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Tongues as a Site of Subversion

*An Analysis from the Perspective of Postcolonial Politics of Language**

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Abstract

In this article I discuss the close relationship between colonialism and the expansion of language. Language is always politically contested. A language can become an international language today because it has a long history of colonization and subjugation of other groups of people. I analyze the sociopolitical dimension of tongues by engaging, among others, linguist Roman Jakobson, philosopher Michel Foucault, and cultural theorist Judith Butler. By placing tongues in the context of the politics of language, I aim to show that the practice of speaking in tongues can be viewed as a strategic subversion and disruption of the regime of normalized language.

Keywords

Pentecostalism – tongues – glossolalia – language – politics – postcolonialism

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Questions of language are basically questions of power ...

NOAM CHOMSKY¹

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* The earlier version of this article was presented in a “Pentecostal and Postcoloniality” panel discussion at the 2015 annual meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies at Southeastern University, Florida.

1 Noam Chomsky, *On Language: Chomsky's Classic Works Language and Responsibility and Reflections on Language in One Volume* (New York: The New Press, 2011), 191.

This article is a result of my personal reflection and struggle as an Indonesian whose main tongue is Bahasa Indonesia and who lives in the United States, where English operates as the dominant language. In summer 2014 I attended the Forum for Theological Exploration (FTE) summit at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Chicago. On the first evening, we were asked to reflect during a group discussion on the challenges that many minority scholars face in the American academic context. I raised the issue of language as one of the strongest barriers that prevents such scholars, especially first-generation immigrants, from flourishing, because one is expected to express oneself fluently in a foreign language while realizing that it is almost impossible for a person to use a foreign language like a native. The question then is, how do we overcome this barrier? Wonhee Anne Joh, one of the faculty leaders at the summit, offered a thought-provoking comment to our group. She said that rather than forcing non-English-speaking scholars to speak like natives, we should begin to explore ways of decolonizing the dominance of English itself. Upon hearing this comment, I began to rethink ways of dealing with the regime of any particular language. What resources can enable me to subvert and resist the power of the colonial hegemonic language? Is this subversion even possible, and what would it look like?

I realize that, as a native of Indonesia and thus a child of an imperial-colonial framework, this endeavor is not easily accomplished because language is always “a fundamental site of struggle for post-colonial discourse” and “the colonial process itself begins in language.”² The relationship between colonialism and the flourishing of language plays an important role in the stability of colonial occupation. The remark made by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin in their highly celebrated work *The Empire Writes Back* is critical: “One of the main features of imperial oppression is control over language ... language becomes the medium through which a hierarchical structure of power is perpetuated, and the medium through which conceptions of ‘truth,’ ‘order,’ and ‘reality’ become established.”³ Just as the building of any nation-state, as argued by Benedict Anderson,⁴ is not possible without the enforcement and reinforce-

2 Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, eds., *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (Psychology Press, 1995), 283.

3 Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 7.

4 See Benedict R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London and New York: Verso, 2006).

ment of a unified (printed) language, the establishment and expansion of the colonial political bodies are not possible without the expansion of language. The dominance of an imperial language will ensure the perpetual subjugation of the people on the peripheries.⁵

This article is a preliminary effort to embark on a journey of decolonizing colonial language through the practice of glossolalia⁶ in the pentecostal tradition. Although glossolalia has been widely discussed within pentecostal scholarship through theological and biblical lenses,⁷ several perspectives, including the empirical-theological,⁸ psychological,⁹ socio-sci-

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- 5 The use of the term *periphery* in this article is indebted mainly to the work of Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung, who defines imperialism as a "relation between a Center and a Periphery." See Johan Galtung, "A Structural Theory of Imperialism," *Journal of Peace Research* 8, no. 2 (1971): 81–117. It is worth noting that Galtung does not only see the center-periphery relation as exclusively between European nations and non-European nations. He maintains: "The world consists of Center and Periphery nations; and each nation, in turn, has its centers and periphery" (p. 81). Thus, imperial power relations are inherently multilayered.
- 6 I use the terms *glossolalia* and *tongues* interchangeably throughout this article to refer to a phonetic utterance that is not based on any known human language. See another discussion on glossolalia as a phonetic utterance by William J. Samarin, "Linguisticity of Glossolalia," *Hartford Quarterly* 8, no. 4 (1973): 49–75. Samarin basically sees glossolalia as an "artificial language" because it behaves differently from and does not meet the criteria of the "natural language" (p. 65). His assertion that even though tongues-speakers do not speak any natural language, "we are not justified in saying that people who experience glossolalia are fundamentally and temporarily in an abnormal psychological condition" (p. 68) will be similar to my argument that glossolalia is not aphasia.
- 7 Watson E. Mills, *A Theological/Exegetical Approach to Glossolalia* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985); Frank W. Beare, "Speaking with Tongues: A Critical Survey of the New Testament Evidence," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 83, no. 3 (September 1, 1964): 229–246; Charles Russell Smith, *Tongues in Biblical Perspective: A Summary of Biblical Conclusions Concerning Tongues*, rev. ed. (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1973); Michael Harper, *Walk in the Spirit* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1968); Frank D. Macchia, "Sighs Too Deep for Words: Toward a Theology of Glossolalia," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 1, no. 1 (1992); Frank D. Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006); Kilian McDonnell and George T. Montague, *Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit: Evidence from the First Eight Centuries*, 2nd rev. ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991); Keith Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology: A Theology of Encounter* (New York and London: T & T Clark, 2008), 84 ff.; Gerald Hovenden, *Speaking in Tongues: The New Testament Evidence in Context*, *Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement* 22 (New York and London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002).
- 8 Mark J. Cartledge, *Charismatic Glossolalia: An Empirical-Theological Study*, Ashgate New Critical Thinking in Theology & Biblical Studies (Aldershot, UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002).
- 9 John P. Kildahl, *The Psychology of Speaking in Tongues* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972);

