Decolonial Subversions

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Special Issue:
Decolonising university and the role of linguistic diversity

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Table of Contents

An editorial: Introducing the Special Issue of *Decolonial Subversions*

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The origins of the Special Issue

This Special Issue of *Decolonial Subversions* originates from a desire to engage more deeply in the debate and discussions which formed part of the UAL Decolonising Arts Institute's research season series on *'Cultural Urgencies: Actions toward representation, equity, justice and well-being'* (University of the Arts, London 2021). *Cultural Urgencies* convened a roundtable on linguistic diversity with invited speakers Khairani Barokka, Alexander Ding, Mark Ingham, Eila Isolatus, Gillian Lazar and Tim Stephens who, at the time, were artists, scholars, and practitioners engaging, in different ways, with the decolonising the university movement, and with linguistic diversity from within the UK and European universities; but also collaborating, writing and researching beyond national and regional borders. We recognised that the discussions that took place were unfinished and wanted to expand the conversations on the potential of linguistic inclusion in higher education, which from our point of view needed to explore the role of language in knowledge production.

During and post-pandemic, we began engaging with scholars from the Global South mainly through the medium of English to discuss access, representation and educational outcomes within higher education and their intersection with society more broadly. At the same time, we were aware that structural and race-based inequalities within the Global North did not begin with the murder of Stephen Lawrence in the UK, or the murder of George Floyd in the US, but in fact began much earlier. We are also mindful of what we see as the conflation of equality, diversity, inclusion and racial justice work within British universities seeking more equitable access, inclusion and representation within a sector that remains largely intact, with a more radically envisioned decolonising the university agenda. An agenda which seeks more radical structural change in order to challenge 'epistemological racism' (Cooper and Thesen, 2014, p.180) and epistemic injustice (Fricker, 2007). For instance, Hirmer (2020, p.121) writes 'in fact it appears that "decolonial" is often used as a mere cosmetic ... label that eludes radical rethinking and profound restructuring' of institutional knowledge making practices and assessment regimes. Furthermore, and despite recent and often sustained initiatives to decolonise the university curriculum, systematic discussion around language use and multilingualism is often missing from critical debates and

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scholarship (Ndhlovu and Makalela, 2021) and academic practices and publishing. These discussions are taken up by Istratii and Hirmer (this Issue) as well as by Canagarajah (2022), all of whom advocate strongly for the diversification of scholarly writing practices in order to represent alternative epistemologies.

The coloniality of language and power

Although not always at the forefront of decolonising theory, practice and research, language is interwoven in complex ways with race, empire and colonialism (Motha, 2014; Veronelli, 2015). Coloniality, described as that which survives colonialism (de Sousa Santos, 2012; Grosfuguel 2007; Maldonado Torres, 2007), created an epistemic hierarchy of privilege where Western knowledge counts for more than so called non-Western knowledge from the Global South[3]. Coloniality also helped to construct 'a linguistic hierarchy between European languages and non-European languages' (Grosfuguel, 2007 p. 217) and their racialised speakers. wa Thiong'o (2014) has argued for some time for the visibility of non-European languages in the academy in post-colonial contexts. Yet, not much has changed, claim Ndhlovu and Makaleka (2021), with former colonial languages (English, Dutch, French, Portuguese, Spanish, and so on) necessary for access to higher education and still used more or less exclusively for learning, teaching, and research publication in many Higher Education institutional contexts. Contemporary attitudes and resistance towards the legitimacy of certain languages for academic knowledge production have their origins in the colonial project.

The British colonial legacy saw the uninterrupted rise of English as a language of power and status. Linguistically this meant that the use of English was and is still promoted as a powerful model for communication. The colonial narrative saw proficiency in European languages as good and the linguistic complexity of 'local' languages as problematic. The multilingual speaker - proficient in minoritized community languages - was and is still positioned as deficient, and even deviant, in various African educational contexts according to McKinney and Christie (2022) and Monz (2020). There is a complex intersection between multilingual higher education and human rights, as discussed by Rao (2020, p. 6) who found that there was little '...awareness among students of the intersectionality of language as reflecting, constituting, and reproducing privilege, discrimination and exclusion'. Additionally, Andreotti et al. (2015, p.30) remind us that people working and publishing in their own or otherwise dominant language from within HEIs are all implicated to some degree as universities continue to benefit from the impact colonialism has had on others. As

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[3] We recognise the importance of the World Bank categorisation of the world based on geography, nation and income
https://datatopics.worldbank.org/world-development-indicators/the-world-by-income-and-region.html.
Following scholars such as Kerfoot and Hytlenstam (2017), we see the Global South as a useful metaphor for resistance and challenge as well as marginalisation, racialization and income disparity caused by global capitalism and ongoing coloniality. Also see Veronelli (2015) on "The coloniality of language".

Guest Editors[4], we acknowledge our complicity as we write in ways which may exclude as much as they include. In doing so, we accept our connection to the coloniality of language as we write and publish from Britain and in English. Language was and is still very much a part of the neo-colonial project.

Framing the Special Issue

There has been significant effort, and in some cases violent uprising, in support of decolonising universities (see for example: Bhambra et al., 2018; Ritchie this Issue), their curricula, and the creation of more equitable access in Latin America and South Africa, but also more recently in the US, parts of Europe and elsewhere. A common aim is to encourage universities, their faculty and students to begin to talk about and challenge traditional ways of knowing and doing in relation to teaching, learning and research in order to reverse longstanding inequalities and ideologies with origins in the colonial past. However, and despite changes within some universities, there are scholars who question whether 'academic decolonising' is possible (Moosavi, 2022). At the same time, there has been an increase in the linguistic diversity of universities around the world, although what this means, and for whom, can differ for stakeholders in different contexts, according to Madiba (2018). We suggest that making linguistic diversity in the academy visible beyond the purely performative can engender a sense of well-being, belonging and social justice, but more profoundly has the potential to decentre dominant ways of knowing and being.

Andreotti et al. (2015) acknowledge the challenges of entering into difficult conversations within the context of HE; and we agree that universities can be important spaces for contestation, for entering into dialogue about decolonial and anti-colonial struggles, something contributors to this Special Issue have engaged with. Drawing on Mignolo and Walsh's (2018) 'practices of decoloniality' we have sought to create a critical space for contributors to speak back in languages other than English in order to resist and look beyond some of the dominant epistemologies and ideologies that disproportionately affect the Global South resulting in unequal access to resources and power. The Special Issue is multi-/trans-disciplinary, multilingual and multimodal. Given this breadth, there has been a deliberate attempt to avoid overtly specialist language or to enter into conceptual or ontological debates of interest and relevance only to specific disciplinary traditions.

The contributing authors make rich and varied contributions to the Special Issue that draw on different languages, modes, formats and contexts through which they link to (different) perspectives and traditions of knowledge-making. Living and working in very different geopolitical spaces: Algeria, Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, Ethiopia, South Africa, India, Indonesia and the United Kingdom, contributors write predominantly in English

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[4] Victoria, a female academic of mixed heritage living and working in England who uses a historically and culturally valued variety of British English as a dominant language. Gillian, a white Jewish female academic who grew up in South Africa and lives in the UK, uses historically and culturally valued standard English as her dominant language.

(except Barokka) but also make visible the languages that are meaningful to them; in doing so, give voice and visibility to *invisibilised* languages and people present in their research and practice. These strategic choices include, but also move beyond, former colonial languages in the academy, as contributors experiment with genres, registers, formats and the boundaries of what is, or should be, considered academic. Contributors are academics, comedy writers, poets, and researchers in anthropology, gender and religious specialisms. This diversity creates a welcome unevenness which serves to deepen and enrich the Special Issue as a whole, as each contributor addresses the issue of decolonising the university and the making visible of language in relation to this in ways that are sensitive to their own contexts and positionality.

Introducing the Special Issue contributors

The first contribution is a poem meant to be read as a creative intervention, rather than as academic writing. **Khairani Barokka's** translingual poem breaks the straitjacket of academic language and knowledge production. Her poem *'prayer doa in which di mano: english inggris, baso minang and dan bahasa indonesia fight berseteru'* is written in Bahasa Indonesia, Baso Minang, and English, as Barokka explains 'privileging those with a working understanding of how all three are used--deliberately using Edouard Glissant's concept of opacity in not translating for those who understand only English. I'd not read a piece that was written for people who have experience of all three languages, without need for explanation, and decided to write one; there are, after all, many of us.' Readers may wish to respond by falling back on norms and expectations of monolingual academic publishing we are familiar with, yet Barokka pushes us gently, subtly challenging expected norms of readership and audience as dictated by the Anglophone Centre.

Maria Sílvia Cintra Martins explores the challenges inherent in the translation of texts from every day discourses (chants and myths) into academic discourse genres through longitudinal work with indigenous students at a Brazilian university. Martins argues the academy must '...overcome a worn-out way of referring to orality, where indigenous people would be characterised as primitive and savage users of oral language, whereas civilized people (mainly from the West and Northern Hemisphere) would be characterised as the most advanced human beings and users of written language' (p. 17). A question emerging from her research is what knowledges and languages indigenous and racialised students have and how they can be best represented in academic knowledge production. Her contention is that written academic discourse is 'averse to the presence of orality', ending with the caveat that languages need to be not only made visible but also embedded within the curriculum in order to decolonise.

Nour Elhouda Souleh's paper draws on a powerful biography and feminist autoethnography providing insights into the experiences of an international doctoral researcher and scholar in the United Kingdom. Souleh challenges the discourses of academic writing for imposing particular colonial ways of thinking and writing; contending that both

creative writing and stand-up comedy offer forms of resistance which enable speakers and writers to create alternative modes of thinking and being. Souleh's life trajectory draws sensitively on coloniality, culture, indigeneity, and expectations of a hijab-wearing Muslim woman in a Western academy inflected by her female-dominated past. By drawing on lived experiences in Algeria and the UK, this contribution invites the reader to reflect on Algeria's colonial heritage and present day relationship with Europe. For Souleh, a consideration of linguistic diversity must extend beyond language to include alternative genres of writing as a way of pushing back against epistemic violence in the White, male, Western academy and to challenge colonial oppressions of the past and present.

Writing from post-apartheid South Africa, **Linda Ritchie** engages with the contested and inter-related issues of teaching, Shakespeare and the literary canon. She reports on a 'decolonial pedagogic initiative' to teach *Julius Caesar* through a translanguaging lens to students at the University of the Witwatersrand and the University of Texas, with the aim of subverting ideas about language, power and coloniality. The intervention required students to recontextualise the play using their own linguistic and cultural lenses in response to the dominant discourse of Brutus, a powerful senator. The article explores possibilities for translanguaging in the classroom and to what extent the inclusion of multiple languages can subvert colonial notions of language, power and race by challenging monolingual ideals about the exclusive use of English embedded within classroom practices. While the translanguaging intervention did not challenge the status of English, this contribution underscores the importance of raising awareness of linguistic and racial representation in historically White institutions.

Shahina Parvin, who taught anthropology at Jahangirnagar University in Bangladesh before moving to Canada for her Masters and Doctoral studies, provides a powerful autobiographical account of her experiences as a Bangladeshi skilled migrant and scholar in Canada. She recounts the othering effects of the preference for so-called native speakers and pressure to conform to standard Canadian English language, which position speakers of varieties of English from the Global South as deficient and their writers as linguistically lacking. She describes the pain and psychological damage caused by the inferior non-native-speaking identity she was forced to adopt. Parvin argues that despite championing multiculturalism, Canada's '…colour blind approach has perpetuated dominant power relations and colonial politics', pointing out that her 'self-blame' about her English 'language deficit occurred within a neoliberal 'colour blind' higher education system that perpetuates racism by ignoring the needs of individuals. Her paper delineates her resistance to these views, and enables her to begin to deconstruct the notion of the 'native speaker' and its links with coloniality.

Romina Istratii and **Monika Hirmer** discuss how *Decolonial Subversions*, the multilingual and multimodal online platform they founded, engages with decentring approaches to publishing. Their essay reflects some of the bold and deliberate choices they have made as they develop an online platform that challenges the privileged status of written English over other languages and over oral or visual modes of communication. They share a vision that

promotes multilingual contributions and opens up 'conceptual repertoires' in order to move closer to true diversification of knowledge production. A strength of their vision is in recognising the epistemic violence perpetuated by insisting on publication in English. In doing so, they elevate the role of language and communication within scholarly publication. Istratii and Hirmer reflect ethically and with caution on the process, as pushing the boundaries of high quality and peer reviewed work is not without its challenges, raising questions of whose language and whose academic labour is needed.

Suresh Canagarajah, in collaboration with **Victoria Odeniyi** and **Gillian Lazar,** moves beyond the expected genre conventions for an Afterword quite deliberately by taking as his starting point questions from the editors of the Special Issue. In response to the questions posed, we learn of Suresh's life trajectory and how some of his major publications are interwoven with personal experiences in Sri Lanka and the US, and were motivated by academic inequalities. He suggests that a productive - yet gradual - step towards decolonising academic knowledge is to think of all languages as being equally legitimate resources for knowledge making. Adopting a kind of strategic resistance from within, Suresh advocates a subtle democratising and diversification of the traditional and often tacit conventions of the research paper, among his other recommendations. Canagarajah suggests that if Northern scholars care sufficiently about decolonisation they should be able to offer selfless time, energy and other resources 'while keeping a safe distance'. The piece gives all readers much to think about, but steers Northern scholars in particular towards what can be done - in very practical terms - in order to diversify academic publishing.

Our work as editors

We met with the majority of contributors online to discuss in English proposals written in English and the ways in which we felt we could or should support contributors with the process of text production and accessing online resources. Early on, we learnt from prospective contributors first-hand how choosing to speak one language rather than another is often seen as a political, even dangerous, act in certain regions and situations. We had lengthy discussions about global reach, cultural and linguistic representation and the politics of translation. Indeed, translation emerged as crucial for the Special Issue which began with a multilingual Call. Consequently, it was necessary to draw on a wide network of multilingual scholars, reviewers and translators and we were fortunate that network members were conscientious, curious and asked many questions.

We were convinced from the outset that the use and representation of multiple languages can and should be seen as a form of decolonising praxis within Northern universities; yet we were mindful that perspectives and experiences change across time and space. We sought contributions that would make visible different languages, modes, formats and contexts through which to offer often under-reported perspectives while remaining accessible to a diverse multilingual audience. While we were committed to moving beyond an English-only publication, one aspect of the project we had not given much attention to was which

languages should be represented, preferring to leave the decision to contributors. Nonetheless, it is no coincidence that an aspect of the Special Issue we are especially pleased with is the representation of languages from the Global South. Reflecting on the process of curating the Special Issue we can say that we have learnt a lot, realised through collective effort.

Thanks and acknowledgements

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prayer doa in which di mano: english inggris, baso minang and dan bahasa indonesia fight berseteru[1]

Dr Khairani Barokka[2]

karena dia merasuki semua seperti kesurupan bahasa inggris

    karena dia mengambil jantung syair dan menjadikannya

    terjemahan untuk bisnis

      onde mande

apo nyenyo inggris iko? la laruik sanjo

      dan kampuang

        di mato inggris dak tontuuuuu lai

karena dia mengambil pantun dan menjadikannya pantoum

      they don't understand

pantun weaves weddings and mourning rituals together

        as they teach 'pantoum' in a classroom

      and do not even say our names

      he fashions your camera lens

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[1] 'prayer doa in which di mano: english inggris, baso minang and dan bahasa indonesia fight berseteru' was first published in *harana poetry*.

[2] Author of *Ultimatum Orangutan* (Nine Arches).

to the setting of white tourist

bukan dia yang mengayomimu   ayo

   ambo bundo

   sini sayang   kurangkul selalu

excuse me –

      jangan ke situ

Decolonial
Subversions

Voice, orality and academic literacy in the light of indigenous presence in Brazilian universities

Maria Sílvia Cintra Martins[1]

Abstract

When writing this paper, I had as a main objective to bring to light the importance of exercising language in a free, poetic and radical way, understanding such an exercise as absolutely necessary to challenge dominant discourses and practices. In this sense, writing in any of the discourse genres – and maybe mostly in the academic genre, where we have to struggle and fight inside the colonizer's territory - can be seen as an ability that needs a lot of exercise out of the combat arena and before entering it. Our language needs to be strong; it needs to acquire a force of language that only poetic and free exercise can provide. This paper presents results of ten-year research involving three indigenous students at the Federal University of São Carlos. In what concerns theory, it highlights the necessary interaction between Poetics, Ethics and Politics as the main issue we must take into consideration when decolonization is at stake. My research highlights that there is a role for orality as well as voice in the academy.

