

## **Designing New Ownership of English: A Commentary**

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This special issue brings together understandings about language teaching advanced by scholars whose theoretical frameworks and study of practices fall under what is considered, on the one hand, Global Englishes, and on the other, Translanguaging. Although there is much synergy between the two, this excellent special issue shows how each of these two frameworks differ, advancing the teaching of Englishes today in ways that promote diversity and inclusion.

The contributions of some of the authors — Savski and Prabjandee, Kohn, Jones and Blume — fall under what we would call the Global English paradigm. Others — Kim, Song, Mackinney— clearly start with a translanguaging framework. This collection of articles closes with an article by Fan Fang and Yidie Xu which places one leg in each of the frameworks, putting them alongside each other to glean what aspects of each make for more equitable English language education. (Unfortunately I did not get to read the contributions in the *In Perspective* section before writing this Commentary.)

It is instructive to reflect on what has been the hook for the authors to hang their work on one or another conceptual framework. It appears that scholars who studied applied linguistics in the U.S. and who are conscious of language diversity and heteroglossic practices start out applying a translanguaging lens to their work. Perhaps this has to do with the engagement with critical scholarship that has emerged in the study of U.S. bilingualism and language education for minoritized bilinguals (see, for example, Flores & García, 2017) and the ways in which theories of translanguaging have been linked to raciolinguistic ideologies (Flores & Rosa, 2015; García et al., 2021). Scholars who studied in Europe have been deeply influenced by how multilingualism has been shaped by the construction of plurilingualism by the European Union, and especially by the Common European Framework Resource for Language (CEFR). The conceptual difference between how students' diverse languaging, and especially what is named English, are viewed in the U.S. and in Europe is instructive and has important repercussions in Englishes language education throughout Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

### **Deconstructing a western historical legacy on language and nation**

Language has had much to do with the national formation of all countries throughout the world. Traditions of language education throughout the world have been copied from those that emerged in the west where monolingualism was constructed as supreme in the imagination of those in power. We describe here how language was related to the national formation of western European powers, as well as the U.S. We do so to understand how the Global Englishes

paradigm and the translanguaging paradigm that are represented in this collection of articles distance themselves from the legacy of a modern western national language ideology.

The national formation of what we now know as the U.S. was based on a simple colonial logic — embrace white immigrants from other places and reject those considered non-white within their own territory: Native Americans, Mexican Americans, and enslaved African Americans. Although the eradication of languages other than English was a goal for all, English language and literacy were seen as the outcome of education for whites only. Territorial expansion and imperialism were the goals, as a policy of Manifest Destiny took hold. The white Anglo-Saxon race, with English as its language, was said to have a mandate from God to spread its Protestant religion, values, and English language throughout the expanding territory. A “funnel” ideology was at work in nation-building, broad and expansive at the top for anyone who was perceived as white, and narrowing incrementally until U.S. peoplehood with citizenship privileges was defined as white, English-speaking, and male.

In contrast, the national formation of the European nation-states in the 19<sup>th</sup> century relied on drawing geographic boundaries that were said to be matched by a specific language and culture. This ideology of “one nation, one language, one culture” was expressed most vehemently by the German Romantic, Johann G. Herder (1783):

Has a nationality anything dearer than the speech of its fathers? In its speech resides its whole thought domain, its tradition, history, religion and basis of life, all its heart and soul. . . With language is created the heart of a people.

Rather than starting broad and inclusive of whites, European national formation started by being narrowly defined and exclusive of everyone who was culturally and linguistically different. Whereas race was the most important criteria for inclusion in the U.S., nation-states in Europe were formed around those who were seen as culturally and linguistically homogeneous. Whereas the U.S. ideology regarding language was that English, as the language of commerce and power, would ultimately attract all white immigrants to shift to English without coercion, the ideology of European states was that the language declared to be national or official had to be imposed on all. School became the means through which socialization to the language of the nation occurred.