tific,¹⁰ and sociolinguistic,¹¹ have also contributed to the complexity of the study of glossolalia. This essay focuses primarily on the question of the political dimension of the relationship between tongues-speech and language especially in the context of postcolonial struggle, which has been largely absent from the scholarly discourse on tongues.¹²

James K.A. Smith's insightful essay resonates somewhat with the project undertaken in this article.¹³ Smith draws mainly from the theories of (a) semiotics by Husserl and Derrida, (b) hermeneutics by Heidegger and Gadamer, and (c) speech act by Austin and Searle. He argues, through his reading of

John P. Kildahl, "Psychological Observations," in *The Charismatic Movement*, ed. Michael Pollock Hamilton (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1975), 124–142; James T. Richardson, "Psychological Interpretations of Glossolalia: A Reexamination of Research," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 12, no. 2 (1973): 199–207.

10 Margaret M. Poloma, "Glossolalia, Liminality, and Empowered Kingdom Building," in *Speaking in Tongues: Multi-Disciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Mark J. Cartledge (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2012), 147–173; Watson E. Mills, "Glossolalia as a Sociopsychological Experience," in *Speaking in Tongues: A Guide to Research on Glossolalia*, ed. Watson E. Mills (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1986), 425–437; Felicitas D. Goodman, "Phonetic Analysis of Glossolalia in Four Cultural Settings," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 8, no. 2 (1969): 227–239; Felicitas D. Goodman, *Speaking in Tongues: A Cross-Cultural Study of Glossolalia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972); Gordon Stanley, W.K. Bartlett, and Terri Moyle, "Some Characteristics of Charismatic Experience: Glossolalia in Australia," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 17, no. 3 (1978): 269–277; Virginia H. Hine, "Pentecostal Glossolalia toward a Functional Interpretation," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 8, no. 2 (1969): 211–226; H. Newton Malony and A. Adams Lovekin, *Glossolalia: Behavioral Science Perspectives on Speaking in Tongues* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

11 Jeffery Lynn Henderson, "A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Glossolalia in Corinth" (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1997); Vern S. Poythress, "Linguistic and Sociological Analyses of Modern Tongues-Speaking: Their Contributions and Limitations," in *Speaking in Tongues: A Guide to Research on Glossolalia*, ed. Watson E. Mills (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1986); Samarin, "Linguisticity of Glossolalia."

12 William J. Samarin's book *Tongues of Men and Angels* has a chapter on glossolalia and politics. While the entire preceding chapters of the book focus primarily on the individual experience, chapter 11 deals with the question of collective function of tongues. He stresses the importance of "the unifying function of glossolalia" that operates like slang or eccentric language in secret societies or groups. However, Samarin does not deal with the question of colonial control over language. See William J. Samarin, *Tongues of Men and Angels: The Religious Language of Pentecostalism* (New York and London: Macmillan, 1973), chap. 11.

13 James K.A. Smith, *Thinking in Tongues: Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy*, Pentecostal Manifestos (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2010), chap. 6.

1 Corinthians 14, that tongues could be a meaningful or expressive speech and it destabilizes the Husserlian strict distinction between expression and indication. Because speaking in tongues performs a meaningful act of speech, Smith then moves further in his argument and engages Heidegger and Gadamer in order to demonstrate the importance of a community of believers for tongues interpretation. Moreover, Smith's discussion of tongues and speech-act theory attempts to illuminate the performative characteristic of tongues, which takes place in the forms of *locutionary* act, *interlocutionary* act, and *prelocutionary* act.¹⁴ While Smith explores issues surrounding the performativity and interpretability of tongues, his essay lacks a full discussion on the "resistance" aspect of tongues that he promises to discuss.¹⁵ Smith devotes only a marginal amount of space in his lengthy essay to a discussion of tongues as a discourse of resistance. Although the first part of Smith's essay offers a compelling discussion on semiotics, hermeneutics, and speech act, his connection between these areas and tongues as resistance still needs further elaboration. I hope that my article will fill this lacuna in Smith's work. I am placing my discussion of tongues as resistance mainly within the locus of the postcolonial politics of language, whereas Smith's context is more philosophical in nature.

This article is divided into two main parts. The first part will discuss the close relationship between colonialism and the hegemony of language. In the second part, I will look into glossolalia and tease out its cultural resisting element against the order of the world created by the dominance of the colonial language. My overall argument has been influenced by Frantz Fanon, who argues that "decolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world is obviously a program of complete disorder."¹⁶ Focusing on this disorder, I aim to demonstrate that the disruption that glossolalia brings to the ordered language

14 J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 2nd ed., William James Lectures, 1955 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975). Locutionary act is simply "the act of saying things." Illocutionary act is a "performance of an act *in* saying something," that is, by simply saying it a speaker does that performance. Perlocutionary act is not as immediate as illocutionary; perlocutionary act is an act of speech that produces "certain consequential effects upon the feelings, thoughts, or actions of the audience, or of the speaking, or other persons" (see especially Lecture VIII).