Keywords: academic literacy, Balatiponé, Decolonising, Guarani, indigenous, Poetics, Higher Education, orality, Xavante

Pausapé, ambúri yepé maã yamaité arama: ti aikué yepé tetama ntu upé yepé nheenga. Tiramé yepé nheenga ntu yepé tetama supé. Nheenga ramé muíri amu nheenga ita uiku. Yepe tetama uriku muiri nheenga nhaãsé yepé nheenga uiku amu nheenga kuara upe. Panhe kuri tetama nheenga itá umuyereu arama.[2]

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[1] Federal University of São Carlos, Brazil.

[2] These phrases have been written in Nheengatu – a Brazilian indigenous "língua franca" – by João Paulo Ribeiro, one of the subjects of my Research Project. They refer to the importance of Nheengatu language for communication among Brazilian indigenous people of different communities. In this sense, they do not imply the literal translation of the Abstract (written in English) into the Nheengatu language, because in this case, we are dealing with languages that circulate in very different contexts.

Introduction

I present the results of ten-year's research on academic literacy that considered indigenous attendance at Brazilian universities with a special focus on the Federal University of São Carlos. I based my research, in part, on the New Literacy Studies and, in a complementary way, on concepts drawn from Translation Studies and Cultural Studies (Lotman, 2005). The first phase of the research project was based on procedures and strategies present in the Academic Literacies Model (Lea & Street, 2006) of university writing development. For the second phase, however, I found it necessary to introduce elements from Translation Studies, particularly aiming at the construction of a Theory of Language intimately related to Poetics, Ethics and Politics. Such a proposal is based on a critical approach that, among other aspects, calls into question the concept of orality in the way it has been traditionally conceived (Meschonnic, 2011; Martins, 2022).

It is worth emphasizing the fact that though the French poet, linguist and translator, Henri Meschonnic, never made any explicit reference to Decolonizing theory, the core of his theoretical proposal has an essentially critical, libertarian appeal as it will become clearer in the arguments and examples presented below. Anyway, it is my contention that when we bring together, in intimate interaction, Poetics, Ethics and Politics – three elements usually studied in separate disciplinary areas – we certainly contribute to decolonizing universities and to destabilizing hegemonic thinking.

Defining research subjects and ambience

In Brazil, a country of around two hundred million people, we have the largest concentration of indigenous people in isolation in South America. According to the 2010 population census of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), the Brazilian indigenous population includes almost 900 thousand indigenous persons, which means 0.4% of our total population. There are 305 different ethnic groups and 274 languages. Among indigenous persons over the age of five, only 37.4% speak an indigenous language, while 76.9% speak Portuguese.

The Federal University of São Carlos is located in the southeast region of Brazil, far from Mato Grosso and the Amazon states, where the majority of indigenous people live in our country, if we take into account data drawn from the 2010 IBGE census. Some issues must be considered, however: 1) the fact that our last IBGE census dates from 2010, twelve years ago; 2) the fact that each year more people in Brazil declare themselves indigenous; 3) and the existence of intense racism and stigma experienced by indigenous people. In this sense, until the 2010 census, practically the only people living inside "aldeias" (indigenous reserves) were registered as indigenous whereas in reality, many people living on the peripheries of a metropolis such as São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro are migrants with indigenous ascendence.

Our university is the only Brazilian university that offers places in departments to students that self-identify as indigenous, including the Departments of Engineering, and Physics and Medicine, just to give two examples. As a professor of the Department of Modern Languages, I have been engaging with indigenous undergraduates since 2008 when the first entrance exam aimed at self-identified candidates was established. Students used to come to our department searching for support concerning academic literacy. In 2010, for instance, I had contact with students belonging to the following ethnicities: Baniwa (Amazon), Bororo (Mato Grosso), Cambeba (Amazon), Manchinery (Acre) Pankararu and Xukuru (Pernambuco), Terena (Mato Grosso do Sul), Xavante (Mato Grosso) and Balatiponé (Mato Grosso). They came from distant places and faced great difficulties due to many factors including material conditions.

In this paper I will refer in more detail to three indigenous students: a Balatiponé undergraduate who attended our degree course at the Department of Modern Languages and who developed research aimed at the production of a didactic artefact; a Xavante undergraduate whose coursework in Pedagogy I supervised and who was interested in giving visibility to Xavante mythical narratives that had not previously been translated; a Guarani PhD student whose thesis I supervised and who was involved in the translation of Guarani indigenous chants into Portuguese. [3]

I will mention three interlinguistic translations: from Portuguese to Balatiponé that was part of the academic monograph of the Balatiponé undergraduate; from Xavante to Portuguese that was part of the academic monograph of the Xavante undergraduate; and from Guarani to Portuguese, as a part of the doctoral thesis of the third student. It is worthwhile pointing out that Portuguese is the main official language in Brazil, and Balatiponé, Xavante and Guarani are languages spoken by different Brazilian indigenous nations or communities.

It is also important to make it clear that, when referring here to translation, my approach is underpinned by Lawrence Venuti (1995) of foreignization (rather than domestication) and its relevance for the debate on decolonization. Defending foreignization implies recognizing the importance and the value of the language of the other country, community or individual. It implies a special effort and interest in understanding the other culture and its specificity, and in maintaining certain characteristic and unique cultural and linguistic traits no matter how strange or incomprehensible they may seem at a first contact.

Some data on indigenous ethnicities and voice from the first phase of the research

From 2008 to 2010, I supervised research involving a PhD student and six indigenous undergraduates belonging to three different Brazilian ethnicities: Balatiponé, Terena and

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[3] I do not use any pseudonyms here. There is no mention of negative aspects or characteristics that could compromise the research subjects' images.

Baniwa. The undergraduates initially complained that they had difficulties in writing essays, reviews and monographs. Centred on empowering and participative methodology (Cameron et al., 1992; Freire, 2005), at the beginning my main objectives were: a) understanding the challenges inherent in the process of recontextualizing texts of everyday discourse genres into academic discourse genres; b) enhancing indigenous undergraduate students' access to academic literacy practices together with their metaconsciousness on such a process.

The results pointed to the academic literacies model, and its critical features, as adequate for supporting the success of students from indigenous minority groups in their potential for transforming the university as a whole insofar as they became more conscious of the hegemonic role of academic literacy and collaborated to make visible its constraints. It was during this first phase of research that issues related to orality started to catch my attention as features characteristic of the spontaneous way of writing of indigenous students. I was also attentive to students' relationship to mythical narratives and chants.

What intrigued me during this phase was the fact that we had, on the one hand, the recognition of the importance of indigenous mythical narratives and chants, and the relevance of giving voice to minority groups. On the other hand, however, we paradoxically recognized the importance of motivating indigenous students to engage with academic language. There did not seem to be points of contact between these realities.

We had, in fact, been dealing with academic language in a way that, later, I could understand as instrumental. There was another way of focusing on languages, and it needed to be from an anthropological and poetic point of view. Language is not an instrument, it is not an external object ready for our use, an affirmation that may seem too obvious, but one that makes all the difference when dealing with academic writing, that cannot, simply and instrumentally, be seen as an external genre of discourse students would engage in, expecting them to simultaneously attribute their own voice to such a tool.

As we can read in Henry Meschonnic (1989, p. 321, my translation), "The problem of Poetics is not to criticize such a metaphor [i.e., voice], but to understand its origin, and how the passage is made from the subject-voice and the voice-subject into the writing/scripture of orality".

That is why we progressively attributed more and more importance to Poetics, in its intimate interaction with Ethics and Politics. Poetics, Ethics and Politics are parts of language, inherent in language, and language, in its turn, is inherent in human beings.

As mentioned above, language is not an instrument. Poetics is not something that may happen to language by chance or only to those special persons we recognize as poets: it belongs to language, to its functioning whenever we deal with language in a spontaneous, creative way – moreover, we do not need to be considered poets to deal poetically with language.

Following similar reasoning, Ethics and Politics are not external vectors to language. Even though we can deal poetically with language – as far as we struggle to free ourselves from different forms of social control – whenever we speak we act ethically and politically too, transforming ourselves and simultaneously contributing to social and historical change.

Why orality (and not just voice) and what it means when we refer to writing

In the second phase of research, we started to focus more on aspects inherent in the concept of "orality" as features of orality are normally considered undesirable in academic discourse genres, and they seem to be a hindrance for students coming from indigenous minority groups.

From a poetic point of view, however, "orality" is a characteristic of both verbal and written texts, indicating the presence of subjectivity and the subjectivation of language (Meschonnic, 2011). Orality also indicates the existence of a creative and protagonistic process of language appropriation for students coming from indigenous minority groups. In this sense, erasing orality from texts – as is very often the tendency in academic literacy orientations – implies impeding the emergence of personal subjectivity with genuine expressivity, that is, of indigenous students' presence in language in a protagonistic and creative way.

The importance of such a proposal implies, therefore, a defense of humanity through language – not only for what concerns indigenous students - opening the way for the anthropology of language as a complement to a sociology of language.

It is necessary to establish the difference between voice and orality, as although they imply distinct conceptualizations they may complement each other. There may be a risk of understanding that they are just the same, and when this happens we may lose some important linguistic issues that are at stake. The concept of orality, in fact, can help us better understand the linguistic implications of our general defense of the importance of voice. Also, it can bring up different pedagogical strategies for dealing with academic literacy within a protagonistic and creative mode.

Founded in the Bakhtinian tradition (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 88), voice is understood as "[...] my word, for, since I am dealing with it in a particular situation, with a particular speech plan, it is already imbued with my expression". Thesen (2013, p. 112), referring to voice, calls attention to:

> [...] how the brought-along interests of students who have developed confidence on the periphery of the world system, or in domains other than the university – the workplace, industry etc.- translate (or not) into academic disciplines and publishing houses, and vice-versa.

She adds that "Students who move across disciplines, or universities, or languages, often sound strange in their writing" and says that "Voice also implies a level of consciousness about what one is doing" (Thesen, 2013, p. 110).

From a linguistic and also from a pedagogical point of view, as I stressed above, we need to understand, however, what exactly - in terms of word choice - should be done in the process of translation, Thesen (2014) presupposes, in order that students' writings would not sound strange. Or, put in other terms: why does certain writing sound strange? When searching for a linguistic and anthropological reason, I wondered whether writing may sound strange exactly when language is treated as an artefact, an external instrument, something resulting from excessive attention to reception, remembering that Thesen (2014) emphasizes that voice is related both to production and reception.

Orality, in its turn, and translation when considered from a poetic point of view, would not take readers into account primarily, but, instead, is something characteristic of poetry.

Conscious of the necessity to deal with orality through more in-depth strategies, and approaching orality from a poetic point of view, I started to suggest the importance of enhancing creative work with creative language (Franchi, 1992). This pointed to the pertinence of the experience with reading, writing and translating poetic texts in the transition between different literacy practices. I also defended the necessity of working with intralinguistic, inter-genre and also literary translation from a poetic and creative perspective whenever a search for critical literacy is at stake. We thus started dealing together with rational and emotional human dimensions (Martins, 2017). The fact is that, as I will point out in more detail, when working with translation from a poetic perspective we deal necessarily with metaconsciousness.

The research I present here brings to light the fact that it is through translation –understood as a creative process inherent in languages - rather than recontextualization procedures during which criticism takes place more profoundly. I also want to emphasize the fact that, though applied to indigenous minority groups in this article, research results confirm the experiential character of translation necessary for all criticism.

Anyway, and just to finish this point, it is important to emphasize that from a Bakhtinian philosophical and sociological perspective, voice has to do with conversational turns and contexts, that is, with taking a turn within a specific context and assuming the words as mine, imbued with my particular expressive style, with my tone. From a linguistic and poetic point of view, orality, on the other hand, has to do with word choice and syntactic orientation, with rhythm and language force. Exercising voice mainly means exercising courage and risk when assuming one's turn; exercising orality involves more profound expertise in terms of linguistic choices and possibilities.

Assuming orality and a poetic approach to language involves a more radical and affirmative position.

Some theoretical principles: translation as the basis of every language

When we mention translation, the first idea that comes to our minds is related to interlinguistic translation, that is, translation from one national language to another. I need to mention, however, another dimension of translation that is related to the intimate functioning of every and all languages and one which is not usually mentioned except in the specialized areas of Linguistics and Translation Studies. From this point of view, translation refers to the functional dimension that underlies languages in general and affords the possibilities of inter- and intralinguistic translations as well. It is, in fact, the poetic dimension of language in general that implies a humanistic, creative, ethical and anthropological form of considering languages in their genuine processual functioning – and not as a tool or a sort of commodity one has to acquire, that is, a sort of discourse that is socially considered as adequate or convenient to such and such an aim and that has become a ready-to-use commodity. In such a context, instead of a citizen the individual has become and has been treated as a consumer.

Of course, this cannot be in principle an inclusive proposal, unless we start thinking about Poetics, and poets, from another point of view. The issue at stake implies envisioning that we are mostly engaged and imprisoned in a kind of thinking and making use of language that rather drives us towards colonization and dehumanization, and I am not only referring to minority groups.

Challenging dominant discourses is, therefore, related to freeing ourselves from a colonized way of making use of language. Freeing ourselves from dichotomies in general: savage versus colonized; written versus oral; oppressors versus oppressed; signifier and signified and so on.

In what concerns language, it is very important to overcome a worn-out way of referring to orality, which in part we inherited from ethnologists: indigenous people would be characterized as primitive and savage users of oral language, whereas civilized people (mainly from the West and the Northern Hemisphere) would be characterized as the most advanced human beings and users of written language. It is worth mentioning a not unimportant detail: users of written language.

It is crucial to think of orality as the force of language that can be manifested in the spoken as well as in the written modality of language, as a kind of thought that can make all the difference when fighting against prejudice, racism and hegemonic discourses in general, and against the hegemony of a special kind of dominant discourse: the academic discourse in its written modality which is averse to the presence of orality. This is because it is averse to the presence of body and emotion in language. It is an absolutely colonizing form of discourse in the way it aims to impede the participation of all of those who do not adhere to its modality, to its structure.

I call attention to the fact that I am not referring to what we call "meaning" or "content" of discourse: I rather refer to its form and its force. To the strength of language that is responsible for its sense, and not only for its meaning.

The word "sense" is particularly meaningful in English (as well as in the Portuguese term "sentido"), because it can also refer to the direction, that is, to the intention a word may carry: every genuine word is intentionally directed to and against someone, because of the force it carries. A force that is not the mere result of what we call – in very general terms – voice; it is the result of poetic, emotional and creative choices involving language, its words, and its possible (or apparently impossible) syntactic orientations.

In the research projects I coordinated I could find in the valorization of indigenous chants and narratives, and in their translation, a way of experiencing language in its more genuine polysemic functioning. The first objective was the translation of the chants and narratives into other languages, but underlying this practice was the conviction of the existence of criticism and metaconsciousness inside translation procedures. This is because by translating poetic texts, one can access a more polysemic form of language and, thus, exercise the human capacity and ability to the use of language, freeing indigenous students from institutionalized ties.

It is to be expected that the ability to deal with language as a freer exercise may construct a freer and more audacious way of dealing with language inside institutions, as is the case of the academy. Knowing this, we can really question many assumptions relating to academic literacy within the academy. Challenging them.

My initial question was thus related to three intuitions I had at the beginning of this work : 1) that features we normally recognize as belonging to orality are often recurrent in texts written by students from indigenous minority groups; b) that accessing academic hegemonic writing cannot be a result of erasing such features, but, instead, must be a result of challenging dominant discourses; c) that translation involves exercising language and must be mostly centred on rhythm, and not on a word-by-word procedure.

In short, I refer here to poetic translation as a free exercise with language, that necessitates:

(a) searching for the many different possibilities of words in the virtuality of language;
(b) experiencing the different possibilities of syntactic arrangements;
(c) comparing different statements and feeling their language force and possible impact;
(d) understanding and feeling more and more the poetic and creative possibilities of language;
(e) understanding in what way poetics involves orality, ethics and politics.

The emphasis on translation in the sense I am dealing with here involves, thus, the emphasis on the necessity of exercising language in a freer way than we do normally in the academy.

An exercise of utmost importance when dealing with voice and with challenging dominant discourses.