In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the ethnic revival and the era of Civil Rights meant that racial, cultural, and linguistic minorities started demanding their rights to an equitable education, as well as their own language practices. In the United States, bilingual education was claimed by the Mexican American, Puerto Rican and Native American communities to educate their children in ways that might offer them better opportunities, including better paying jobs, more voting/political rights, and improved housing. Throughout Europe, linguistic minorities also developed bilingual education programs that used their languages as a medium of instruction. As countries in Asia and Africa declared their independence, the medium of instruction had to be carefully planned. The world’s linguistic diversity was now in full view. The European-western epistemology about a language as a bounded entity that denoted nationhood and citizenship did not fit the many non-white speakers in the new African and Asian countries. The language planning and policy field was organized to solve “the language problems” of the new nation-states, that is, their multilingualism (Rubin et al., 1977). Language education followed suit by imposing, more than ever, a monolingual/monoglossic ideology to work out what were seen as the challenge of multilingualism in the newly independent nations. This monoglossic ideology became prevalent also in bilingual education programs as they were institutionalized by nation-states for their language minoritized population.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the monolingual/monoglossic ideology that had dominated language education in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century started to be cracked in different ways. The growing neoliberal global economy needed plurilingual workers, able to travel, work and live in different societies. As awareness of plurilingualism grew, supported especially by the European Union, one language started to reign supreme — English. But English was now no longer understood as the entity spoken by white British colonizers inside Great Britain and in the colonies. People from the former British colonies were now living, working, and studying in the former colonial power, and speaking English, as well as other languages. As technology facilitated communication, travel, and relationships among people with different linguistic and cultural practices, scholarship in sociolinguistics and applied linguistics started to shift, now recognizing Englishes not just in the concentric circles first offered by Kachru (1985), but now as plural, with multiple forms and norms (Galloway & Rose, 2018). The borders of the Englishes circles started to be effaced, as did borders around other named languages, as plurilingual speakers peopled language classrooms around the world. The translanguaging framework, as well as that of Global Englishes emerged from this common reality, although their epistemological foundations, as we will see, are different.

Moving the work from the theoretical to the practical in language classrooms has been challenging. The contributions in this collection clarify the different emphases of these two frameworks, the ways in which they have been translated into language teaching pedagogical practices, and the promises and challenges that remain.

## **Translanguaging and GELT**

As a U.S. Latina scholar, my work on language education has leaned towards translanguaging as a way of understanding the ways in which racialized bilingual people language by deploying the resources in their unitary repertoire. Translanguaging posits that speakers *own* the way they do language. Teaching them through language and to language, should match the ways in which they *do* language to give them equitable access to instruction. Translanguaging pedagogical practices have been advanced to *transcend* the boundaries that have been drawn around named languages normed as the standard and taught in schools (García & Li Wei, 2014; Otheguy, García & Reid, 2015).

### **GELT: Advances and challenges**

This special issue in many ways flips la tortilla, for it starts by focusing on the teaching of a named language, English, although now transformed by its many interlocutors around the world and without the borders that had been drawn around a “native speaker” norm. The first article by Savski and Prabjandee describe how Global Englishes Language Teaching (GELT) is grounded in the work of World/Global Englishes, emphasizing diversity of practices, and of English as a Lingua Franca/English as an International Language that focuses on how English is used in intercultural communication with interlocutors from diverse backgrounds. As I read this article with my translanguaging lens, I started to expand my own understandings and learned much. The authors clearly lay out how the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages Companion Volume (CEFRVC, 2020) has extended a language teaching framework that has been used around the world and is increasingly used in the teaching of what is named English beyond the European Union in Asian, African, and Latin American countries.

Following recent developments in applied linguistics, the CEFRVC upholds language as defined by context and the actions of human beings, and not simply as a system of set meanings. Thus, the focus has changed to what speakers “can do,” focusing not on the traditional skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, but on how speakers engage in language reception, production, interaction, and mediation (the transformation of meaning), as well as awareness

of linguistic diversity, and attitudes and dispositions towards the languaging of others. Savski and Prabjandee point out that although the term translanguaging was not mentioned specifically, CEFR CV upholds language practices where language borders are relativized and translanguaging practices are seen as a form of competence. My question, however, is: Is it really? In what ways? Is it possible, if the goal of instruction remains the use of English, even if now named and recognized as Englishes, to truly put the languaging of the colonized, the racialized, at the center of the endeavor? Can the European Union, the authors of the CEFR, ever conceive of really flipping the tortilla so that others are on the side of the angels? How much power (and money) are the agents of English, the British Council, Cambridge Assessment of English, and the publishers of English language textbooks willing to grant others? How many texts presently exist that present Englishes in their diversity, and engage students with multilingual interlocutors whose languaging practices are translanguaging? In this special issue, Jones and Blume tell us that despite the advancement of GELT, “ELT materials tend to use prestige variety speakers as models.”