15 This essay was published earlier under a different title that reflects more clearly the argument for resistance. James K.A. Smith, "Tongues as 'Resistance Discourse': A Philosophical Perspective," in *Speaking in Tongues: Multi-Disciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Mark J. Cartledge (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2006), 81–110.

16 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 36.

should be seen as a pentecostal, anti-colonial resistance against the hegemony of colonial language. Within this seemingly chaotic and disordered context, a new space could be formed in and through which the repressed subaltern voices could flourish.

Colonialism and the Politics of Language

The Aristotelian dictum that “the human being is by nature a political animal” is widely known.¹⁷ Interestingly, Aristotle argues further that the reason why human beings are political is because they have language.¹⁸ It is through *logos* that human beings are able to construct their morality or to know right and wrong. Politics and language are closely connected; that is, language makes politics possible.

The relationship between colonial politics and the flourishing of language has been widely discussed in the fields of, among others, linguistics, sociology, and anthropology. Language plays an important role in the stability of colonial occupation. Let us take the example of English, the language of the British

17 Aristotle, *Politics*, 1.1.9. See Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen, Homo Sacer Series (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998).

18 Ibid. The basic meaning of *logos* is “word” but it can also refer to utterance, account, explanation, theory, argument, or discourse. See Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. “*logos*.” Deborah Modrak has rightly pointed out that the concept *logos* in Aristotle does not merely refer to the ontological principle that organizes reality as in Heraclitus, the Stoics, and the Church fathers, but is used “variously for term, sentence, definition, premise, formula, form, principle, speech, rationality.” See Deborah K.W. Modrak, *Aristotle’s Theory of Language and Meaning* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 259, n. 20. In the context of Aristotelian philosophy of language, Modrak explains: “A word, unlike other sound made by living creatures, is what it is precisely because it has a meaning. By employing *logos* for both speech and definition, Aristotle expresses the necessary connection between the two notions. Making statements is fundamental to language and truth, and thus Aristotle uses *logos* for what is asserted by a sentence. He traces meaning, assertion, and truth back to the states of mind. The sameness of the faculty and its object is captured by the common use of *logos* for the faculty of reason as well as the content of thoughts” (ibid., 160.) Aristotle explains the connection between word and soul [or mind] in his *On Interpretation*, 1.1. Hans Arens also points out that although many times Aristotle uses *logos* for sentence, it can also mean “speech or even language.” Hans Arens, *Aristotle’s Theory of Language and Its Tradition*, Studies in the History of Language Sciences 29 (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 1984), 56.

empire, which now has enjoyed a reputation as a global language.¹⁹ It is both perplexing and appalling to read scholars in the Western world such as David Crystal, a prominent British linguist, who blatantly deny the impact of colonialism on the politics of English as a global language in the present time.²⁰ Even though Crystal acknowledges the historical reality of colonization, he immediately argues against the idea that it is the driving force behind the emergence and expansion of English. Instead of looking at the continuation of colonial history in the postcolonial world, Crystal maintains that English becomes a global language because of the widespread influence of mass media (such as advertising, press, broadcasting, movie, and music), international travel by English-speaking people especially from the USA, education, and so forth. His argument is simple: English is a dominant language today because it peculiarly “found itself in the right place at the right time.”²¹ Crystal’s effort to politically neutralize English is a reflection of the inability of the colonizers in the metropole to deal with their past sins. His avoidance of taking seriously the influence of colonial history on the shape of the world today becomes even clearer when he argues that his analysis “recognizes the legacy of colonialism, as a matter of historical fact, but the emphasis is now on *discontinuity*, away from power and towards functional specialization.”²² In other words, Crystal knows precisely that it is not possible to become a colonial denier. By emphasizing the discontinuity, however, he seems to argue that we should forget the bloody and ugly history of colonialism. “Get over it” is apparently his message to the former British colonies.²³ He writes further: “It is a model which sees English playing a

19 Any colonial language could be examined, but the predominance of English makes it an ideal example.

20 David Crystal, *English as a Global Language*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 67. Crystal traces the origin of English back to the fifth century. However, in its earlier stage the influence of English was very limited; it was a language of communication in the British Isles only. The beginning of the expansion of English took place in the sixteenth century, when people from England began to move to the New World and established their residence there. The influence of English grew further when these people from England began to occupy the northern part of the American continent, namely, Canada. It did not stop there; English also expanded to the Caribbean in the eighteenth century through the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Around the same time, the English language also arrived in Australia and New Zealand, South Africa, South Asia, and other regions. In 2002, according to Crystal, there were about 2,236 million people—over one third of the entire population of the world—who speak English as either their first or second language.

21 *Ibid.*, 120.

22 *Ibid.*, 24. Emphasis is mine.

23 I intentionally use stronger emotional language to express the tone that Crystal takes in

central role in empowering the subjugated and marginalized, and eroding the division between the 'haves' and the 'have nots.'"²⁴ Thus, English is not only deemed a neutral language that expands because it finds itself in the right place at the right time, but English also has become a sort of "superhero" that saves the human civilization.