A first experience: the construction of a Balatiponé didactic book

Luciano Kezo was twenty-two when he developed research resulting in the construction of a didactic book designed to furnish his people with more knowledge about their language and their culture. He was the first Brazilian indigenous undergraduate to receive support from a prominent scientific foundation with a project related to the construction of a didactic book aimed to be used in his *"aldeia"*. He is one of the only speakers of the Balatiponé language which is considered extinct by UNESCO.

Students coming from Kezo's Umutina community speak Portuguese fluently and they know very little about Balatiponé, which is the language of their ancestors. A fact that happens with any language is that it functions according to different activity circles or semiospheres (Lotman, 2005) which implies differences in syntax and vocabulary. Such a fact can be seen in indigenous communities, where the language exercised when narrating mythical stories is different from the language present in sacred chants.

Something similar to this also happens with Portuguese and English, which are expected to be used following different rules according to different contexts. Because of this fact, though being fluent speakers of Portuguese in their communities, when arriving at the university without the specific training necessary in the use of academic writing and speech – indigenous students can fail and be left behind.

The construction of a didactic book to revitalize Balatiponé language among Kezo's people contributed to his self-esteem and, in an indirect way, to his access to academic writing. It is necessary to emphasize that in cases similar to this one it is very important to form a collaborative partnership between the supervisor and the student in which both learn and exchange knowledge. In such cases, the professor needs to assume a horizontal position (Freire, 2005) in the co-construction of knowledge, understanding that both individuals master, each of them, knowledge which is different and equally important: that is why the project that was submitted to the funding institution was in part written by the undergraduate, and in part written by his supervisor. It is a fact that the project would not have been accepted if only the indigenous undergraduate had written it, because of the demand of a rigidly structured academic writing by such institutions, and also because at that phase in his academic literacy trajectory such a specialized form of writing was not within his domain.

That is why, when we want to challenge dominant discourses, we also need to challenge the way discourses circulate in society. We need to open up ways to valorize alternative forms of knowledge which would not be opened if we remained inside the strict rules of the

status quo. It is also a fact, however, as I have been able to conclude after years of collaborative research, that very often I was timider than the circumstances demanded.

I transcribe below a small mythical narrative taken from Kezo's book.

It is worthwhile underlining some aspects: (1) Brazil was colonized by the Portuguese Empire from the year 1500 until our Independence at the beginning of the 19th century, that is the reason why Portuguese became our official language. (2) Kezo is one of the only speakers of the language of his people – he was able to learn Balatipone from his grandfather who, during the last years of his life, lived with his daughter, Kezo's mother. (3) In order to produce his book, Kezo had to rely on the Portuguese version of the myth, which had been orally repeated by his people in the Portuguese language, and then translated into Balatiponé. He intended to produce a didactic book to revitalize the Balatiponé language and make it known to his people. As his supervisor, I did not know a word of Balatiponé, but I was very familiar with methodologies related to the teaching and learning of languages, so that I could advise him on aspects related to contemporary methodologies of language teaching which are based on texts, and not on grammar and words alone.

Kezo is also an excellent drawer, possessing an artistic ability that is not uncommon among young people from indigenous communities.

O'rebutá barepô, urixá puwazo

Men and women originated from a leaf

> Hindondo nokuteynatono, Balatiponé kiawá moto. Unukukwarekwá ayxoré Haypukú amenú mototoré. Unukwarekwá meyukí, atabé ipualo inyazo, atokwá uri he xakaboe to moto he. Ipúxixinikí axipá. Bolotoximana, amameti mataré, jikixo rinimã pwe arikixi, ouá o ˊhebutá balatiponé. Haypuku kuku aketo, samati balatiponé he amatara ouá ipoxixiniki há xipá.

> [At a distant time, there were no people on Earth, only a big man walked, his name was Haypukú, he was very sad, then he decided to pick some fruit and leaves from the trees, he gathered many of them and left them there. Then he went home. At night, he could hear people chatting. Feeling curious, he went out and saw that people were born from the things he had gathered. Haypukú was very glad and he invited them to his home].

Drawing 1: Men and women originated from a leaf [Drawer: Kezo, a twenty-two-year-old undergraduate from Umutina-Balatiponé community]. O'rebutá=origin   Barepô=man   Puwazo=leaf   urixá=woman   Nokuteynatono=distant   Moto=Earth

A second experience: supervising the coursework of a Xavante undergraduate

I have had many different experiences as a professor and supervisor dealing with undergraduate and graduate indigenous students. One of them, a Xavante student, was very remarkable. In this case, what happened was very different from my experience with Kezo, because Muniz - who was forty-six - and all the community he came from could speak the Xavante language very well. On the other hand, he had more difficulty than Kezo dealing with Portuguese in any academic discourse genre. Such a difference points to the complex character of Brazilian indigenous people. There are a few isolated communities that, up to the present time, have avoided contact with non-indigenous society. Yet there are some people, like Muniz, who are very much immersed in their communities and at the same time also search for contact with non-indigenous people and who see access to universities, for instance, as something they can benefit from. As a consequence there are many who have lost contact with their ancestral languages. Mainly since Brazil's most recent Constitution (1988), indigenous communities have struggled to recover languages and the many other cultural traits they lost – very often brutally and violently due to the actions of colonizers.

First, Muniz told me orally many Xavante mythical narratives. He said that the narratives had never been written down. As they were long narratives, and as I sometimes had difficulty concentrating and listening to the stories without losing the many details they had, I asked him if we could conduct some interviews which I would record. After the interviews, I could understand that the experience of having his speech recorded was important for his self-esteem. He felt he was important for our society.

I then asked him to write the stories down which he did very enthusiastically. I was impressed with the amount he wrote week by week, so that we were already constructing an important part of his academic work. The volume and enthusiasm for his research did not mean, however, that he would be able to write academically. The problem resided in the theoretical chapter. As it was not a scientific research bid – as with Kezo – I could not write parts for him. It was his final graduation work.

I coordinated the LEETRA Research Group, in which Muniz and also João Paulo – a descendant of the Guarani people – participated, and João Paulo could give some support to Muniz who, as stated earlier, was fluent in Portuguese but had some challenges with academic discourse. João Paulo was able to show Muniz important terms and expressions that needed to be added to his text, as Muniz had mastery of his knowledge, but did not know some specialist terms appropriate to the academy, such as "collaborative research", or "field notes".

It is very common among indigenous students to make specific and emotional references to themselves in a way that is more typical of the narrative genres and that would be acceptable as literary chronicles in the so-called civilized world. Chronicles, and not reports, reviews or dissertations.

Anyway, because the Federal University of São Carlos works with special quotas for indigenous students, and because we belong to the Centre of Human Sciences – which is usually more tolerant and receptive to linguistic diversity than other academic centres - we were able to compose a differentiated assessment board and have Muniz's work approved even when it was structured in a form that is not commonly considered academic. It had a first chapter with a biographical characteristic, in which he described his people and explained his previous experiences as an Iprédu in his community; a second one where he reproduced in Portuguese nine myths of his people with illustrations drawn by himself; and a third chapter where he reported some collaborative fieldwork he developed when he went to a public school near our university and explained to six-year-old children certain aspects of his culture. While at the public school, he also produced some drawings on the classroom board and encouraged the children to draw. All of these fieldwork activities developed at the school were part of his research.

In the introduction to his work, he first explained the role of the Iprédu in his community: "In the community I live, I have the social role of Iprédu. The social role of Iprédu is of the observer of the social knowledges of my culture" (Muniz, 2019, my translation). Then he explains the importance of drawings and mentions visible and invisible dimensions to

which the drawings refer– in a way that may seem strange to those who have not been used to intercultural dialogues and whose beliefs are ethnocentrically and rationally centred.

The fact is that when supervising students like Muniz we come into contact with a vast world and worldview with many different knowledges in relation to which the dominant academic discourses reveal all their failure, their insufficiency, their smallness. Unless one cannot accept – because of prejudice, racism, ethnocentrism – that other forms of knowledge exist, in which a vast invisible world is seriously taken into account.

That is also why certain rules of academic literacy appear in their mediocrity, persist in their real function, and forming a racist barrier to impede many other knowledges to circulate.

I take the opportunity to observe that my text corrector found it strange and corrected the term "knowledges" suggesting I should write "bits of knowledge" or "pieces of knowledge". I resisted, however, because for Muniz – and also for us who want to learn more and more with many different peoples and communities – there is not only one knowledge composed of its different pieces. There are, in fact, many different knowledges and we can learn, change and grow humanistically when we recognize and listen to them, and accept that there is much to be known.

I transcribe below an excerpt of a mythological narrative Muniz first told me in Portuguese, and afterwards very proudly wrote down and illustrated. I asked him to send me the Xavante version especially for this publication:

UDZO (Fire)

Durei hã, a Uwe nõri, te re tsaihuri,wede nhiwahuna, dure wede póre, emariwa marî ãna ni´waima rotsarada tãma waihu u õwa, ni´wa marî te manhãrî waihuu õwa. Tahaparimhã Wahu ahöna te tsi utõrîmono, tahawaptsi ma óto podo itsitsihã 'UDZO' (FOGO/fire). Îmorirada udzohã are 'HU u nhib udzo' era (FOGO da Onça humana/fire of the human jaguar) Darada itsihu rehã, udzohã a ôiwede, emariwa a õiwede do ötsu u õwa, udzo date tiwi öri ore te 'TINHIHUDU' (NETO/grandson) ma roti.

Îwapripetse îwatsu u tõ, ni´waimahã ni´wa, Tete atsadanhãrî wamhã, niha aima re inhimbdzebre mono nahã, ãnê tedza îwatsu u, Êtêpo waróna.

[In the old days, they fed on rotten logs and mushrooms, because the people did not understand the experience to produce something interesting. After years passed, they began to discover how to use fire. The first fire that arose was the human jaguar: people had grandchildren, the fire was the jatobá trunk because the jatobá trunk takes time to burn out. Before stealing the fire, he said to his grandchildren:

Listen to me, don't tell anyone, if people ask you how I'm roasting meat, you say like this: It was the hot stone.]
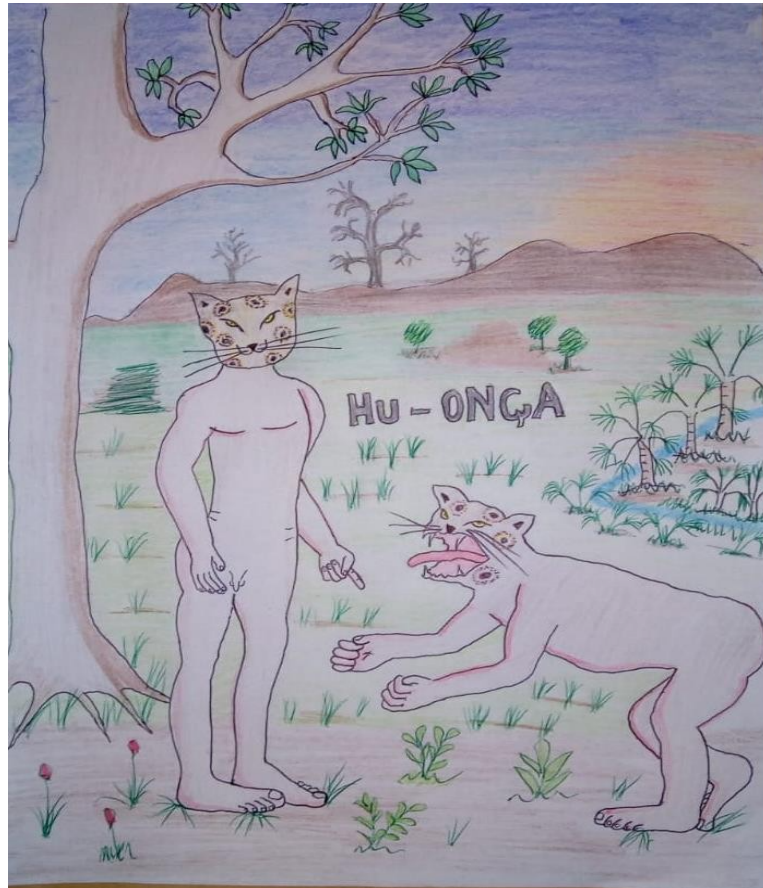
Drawing 2: The first fire that existed was a human jaguar [Drawer: Muniz, a forty-six- year-old Xavante undergraduate]

A third experience: supervising a descendant of the Guarani people

João Paulo Ribeiro does not identify as an indigenous person though he often reports he is a descendant of the Guarani people. As a consequence and different from the two cases mentioned before, he did not benefit from quotas in order to enter the university. He had a Masters' degree related to the translation of the Brazilian Novel "Vidas Secas"[Barren Lives] into Nheengatu language. Nheengatu is an indigenous "língua franca", that is, an indigenous language derived from Tupi that was hegemonic in Brazil when the European colonizers arrived and that is used nowadays mainly in Amazonia by indigenous people belonging to different ethnicities. When he did his Master's degree - and as he frequently made reference to his Guarani grandmother - I advised him that he could develop a PhD Project related to Guarani, and not to Nheengatu, though in fact, he knew more about Nheengatu than about Guarani.

In support, I had accompanied a course Ribeiro offered on Nheengatu language so that I knew something about the general functioning of Nheengatu, its lexicon and its grammar.

But I did not know Guarani. João Paulo knew some Guarani vocabulary and used to say that its grammar was similar to that of Nheengatu language.

The Guarani people have a founding chant called "Ayvu Rapyta" which was compiled by Paraguayan anthropologist León Cadogan who, in 1959, first published a bilingual written version in Guarani/Spanish. The chant narrates the founding of the human language by the ancestor Ñamandu. As a supervisor, I called Ribeiro's attention to the literary or poetic dimension of indigenous chants, a fact that was not assimilated in Cadogan's translation into Spanish. As an anthropologist, Cadogan had a form of reading and translating very much attached to interpretation, to Hermeneutics, which may be partially adequate for anthropological purposes, but which implies the loss of the poetic aspect. From Venuti's perspective, we can say that Cadogan made use of a domestication procedure in his translation of the Guarani chant.

In this sense, as happened in the two other cases I mentioned, with Ribeiro a partnership needed to be constructed in which he dominated more and more through the Guarani language and its specificities while I shaped his use of poetic language – something for which he quickly manifested much ability.

As a matter of fact, Ribeiro had a very free way of speaking the Portuguese language which was connected to a free way of thinking – and which often provoked his colleagues to ask him for explanations. They really felt Ribeiro thought deeply about many different subjects, a fact that called their attention but simultaneously left them in the need of further clarification.

In a certain sense, supervising him involved more subtleties than supervising Kezo or Muniz. Up to a certain point, a conventional assessment board could understand and accept his form of writing without restrictions. There was, however, a certain hybridity, as at the same time as he was able to furnish all the references that are common in academic writing he constructed phrases in an unconventional way for academic taste.

It is worth mentioning that before coming to São Carlos and starting his Masters at the Federal University, he worked as a postman in São Paulo – the greatest metropolis of South America - and had already completed a diploma at the University of São Paulo. He lived for some time in a community on the periphery of São Paulo and was familiar with rap music and rhythm. This fact deserves mention because a characteristic of rap music is its boldness, and I became aware of a certain boldness in Ribeiro's work. He resisted a servile status at the university, in the sense that he was very proud of his origins and his ancestry, so much so that he would not give up his ancestry in favour of academic discourse.

I present below an excerpt of the student's translation of the first chapter of the Guarani chant "Ayvu Rapyta", 'Maino i reko ypy kue', and below that the Portuguese translation 'Beija-Flor sendo' I also propose here a possibility for the translation of the Portuguese version into English, 'Hummingbird being', following Ribeiro's literary proposal:

Maino i reko ypy kue

Ñande Ru Pa-pa Tenonde

guete rã ombo-jera

pytũ yma gui.

Yvára pypyte

apyka apu'a i,

pytũ yma mbyte

re oguero-jera.

Beija-Flor sendo

Nande Ru último pai-

principia teu corpo

embogerá

de há muito tempo noite.

Yvára, entre o pé

redonduzindo assento

entre há muito tempo

noite guerogerá.

Hummingbird being

Nande Ru last father-

beginning your body will

embogera

from long ago night.

Yvára, enter the foot

retracting seat

enter long ago night guerogerá]

It is noticeable that Ribeiro inserted some Guarani words in his Portuguese translation ('ombo- gerá", "oguero-gerá"), giving the Portuguese language creole features; sometimes he followed Guarani syntax in his translation into Portuguese; he also created new words,

like "pai-principia"/father-beginning. Anyway, the fact is that it is mainly contemporary poetry that permits such obvious deviations from standardised forms of the language: but academic literacy is not as flexible.

