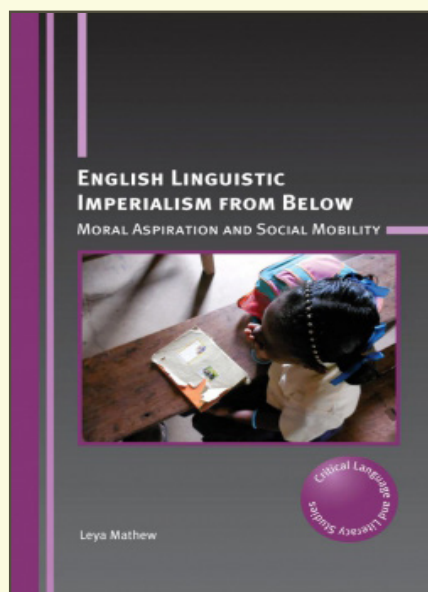


## English Linguistic Imperialism from Below Moral Aspiration and Social Mobility

By **Leya Mathew**  
(Ahmedabad University, India)

***Provides fresh insights on questions related to the intersection of political economy and English language pedagogy***



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### ABOUT THE BOOK

This book demonstrates how English has been newly constituted as a dominant language in post-market reform India through the fervent aspirations of non-elites and the zealous reforms of English Language Teaching experts. The most recent spread of English in India has been through low-fee private schools, which are perceived as dubious yet efficient. The book is an ethnography of mothering at one such low-fee private school and its neighboring state-funded school. It demonstrates that political economic transitions, experienced as radical social mobility, fuelled intense desire for English schooling. Rather than English schooling leading to social mobility, new experiences of mobility necessitated English schooling. At the same time, experts have responded to the unanticipated spread of English by transforming it from a second language to a first language, and earlier hierarchies have been produced anew as access to English democratized.

The book shows how English has been newly constituted as a dominant language in post-market reform India. Political economic transitions experienced as radical social mobility fuelled intense non-elite desire for English schooling. Rather than English schooling leading to social mobility, new experiences of mobility necessitated English schooling.

- One of only a few books to provide empirically grounded sociolinguistic research from a postcolonial context
- The politics of English in contexts of neoliberalism is a popular topic in the field of applied linguistics but research has so far failed to challenge the hegemony of monolingualism in the Global South
- Explains how English has become a dominant language in India through the aspirations of non-elites and the reforms of ELT experts

### REVIEWS

In this most sensitively written volume Leya Mathew lays bare the enmeshed environment in which English in India is caught. Anchored deep in the lives of those on the margins, the book uncovers the various contradictions that policies, human actions, pedagogies, and theories pose to any and all engagements around English; in steady and courageous tones, the book highlights all that we in our various applied linguistics worlds need to pay deep attention to.

— Vaidehi Ramanathan, University of California, Davis, USA

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How is it that English linguistic imperialism is created anew amidst decolonizing educational reforms in the Global South? Taking us to Kerala, India, Mathew provides an eye-opening, disturbing and profoundly critical ethnographic look at this question from her perspective as researcher and practitioner. It is a poignant story of how non-elite mothers' bottom-up aspirations for their children to have English-medium education contradictorily founder in the child-friendly English language teaching pedagogical reforms of critical educators and well-intentioned policymakers.

— Nancy H. Hornberger, Professor Emerita, University of Pennsylvania, USA

## CONTENTS

Figures and Tables  
Acknowledgments  
Series Editors' Preface  
Chapter 1. Moral Aspiration  
Chapter 2. Development and its Afterlives  
Chapter 3. Temporal Migrations  
Chapter 4. Social Lives of Rote  
Chapter 5. Scripted Lives of Communication  
Chapter 6. Obsessive Hope  
Chapter 7. Mandated Resistance  
Chapter 8. Rote to Interaction  
Chapter 9. Conclusion: Linguistic Imperialism from Below  
References  
Index

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Leya Mathew** is an Assistant Professor in the Social Sciences division of the School of Arts and Sciences at Ahmedabad University, India. Her research examines the sociocultural transitions that have accompanied economic liberalization in India.

## READERSHIP

Postgraduate, Research / Professional.

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