Conversely, a particular subfield in linguistic studies, namely, "linguicism,"²⁵ emerges as a field that examines the unequal power structures of language.²⁶ Robert Phillipson explains that linguicism is similar to the other forms of -isms, such as racism and sexism:

Just as racism studies were revitalized in the 1970s by Black scholars speaking from a Black perspective, linguicism studies attempt to put the sociology of language and education into a form which furthers scrutiny of how language contributes to unequal access to societal power and how linguistic hierarchies operate and are legitimated. Drawing on the perspective of minorities, of speakers of dominant languages, is important, since somehow speakers of dominant languages such as English and French tend to see the expanded use of their languages as unproblematical.²⁷

How does the linguicism work within a colonial context? I would argue that it takes place in three different, yet related, ways. First, because language is crucial for the perpetuation of colonialism, the colonizers will enforce and reinforce it through any legal means. For instance, Lord Macaulay, the chairman of the Governor-General's committee on public instruction who significantly shaped the face of education in India, believed that the role of English in helping

his work. It is difficult to express the feelings of oppression of the colonized in a softer tone. This is why Frantz Fanon and others use stronger language in order to display the deep social, emotional, and political struggle of the colonized.

24 Crystal, *English as a Global Language*, 24.

25 See Tove Skutnabb-Kangas and Robert Phillipson, "Linguicism: A Tool for Analyzing Linguistic Inequality and Promoting Linguistic Human Rights," *International Journal of Group Tensions* 20, no. 2 (1990): 109–122; Robert Phillipson, "Linguicism: Structures and Ideologies in Linguistic Imperialism," in *Minority Education: From Shame to Struggle*, ed. Tove Skutnabb-Kangas and Jim Cummins (Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters, 1988), 339–358.

26 See Robert Phillipson, "Realities and Myths of Linguistic Imperialism," *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 18, no. 3 (June 1, 1997): 239. Phillipson interestingly places the issue of linguistic imperialism under the larger category of linguicism.

27 Ibid.

the world is similar to the role of Latin or Greek in ancient civilization.²⁸ The implementation of his eurocentric view of education appeared in the 1835 decree: "The great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India; and that all the funds appropriated for the purpose of education would be best employed on English education alone."²⁹ In the subsequent years, English officially replaced Persian as the official language in the Indian legal system.³⁰ It is one of the important historical and political reasons why the majority of the populations in India speak English. Realizing the close relationship between the enforcement of English and the perpetuation of British colonial domination in India, Mahatma Gandhi states: "To give millions a knowledge of English is to enslave them ... It is worth noting that by receiving English education, we have enslaved the nation."³¹ Gandhi further insists that the use of English in the Indian judicial system is not only the sign of enslavement, but also "the curse of nation" and "absurd."³²

Second, I would like to employ what Michel Foucault calls a "disciplinary power" to explain why a certain colonial language has dominated our world. Foucault's theoretical proposal, which has positioned him as one of the most important political theorists in the twentieth century, is that we need to see power not in a top-down monarchical model (or sovereign power) but as what he calls "forces of relations."³³ Foucault presents this new model of power through a close historical analysis of how punishment in the western world underwent a change from torture to discipline and a modern prison system.³⁴ The disciplinary power is exercised by training of the body in the context of an extremely detailed arrangement of time and space. Furthermore, through close observation and surveillance, just like in a prison system, disciplinary power is expected to produce individuals who will behave according to the norms of the society. The disciplinary mechanism, according to Foucault, *normalizes* a law and order in the given society.³⁵ Every individual, thus, is shaped to behave in a certain way through this operation of disciplinary mechanism.

28 Robert Phillipson, *Linguistic Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 110.

29 Quoted in *ibid.*

30 *Ibid.*, 110–111.

31 Mahatma Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj* (New Delhi, India: Rajpal & Sons, 2010), 73.

32 *Ibid.*

33 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1 (New York: Vintage Books, 1988).

34 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 2nd ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

35 *Ibid.*, 183.

How does this relate to language and the perpetuation of colonial domination? The disciplinary power works well in the colonies through education. Scholars such as Rey Chow³⁶ or John E. Joseph³⁷ or Alastair Pennycook³⁸ or Robert Phillipson³⁹ or Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin,⁴⁰ who have done extensive works on colonial politics and language, would point out that education plays an extremely significant role in imposing and perpetuating the dominance of colonial language. Why education? The answer is, to borrow from Foucault's theory, that education is the place in which disciplinary power can achieve its best result. Colonial language is normalized through the heavily detailed mechanism of discipline not only through an arrangement of space, lessons, and teaching, but also through the ritualization of examination. Examination is crucial in the disciplinary mechanism. Foucault rightly points out that "the examination combines the technique of an observing hierarchy and those of the normalizing judgment. It is a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify, and to punish ... That is why, in all mechanisms of discipline, the examination is highly ritualized."⁴¹ When Europeans came to the colonies and built an educational system, the normalization process of colonial language was easily established. Students are conditioned through a system that is intentionally set in order to train them to speak, read, and write properly in the language of the empire. Pennycook correctly points out that "English language teaching was always a highly significant part of colonial policy. Where the empire spread, so too did English."⁴² It should be clear that the continuation of hegemony of the colonial language in the periphery could be well maintained through the operation of the disciplinary mechanism of power. This can, therefore, explain why the establishment of educational systems in the peripheries became one of the priorities of the imperial project.⁴³

36 Rey Chow, *Not Like a Native Speaker: On Language as a Postcolonial Experience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014, 2014), chap. 2.