Conclusions:

A very important issue relates to the fact that many Brazilian indigenous people appreciate and cultivate the traits of confidence and boldness present in their culture and inherited from their ancestors. Another aspect is their ease and skill for the creolization of language. Though characterized as 'violent' and 'savage' by the conquerors, from their own point of view it was the indigenous people who had to pacify the whites. The many conversations I had with Kezo and Muniz always transmitted the impression of friendly people, so that the "indeterminate trajectories" they eventually traced or their tactics always seemed rather spontaneous than planned in advance and with very defined purposes.

In the case of Ribeiro, however, who grew up in the outskirts of São Paulo – and not in an "aldeia", and though he was also a very peaceful person, it seemed he was also more strategic and more aware of the traps, tricks and the minefield that he would have to cross on entering the university. A professor of the assessment board asked him the question, if it was on purpose that he constructed a hybrid text, but he answered negatively. I wonder if hybridity was part of his language and his thought, but above all, he was not shy or ashamed of his social position.

The three indigenous students managed to succeed in the academy without giving up orality as the force that can only persist in our language and our thoughts when we do not replace one language in all of its force with another that will always function as a foreign language, that is, with a language that would never be ours.

Once again, it is necessary to emphasize that I am referring to rhythmic and lexical-syntactic aspects of language, that is, to what we call discourse in the sense of the way phrases are structured and flow, and not necessarily to their ideological components. Such a choice means that our attention is not so much centred on what is said, but rather on how things are said. Challenging dominant discourses from this point of view implies structuring language in a creative and freer way, forming phrases that are not constructed with molds and preestablished patterns.

Certainly, the academic researcher runs a series of risks when performing language in a way that is not usually accepted in the academic circuit, and that is counter to the genres produced at universities (reports, monographs, reviews, thesis) and the papers sent to specialized journals. That is why I understand we must maintain as far as we can the most spontaneous, fluent and oral language if we feel it is our genuine language, and make adaptations here and there to get through the narrow gate of the academy. This is something Ribeiro did effectively.

I defend, thus, that it is mainly the structure of a language that may or may not work as a prison – and not its ideological components per se.

Two final remarks must be presented:

1) Though the main hindrances for indigenous graduates and undergraduates were, as I have remarked, related to academic writing, the excerpts I presented above belong to their work with the translation of mythical narratives and chants, and not to the theoretical part of their academic production. This occurred since I wanted to show to readers the richness of their knowledge and their cultural abilities, which can only benefit the academy if we really practice an interculturally tolerant and plurilingual dialogue. Furthermore, I believe, as a linguist, that we need to mobilize and unleash the skills related to language with an agile methodology free of impediments, and not imposing a model of language that must be followed. This approach can cause the stigma and more difficulties of expression. Apart from the fact that it involves an unethical posture.

2) When referring to the hindrances present in the academy, I do not intend to accuse professors and editors of being insensitive, rude or cruel. They do the work they understand they should do – and of course, they may change their position with time.

In this sense, I point out that the conventional academic tendency towards the erasure of orality may be seen as a form of control, that is, a form of shaping literacy practices in a negative and pernicious way, thus preventing subjects from being transformed and transforming society. I thus defend that multilingualism per se is not a guarantee for decolonial praxis in Higher Education, as we can also conclude with Ritchie's words, in this volume, when she affirms that "translanguaging is insufficient on its own as decolonial pedagogy" (p.57). The main issue is not related only to the presence of a variety of languages at the university. The issue is also related to the various discourse genres and discourse practices they normally pertain to, for instance, the genres of religious chants and mythological narratives. Languages, in general, cannot be reduced to vocabulary and grammar, but must be seen, considered and valued inside the genuine processes of which they are part.

After all, only then, feeling valued and recognized in our languages and our cultures, can any of us traverse other territories in ways that transports and translates into other languages and discourse genres, drawing on the rhythm and force which announces, positively, our genuine presence.

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Decolonial
Subversions

Creative Nonfiction and Stand-up Comedy as Alternative Forms of Decolonial Scholarship

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Abstract

The following article discusses the potential of creative writing as an alternative form of writing in academia. I ground the importance of such a form of writing in my experience of writing comedic and creative nonfictional accounts during my doctoral research. Influenced mainly by Feminist and Decolonial thought, I attempt to lay bare the subversive nature of such personal forms of writing in what may seem a rigidly defined academia. Ergo, the article holds a rather unconventional structure, as the discussion moves between my experience and the analysis of relevant theoretical literature in what may seem a personal style of writing. I ground my argument in the unfolding of truth from the Other's standpoint, the linguistic and the cultural richness that the stories present us with and the diverse stylistic discourses that such creative forms of writing bring into the rigid scholarly discourse that we are used to. This enables linguistic diversity to take place and to provide counter storytelling to colonial power situations that we encounter. Stand-up comedy in particular creates a space for honest critique that also develops our counter narratives. These creative forms of writings are not simply a biographical documentation of the Self, but can be a rich site for delivering critical, cultural, and linguistics analysis of complex narratives.

Keywords: academia, Algeria, autoethnography, decoloniality, feminism, humour, Othering, stand-up comedy, stereotypes, the Self, Western/indigenous knowledge.

ملخص

تناقش المقالة التالية إمكانات الكتابة الإبداعية كشكل بديل للكتابة في الأوساط الأكاديمية. أؤكد أهمية هذا النوع من الكتابة إستناداً على تجربتي في كتابة نصوص كوميدية وإبداعية واقعية خلال إعداد رسالة الدكتوراه. متأثرة بشكل أساسي بالفكر النسوي والديكلونيالي، أحاول الكشف عن الطبيعة التحررية لمثل هذه الأنواع من الكتابات الشخصية في ما قد يبدو وسطا أكاديميا جد صارم. لهذا تحمل المقالة بنية غير تقليدية إلى حد ما، حيث ينتقل النقاش بين تجربتي وتحليل أعمال أدبية ونظريات ذات الصلة فيما قد يبدو أسلوبًا شخصيًا في الكتابة. أقوم بتأسيس حجتي في استعمال هذا المنظور في كشف الحقيقة من وجهة نظر الآخر، في الثراء اللغوي والثقافي الذي تقدمه لنا القصص، والخطابات الأسلوبية المتنوعة التي تجلبها مثل هذه الأشكال الإبداعية للكتابة في الخطاب الأكاديمي الصارم الذي اعتدنا عليه. هذا النوع من الكتابات يبرز التنوع اللغوي يمنح مجال للرواية المضادة والمستنكرة لحالات القوة الاستعمارية التي نواجهها. تخلق الكوميديا الارتجالية على وجه الخصوص مساحة للنقد الصادق الذي يطور أيضًا من سرد الرواية المضادة. هذه الأشكال الإبداعية من الكتابات ليست مجرد توثيق للسيرة الذاتية، ولكن يمكنها أن تكون منظورًا غنيًا لتقديم التحليل النقدي والثقافي واللغوي للروايات المعقدة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأكاديميا ، الجزائر ، علم الكتابة الذاتية ، إزالة الاستعمار (الديكلونيالي)، النسوية ، الفكاهة ، الآخر ، كوميديا الارتجالية ، الصور النمطية ، الذات ، المعرفة الغربية / الأصلية.

Introducing This "I"

I did stand-up comedy in my early twenties when I was an undergrad student in Algeria, as a part of my course assessment, and I thought I left it behind me. Prior to that, my undocumented influences were dominated by female relatives and carers. The female quarters that I grew up in and had access to as a young girl was a rich site of humour; from the Hammam (public baths), the tailors, to weddings and social events. I was also influenced by the comedic sets that were aired on National TV by Algerian comedians; mainly Hassan Al-Hassani. He was commonly known for his character Bou-bagra (son-of-cow) which depicts the persona of a farmer who is frustrated with the socioeconomic situation of the country.

In his theatrical or cinematic pieces, he was outspoken about the struggles of working-class Algerians particularly after the independence, which my family and I are not estranged to. For example, his dramatic irony film "Rihlet Chouitar – Chouitar's Journey - 1976" narrates the story of a working-class family from a farming background who decided to move to the city to better their lives. The family ties ended up being severed; as the son who was mesmerised by the vibrant city decides to remain there, whilst his father, mother, and younger sister return to the village. However, these three characters were shocked to see and to know what modernity did to their village, and how their land was no longer there. Like Chouitar and his family, whether in Algeria or abroad, on a daily basis or through my writings, I navigate different narratives about me sometimes successfully and at times not so much.

The comedy in this film was implicit and dark as the audience holds an omniscient view of the difficult lives of all characters whether in the city or the village. Despite holding constant disapproval and contempt of their living situations, the characters paint a jolly picture to others when they meet which Chouitar who was too naïve to recognise. The film also depicts the constant conflicts that are fuelled by stereotypical ideas about people from the city or the village towards each other. At times, such conflicts rise immediately after pinpointing the different dialects and visual attire that signposts the characters' origins. Colonial history in Algeria taught me a lot about multilingualism and how different languages have a varied access to power and visibility. Chouitar for instance could not shake away his rural accent. So even when he changed his traditional attire to a suit, he was still made out for being someone from a village the second he spoke, compared to his brother-in-law who managed to learn a different dialect and new skills. Chouitar decides to return to his village after he had the terrible realisation that he was sold into a life of modern slavery and false hopes. His dream of being a rich businessman with a kind heart that supports others was farfetched. This decolonial work does not only depict the lived experiences of working-class Algerians after the independence in indigenous dialects, but also exposes the geo-political and the socioeconomic structures that connect with colonial heritage of the country (i.e., the master-slave dialectic).

Before my stand-up in Algeria, I led a rather liminal life because of my background; an honours student from a working-class family. Ah- Yes, a girl too! That is always helpful. I arrived in academia through a scholarship where I started my explorations of Othering through lived experiences. I think I should have said "Western" academia because I am visibly a Muslim (I wear the Muslim headscarf - hijab) from a country with a long and painful colonial heritage – Algeria. Even though I did not live through the colonial era, my grandparents took an active role in the Algerian National War for Independence. Those who survived always narrated their struggles to me growing up, which explains the colonial extension of this in my work.

At first, I began my qualitative research with a quantitative research background. It is only fair to say that I started my doctoral research with a "shallow conception" of what qualitative research is. Interviews were what I sought first, but once I engaged in the analysis process, it became evident to me that it is impossible to investigate the material without "the lens of the self". It was then that I engaged in auto-ethnographic writings of my own experiences of Othering. My auto-ethnographic reflections helped me understand the critical and uncomfortable nature of my topic. Thus, researching Othering in an academic setting where everyone knew what I was exploring was no longer an option that I could seek. My identity as a Ph.D. student who was researching constructions of Othering through lived experiences in my institution made individuals cautious around me. At times, I even felt "kindly" isolated; I had to find another setting to work in and develop my interviewing and researching skills.

I got a part-time job at a local fast-food restaurant. It is there that I maintained a profile of a postgraduate student researching language and communication. That did not mean that I

thought that this fieldwork would eradicate my influence in the setting and on the results (Davies, 1999/2002, p. 4), but it allowed me to get rid of "the researcher status" that proved to be hindering and threatening in my academic setting to collecting relevant materials.

During that period, my awareness of what the setting necessitates heightened as my presence prolonged. Observing, reflecting, acting, reacting, and learning from different situations ignited back "my comedic skills" that I needed to create bounds and to access the "backstage lives" of my workmates. I found the banter and the humour in that setting were reflections of the politics of lived experiences; resistance to othering, and at times othering to gain control and structure. Between management and employees and between employees themselves. The fast-food restaurant was a rich slice of the complex reality that we live in, and humour was more than just an organisational tool.

Linguistic Diversities in Creative Nonfiction and Stand-up Comedy

As a PhD student, an Other in Western academia, I grappled with the normative ways of academic writing that I was expected to demonstrate. Drawing widely on autoethnographic and creative forms of writing assisted me in expressing the complexities of my positionality, my identity and doctoral work. But most importantly, these alternative forms of writing brought in nuanced understandings of abstract concepts and detailed accounts of lived experiences that transcends the boundaries of time, space, languages, and culture.

I think there can be a rather monolithic interpretation of what autoethnography or creative nonfictional forms of writing cover. My interpretation of linguistic diversity in these forms of writing covers; (a) whose story is it (which extend to presents the reader with social and cultural diversity), (b) what language is used, (c) what kind of discourse and repertoire these untold stories work with. The source of knowledge in Western academy has always been white, middle-class man; hence gendered, empowered, able-body and rich, and so was the traditional view of knowledge. Such views and forms smothered the Other's potential to speak up and about their indigenous knowledge and views of their world. Even though, as a PhD student, I used mainly English in my creative nonfiction and comedy – which might be frowned upon in the view of some scholars from Non-Western backgrounds, I see this use as an opportunity to educate the West about me as the Other. These artistic presentations break the normative ways of thinking, being, making knowledge and researching in academia. It also presents us with undocumented truths and sense of agency from the Other allowing for a decolonial praxis to take place and bringing an equal footing to this disregarded indigenous knowledge. In a similar vein, Martins (2023) in this Special Issue writes about the how crucial it is to employ language in "a free, poetic, radical way" that challenge the dominant, existing discourses in a Brazilian university.

It is worth noting that by coloniality I refer to the oppressive views and ways of perceiving and researching the Other not just the historical colonial act of expansion. And by

decolonial praxis, I refer to the "decolonial turn" by (Maldonado-Torres, 2017) the paradigm that disrupts the colonial heritage of power that remains rooted in ways of knowing, doing, and being in the world. I agree with Atallah and Dutta (2022, p. 434), "Colonial structures/systems are predicated on recurring patterns of domination and violence". In my situation, that does not only include the Algerian French colonial conflict that I inherited through oral literature, but also the set expectations of how to write and to research in the Eurocentric perspective of knowledge. This latter point is built on the idea of social classification based on race that capitalism worsened (Quijano, 2000, p. 215). Therefore, coloniality is fuelled by the idea of differentiation between the idea of human Self as opposed to the dehumanised Other(s). Add to that the power created and gained with European expansion which contributed to the knowledge perception (Maldonado-Torres, 2017, p. 434) and visibility.

I must explain that by creative nonfiction I mean the creative format in which stories about the self and others are collected and shared. Thus, the creative covers the literary style in which a story is told. This literary, creative style allows the writer to present the reader with a detailed, unexpected, and risqué subject matter. In my experience of writing creative nonfiction and stand-up comedy, I reported on my own lived experience and others' that I interviewed. When I am writing about an ethnographic event for the first time, I do not have the clear-cut vision that is expected until I have finished writing the piece. However, I am well-aware that the two have distinct styles of writing that may share commonalities, such as storytelling, but overall comedic discourse uses more puns, sarcasm and plays with the "truth" through exaggeration and dramatization to draw laughs.

Meanwhile, creative nonfiction attempts to bring forward a sense of re-living the research and walking into the data, so the reader can have their own interpretation, and are able to see how I arrived at my own understanding of this slice of social reality. An example of walking into data is when I narrated an incident where my male friend and colleague at work Hamada was objectified by two females on the volleyball court. Such account encounters the idea that man cannot be subjected to an objectifying gaze.

> After an intense point scored by Hamada and I when we thought we almost lost the ball to the other team, I sat down next Francisca, and Omar joined the game to replace me. Francisca started: "He's a bit skinny, but the strength on him!", while starring at Hamada's body. Her friend - at that time who I did not know her name nodded while looking at me and said: "you guys are very strong". I did my awkward laugh while hoping that they would not pick it up, and I said: "A-AH! Thanks?!" Then, Francisca continued: "It's always the skinny one who comes in packing, right Jess?" Mutual almost hysterical laughter rose. I understood the reference, but I found it hard to laugh considering that I know the person they are referring to. So, I inquired to cover the tracks of disapproval from off my face: "Packing?" Jess replied: "Yeah! You know...", she said while pointing at her crotch. Francisca then continued: "This is only how he plays volleyball. Euuf! Can you imagine how he's in bed" Jess giggling away: "GOD!" I then felt the urge to tell them: "I can't actually. He's my co-worker and my friend." An awkward, silent

> second filled the place, then Francisca started: "You work with that thing?". Jess
> bursted into laughter: "Well done, sis!" (Souleh, 2022, p.111).

This account shows how creative nonfiction relies heavily on the descriptions of places, individuals, how they felt they communicated and how their stories impacted me as a part of their setting as a form of reflexive practice.

