Edward Kamau Brathwaite (1930- )
“Nation Language” (lecture at Harvard in 1984)
nation language
native language
metropolitan language
cultural imperialism

‘cultural disaster’ area
syllabic intelligence

iambic pentameter
calypso
dactyl
noise

creole
griot
dialect

oral tradition
total expression

“But basically, the pentameter remained, and it carries with it a certain kind of experience, which is not the experience of a hurricane. The hurricane does not roar in pentameters. And that’s the problem: how do you get a rhythm which approximates the natural experience, the environmental experience?” (313).

“I think, however, that language does really have a role to play here, certainly in the Caribbean. But it is an English which is not the standard, imported, educated English, but that of the submerged, surrealist experience and sensibility, which has always been there and which is now increasingly coming to the surface and influencing the perception of contemporary Caribbean people. It is what I call, as I say, nation language. I use the term in contrast to dialect” (313).

Braj B. Kachru (1932- )
from The Alchemy of English (1986)
colonialism
imperialism
vehicular load (Quirk)
demographic distribution of a language
“White man’s burden” (Kipling)
non-native second language

comprador class
elite language
code-mixing
attitudinal neutrality
power

Raj
sahib
pandit
ecology of language
modernization
language policy
social change

“There are some who consider it a “grotesque perversion of the truth” that English “was imposed on a subject people by a set of foreign rulers for the sake of carrying on their alien government” (Chaudhuri, 1976: 89). The word “imposed” is tricky here, for what was attitudinally prestigious and pragmatically desirable and rewarding did not need imposition: Power seems to have a way of creating its linguistic base” (321).

“The alchemy of English (present and future), then does not only provide social status, it also gives access to attitudinally and materially desirable domains of power and knowledge. It provides a powerful linguistic tool for manipulation and control. In addition, this alchemy of English has left a deep mark on the languages and literature of the non-Western world” (325).

Chinua Achebe (1930- )
“The African Writer and the English Language” (1975)
African literature
national literature
world language (“which history has forced down our throat” [430])

Olaudah Equiano

Academy of Lagado

“A national literature is one that takes the whole nation for its province and has a realized or potential audience throughout its territory. In other words a literature that is written in the national language” (428).

“What are the factors which have conspired to place English in the position of national language in many parts of Africa? Quite simply the reason is that these nations were created in the first place by the intervention of the British which, I hasten to add, is not saying that the peoples comprising these nations were invented by the British” (429).

“Of course there are areas of Africa where colonialism divided up a single ethnic group among two or even three powers. But on the whole it did bring together many peoples that had hitherto gone their several ways. And it gave them a language with which to talk to one another. If it failed to give them a song, it at least gave them a tongue, for sighing” (429).

“The price a world language must be prepared to pay is submission to many different kinds of use” (432).

Ngugi wa Thiong’o (1938- )
apartheid
alienation

orature
means of communication
carrier of culture

three aspects of language as communication:
the language of real life (Marx); production (hand)
speech (voice)
written sign (writing implement)
three aspects of language as culture:
“culture is a product of history which it in turn reflects” (438)
“an image-forming agent in the mind of the child” (438)
culture transmits images through a specific language

Rider Haggard
Nicholas Monsarrat
David Hume
Thomas Jefferson
Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel

Micere Mugo
Léopold Sédar Senghor

“Language was not a mere string of words. It had a suggestive power well beyond the immediate and lexical meaning. Our appreciation of the suggestive magical power of language was reinforced by the games we played with words through riddles, proverbs, transpositions of syllables, or through nonsensical but musically arranged words” (435).

“In Kenya, English became more than a language: it was the language, and all the others had to bow before it in deference” (435).

“English was the official vehicle and the magic formula to colonial elitedom” (436).

“Production is co-operation, is communication, is language, is expression of a relation between human beings and it is specifically human” (437).

“Culture is almost indistinguishable from the language that makes possible its genesis, growth, banking, articulation, and indeed its transmission from one generation to the next” (438).

“It is the final triumph of a system of domination when the dominated start singing its virtues” (441).