37 John Earl Joseph, *Language and Politics*, Edinburgh Textbooks in Applied Linguistics (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006).

38 Alastair Pennycook, *English and the Discourses of Colonialism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).

39 Phillipson, *Linguistic Imperialism*, chap. 5.

40 Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*.

41 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 184.

42 Pennycook, *English and the Discourses of Colonialism*, 20.

43 See Stafford Kay and Bradley Nystrom, "Education and Colonialism in Africa: An Annotated Bibliography," *Comparative Education Review* 15, no. 2 (1971): 240–259; Edward Shizha and Michael T. Kariwo, "Impact of Colonialism on Education," in *Education and Devel-*

Third, the problem of linguistic subjugation occurs not only because the colonizers have effectively insisted that the people in the periphery use their language, either through legal means or the disciplinary mechanism of power, but also because after a long period of time, the colonized groups begin to internalize the idea that anything that comes from the metropole, or the center of the empire, is better, and therefore by mimicking it they are able somehow to achieve the privilege that the colonizers have enjoyed. In other words, the colonial subject has absorbed internally that the language of the empire is superior. In Indonesia, for example, during the period of colonization, every level of education was conducted in the Dutch language. Deeply rooted in the mind of Indonesians is a cultural perception that those who can speak Dutch are more educated and therefore possess a higher status in the society. In Indonesian, the expression *kebelanda-belandaan* (behaving like a Dutch) connotes something noble and highly valued. Interestingly, along with the rise of the American neocolonial power after World War II, Indonesian schools began to curtail Dutch language lessons in their school system and replaced them with English. However, Bahasa Indonesia, which is originally a Malay language, eventually became the national language⁴⁴ in spite of the existence of over three hundred local languages in Indonesia. This is another anti-colonial local struggle in Indonesia that goes side by side with the struggle of former European colonies.⁴⁵ But the point remains: the people in the colonies have absorbed and internalized the idea that the language of the colonizer is superior.⁴⁶

Is it possible that English could become a global language without colonization and imperialism?⁴⁷ The answer is no. The close relationship between the

opment in Zimbabwe, ed. Edward Shizha and Michael T. Kariwo (SensePublishers, 2011), 13–26; Mbukeni Herbert Mnguni, *Education as a Social Institution and Ideological Process: From a Negritude Education in Senegal to Bantu Education in South Africa*, European Studies in Education (Germany: Waxmann Verlag, 1999).

44 For further discussion, see Khaidir Anwar, *Indonesian: The Development and Use of a National Language* (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 1980); James T. Siegel, *Fetish, Recognition, Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997); Takdir Alisjahbana, “The Indonesian Language: By-Product of Nationalism,” *Pacific Affairs* 22, no. 4 (1949): 388–392.

45 Robert J.C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 3 ff.

46 See how Fanon illustrates this point in Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann, Get Political (London: Pluto Press, 1991), chap. 1.

47 Edward Said makes a helpful distinction between imperialism as “the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory” and

expansion of English as a language of the empire and the subordination of other cultural expression through a long history of colonization must not be overlooked. Chris Searle, therefore, correctly states, "Let us be clear that the English language has been a monumental force and institution of oppression and rapid exploitation throughout 400 years of imperialist history."⁴⁸ In her analysis of the political landscape of the world in the aftermath of colonization Leela Gandhi asserts that one of the characteristics of the postcolonial world is "a self-willed historical amnesia."⁴⁹ Gandhi, in agreement with Jean-François Lyotard, asserts that "the postcolonial dream of discontinuity is ultimately vulnerable to the infectious residue of its own unconsidered and unresolved past. Its convalescence is unnecessarily prolonged on account of its refusal to remember and recognize its continuity with the pernicious malaise of colonization."⁵⁰ This historical amnesia insists that all former colonies have to overcome the history of colonization. However, postcolonial theory can be seen as an effort to deal with the wound and ugliness of past colonial experience. It refuses to forget and let go of the repressed past. It insists on the "re-membering," a program that Homi Bhabha says is not "a quiet act of introspection or retrospection ... [but] a painful re-membering, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present."⁵¹ In the next section of this essay I hope to "re-member" (read: to put together) the regime of language and to demonstrate a way in which glossolalia disrupts its power.

Tongues Disrupting the Regime of Language

In a postcolonial world in which empire is no longer centered at a single point but operates in a multidirectional and interconnected way, as has been argued by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in their seminal work *Empire*,⁵² the resis-

colonialism as "a consequence of imperialism ... the implanting of settlements on distant territory." See Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1994), 9.

48 Chris Searle, "A Common Language," *Race & Class* 25, no. 2 (October 1, 1983): 68.

49 Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 7.

50 Ibid.

51 Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 90.