An anecdotal example of the uncertainty when writing creatively happened during a conference talk by a British academic that was hijacked by a colonial racist discourse from the audience. The presenter's work was in support of the similar complexities that both the Other and the Self have, and how we should be aware of this, and accommodating to the presence of the Other in shared spaces and the world. The presenter proceeded to give an example of the noticeable Algerian community at that event. A member of the audience interjected: "what if these foreigners want to change the face of the UK?" The presenter requested clarification and the same member replied: "what if they, Algerians in this case, decided to illegalise alcohol? Change the rules!" Before the presenter could say anything, I said: "but we have bars in Algeria; some are illegal underground market, and some are licensed five stars hotels". Feeling cornered this lady then said: "both my parents were born in Algeria during the French colonisation, and they told me a lot about Algeria, so I know what it is *REALLY* like there." Before I could say: "I lived there for my whole life." The speaker intervened to defuse the situation.

Feeling betrayed and silenced, I turned to my safe place; my diary, and I start writing about the event. Two hours later, I had my comedic set and it read something like this:

> The other day, I had a discussion with this French lady that opposed for people like
> me - "Algerians" in particular, to come to the UK. I don't know if you can see the
> irony already; French in the UK! Who speaks about "UK matters"?! O-K-A-Y!!!!! Not
> judging, WHICH I AM! But, seriously, mind your own fucking business. She said:
> "What if they decided to illegalise wine and alcohol?!" In my head, I was like: "what
> the F… Are you Snooki from Jersey Shore?!" (Souleh, 2022, p. 252).

Someone who is not familiar with stand-up comedy materials may see it as an angry rant. Thus, it is emotional and subjective which disqualifies it from being a scientific, rigorous work. Basically, it is the same critique that autoethnography received before it was finally seen as the systematic study of one's life and the situatedness of these experience in a larger cultural sphere of thought (Canagarajah, 2012). Similarly, comedians rely on their observation of reality, their awareness of creative linguistic formats, and self-analysis whilst being aware of the different conflicting discourses and ideologies. This qualifies it to be a complex and rich ethnographic study that is linguistically, individually, socially, and ideologically diverse. In the case of the previous example, the conflicting discourse is present when the French lady in the UK imposes my presence as a migrant. The use of "Snooki from Jersey Shore" is an exaggeration of a stereotypical image about "the dissolute West" since "Snooki" is the name of a character from an MTV reality show "Jersey Shore" that is outspoken about her alcohol consumption and intimate relationships.

Stand-up comedy as creative nonfictional writing is entrenched in resistance and politics. Such forms do not simply transmit the emotional status of the writer, or the mood in which the events took place in, but also utilises their material, social, cultural, and linguistic knowledge of the worlds. These in return shape their view of the world and political stand. For example, in Dağtaş' study (2016, p.27) of humour in Turkey's Gezi protests found that the social frameworks of political expressions were reworked through "mimicry, inversion, subversion and reproduction". We must understand that humour has a role that extends beyond "entertainment", it can be a complex means of delivering social critique. As Tsakona and Popa (2011, p. 1) put forward "politics can be represented in humorous manner and humour can have a serious intent".

In understanding the outcomes of humour, Sorensen (2008, p. 180) summarises it as follows. Humour can either (1) provoke and ridicule to increase the pressure on the oppressors, (2) have cathartic quality for the oppressed (which connects to Freudian view of humour as a release), (3) decrease the oppressors' reactions. My stand-up does not simply provide me with a cathartic release. In my stand-up, when I deconstructed the joke about the French lady, I can see I tried to punch holes in her argument about the presence of "foreigners", by pointing out that she is one. I also reproduce the stereotypical image of her as a "dissolute West" which is no different of her image of me "the Oriental, religious, fanatic". In using both techniques, I aim to ridicule her discriminatory agenda and silence her for good.

Feminist Autoethnographic Selves and Indigenous Truths

> At first, I found it hard not to look when people are moving around me naked like the day they were born, but with biological features of adults. My mom found an almost excluded corner in the hammam near the running waters, and she said: "let's sit here." […] she turned to me and said: "nobody is looking, but you. People are busy with themselves". […] I took off my towel cautiously, and she started bathing me (Souleh, 2022, p. 30).

Whilst the common assumption is that autoethnography generated in the West, my seventeen years old self who grew up reading autoethnographically written essays, and creative forms of writings in Arabic from Feminist writers from North Africa and the Middle East strongly disagrees. I must say I only knew Ellis and other researchers when I started my doctoral research in England. Since then, I have been wrestling with my reference list, many times, and unfortunately, I took the cowards' way out, and I gave up on translations and referencing people that Western academics and academia were not built for.

It is true that I arrived at writing autoethnographically from my research development, but I was immensely encouraged by my readings of Fatema Mernissi (2001), *Scheherazade Goes West*. It is not simply the writer's background that I connect with, but her reflexive

retelling of her intercultural experiences with different others encouraged me to speak up and about mine. Her quest of exposing the "sexual fantasies" attributed to the East by Westerners relates to Yegenoglu (1998) text about *Colonial Fantasies*. Yegenoglu (1998) views envisage the intersection that the Oriental female body is part of. Ergo, when I write about the personal, I write from within the intersections that I am from, and the layers of oppression that I recognise – as a Muslim woman of colour from a working-class colonial space. After all, our lives are fashioned by our racial, social, economic status and gender, but not determined by these traits (West, 2016, p. 38). One of the memories that Mernissi's writing unlock in me was the construction of the Hammam (public baths); where this image of the Oriental female body was used and abused by white male middle class writers and painters. Each of their Western productions depicted an exotic image of the female body from the master's point of view. Writing about my first experience in the Hammam "attempts to overthrow these undermining constructions away and to give voice to the postcolonial subject that was smothered decades ago" (Souleh, 2022, p. 27), as an image of people getting on with a daily chore in their lives and not as sexual beings rubbing up on each other for the pleasure of their captives.

The thought that autoethnographic writing is a self-indulging trip has been used to silence alternative forms of writing that are deemed as a subjective knowledge-making. However, my arguments for the importance of autoethnography lies in the fresh acuities that indigenous autoethnography in specific provides from counter-story telling that holds both new insights and diverse linguistic repertoire. "The indigenous researcher recovers subjugated knowledges, that helps create spaces for the voices of the silenced to be expressed and 'listened to', and that challenges racism, colonialism, and oppression" (Tuhiwai Smith, 2021, p. 253-254). Similarly, creative nonfictional writing forms do not only tell stories, but they also acknowledge the power of story in marginalised groups, as a disruptive narrative in the mainstream media that devalue the Other's consciousness and voice (Delgado, 2013, p. 71). As an indigenous researcher in the West, I bring the knowledge that I grew up with into academia to allow voices from the margins to have a space and to confront all forms of oppression whether gendered or racial. Even though, in Algeria, I may not qualify in the view of some to be "indigenous" because I am perceived as an Arab who arrived to the Amazigh area with the arrival of Muslims. I still see myself as an indigenous researcher because my great-grand parents held strong political grounds against the French colonisation that were passed on to me.

Being able to write experiences from within has the potential to challenge the existing knowledge that is grounded in the myth of the rationale white male researcher. Such forms of writings hold a disruptive power. Being consciously aware of the insider layers of our oppressions and privileges and reflexively writing about these issues is an alternative form of writing, rethinking and "unearthing a hidden or unacknowledged or unnoticed life" (Krog and Brown, 2011, p. 57). Similarly, stand-up comedy is not just a "form of self-analysis" (Smith, 2018, p.14), but also a form of writing and performing visible subversions that connects with the disregarded lived experiences from the periphery. This is

N. E. Souleh / *Decolonial Subversions* SI *Decolonising the university and the role of linguistic diversity*, 2023, 31–47

Decolonial
Subversions

why; feminist comedic materials include not just the discussion of discriminatory behaviours that is grounded in their lived experiences, but also uncover the rebellious side of feminine writing in speaking up. Female comics introduce us to subversive acts of comedy that are grounded in the lived and are supportive of the marginalised.

The Laughing Medusa: Standing up in Academia

I see creative forms of writing as a form of indigenous ethnography. As I write comedically and creatively, I engage in disrupting the narratives surrounding me as a Muslim, woman of colour in the West, where most of the establish knowledge about me comes from travelling, middle-class white man from centuries ago. My interests whether in comedy or creative nonfiction are seen as an uncontrollable, frivolous, random acts that do not reflect the critical nature of academic discourse. Nevertheless, I see the potential of these art forms in "speak[ing] truth to power" (Said, 1993, p. 85), bringing the nuanced, marginalised, and complex realities to the ivory tower of knowledge where the silver-spoon fed white males laid down and wrote about "the mindless lives of the laboured help". Stand-up comedy is a crucial voice in research with the potential to assist us in learning and "unlearning" (Cochran-Smith, 2002, p. 5) the narratives surrounding us and others. Thus, it can be regarded as a form of counter storytelling. Gillborn (2008, p. 31) writes about the importance of counter story-telling in "minoritized cultures", as it unpacks the mythical ideas and prejudgements about the self and others, which "turn dominant assumptions on their head". This subversive nature is very much established in the Feminist and Postcolonial research, as "fixed" representations are challenged because they do not consider the [Other] "in a positive light" (Memmi, 1974/2021, p. 127).

In Feminist works, autoethnographic practices can disrupt the constant broadcasting of "controlling images" (Hill Collins, 2002, p. 69) that surrounds us, and grounds our knowledge of the world in a "single story" (Adichie, 2009) about truth. Building on the words of Adichie, the danger of a single story is that we succumb to the notion of a universal truth, and we become complacent towards the notion of knowledge. It is my understanding "the first myth that framed our knowledge of the world, and blindly guided us into a swamp of colonial misery, sexual and cultural stereotypes is the myth of the European, rational, white male" (Souleh, 2022, p. 188). This became our single story of research and truth before the rise and the access to Feminist and Postcolonial thought. This view left us with a "fixed, froze, and often false image" about others (Kumaravadivelu, 2008, p. 50), as we forget that Othering can be "the result of partial and distorted representations" (Laclau, 2007, p. 10).

Having a social imagination is key to writing comedic materials as you are thinking beyond the realms of reality and about social reality itself. I think this is what rigid academic works lack – *imagination*. I think a crucial reference that supports the engagement with the

funny and the imaginative is Helen Cixous' *The Laugh of Medusa*. She writes: "Women's imaginary is inexhaustible, like music, painting, writing: their stream of phantasms is incredible" (1976, p. 876). Following this statement, the feminine writing is not just to introspect ourselves, but to also to tap into our imaginative skills. Therefore, Cixous' work is an invitation to women in particular to participate in the feminine writing as a way of standing up against the violent exclusion that is exhibited towards them, which drives them away from their bodies, the world they live in, and eventually scholarship.

Humour in the female quarters where I grew up was no different from male comedy. At times it was outrageously crude, and other times secretly witty. It will either make your drink burst out of your nostrils or it will take you a good two seconds for the laughter to start build up in your belly before you give up on breathing. Intercourse jokes flew right off my head at that age, but it made the women have a bellyful of laughter, and the young girls either secretly chuckle or look away in disgust. This might be difficult to hear for some, even though there was no male member in those quarters, the punchlines had plenty of those in them. Feminist humour does not shy away from the use of profane language, as it is recognised as a part of our linguistic repertoire and social life. However, it is not the norm to use profanity in one's comedy to be perceived as feminist. The use of obscene language is up for taking depending on the comic, and the persona they are trying to draw. It is worth noting that Feminist humour is not solely taken up by female comics.

My comic representation (persona) is a reflexive account of my feminist, Muslim and decolonial self that does not adhere to the prescribed ideas about it. With that in mind, it is difficult not to consider stand-up as a performance of activism as well. The following is a piece of my stand-up routine where I challenge a French teenager at the restaurant where I worked, pointing out the inevitable result of colonialism in Algeria.

> In my job, I get to meet people from different backgrounds. Once, I had this group of French teenagers. I started speaking to them in French. And, this guy didn't like it, he was like: "Pfff! Is this England or France!? What must a person do to hear some English around here?" I was like: "Well, your dickhead of grandpa shouldn't have showed at our shores guns blazing!" (Souleh, 2022, p. 258).

In this example, I ignore the fact that not all Algerians speak French. I certainly started to lose mine since I moved to England. However, I assert the domino effect that the violent coloniality had on Algeria which caused "the mild discomfort" of this teenager who was not satisfied with my ability to converse with him in French on his visit to an English-speaking country. I was mocking him which can be interpreted as if I was blaming him for a coloniality that he did not have a direct hand in. Certainly, the use of profanity asserts that; however, I would like to think that I am pushing him to rethink his decolonial turn.

My stand-up, as many feminist comedians is, is crude, ribald, dark, and sarcastic. Not because I want it to befit the expectations that "male dominated comedy" has drawn, but because it is an extension of myself that social norms try to dis-acknowledge its presence, tame it if not silence it for good. My stand-up acts as a subversive statement that disturbs the

centre's knowledge of me, as an attempt to challenge narratives about me visibly and critically. The following comedic piece is an example of challenging the stereotypical views about me as an inert, oriental woman and the abusive man.

> Once, I hurt my wrist, so I had to wear a splint. In the city centre, this shop keeper asked me: "Oh! Dear! What happened to you?" I decided for the fun of it to tell her: "my husband beat me up." And she said: "Oh! My God! What a savage!" I said: "WOAT? Why?! Christian beats Anastasia in the bedroom all the time, but all they say about him "he is stud".

Christian and Anastasia are two characters from a series of fiction books entitled "Fifty Shades of Grey" (James, 2011) that tell the story of this couple who engage in erotic practices of bondage, discipline, dominance, and submission. My knowledge of such sexualised item from popular culture reference defies the assumptions about me. The social and cultural norms surrounding me as a woman prohibits or looks down at me if I use profanity or in this case insinuate at intimate matters. Therefore, the discussion of the intimate whether from our bodily functions to our politicised bodies is also frown upon and silenced. For that reason, writing and performing comedy is a creative, subversive act that encounters stereotypical narratives about the comic, and recentralises their subjective stories in a time where mainstream, degrading representations are the norm. Stand-up comedy presents the audience with a counter story-telling that is grounded in the comedian's experience of the world and thus a form of decolonial praxis that brings stereotypical ideas about the Self and the Other into discussion.

Linguistic Diversities and Decoloniality

There are hidden riches to these artful forms of writing; (a) of a narrative, which we tackled in view of the indigenous ethnographer, and which Parvin (2023) explores further in her contribution to this Special Issue, Parvin introduces us to narratives of multilingualism in Canada as a person of colour who attempts to rupture the colonial heritage of English. (b) of the language used (multilingual, vernaculars or registers), and (c) of the material culture that comes with it (descriptions of the surroundings and human practices). These linguistic and non-linguistic diversities, when and if investigated, brings to light new forms and views of, and about knowledge that challenges our monolithic, able-bodied, gendered, aristocratic views of the world and knowledge about different Others. Like indigenous ethnography, I consider writing creatively in academia to be a form of decolonializing the normative scholarly language; thus, a novel intake of what linguistic diversity can be. To bring change and awareness of the decolonial and feminist issues, we must recognise that "the protocols of academic convention are biased and partisan. The dominant conventions are informed by modernist and Euro-centric assumptions. Notable, also, is the power of English as the academic lingua franca" (Canagarajah, 2021, p. 2).

This means that in western thought, the travel writings that ethnography yielded came from the study of the Other as a subject, different and distant from the Self communicated

mainly via English from the lens of contempt and inferiority. This sets a rather conservative and constraining frame of thought and knowledge-building, as the Other is a complex entity that is also a part of a linguistically, culturally rich environment. The following is extract from my first time in a Hammam which introduces the reader to the surroundings and the recorded human interactions that in my opinion Western views failed to communicate in their exoticized version of investigating Eastern Hammams from afar.

> My mother prepared two baskets for us to carry. She placed fruits in one basket with a bottle of mineral water, some clean cloths, and covered it with clean white towels... In a small bucket that rotated between my grip and my sister's, my mother placed: soap, shampoo, "Kasa" (A thick glove used to rub the skin with after being soaked with water to remove the dead skin off), bath sponges, rose water and "Talik" (A white powder that is a mixture of different aromatics. It is applied mainly under the armpits and near private parts after being cleaned and dried thoroughly. It keeps you fresh for longer). Some Westerners seem to think of the Eastern hammam as hundreds of naked women gathered in a small steamy place, bodies touching and rubbing against each other. This can be seen in the painting of "Le Bain Turc -Turkish Baths" by Ingres (1863). In fact, one of the women in that painting was cupping the breast of another, while listening to music being played by another naked woman where other naked women were dancing. I think such picture magnifies the erotic vision about the East in general, but such depiction is not even remotely true. In the hammam – at least my hammam, I have noticed a great deal of physical distance that I did not notice before when people had their clothes on in their daily, regular life. To the extent which that the usual warm greeting of hugging and kissing another woman on cheeks was replaced by warm greeting words only (Souleh, 2022, pp. 28,32).

