points out, puts much emphasis on "teaching and learning how to read and

write in page-bound, official, standard forms of the national language" (qtd. in

Mermann-Jozwiak and Sullivan 270).   This approach inevitably limits the choice of teaching

materials to anthologized pieces written by well-established writers of high sociopolitical status.

At the same time, this educational approach runs afoul of the function of education that Paulo

Freire envisions in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.   This traditional pedagogy almost forecasts the

consequence of literacy education, which is, preparing students in service of the government and

confirming educational institutions to be what Louis Althusser names, a state apparatus, or status

apparatus, in Bourdieu's words.

The mediating role of the government and its underlying ideological positions in literacy

education cannot be easily dismissed. The role of literature for the last two centuries has been

closely related to the government, whether serving for nationalist interests in the context of

Germany, or claiming literature's independence from the government's ideological positions

(Readings). The two interpretive frameworks that I promote here not only inform literary

analysis, but also highlight educational values regarding the critical uses of literature in a

multilingual world.

NOTES

[i] One exception concerning my use of Critical Discourse Analysis and Wodak's

discourse-historical approach is that my analysis does not involve the use of numerical data,

which was one of the essential components in Wodak's work.   My method of analyzing the

texts qualitatively is informed by power relations and structures shared across their relevant

contexts.   On the whole, my method of analysis sits between New Critics' version of textual

analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis as in Wodak's work.   By discussing texts in relation to

their sociopolitical contexts, my method bridges the text-and-context dichotomy and

incorporates in my research the element of language politics that is under-researched in any

subfields of literary studies.

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