52 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000). Bruce Ellis Benson and Peter Goodwin Heltzel, in their edited book *Evangelicals and Empire*, bring different scholars from the evangelical tradition to discuss the sociopolitical implications of Hardt and Negri's work to the evangelical movement. See Bruce Ellis

tance to this multiplicity of power relations clearly cannot take the form of radical revolution or what Foucault calls “a locus of great Refusal.”⁵³ In other words, revolting against the global dominance of the British or American governments will not stop the dominance of English. Thus, I take seriously the Foucaultian proposal that in order to resist these multiple directions of power, one has to think about a “plurality of resistances.” These resistances, according to Foucault, “are the odd term in relations to power.”⁵⁴ They distribute irregularities to the relation of powers. They disturb powers in its locality.

Let me explain why I think tongues-speech can become a pentecostal model of resistance(s) against the regime of language that operates in this new model of empire. First, the word *tongues* is a plural noun. This is crucial because the practice of tongues-speech in pentecostal churches today also shows this plurality of forms. One can neither bracket glossolalia in one single form nor write a grammar book for glossolalia. It varies not only from country to country and church to church, but also from person to person. That is, social convention as an important requirement for a language to be operative is absent. This does not mean that glossolalia does not have a pattern; however, the pattern does not necessarily constitute a social agreement or grammatical consensus, as Samarin has correctly pointed out.⁵⁵ Second, with the expansion of the modern pentecostal movement, glossolalia has become a global phenomenon.⁵⁶ This globalized glossolalia is a potential form of resistance to language domination in the new model of empire.

The resistance of glossolalia takes the form of a strategic linguistic disruption because the tongues-speakers resist the regime of language. In order to understand how glossolalia disrupts language, it would be helpful to see first how language generally works. This I will be arguing through the theory of language proposed by Russian linguist Roman Jakobson.

Jakobson begins his discussion by acknowledging that there are many forms of aphasia or language disorders/disturbances. He believes, however, that a close examination of the tendencies and general features of aphasia can shed light on both the study of aphasia itself and the linguistic study in general. He asserts:

Benson and Peter Goodwin Heltzel, eds., *Evangelicals and Empire: Christian Alternatives to the Political Status Quo* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2008).

53 Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 1:96.

54 Ibid.

55 See particularly Samarin, *Tongues of Men and Angels*, chap. 4.

56 Harvey G. Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1995), chap. 4.

The application of purely linguistic criteria to the interpretation and classification of aphasic facts may substantially contribute to the science of language and language disturbances, provided that linguists remain as careful and cautious when dealing with psychological and neurobiological data as they have been in the traditional field.⁵⁷

Hence, according to Jakobson, we can explain all aphasia through two different yet connected characteristics of language: (1) selection and (2) combination. The twofold procedure of language is well captured in this statement: "The speaker selects words and combines them into sentences according to the syntactic system of language he is using; sentences are in their turn combined into utterances."⁵⁸ Let me elaborate this a little more. First, in order to communicate through language, one has to choose from the available database of letters or words, or phrase-words. This process is called "selection." One has to make a decision to select from the abundant option of linguistic units. Jakobson writes as well that "[a] selection between alternatives implies possibilities of substituting one for the other ..." ⁵⁹ In other words, substitution and selection are closely related. Second, after selecting, one has to put all these selected linguistic units into a proper syntactical order. According to Jakobson, the combination will expand a word into a sentence, a sentence into an utterance, and an utterance into a discourse.⁶⁰ "This means that any linguistic unit at one and the same time serves as a context for simpler units and/or finds its own context in a more complex linguistic unit."⁶¹ Hence, we can also say that combination and context are closely related.⁶² It is important to note that Jakobson also argues that the processes of selection and combination are not just a matter of personal preference. There are all sorts of external influences and structures that determine and affect how one selects and combines those linguistic units in the process of signification.

Furthermore, by analyzing aphasia or language disorder from this linguistic perspective, Jakobson shows that there are two different aphasic tendencies. The first is an inability to select the linguistic unit. In other words, a person who is not able to select, and therefore substitute, for example, a word from the other

57 Roman Jakobson, *Fundamentals of Language* (Leiden, Netherlands: 's-Gravenhage, Mouton, 1956), 77.

58 Ibid., 58.

59 Ibid., 60.

60 Ibid.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.

option of word(s) has a linguistic disorder. He calls it a "similarity disorder."⁶³ This kind of disorder "can neither switch from a word to its synonyms and circumlocutions, nor to its heteronyms, i.e., equivalent expressions in other languages."⁶⁴ The second disorder is the inability to combine. Jakobson calls it a "contiguity disorder."⁶⁵ This aphasia appears when a person is unable to put all the linguistic units together. Consequently, "word order becomes chaotic, the ties of grammatical combination and subordination, whether concord or government are dissolved."⁶⁶

How do we analyze glossolalia from this Jakobsian perspective? The practice of glossolalia seems to demonstrate neither a process of selection nor one of combination. Samarin rightly points out that speaking in tongues "consists of strings of syllables, made up of sounds taken from all those that the speaker knows, put together more or less haphazardly but emerging nevertheless as word-like and sentence-like units because of realistic, language-like rhythm and melody."⁶⁷ The consequence of the freely selective and combining activities of tongues-speech is that "there can be neither syntactics nor semantics to this means of speech."⁶⁸ On the one hand, a tongues speaker does not select from any linguistic unit database. On the other hand, tongues-speech does not follow any socially accepted grammatical order. As a result, it disrupts the linguistic syntactical rules. Glossolalia is "free" speech in an extreme sense of the word. However, is it a phenomenon of aphasia? Speaking in tongues suggests a language disturbance and disorder. But can we categorize it as aphasia? Tongues-speech displays a quite different kind of disruption or disturbance because the nature of glossolalia is more voluntary, whereas aphasia tends to be involuntary.⁶⁹ In the decision to surrender to glossolalia utterance, the tongues speaker engages in an act of disrupting the rule of language. This understanding is different from viewing tongues as a kind of linguistic pathology.⁷⁰ Felicitas