Although, the text is mainly in English, I introduce the reader to the accompanying material culture; Kassa and Talik, and I describe the human interaction in that setting. This is to question the Western views of public bathing, to demystify it, and to break this sexualised perception. These thorough descriptions of this social event are a subversive account of a discarded indigenous knowledge. Very much like Ngugi wa Thiong'o's articulation of "the importance of vernaculars and multimodal art forms in social transformation. He discusses the role of affective dispositions such as memory, pain, and hope in resistance" (Canagarajah, 2020, p.1). My language is an extension of my identity and life history which is in a constant clash with dehumanising ideas about me.

Similarly, comedic discourse comes with its own linguistic diversity. Every comedian develops their own linguistic repertoire depending on their identity, life history and their comedic persona. My persona is an exaggeration of one character in me in particular; "honesty turned to bluntness". Such a persona is in direct contrast to the perceived image of me that was drawn by white, middle-class travellers and is accessible through mainstream media; the submissive. Thus, my identity is disruptive of the stereotypical images about hijabi Muslim women. This is why my linguistic repertoire does not shy away from the use

N. E. Souleh / *Decolonial Subversions* SI *Decolonising the university and the role of linguistic diversity*, 2023, 31–47

Decolonial
Subversions

of profanity. As a polyglot some of the punchlines or details in the set-up of joke are not in English either.

One of many feminists' comedic examples is Sarah Millican's *Chatterbox* (2011/2019); which is a rich linguistic set. As background to her special, drawings of a male sexual organ and muffins were displayed. This refers to her being outspoken about her intimate life, her body image and love for cakes. Millican was outspoken about intimacy, her living alone naked, and other life instances where she breaks from the social norms and expectations that are drawn on her female body. She says:

> A male acquaintance of mine with whom I've never had a dalliance. Said to me: "you know what? If you lost a couple of stone… (she pauses, and audience laughs)" – I said: "the rest of this better be a fucking equation" (audience laughs). He said: "we could probably go out". I said: 'Only if the couple of the stone I lost was me fucking head'.

Millican's humour does not simply defy the social norms imposed on women's bodies, but also introduces us to a different discourse that is not common in academic genre. In this case, it includes grammar, lexicon, and her northern accent which cannot be transmitted to the readership through writing. Comedy in this sense is an extension of Millican's embodied experience and self; after all, a comic persona is a mean for introducing social critique.

Concluding Thoughts

In conclusion, I think creative modes of writing whether nonfictional or comedic form a multilingual, decolonial praxis for academia. These modes of writing constitute; (a) the practice of truth and storytelling from indigenous research perspectives, (b) the introduction of cultural and linguistic richness indigenous to the narrative, and (c) the diverse discourses encourage and encounter the normative ways of making and presenting knowledge.

As mentioned earlier, I am aware of my use of English and how it contributes to the continuity of language coloniality. However, I hope the readership will be forgiving, as I use this colonial language and discourse as an attempt to educate the West about the different Other(s). I consider my ability to speak English as an arsenal for change. This connects with what Bishop (2021, p.370) explores in her role as an indigenous researcher; a translator, a mediator, and a confronter. My struggle as multilingual researcher persists. Translating original texts is a fulltime job, let along convincing academics of the worth of my indigenous knowledge and system of inquiry. This seems to be a key struggle in decolonial works, as "it takes energy to carefully explain that there are multiple knowledge systems" (ibid, p. 369). I feel this is partially what pushed Eddo-Lodge (2017) to write her controversial work "why I'm no longer talking to white people about race". The pressure is crippling at many times as I attempt to explain from within a system that does not recognise my narrative as worthy. Whilst I want to go past this, and explore other routes within my indigenous research

interests, my worry is that when I am writing these words, another nutcase comes and misuses this to further their agenda.

Still, in my doctoral thesis, I tried to bring forward the indigenous understandings through providing explanations in English as a form of inclusive practice to those who do not speak the local languages that I am fluent in. Examples of this are explaining the material cultural such as Kasa and Talik, or the linguistics and historical interpretations of keywords or punchlines that the participants or I use in our mother tongues. I used footnotes, literation, and translation to explain words from local languages. These keywords were selected because either my participants' or I used it or felt it was a key component to discussing their lived experiences. Sometimes, I wrote long paragraphs as a part of the analysis of these keywords which had specific socio, cultural or historical relevance within my work.

In the colonial university, autoethnography is now recognised as a method of inquiry within the interpretive paradigm that focuses on the study of the self from cultural, political, and social constructs. However, from a decolonial indigenous perspective, "at times [it] lacks a certain esoterically, metaphysical, and w(holistic) edge specific to an indigenous reality" (Whitinui, 2014, p. 461). This is why stand-up comedy as other methods of creative practices provide frameworks for different Other(s) to bring forward and discuss their indigenous realities and knowledge making. As I mentioned earlier, my early experiences of humour were documented in the female spaces that I grew up in.

Writing creative nonfiction or comedy is not simply an extension of the biography of the self. It embodies the social, historical, and cultural counter storytelling of the indigenous selves allowing for a critical view and resistance of the existing knowledge about the Other. The experience of the self holds historical, cultural, social, and economic tensions (material or non-material ones) that we are surrounded by and channels it into a creative output for the world to see. The comedian's persona many times is an extension of them. In indigenous terms, the "them" does not solely refer to the comedian's "I", but also to the village that carried this "I", and the circumstances and the knowledge that this "I" was in contact with. Therefore, stand-up comedy writing in academic research can be viewed as an auto-ethnographic observational tool, an intercultural site for learning, a constant ideological struggle, a creative and reflexive form of Feminine writing that decolonise our existing norms of research (Souleh, 2022, pp. 47-60).

Although there are similarities between autoethnography and indigenous autoethnography, the latter focuses on "centring indigenous axiologies, ontologies and epistemologies" (Bishop, 2021, p.368) into the space of research. This means that when writing creatively the nonfictional realities of our experience or of the participants' draws on different ways of knowing, such as their feelings, atmosphere and our reasoning and emotions. This exposes our prejudices and privileges as a practice of truth-telling that resists the normative ways of thinking, being, and researching.

In their article "You can be creative once you are tenured", Covarrubias, Newton and Glass (2022) explored their own lived experiences as women of colour in academia with the rigid rules of academic writing through their scholarly personal narratives. They (2022, p.126) explain the need for creative practices as follows: (1) The structured academic discourse and narrow frameworks do not accommodate complex learning experiences. This explains why I resort to creative nonfiction and stand-up comedy in my work as alternative forms of writing to accommodate the complexity of the social reality that I research. (2) How the normative academic writing conventions weigh down and isolate academics from different intersections because of the constant rule of "intellectualizing the lived experience". By intellectualizing, I do not mean to dismiss the scholarly perspective to investigate and to introspect. However, in my decolonial turn, there are other ways of learning that within the normative canon of Western research may not be acceptable. (3) Glass, as a black woman researching racism, struggled with the false claims that are grounded in the Western reasoning of neutrality and objectivity. Comedic language like any creative writings of the self is grounded in vulnerability and honesty. With the need to constantly intellectualise the lived experience as a woman of colour researching discrimination through creative practices in predominately white academia, I was constantly told that I am either reading too much into something or my interpretation of the event is not what it is. My creative nonfiction and comedy allowed me to stand-up and bluntly say: "They called me a sand nigger! What else do you want from me?".

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Translanguaging as Decolonial Pedagogy:
Investigating its efficacy in the teaching of a trans-Atlantic *Julius Caesar*

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Abstract

In a multilingual country like South Africa, institutions of higher education are characterised by predominantly monolingual practices which perpetuate colonial objectives of linguistic monopoly and cultural assimilation. As a South African from an historically advantaged background, I believe that it is imperative to find, and implement, pedagogies to subvert such colonial trajectories. This article discusses my case study of the efficacy of translanguaging as decolonial pedagogy. The investigation incorporated linguistic ethnographical methodologies and was conducted during the teaching of a trans-Atlantic *Julius Caesar* with students from the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa and the University of Texas in the United States of America. It required the students to interpret any aspect of the play through their own linguistic and cultural lenses using video media. The study found that translanguaging failed to subvert colonial ideas about language and power, but succeeded in subverting the exclusive use of English, as well as aspects of cultural assimilation. Based on these findings, I concluded that while translanguaging is insufficient on its own as decolonial pedagogy, it is valuable for raising students' awareness of linguistic and cultural plurality. To further the decolonial process, I proposed that translanguaging be followed by pedagogies of "(un)learning" – to use Laininen's (2019) term – that encourage students to reflect on their own language practices and the views embedded therein, to interrogate the origins and validity of such views, and to empower them to provide their own linguistic and cultural interpretations of texts.

Keywords: translanguaging, decolonial pedagogy, South Africa, Shakespeare, higher education, unlearning.

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Isizulu ukuhumusha

Izindawo zemfundo ephakeme eNingizimu Afrika, zibukwa njengezithuthukisa ulimi olulodwa olugqugquzela izindlela nemfundo yabokufika abangabacindezeli, nendlela yabo yokuphila. ENingizimu Afrika entsha kubalulekile ukwethula izindlela zokufunda ezizovikela ziqede indlela yokufundisa ngolimi olungelona olwasekhaya.

Kumbiko otholakele olanda ucubungulo ngabafundi befunda ngoShakespeare's Julius Ceaser abafundi beNyuvesi yaseWitwatersrand eNingizimu Afrika kanye neNyuvesi yaseTexas e-Amelika.Locwaningo luveza ukuthi abafundi kundingeka ukuthi bahumushe izigaba zomdlalo ngolimi lwabo kanye nendlela yekuphila besebenzisa nomkhakha wokubonwayo (video media).

Ucwaningo luthole ukuthi ukusetshenziswa kolimi lokuhunyushwa aluphumelelanga ukuphebeza nokugudluza imibono namandla ngolimi lwabacindezeli kodwa konke lokhu kuphumelelise ukudlondlobala ngolimi lwesiNgisi nenqubo nenqubo yezokuphila kwabo.

Ucwaningo lukhuthaza ukundiswa kwezilimi ezinye nendlela yokufundisa "(un)unlearning" (Laininen, 2019) lokhu kukhuthaza abafundi ekubukeni ulimi lwabo nezindlela olusetshenziswa ngayo nokubapha amandlato ekuhumusheni kwalo ulimi nokuqukethwe yilo.

Introduction

The South African education system has been plagued by linguistic inequalities since its inception. These inequalities can be traced back to the early nineteenth century when the British and Dutch colonists struggled for the dominance of their own languages, English and Dutch (which developed into Afrikaans), as the medium of instruction in formal schools. These power struggles continued into the apartheid era (1948-1994) during which language policies in education were used as tools of discrimination, of which the most obvious was the Bantu Education Act of 1953 which claimed to encourage indigenous instruction and the promotion of indigenous languages. However, the government's extremely limited allocation of resources to the development of African languages and curricula resulted in stark differences between the quality of education received by the colonists' children, and children of other 'races'.

The dawn of South Africa's democracy in 1994 was heralded by admirable ambitions to transform the education system regarding equity and social justice. For example, the 1996 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa included several clauses that endorse the global recognition of freedom to use one's home language as a fundamental human right, such as Clause 29(2) which states that every individual has the right to be educated in the official language(s) of their choice at public educational institutions. However, Foley[2] (no date,

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[2] As of 28 February 2023, teachenglish today website hosted the article: "Mother-Tongue Education in South Africa": https://teachenglishtoday.org/index.php/2010/06/mother-tongue-education-in-south-africa-2/.

footnote 1) points out that "this right is … qualified by the consideration of reasonable practicability, which is defined in the Language in Education Policy of 1997 as occurring when 40 learners in a particular grade in a primary school, or 35 learners in a particular grade in a secondary school, demand to be taught in their mother tongue". Also in 1997, the South African Constitution recognised eleven official languages, which included indigenous languages: Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda and Xitsonga.

Unfortunately, there is a sharp contrast between policy and practice in South African educational institutions. Of particular interest for this study is the fact that four of the top five South African universities[3] use English as the medium of instruction[4] and one uses Afrikaans and English[5]. Such practices perpetuate colonial ideologies of linguistic monopoly and ignore the multilingualism of the average South African who speaks 2.84 languages[6] and the statistical findings that just over 80% of South Africans speak neither English nor Afrikaans as a home language – only approximately 8.1% of South Africans speak English, and 12.2% speak Afrikaans, as a home language[7]. The issue of decolonising higher education was foregrounded in 2015 when some students and academics began a campaign to end "the domination of Western epistemological traditions, histories and figures" (Molefe, 2016, p. 32). However, these actions did not make any significant changes to the linguistic landscape in higher education institutions.

Against this background of the negative impact of colonialism, the inclusion of Shakespeare in South African curricula is fiercely contested. The argument that the study of Shakespeare contradicts the aim of decolonising education is based on the "substantial body of scholarship on the relationship between Shakespeare in education and South Africa's colonial history" (Thurman, 2020, p. 51)[8]. On the other hand, proponents for the inclusion of Shakespeare argue that the meaning of Shakespeare needs to be constructed (Distiller, 2005) and that "all knowledge is relevant to all people, and for that reason alone Shakespeare belongs to us as 'he' does to anyone else ... [and] has cultural capital that Africans are entitled to as anyone else" (Distiller, 2012, p. 7).

This notion of 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1991) has recently been explored by numerous African scholars, theatre producers and actors. For example, Khala-Phiri (2017, p. 90) foregrounded South African tertiary institutions as repeated locations for political protests

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[3] As of 5 September 2022, the Mastersportal website hosted the article "Best 11 universities & colleges in South Africa": https://www.mastersportal.com/ranking-country/191/south-africa.html.

[4] These universities are the University of Cape Town, the University of the Witwatersrand, the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and Durban University of Technology.

[5] The University of Stellenbosch uses Afrikaans and English as media of instruction.

[6] As of 21 February 2022, the South African Gateway website hosted the article "The 11 languages of South Africa":https://southafrica-info.com/arts-culture/11-languages-south-africa/#:~:text=A%20rough%20estimate%20based%20on,three%2C%20four%20or%20more%20languages.

[7] As of 19 January 2023, the statssa website hosted the article "General Household Survey 2018": https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0318/P03182020.pdf.

[8] Scholars such as Wright (2008) and Willan (2012) expound on this relationship.

and positioned *The Tempest*'s Miranda as "a first year student, in present day South Africa, … on the island of a tertiary education institution during a terrifying storm of political instability". Similarly, drawing from the significant challenges of life in South Africa, Meskin (2017) produced an enactment, based on *Julius Caesar*, in which students staged slam poetry to convey their dissatisfaction with contemporary South Africa to their fabricated leader, Caesar. Additionally, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Shakespeare Society of Southern Africa produced the #lockdownshakespeare initiative in which actors performed and recorded extracts of Shakespeare's plays in their own homes and ofttimes in their own languages. These performances inspired theatre companies in countries like Ghana to produce similar, culturally specific renditions of Shakespeare's works[9].

This study is positioned alongside such productions as a decolonial pedagogical initiative. It adopts Walsh's (2009) understanding of decoloniality as the interrogation of, and endeavor to conquer, all types of control against people who have been subjected to systems of domination. Furthermore, it operates from the premise that colonial processes are embedded in language (Canagarajah and Liyanage, 2012) and argues that for decolonial pedagogy to be effective, it must subvert colonial ideas about language and power, such as the association of colonial languages with superiority and power, and other languages with inferiority and inconsequence. It also argues that decolonial pedagogy must subvert colonial cultural assimilation.

Based on these premises, the investigation explored the efficacy of translanguaging as decolonial pedagogy. To determine efficacy, it looked for evidence of the subversion of colonial ideas about language and power, and the subversion of colonial worldviews. This evidence was obtained from the students' responses to a task during the teaching of a trans-Atlantic *Julius Caesar* – one of Shakespeare's historical tragedies that focuses on the assassination of the Roman general, Julius Caesar, by a group of senators (led by Brutus and Cassius), and the senators' consequent battle with Caesar's ally, Mark Antony.