The jury is still out as to whether GELT can develop the competence of many around the world in using Englishes, competence that will be assessed not simply by the linguistic, but by how speakers perform and act in particular contexts, their awareness of diversity of practices, and their dispositions toward those. Jones and Blume’s research suggests that GELT is just as effective in teaching English as the standard prestige-variety approach, but most teachers of “English,” even if they now think of “Englishes,” still need convincing.

Kurt Kohn introduces the concept of the development of MY English in the GELT field. This is indeed a welcomed advance in the field; one that has much in common with translanguaging theory. He says that “it is about MY language, MY English.” Kohn gives us strategies by which this could be done, in effect capitalizing on the online communication environments. Although this is an important way in engaging students in translanguaging/ transcultural communication activities, it may not go far enough. Centering racialized bilinguals’ repertoires and lifeways rather than remediate them (García et al. 2021) is not an easy task because it would involve giving up the power, control and financial opportunities that have gone along with the English teaching industry.

There has been much thinking and theorizing that has accompanied the Global Englishes movement. And yet, practices in classroom teaching remain elusive, as teachers and students remain unconvinced that this advances the learning of Englishes in ways that benefit especially the many Asian and African students around the world who want to have access to a language that is said to bestow opportunities.

### **Translanguaging: Advances and challenges**

The ideology of linguistic normativity also challenges scholars who are teaching English but inspired by what could be said to be a translanguaging pedagogical framework. Focusing on how students’ translanguaging is leveraged in English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, Grace Kim here reviews studies of the use of pedagogical translanguaging in different contexts — Australia, Canada, China, Colombia, Philippines, Portugal, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Turkey, United States. The studies encompassed elementary schools, secondary schools, and universities. Kim points out the benefits that translanguaging pedagogical practices bestow — supporting students to understand and learn English, developing their linguistic and cultural repertoire, fostering bilingual literacy, increasing metalinguistic awareness, allowing greater access to curricular content, increasing student participation. At the end, however, Kim concludes that translanguaging pedagogies were mostly used with students who had low English proficiency and consisted of translation strategies. The teachers themselves, as well as the students and

their families, were hesitant about the value of translanguaging practices in instruction. García, Johnson and Seltzer (2017) maintain that for translanguaging to reach its full potential to educate racialized bilinguals it must go beyond simple scaffold strategies. Translanguaging must be transformative of the deficient subjectivities that language minoritized students often develop in schools. The use of translanguaging simply as a scaffold in no way supports the transformation of racialized communities.

Sunyung Song's research followed preservice teachers in a U.S. university as they developed a translanguaging stance and enacted it in a digital service-learning setting. The prospective monolingual teachers were immersed in reading about translanguaging and then designing activities and lessons in which the students' translanguaging was leveraged during family literacy activities and Zoom tutoring sessions. Although emergent bilingual students and their families benefited from translanguaging pedagogy, this took place in homes, and through tutoring sessions, and not in actual school classrooms. One is left with the impression that although promising, translanguaging pedagogical practices remain elusive in traditional ESL classrooms in the United States.

Mackinney describes the translanguaging practices of emergent bilingual middle school students in a Math class in the U.S. to make sense of Math. Demet Yigitbilek describes an autobiography-driven instruction to teach writing in a second language. And yet, at times, all the authors said to be leveraging translanguaging fall back on the traditional conceptualizations about language, bilingualism, and language learning that the translanguaging paradigm try to dissipate. The authors talk about learning "a second language," "a foreign language." They refer to students' L1, their first language, and often confuse that use simply as translanguaging (to understand the difference between using students' L1 and leveraging translanguaging, see Li Wei & García, 2022).