63 Ibid., chap. 3.

64 Ibid., 68.

65 Ibid., chap. 4.

66 Ibid., 71-72.

67 William J. Samarin, "Sociolinguistic vs. Neurophysiological Explanations for Glossolalia: Comment on Goodman's Paper," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 11, no. 3 (1972): 293.

68 Ibid.

69 Jakobson, for instance, explains: "If an aphasic becomes unable to resolve the word into its phonemic constituents, his control over its construction weakens, and perceptible damages in phonemes and their combinations easily follow." See Jakobson, *Fundamentals of Language*, 74.

70 For example, George Barton Cutten calls glossolalia a pathological behavior, or Donald

D. Goodman might argue that tongues speakers are in “an altered state of consciousness” or “hyperarousal state,”⁷¹ but it is a different category altogether from mental illness.⁷² Jeffrey Lynn Henderson hence is right in pointing out that “no modern studies have shown any connection between glossolalia and psychological abnormalities nor has dissociation been demonstrated to be a prerequisite for glossolalia.”⁷³

Let me elaborate a little more about why glossolalia is a significant disruption against any normalized colonial language. As I have discussed above, one of the most strategic ways for the empire to impose its language is through what Foucault calls disciplinary power. By putting individuals within a strict regulation and observation, the mechanism of disciplinary power, especially in an educational system, will result in the normalization of language. But how does one resist this, knowing that one will always be in the complex network of power relations? Foucault does not elaborate any particular strategic proposal for resistance(s). He just says that resistance should be in the form of plurality instead of singularity. Taking up this challenge, Judith Butler, working mainly on gender theory embedded thoroughly in a Foucaultian tradition, offers a more constructive proposal. Because normalization is produced not only through strict regulation and observation/surveillance, but also through repetition, Butler further argues that resistance should be undertaken in the form of a “strategy of subversive repetition.”⁷⁴ Butler writes: “just as bodily surfaces are enacted *as* the natural, so these surfaces can become the site of dissonant and denaturalized performance that reveals the performative status of the natural itself.”⁷⁵

Burdicks maintains that “present day glossolalia is an abnormal psychological occurrence.” See George Barton Cutten, *Speaking with Tongues: Historically and Psychologically Considered* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2006); Donald W. Burdick, *Tongues: To Speak or Not to Speak*, Moody Evangelical Focus (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969). Richardson has provided an excellent critique of the pathological or schizophrenia theory. See Richardson, “Psychological Interpretations of Glossolalia,” 200 ff.

71 See her rejection of the pathological theory in Goodman, *Speaking in Tongues: A Cross-Cultural Study of Glossolalia*, xvii–xviii.

72 My concern with Goodman’s hyperarousal thesis, as also has been pointed out by Samarin, is that it does not sufficiently explain the agency of the tongue speaker. See Samarin, “Sociolinguistic vs. Neurophysiological Explanations for Glossolalia.” Cf. Goodman’s response to Samarin in Felicitas D. Goodman, “Altered Mental State vs. ‘Style of Discourse’: Reply to Samarin,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 11, no. 3 (1972): 297–299.

73 Henderson, “A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Glossolalia in Corinth,” 52.

74 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 185.

75 *Ibid.*, 186.

How do we apply Butler's theory in the context of linguistic studies and the practice of tongues-speech? The way our bodies behave, especially in the process of linguistic signification through Jakobsian selection and combination, is always in accordance with the force of naturalization imposed on us by the existing complex network of powers around us. Because there is no origin of subjectivity that produces language, linguistic identity is basically a repetition of the normalized language. In other words, language is a social performativity through repetition. One performs, and does not produce, language. If we follow this logic further, the linguistic procedures of selection and combination become an inevitable site of performativity. The network of power relations in a form of social constitution will impose its rules and regulations in order to shape the way one selects and combines any linguistic unit. So in order to resist this, every time one repeats or performs the linguistic norm, one does it differently so that it "interrupts the processes that define and endorse identity positioning again and again."⁷⁶ Placed in the Jakobsian framework, in order to disrupt the norms of language, the strategy of subversive repetition will be performed through selecting differently and combining differently. Since in the performance of glossolalia one neither selects nor combines, it becomes a more robust disruption of normalized language. It even goes further than Butler's subversive repetition. Glossolalia is a pentecostal radical subversion of language. In a way similar to how Amos Yong, in his exposition on the so-called "cosmopolitical liturgics of resistance,"⁷⁷ sees the element of resistance in pentecostal practices of worship and exorcism, I argue that the practice of glossolalia constitutes a resistance against normalized language.