The study employed translanguaging because research indicates this approach's potential as decolonial pedagogy in (at least) three ways. First, translanguaging creates a more inclusive learning environment by providing opportunities for the use, acceptance, encouragement, and development of all languages (García, Skutnabb-Kangas and Torrez-Guzman, 2006). Second, it validates bi- and multilingualism by creating a safe environment that serves to "liberat[e] the voice of language minoritized students" (García and Leiva, 2014, p. 200). Finally, it serves to ease potentially stressful transitions to new content by affording learners the opportunity to use their own languages to engage with new subject material (Duarte, 2016), which consequently facilitates more meaningful class discussions and greater cultural investment in the learning experience (Bisai and Singh, 2020).

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[9] As of 31 August 2022, the Conversation website hosted the article "Decolonising Shakespeare: setting Othello in Ghana and Pericles in Glasgow": https://theconversation.com/decolonising-shakespeare-setting-othello-in-ghana-and-pericles-in-glasgow-174166.

However, translanguaging also has some limitations (as discussed by Escobar and Dillard-Paltrineri, 2015; Cenoz and Gorter, 2017; and Hamman, 2018). Of particular interest for this study is the observation by Pennycook and Makoni (2020, p. 98) – reiterated by Jasper (2018) and Meighan (2022) – that translanguaging can result in indigenous and minoritised languages "being treated as mere resources, important only for their exchange value rather than cultural significance".

Within the context of South Africa's political history, my position as researcher and one of the facilitators in the course on *Julius Caesar* is complicated and confirms Smith's (2008, p. 37) view that there are "multiple ways of being both an insider and an outsider in indigenous research". As a born and raised South African, I am an insider as I have lived in South Africa my entire life. However, my status as a South African from an historically advantaged background positions me as a privileged outsider to the South African experience of colonialism and apartheid, while simultaneously precluding me from the general outsider advantages of "objectivity and neutrality" (Smith, 2008, p. 37). Despite these obstacles, I believe passionately in the need for South African educators from advantaged backgrounds, like me, to contribute to subverting colonial trajectories in educational settings. This belief drives my research.

Conceptual framework

In this study, 'translanguaging' refers to the "planned and systematic use of two [or more] languages for teaching and learning inside the same lesson" (Lewis et al., 2012, p. 3). As part of the study was conducted in South Africa – a good exemplar of "African situations of linguistic confluence" (Makalela, 2016, p. 190) – the term 'translanguaging' also encompasses "simple to complex multilingual encounters where speakers use more than one language for exchange of input and output" (Makalela, 2016, p. 190).

The investigation shares the socio-political context of scholars such as Setati et al. (2002) and Probyn (2015) on translanguaging pedagogy in South Africa. Furthermore, it aligns with the work by Makalela (2016) and Guzula, McKinney and Tyler (2016) on the use of translanguaging to address the prevailing monolingualism and linguistic injustices in South African classrooms.

Method

Setting

The case study formed part of a digital exchange between second-year English (literature) students at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) and their peers at the University of Texas (UT) in the first six months of 2022. In both universities, English is employed as medium of instruction. The digital exchange consisted of a combination of shared online

classes and meetings in three small groups of approximately 10 students each, with roughly equal numbers of students from both universities. Each group had a facilitator – two from UT and one from Wits.

Participants

The number of students in the digital exchange was approximately 30. However, only 16 students (hereafter referred to as 'participants') responded to my questions on their language usage in the videos and only these responses are included in the study. In describing the participants, I deliberately avoid categories of 'race' in acknowledgement of the many inaccurate and ofttimes damaging associations of these categories, rather than from the historical tendency for racial discourse to ignore distinctions between races (Goldberg, 1993). Ethnic classifiers are also avoided, because my discussions with many of the South African participants disclosed the difficulty of assigning people to single ethnic groups. For example, a person may have a Zulu father, a Xhosa mother, and despite tribal traditions of adopting paternal lineage, may identify with both tribes or the mother's tribe or, due to living in an urban area, with neither tribe.

Due to these factors, the discussion simply refers to the facilitators as "Facilitator 1" and so on, and to the participants as "Participant 1", "Participant 2" and so on, and only supplies the languages they speak.

Table 1 indicates the languages spoken by the facilitators (abbreviated to "Fac.") and the participants (abbreviated to "Part.").

Table 1

Languages spoken by the facilitators and participants

	Afrikaans	Bosnian/ Croatian/ Serbian	Dutch	English	French	Hebrew	IsiZulu	Latin	Portuguese	Sepedi	Sesotho	Spanish
Fac. 1				✓								
Fac. 2				✓								
Fac. 3				✓								
Part. 1				✓			✓					
Part. 2	✓		✓	✓	✓							
Part. 3				✓				✓				
Part. 4				✓			✓				✓	
Part. 5				✓		✓						
Part. 6		✓		✓								
Part. 7				✓			✓					
Part. 8	✓			✓								
Part. 9				✓								✓
Part. 10				✓								✓
Part. 11	✓			✓								
Part. 12	✓			✓								
Part. 13				✓								✓
Part. 14				✓					✓			
Part. 15	✓			✓			✓			✓	✓	✓
Part. 16	✓			✓								

Table 1 shows that all the facilitators and participants spoke English. Furthermore, the three facilitators only ever communicated in English and of the sixteen participants, thirteen were bilingual, two were trilingual and one spoke six languages.

Experimental pedagogy

Prior to the study, there had been no focus on the multilingualism and multiculturalism of the participants, and the participants had not engaged in any translanguaging exercises. Translanguaging was introduced as an experiment to determine its efficacy as decolonial pedagogy. To this end, *Julius Caesar* was used for the study in keeping with the digital exchange's predetermined focus on two plays – *Julius Caesar* and *Coriolanus* – that explore issues of republic and people's voice (rather than other Shakespearean plays that focus more specifically on colonial issues, such as *The Tempest* or *Othello*). Furthermore, to prevent the participants from adapting their responses to the focus of the study, they were not informed

of its exact focus, only of its interest in their use of different aspects of their linguistic and cultural backgrounds in the process of making sense of the play. The participants were also not given any information on translanguaging, nor the impact of colonisation and its educational objectives of linguistic monopoly and cultural assimilation.

To determine whether, and to what extent, translanguaging subverts colonial educational objectives, the experimental pedagogy was therefore deliberately open-ended. The participants were instructed to 'work in their small groups and to produce video interpretations of an aspect, such as a scene or central idea, of *Julius Caesar* using their own linguistic and cultural backgrounds'. The experimental pedagogy was not assessed formally to avoid the possibility of the participants focusing on producing a 'video-that-will-get-the-best marks' rather than a more authentic exploration of their own interpretations of the play.

The groups met twice (for approximately 45 minutes each time) to discuss and consolidate their ideas, after which they had two weeks to produce their videos. The groups interpreted the task slightly differently. The UT facilitators' groups collaborated with each other, which resulted in both groups producing single video interpretations (one per group) – based on the plebians' responses to Brutus – of the responses of contemporary people to modern-day politicians. My group, on the other hand, chose to produce individual videos based on the assassination of Julius Caesar (Act 3). After explaining the task, the facilitators played very little role in the interpretations, as the participants assumed agency for producing their own videos.

Research design

The research design was qualitative and was influenced by Guzula, McKinney and Tyler's (2016) linguistic ethnographical study of translanguaging with English-isiXhosa bilinguals. As in Guzula, McKinney and Tyler's research, my study's understanding of linguistic ethnography was guided by Rampton, Maybin and Roberts' (2014, p. 2) definition that:

> to a considerable degree, language and the social world are mutually shaping, and that close analysis of situated language use can provide both fundamental and distinctive insights into the mechanisms and dynamics of social and cultural production in everyday activity.

In keeping with the linguistic ethnography framework, I obtained data from my email exchanges with the participants: after the videos had been watched (and greatly enjoyed) by the class, I emailed each of the participants the following questions:

> What language/s did you use in your contribution?
>
> Why did you choose this/these language/s?
>
> Could you please provide an English translation of the other language/s you used?
>
> How did you experience translating Shakespeare's Early Modern English into this language/these languages?

What languages do you speak?

Where required, I asked the participants specific, follow-up questions to clarify my understanding of their responses.

I also obtained data from the participants' language usage in the videos, which I analysed for evidence of the subversion of colonial ideas about language and power, and the subversion of colonial worldviews.

Ethical considerations

The facilitators and participants were informed of the study and provided their consent for their responses to be used in it. They were also assured of their anonymity.

Results

In the ensuing discussion, the translations of the different languages (provided in italics) reflect the translations supplied by the participants.

The first two groups based their presentations on Act 3, Scene 2 in which Brutus justifies Caesar's assassination and the plebians respond to his speeches. Both presentations were set in contemporary South African and American settings. In the first presentation, Brutus was played by Participant 8 who delivered all the lines in the original Early Modern English (hereafter referred to as 'EME'), and in the second presentation, Brutus was played by Participant 3, who alternated between EME and Latin. In both presentations, the participants playing the plebians responded to Brutus' speeches on a variety of social media platforms – such as Zoom chats and SMSs – in Afrikaans, Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian, Dutch, English (both EME and Modern English – hereafter referred to as 'ME')[10], French, Hebrew, isiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho and Spanish. However, despite the incorporation of a variety of languages, there was a telling difference in the number of plebian lines spoken in ME compared to the other languages, as displayed in Figure 1.

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[10] While acknowledging that there are minor differences between EME and ME, this study operates from the view that EME and ME are different versions of the English language.

Figure 1

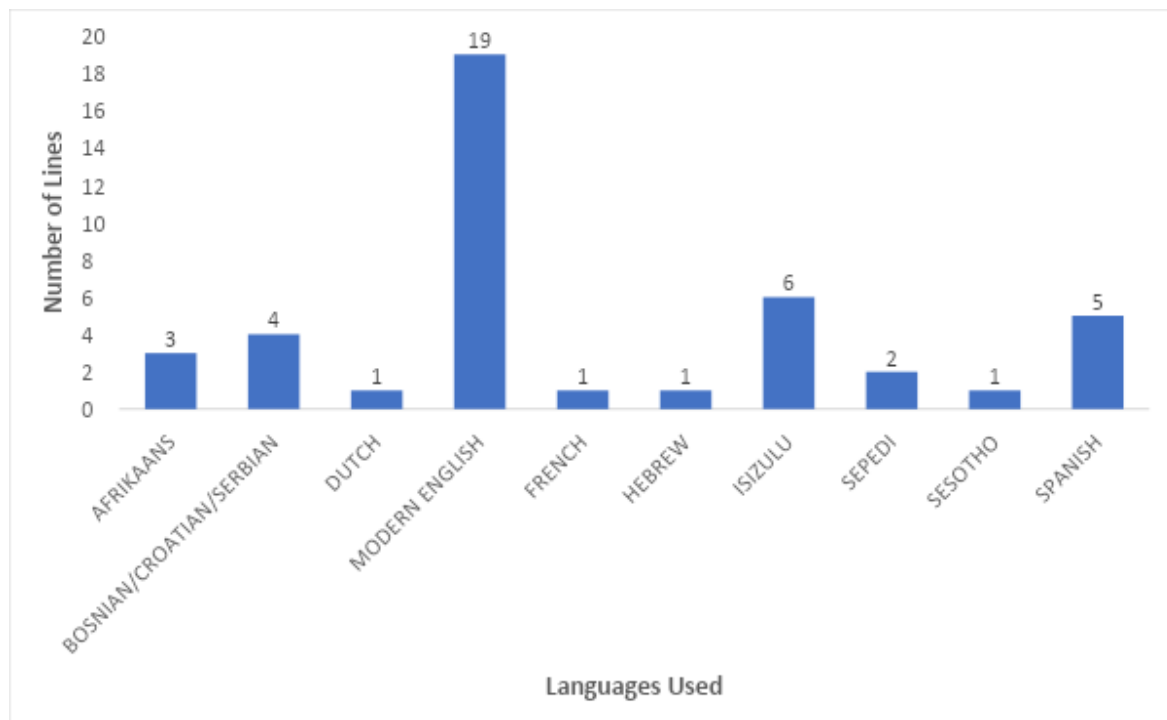Number of plebian lines spoken in the different languages

Figure 1 shows that of the 34 lines spoken by the plebians, 19 were delivered in ME. This result discloses two interesting issues. First, the finding that over half of the translanguaging occurred in a linguistic version of the original language suggests the dominance of the perception of Shakespeare as an 'English' text. A second, and perhaps related, issue is that the limited use of other languages suggests the restraint with which the participants approached the notion of translanguaging with a Shakespearean text.

Despite this restraint, the participants provided a range of rationale for translanguaging into different languages. Some languages were used for purposes of linguistic variety. For example, Participant 11, who used Afrikaans in the lines, "Stilte. Die edele Brutus is opgevaar" [*Quiet. The noble Brutus is ascended*] (3.2.11) and **"**Het hy, meesters? / Ek is bang daar sal erger in sy plek kom" [*Has he, masters?/ I fear there will be a worse come in his place*] (3.2.113-114) commented that, "It's my second language, and it seemed like there weren't going to be any other students using it". In another example, Participant 15, who spoke Spanish in "Shhh. Escucha, comienza a hablar otra vez" [*Listen. He is starting to talk again*] (3.2.119) stated, "I have been learning [Spanish] for three years now … and I wanted to just showcase my interest in romance languages or languages in general".

Another explanation revealed an embryonic awareness of the roles that can be played by different languages. This was evident in the response of Participant 2 who used French, "Qu'il soit César" [*Let it be Caesar*] (3.2.52) and Dutch, "Er is geen edeler man in Rome dan

Antonius" [*There is no nobler man in Rome than Antony*] (3.2.118). Participant 2 provided the following explanation for her linguistic choices:

> A lot of this seminar taught me to challenge statements like 'French and English are the only two languages that are beautiful enough for literature', hence I chose French as well. In challenging these I chose Dutch to show the beauty in other culture[s].

Despite wanting to challenge such notions, it is interesting that this South African participant chose European languages – and not the indigenous languages of South Africa – as 'languages that are beautiful enough for literature'.

In addition to this embryonic understanding, some of the participants' explanations displayed a significantly deeper understanding of the importance of different languages for learning. Several participants noted how different languages facilitated understanding of subject content. For example, Participant 7, who used isiZulu in the lines, "Ngizomuzwa ekhuluma uBrutus" [*I will hear Brutus speak*] (3.2.8) explained, "I used Isizulu … because … I knew that most people would understand Isizulu better". Other participants commented on the role of different languages in making the subject content culturally relevant. Participant 5, who followed the line, "The noble Brutus is ascended" with the Hebrew word שקט [*Silence*] (3.2.11) and later used the Hebrew word שלום [*Peace*] (3.2.56) explained that using Hebrew helped "to connect to what I was saying. … My message was to emphasise that through using different/modern languages, Shakespeare's plays can become more easily relatable and understood". Similarly, Participant 4, who used the Sesotho words, "Kgutso! Kgotso!" [*Silence! Peace!*] (3.2.56) explained, "[I]t's one of the languages I speak" and "I wanted to give the play my cultural feeling". Yet other participants, such as Participant 6 who spoke Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian in "Plementi Brut se popeo. Mir!" [*Noble Brutus is standing up. Peace!*] (3.2.66) mentioned the role of different languages in elevating the visibility of different cultures: "Young people are ready to think bigger and manage not only to tolerate differences but also to accept them. Language is a perfect example for that". Finally, Participant 15 who spoke the Zulu lines, "Uzosifundela intando, funda intando kaKhesari" [*He will read us the will, Caesar's will*] (3.2.141) and Sepedi in "Go kaba kaone ge e le gore a re bolele ga mphe ka ga Brutus moo!" [*It would be better if he lets us talk about Brutus there*] (3.2.70) explained how translanguaging helped to "pay homage to the cultures that shaped me" and even "taught me more about my background than I thought I knew". A further reflection concerned the impact of this task on Participant 15's awareness of personal agency in the learning process:

> The lecturers and facilitators gave us all a platform to define the work of Shakespeare through our own lenses, influenced by the diverse people we are. In high school, it was always about what the teachers wanted you to write and think about certain literature which meant I could not relate Julius Caesar/Coriolanus to Shaka[11] … . But I really enjoyed being challenged to change that perspective.

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[11] Shaka (1787-1828) was a Zulu chief and the architect of the Zulu kingdom in Southern Africa.

