

Chapter 3 is where the book truly enters its stride with a thorough overview of ‘chav’ itself. The chapter first traces ‘chav’ etymologies before unpacking the word’s spread from the street to newspapers, dictionaries, and political discourse. Chapter 4 moves this discussion into the sociolinguistic, looking at ‘chav’ as a semiotic object. Deftly tracing the role of mass media in influencing the indexical values of ‘chav’, the chapter deserves special mention for handily attending to the co-occurring ‘non-linguistic’ signs relevant to the total ‘chav’ linguistic fact. Finally, chapters 5 and 6 provide a fascinating discussion of how global digital media flows can drastically alter indexical referents. Chapter 5 begins with a novel discussion of the value of Tik-Tok for linguistic anthropology before examining how ‘chav’ has transformed through multimodal forms of discourse facilitated through the platform. Chapter 6 then closes the book with a general contents summary that expands into a discussion of how ‘chav’ indexicals have appeared in other UK social scenes, closing with some theories about further ‘chav’ evolutions on other digital platforms. Chapter 7 offers a few concluding remarks.

Taken as a whole, *Indexing ‘chav’* is an incredible display of multidisciplinary scholarship and sociolinguistic knowledge. The only strong critique is in presentation, especially accessibility. In particular, chapters often peter out, missing a clean overview or strong statement of impact at the end. Combined with rather thick language in parts, this makes *Indexing ‘chav’* potentially less accessible to early career scholars. This critique is one limited to presentation, and this limitation does not impact the overall strength of the research project, which unquestionably achieves its goals with aplomb.

(Received 18 April 2023)

Language in Society 52 (2023)
doi:10.1017/S0047404523000544

TONG KING LEE, *Kongish: Translanguaging and the commodification of an urban dialect*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. Pp. 75. Pb. £15.

Reviewed by VINCENT WAI SUM TSE 

*School of Languages, Literatures, Cultures & Linguistics, Monash University
Clayton 3800, VIC, Australia
waisum.tse@monash.edu*

*Department of Applied Linguistics, The University of Warwick
Coventry, CV4 7AL, United Kingdom
Vincent-Wai-Sum.Tse@warwick.ac.uk*

Lee’s *Kongish* begins by delineating the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of studying Kongish, an urban dialect in Hong Kong defined by its multimodal, creative concatenation of different semiotic resources. Chapter 1 establishes the relationships as well as differences between Kongish and Hong Kong English (HKE).

Language in Society 52:4 (2023)

727

While Kongish draws on some HKE lexical items, its comprehension relies on translingual and bicultural knowledge. Employing the notion of postcolonial languaging from cultural studies, Lee regards Kongish as xenophonic practice: 'it evokes the Anglophonic and the Sinophonic at one stroke but ultimately refuses to subscribe to either' (13). Kongish thus disrupts normative expectations on language and culture.

In chapter 2, aligning with a translanguaging approach, Lee explains that Kongish is distinctive for its contingency, creativity, and criticality. Lee also suggests incorporating the lens of commodification to understand the value of Kongish in two ways. The first sees its use as indexing an authentic, local persona; the second considers neoliberal language commodification, where Kongish becomes marketable.

Chapters 3 and 4 are empirical case studies, respectively corresponding to the two facets of commodification. Chapter 3 examines posts from the Facebook page 'Kongish Daily', a translanguaging space for the public production and consumption of Kongish. The analysis demonstrates that Kongish discourse encompasses semiotic resources such as transliterations and calques from Cantonese, contractions, eye-dialect spellings, and emojis. However, Lee cautions that these elements are listed not because they can be codified; instead, they are mobilised in ever-evolving ways by Kongish users and converge to make meaning at a particular moment (e.g. a Facebook post). To comprehend Kongish, one must read translationally between English and Cantonese, between linguistic and other symbols, as well as between critiques and humour.

Chapter 4 explores the value of Kongish in the 'linguistic business of marketing' (60). Lee uses two Hong Kong alcoholic beverage brands as illustrations to show how businesses tap into the affordances of Kongish. For instance, one of the brands is called Fok Hing Gin. While its English pronunciation is sexually sensitive, the name means fortune and prosperity in Chinese, and can be traced back to the name of a street in Hong Kong. Lee argues the value of such instances of Kongish lies exactly in its controversial nature, where negative meanings in English and positive meanings in Chinese co-create cultural authenticity for said products. Looking also at Kongish T-shirts, Lee argues that Kongish does not necessarily have to appear under the skin of English.

Lee ends *Kongish* by discussing some implications in chapter 5. Lee stresses that although Kongish seems to emerge in light of Hong Kong's recent sociopolitical turmoils, it cannot be detached from the city's sociolinguistic history. In a way, Kongish archives Hong Kong's circumvention of the binaries of the Anglophone and the Sinophone. More broadly, Kongish also demonstrates that urban dialects can be (re)conceptualised as beyond named languages, pointing to the significance of studying 'the creative and critical potentialities cutting across linguistic registers and semiotic modalities' (76).

(Received 1 May 2023)