Conclusion

Let me conclude with three implications of the idea that glossolalia is a subversion of language. First, the glossolalic utterance of tongues-speakers consciously or unconsciously has political implications. In the locality of their religious context, there is no regime of language that can keep them from expressing themselves to God. To me, this is more political than theological. Whether God understands this chaotic expression or not is a different issue. Politically

76 Magdalene Ang-Lygate, "Charting the Spaces of (Un)location: On Theorizing Diaspora," in *Black British Feminism: A Reader*, ed. Heidi Safia Mirza (London, UK: Routledge, 1997), 182.

77 For further discussion, see Amos Yong, *In the Days of Caesar: Pentecostalism and Political Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2010), 151 ff.

speaking, a tongues-speaker is rejecting the disciplinary power mechanism that limits his or her spiritual expression within the boundaries of sociopolitical linguistic expectation and convention. There is no regime of language that can exercise its authority over a tongues-speaker. One can see this apparently linguistic chaos as a pentecostal decolonizing disruption of the colonization of language. To put it differently, a tongues-speaker, by speaking in an unknown tongue, refuses to let the power structure of the English language subjugate him or her. If the empire enforces its language on the people in order to ensure a peaceful sociopolitical order, glossolalia is a disruption of that order and peace. Glossolalia is indeed, to quote Fanon again, a decolonial “program of complete disorder.”⁷⁸

Second, the disorder and chaotic moments brought by glossolalia potentially lead to a creation of a new space. Glossolalia serves to clear the ground for the flourishing of multiple languages. This openness to multiple languages can be witnessed in the Azusa Street Revival. *The Apostolic Faith*, for example, recorded a testimony by Bro. Johnson that after receiving the Holy Spirit, he said, “the Lord has been giving me more freedom and power than I ever had before. I now speak eleven or twelve languages.”⁷⁹ The story of G.B. Cashwell, a man from North Carolina, also echoes this openness to the multiplicity of languages. He wrote that after being filled with the Holy Spirit and love at Azusa Street,

I am now feasting and drinking at the fountain continually and speak as the Spirit gives utterance, both in my own language and in the unknown language. I find that all has to be surrendered to God, our own language and all, and He speaks through us English, German, Greek or any other tongue in His own will and way.⁸⁰

If we read the *Apostolic Faith*, we can see that many of the early Pentecostals believed strongly that tongues are known human languages. I think we should not just dismiss this openness to the belief in *xenolalia* as being false. It is a manifestation of their radical openness to the multiplicity of languages. Instead of insisting that the dominant language is the only way to express one's worship, early Pentecostals seem to have a deep conviction that pentecostal worship must provide an open space for many different languages to be expressed.

78 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 36.

79 Bro. Johnson, *The Apostolic Faith*, 1, no. 2 (October 1906).

80 G.B. Cashwell, *The Apostolic Faith*, 1, no. 4 (December 1906).

Samarin's research points to this radical openness to multiple languages as a result of people's glossolalic experience. When the respondents were asked whether they believe that tongues are human languages, only 27 percent (nine out of sixty-nine) "were not convinced that their glossas were languages."⁸¹ The rest of the respondents, however, believe that glossolalia resembles some forms of human language.⁸² Although Samarin also notes that the different proposed languages are "nothing more than guesses by linguistically naive people,"⁸³ it still points to an open attitude for the multiplicity of linguistic expressions. When the regime of a colonial language is disrupted, it will cultivate new space for a radical openness to the other suppressed languages.

Third, because tongues-speech does not follow the normal linguistic process of selection and combination, it consequently can be seen as a break of communication. Hence, when one deals with glossolalia, one actually is dealing with a great unknown. It is a mystery. Just like the Spirit blows wherever it pleases, glossolalia also should retain this sense of mystery. Any doctrine or discourse of glossolalia will surely fall short. If theology is a discourse, then glossolalia is a disruption of that discourse. It is a reminder of the limitations of any discourse. As a consequence of this, any effort to stereotype and represent glossolalia will slip into a condition of uncertainty.

Colonialism is a global phenomenon. This global nature of colonial experience is also true of the linguistic subjugation, suppression, and marginalization. Jacques Derrida, in his discussion on the monolingualism of the other, correctly points out that "all culture is originally colonial."⁸⁴ That is, there are multiple layers of colonial relation that overlap with one another. This article, again, is an effort to think through this multiplicity of the colonial experience related to language. I have argued for another way of seeing glossolalia within the context of political struggle. The messiness and chaos of pentecostal glossolalia can be viewed from a postcolonial perspective as resistance against the regime of any hegemonic language.

81 Samarin, *Tongues of Men and Angels*, 107.

82 Ibid., 107 ff. Samarin's questionnaire responses indicate 29 Oriental (Oriental, 13; Chinese, 8; Hawaiian, 2; Japanese, 2; Polynesian, 3; Vietnamese, 1), 24 Romance (Spanish, 12; Italian, 6; French, 3; Latin, 3), 8 African, 8 Semitic (Hebrew, 5; Arabic, 1; Aramaic, 2); 6 Germanic (German, 4; Scandinavian, 1; Yiddish, 1), 5 Slavic, 4 Indian (Western), 3 Greek, and 2 Eskimo.

83 Ibid., 108.

84 Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other, Or, The Prosthesis of Origin*, trans. Patrick Mensah, *Cultural Memory in the Present* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 39.