Jinsil Jang's interesting article of teaching English to Uzbek, Russian-speaking students reveals that despite advances in Global Englishes Language Teaching pedagogical practices, a lot of English teaching around the world continues to take place in the language of the majority in the country. That is why one of the students refers to "learning Korean in English class rather than English." Although teachers opened space for Korean in the teaching of English, there was little room for Russian use. It was only at home where the Uzbek, Russian-speaking students were able to leverage their own language practices that included what is perceived to be Russian to study English. Again, leveraging the translanguaging of students, that is, going beyond the named language of instruction, as well as what is said to be the students' L1, does not happen often in traditional language classrooms. It is the home where translanguaging resides, with schools often falling short of following the bilingual students' translanguaging norm.

When translanguaging theory is turned to practice, traditional epistemologies about one language and another, an L1 and an L2, and code-switching, come into play. Classroom practices that truly leverage the translanguaging of bilingual/multilingual students, that is, their unitary competence are difficult to find throughout the world, especially when English is involved.

## **The intersection of GELT and translanguaging**

Fan Fang and Yidie Xu put the finishing touches to this excellent special issue by pointing out the commonalities between the two paradigms — Global Englishes and translanguaging. Both paradigms include valuing and leveraging the different linguistic practices of formerly colonial subjects in education, and challenging native speakerism ideology. Global Englishes transcends the norms of native-speaker English and uses a flexible heteroglossic English and

the inclusion of students' L1s in instruction. Translanguaging transcends named languages themselves, centering the language practices of racialized bilinguals to learn and expand their unitary repertoire. That is, the translanguaging paradigm does not recognize either English or students' L1 or L2s, except as social constructions. Bilingual speakers and learners do not simply have two cognitive boxes with two languages. Instead, they draw from a unitary competence to communicate. Language education that adheres to the translanguaging framework takes seriously the idea that it is speakers who own their language and use it in ways that are most effective in their lives.

Whereas the Global Englishes paradigm recognizes the politics of Englishes, translanguaging unmask how race and language have been used in the process of colonization and in the ensuing coloniality (Quijano, 2000). Translanguaging emerges from recognizing the raciolinguistic ideologies (Flores & Rosa, 2015) that have been at play in the ways that named languages have been normalized and used in schools. A translanguaging stance is needed to design instruction and assessment that follows the translanguaging corriente of racialized bilinguals and does not expect them to learn, listen or perform linguistically in the same way as white monolinguals with institutional power (García, Johnson & Seltzer, 2017).

Global Englishes and its other manifestations, for example, English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), also advocate for language education that recognizes the heteroglossic practices of all Englishes-speakers in interactions with others. Inspired by the CERFCV, student practices are assessed depending on what they can do, not to demonstrate achievement, but to provide feedback for learning. What students can do with language relies not on the old language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, but on communicative activities of reception, production, interaction, and mediation.

What would happen, one wonders, if the concepts learned in these contributions regarding GELT and translanguaging were put together? I wonder, for example, why my scholarship on translanguaging has not benefited from the theoretical and methodological advances supported by the CERFCV, and most especially the lenses of interaction and mediation. I wonder why in my own scholarship I continue to talk about English, about Spanish, and have not offered Englishes and Spanishes as an alternative. What does the naming of Englishes and Spanishes advance? What does it hide? Are Englishes and Spanishes also social constructs like English and Spanish? Does it advance the conversation or do we regress by picking these terms up?

I also wonder why GELT does not pay more attention to students' plurilingualism. GELT may emerge from a plurilingual framework, but it seems to be English-focused, despite its naming of the activity as Englishes. Has GELT given any thought to how bilingualism and multilingualism works in the minds and lives of racialized bilingual speakers? Without translanguaging, the object of study in GELT remains a language, albeit the borders have expanded to include what were thought of as varieties of English. And yet, without GELT, translanguaging in the teaching of English seems to be simply the recognition that the students are plurilingual and come from bilingual racialized communities. Without GELT translanguaging does not offer the English teaching profession a way to think beyond named languages in the ways that students make sense of language, and the ways in which they interact in language.

In summary, by putting GELT and translanguaging along each other, this special issue starts to show the language education profession how to truly ensure that English language practices are owned by the many bilingual/multilingual communities that dream of English being part of their repertoire. For all of us to own Englishes, language education must blend a translanguaging paradigm with that of World Englishes Language Teaching, ensuring that

speakers can leverage their own practices in interactions, and that others listen to them with intent and purpose that value their languaging, however different this may be.

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