The participants' reflections therefore affirmed other scholars' observations of the benefits of translanguaging (discussed earlier). Specifically, they indicated how translanguaging facilitated their understanding of the subject content, created cultural connections, served to acknowledge and elevate the visibility of different cultures, inspired a deeper understanding of their cultures, and raised their awareness of their own agency in learning.

The participants in the third group based their individual videos on Caesar's assassination (Act 3). However, unlike the first two groups, they deviated from the literal meaning of the scene and produced figurative interpretations in which the assassination of Caesar was used to represent societal issues that they would like to be eliminated.

Like the first two groups, the participants in the third group filmed their videos in their own South African and American settings, incorporated digital technology, and included languages other than EME. However, the third group displayed greater restraint in the use of languages other than English. Of the seven videos, five used only English, and two alternated between English, and Afrikaans and Spanish, respectively. While there was insufficient data to explain the participants' predominant use of English – I was unaware of this trend when I conducted the email interviews and did not specifically inquire about the participants' predominant use of English – this finding does indicate their reluctance to deviate from the original language of the play.

Despite this restraint, the third group was more successful than the other two groups in departing from Shakespeare's original plot and characters in their depiction of contemporary, ideological 'Caesars' that they would like to see fall. An analysis of these 'Caesars' disclosed a telling distinction between the choices of the UT and Wits participants. This distinction is displayed in Table 2.

Table 2

UT and Wits participants' choices of ideological 'Caesars'

UT Participants	Wits Participants
Late-stage capitalism	Humanity's negative impact on climate
Wade versus Roe abortion debate	Unrealistic beauty standards
American Electoral College	Perfectionism
	Corruption in world leaders

Table 2 shows that the UT participants chose issues that are specific to the American context, while their Wits counterparts focused on global, rather than South African-specific, concerns. I would argue that this distinction suggests that the American participants perceived their national issues as worthy of attention in this trans-Atlantic setting, while the Wits

L. Ritchie / *Decolonial Subversion*s SI *Decolonising the university and the role of linguistic diversity*, 2023, 48–64

Decolonial
Subversions

participants viewed global concerns as more important than those in South Africa. These differences indicate the perception that issues in the global north are more significant than those in the global south, and thereby lend support to Heleta (2016) and Molefe's (2016) argument of the ongoing prevalence of Western epistemologies in South African higher education.

Discussion

To determine the efficacy of translanguaging as decolonial pedagogy, the data from the participants' written interviews and videos were examined for evidence of the subversion of colonial ideas about language and power and the subversion of colonial worldviews.

The data provided evidence that translanguaging succeeded in subverting colonial ideas about the exclusive use of colonial languages – in this case, English – in educational settings. This was displayed by the use of eleven languages in addition to English. However, translanguaging failed to subvert the participants' associations of English with positions of power. In all three presentations, English (and in one instance, Latin) were used for Caesar and Brutus, while the plebians spoke a variety of languages. These findings indicate British colonial notions of English (or a language associated with academia) as 'appropriate' for use by those in power and the (conscious or unconscious) perception of the languages of people with less power, as inferior in some way and therefore more easily alterable. In fact, the 'tokenism' in the use of languages other than English confirms Pennycook and Makoni's (2020) observation that translanguaging can lead to marginalised languages being devalued and treated as commodities. Furthermore, it is feasible (although impossible to prove from this study) that the participants' responses to the task were influenced, and possibly inhibited, by the fact that the facilitators represented the colonial stereotype of people in power, as all three came from historically advantaged backgrounds and only communicated in English. As Parvin (in this publication, p. 71) reflects, "well-intended White folks can unintentionally engage in subtle forms of racism".

The data also provided some evidence of the subversion of British cultural assimilation in the participants' choices concerning setting and plot. All three groups subverted the original setting of *Julius Caesar* from ancient Rome in 44BC to South African and American settings in 2022, which suggests that the participants were most comfortable in contemporising the setting of the play. However, they displayed more restraint in subverting the original plot of *Julius Caesar*, as only one group provided figurative interpretations thereof.

My analyses of the data suggest that translanguaging failed to subvert colonial ideas about language and power but succeeded in subverting the exclusive use of English and some of the secondary objectives of colonial education. Unfortunately, time constraints – due to sharing a course between two universities in different time zones and with different timetables – did not afford me the opportunity of presenting these findings to the participants and receiving their feedback on my interpretations of their language usage and

that of their peers. Such participant feedback could have significantly enriched the results of the study. This was a limitation of the study that I would seek to remedy in future research.

The findings therefore indicate that translanguaging was insufficient on its own as decolonial pedagogy and needs to be supplemented by other approaches. As a possible approach for furthering the decolonial process, I propose the implementation of what Meighan (2022, para. 3) – borrowing from Laininen (2019) – calls an "epistemic (un)learning of the western 'epistemological error' … to enable equitable validation of all languages and knowledge systems, including those Indigenous and minoritized". Such '(un)learning' could involve class discussions that encourage students to reflect on why they used certain languages in certain contexts and their varying positionality (Parvin, in this publication) with these environments, and what these choices indicate about their perceptions of language usage by different members of society and in different contexts. Additionally, the class discussions could encourage students to interrogate the origins and validity of their views on language and power. Building on these conversations and to further challenge the dominance of English and to empower indigenous languages and cultures, the participants could then be tasked with writing and sharing summaries of aspects of the play in their own languages and/or reworking significant monologues or scenes from their own linguistic and cultural perspectives. Additionally, the class discussions could encourage students to interrogate the origins and validity of their views on language and power and to adapt Parvin's call for White students to reflect on their positionality.

An investigation of the efficacy of such (un)learning activities after a task involving translanguaging pedagogy, as well as the participants' responses to such exercises, could be some of the foci for further studies. The investigation also provides several other foci for future research. As it potentially represented many participants' first exposure to translanguaging, studies could be conducted to investigate if repeated exposure to translanguaging serves to liberate and expand students' incorporation of their own languages and cultures. Research could also be carried out to determine the impact of educators' backgrounds and language practices on students' responses to translanguaging.

Conclusion

Since the early nineteenth century, the formal South African education system has been plagued by linguistic power struggles between English and Afrikaans – the languages of the colonisers. The impact of these struggles is still evident in the majority of South African institutions of higher learning where English is the only medium of instruction, despite the multilingualism of most South African students. Since the dawn of South Africa's democracy in 1994, the inclusion of Shakespeare in educational curricula has been fiercely contested due to the substantial evidence of the relationship between Shakespeare in education and colonialism. However, despite this controversy, Shakespeare continues to feature in most South African English curricula and it is therefore imperative to investigate decolonial pedagogies of Shakespeare.

L. Ritchie / *Decolonial Subversions* SI *Decolonising the university and the role of linguistic diversity*, 2023, 48−64

Decolonial
Subversions

This study is driven by my desire, as a South African from an historically advantaged background, to contribute to addressing the predominantly monolingual praxes in South African higher education institutions that perpetuate colonial objectives of linguistic monopoly and cultural assimilation. The ever-growing field of research on translanguaging suggests the potential and limitations of this pedagogy for subverting such colonial trajectories. For this reason, I investigated the efficacy of translanguaging as decolonial pedagogy in the teaching of a trans-Atlantic *Julius Caesar* with students from the University of the Witwatersrand and the University of Texas. The study found that translanguaging failed to subvert colonial ideas about language and power, but succeeded in subverting the exclusive use of English, as well as aspects of cultural assimilation. Consequently, it concluded that translanguaging is insufficient on its own as decolonial pedagogy. To further the decolonial process, I proposed that translanguaging be followed by pedagogies of (un)learning that encourage students to reflect on their language usage in different settings, to interrogate the origins and validity of the views that inform such usage, and to create texts from their own linguistic and cultural perspectives. Although unable to successfully subvert the trajectory of colonialism in South African institutions of higher education, translanguaging can nevertheless play a helpful role in the decolonising process.

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L. Ritchie / *Decolonial Subversions* SI *Decolonising the university and the role of linguistic diversity*, 2023, 48–64

Decolonial
Subversions

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My Encounters with the English Language and My Anti-colonial Praxis

Dr. Shahina Parvin[1]

Abstract

In this paper, as my anti-colonial praxis, I reflect on my experiences with the English language. My accounts demonstrate that although I was aware of the colonizing effect of the English language and the education systems of the West, the academic and socio-economic contexts of Bangladesh that value competence in English and higher degrees from North America led me to pursue an MA and Ph.D. in Canada. While Canada claims itself as a racially democratic and multicultural country, my experiences at universities and workplaces represent how the lack of linguistic diversity and tolerance results in the marginalisation of other speakers, while fostering social difference and inequality and causing their self-doubt, trauma and damage. I call on English and multilingual speakers to work together to rupture the dominance of the English language in Canada and elsewhere in the world.

Keywords: The English language, colonization, suffering, autobiography, anti-colonial praxis.

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Decolonial Subversions

Mes Rencontres avec la Langue Anglaise

Dr. Shahina Parvin[2]

Résumé

Dans cet article, qui s'inscrit dans ma praxis anticoloniale, je réfléchis sur mes expériences de la langue anglaise. Les résultats de mes recherches démontrent que bien que je sois consciente de l'effet colonisateur de la langue anglaise et des systèmes éducatifs de l'Occident, les contextes académiques et sociaux du Bangladesh qui valorisent les compétences en anglais et les diplômes d'enseignement supérieur en Amérique du Nord m'ont poussée à poursuivre une maîtrise (MA) et un doctorat (Ph.D.) au Canada. Bien que le Canada se présente comme un pays démocratique et multiculturel sur le plan racial, mes expériences dans les universités et les lieux de travail illustrent comment le manque de diversité linguistique et de tolérance conduit à la marginalisation d'autres locuteurs, tout en entretenant la différence sociale, l'inégalité, et causant le doute de soi, des traumatismes et des dommages. J'appelle les locuteurs anglophones et multilingues à travailler ensemble pour rompre la domination de la langue anglaise au Canada et ailleurs dans le monde.

Mots clés: La langue Anglaise, colonisation, souffrance, autobiographie, pratique anticoloniale.

সারাংশঃ এই লেখাটিতে আমি উপনিবেশবিরোধী চর্চার অংশ হিসেবে ইংরেজি ভাষা নিয়ে আমার অভিজ্ঞতা তুলে ধরেছি। যদিও আমি ইংরেজি ভাষা এবং পাশ্চাত্য শিক্ষাপদ্ধতির ঔপনিবেশিক দিকগুলো নিয়ে সোচ্চার, বাংলাদেশের শিক্ষাজগত ও আর্থ-সামাজিক প্রেক্ষিতে — যা কিনা ইংরেজি ভাষাদক্ষতা এবং উত্তর আমেরিকায় ডিগ্রি অর্জনকে অধিক মূল্যায়ন করে — আমি এম এ এবং পি এইচ ডি ডিগ্রী অর্জন করতে কানাডায় অভিগমন করি। কানাডা বহুসাংস্কৃতিক দেশ হিসেবে পরিচিত, কিন্তু বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে এবং কর্মক্ষেত্রে আমি দেখেছি এখানে ভাষা বৈচিত্রতা চর্চার সংকট রয়েছে, যা সাধারণত অন্য ভাষাভাষীদের প্রান্তিক করে এবং তাদের মাঝে হীনমন্যতা ও দ্বিধা তৈরি করে। তাই কানাডা এবং অন্যত্র ইংরেজি ভাষার আধিপত্য ও ভাষার ভিত্তিতে তৈরি সামাজিক দূরত্ব, বিভাজন, এবং বৈষম্য নির্মূল করতে আমি ইংরেজি এবং অন্যান্য ভাষাভাষীদের একসাথে কাজ করার আহ্বান জানাই।

মূল শব্দ: ইংরেজি ভাষা, ঔপনিবেশিকীকরণ, ভোগান্তি, আত্মজীবনী, উপনিবেশবিরোধী চর্চা

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The linguistic context for my biography

This paper explores my encounters with language as a scholar from Bangladesh, who first arrived in English-speaking Canada as an MA student, then pursued her PhD., and now works in Canada as a Postdoctoral Fellow. I begin, though, in describing the linguistic contexts in which I have operated as they have had a powerful effect on my trajectory. In this paper, I use the term 'non-native' English speaker[3] to reflect on the colonial saga of the production of the dichotomy of 'native' versus 'non-native' English speakers as the paradox remains up to today, damages the self-perceptions of speakers of other languages and contributes to their pain and suffering. Thus, my use of the term does not convey my acceptance.

The dichotomy was produced at the height of British colonization to draw boundaries between some speakers and others, to construct the English-speaking superior self as opposed to the non-English-speaking inferior other and also to create a particular linguistic identity which is linked to "nationalism and Anglo-Saxonism" (Hackert, 2009, p. 306). The new science of language contributed to this dividing practice (Anderson, 1991). Although language is no longer the sole parameter of the right to claim nationhood, it still constitutes elements of nationhood. As such, the word nativeness invokes "a sense of being born to a speech community and thus language, which implies a naturally determined, inalienable and perfect competence and therefore, right to ownership, and connects linguistic ownership," and identity and political membership of a nation (Hackert, 2009, p. 306). Canada's preference for 'native' English speakers over others in institutional settings and for English language testing scores as a prerequisite for immigration to Canada arguably reflects its intention to preserve the dominance of the English language in Canada. However, representations of Canada continue to portray this settler colonial state as benevolent and celebrated for its multiculturalism (Bannerji, 2000; Dua, Razack, & Warner, 2005).

As Bennerji (2000) claims, multiculturalism officially developed in Canada through the 1970s and 1980s. Pierre Eliot Trudeau's official policy of multiculturalism facilitated a rapid influx of immigrants from the Global South in Canada. Still, in Quebec, the old English-French rivalry was intensified during that time. In this spectrum, the declaration of multiculturalism assisted in muting Francophone state formation aspirations as a strategy "of coping with the non-European immigrants" (p. 9). The inclusion of multiculturalism also aided in sidelining Indigenous peoples' movement of their land claims while facilitating "the nationhood of Canada with its hegemonic Anglo-Canadian national culture" (Bennerji, 2000, p. 9). My lived experiences in the following sections represent Canada's preference for preserving Anglo-Canadian culture and demonstrate how the dominant status of English as a world lingua franca can complicate racialized women's identity and put them at odds with

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[3] In this paper, I have used the term 'non-native' English speakers, although it has a negative connotation and contains some prejudices, including 'non-native' English speakers lack 'perfect competence' in English. L2 or LX are proposed as a better use for erasing prejudices (Dewaele, 2018; O'Rourke & Ramallo, 2011). However, as my experience reflects, using L2 and LX for multilingual speakers did not stop the power dynamic inherent in the English language due to the history of colonialism and neocolonialism.

their language, cultural and academic learning despite the ideology of multiculturalism. Further, education institutes in Canada not only value the Western "epistemic structures" of education that disregard other ways of knowing, learning, and living but also leads others to assimilate to the mainstream 'White culture and structure'. Regarding language, speakers of other languages are forced to master English to survive in Canada, which is detrimental for people with diverse cultures and languages. Although, as a critical sociologist, feminist, and anthropologist, I have been involved in research to learn about marginalized peoples' experiences, until now, I have not written about my own racialization and colonization experiences. I will reflect on this in this paper.

Epistemology and methods

In this paper, I combine autobiography and Critical Race Theory (CRT) to analyze my racialization experiences. Autobiography is significant as its emergence is linked with the methodological and epistemological decolonization of social science methods that relied on Western ways of knowing and writing (Shantz, 2009). Autobiography, conversely, encourages absent peoples' knowledge production through reflections on their selves and interactions with others and societies.

CRT is significant for unpacking the complexities of my racialization in Canada since today in Western society, the mass of racism is perpetuated through its legal systems and other institutions (Gillborn, 2018) and the "majority of racism remains hidden beneath a veneer of normality, and it is only the more crude and obvious forms of racism that are seen as problematic by most people" (Gillborn, 2018, p. 339). The West has produced itself as superior while naturalizing its colonial power as beneficial for colonized people, leading them to alter their cognitive thinking and their ways of living to match Western norms and structures (Khan, 2017; Lock & Nguyen, 2010; Mills, 2017; Nandy, 1983; Scheper-Hughes, 1987; Spivak, 1988). The colonial power of the English language is not an exception, and it has been presented to colonized people in the form of their empowerment. As such, Motha (2014) unpacks the ways colonial aspects of the English language have been hidden in today's world, noting in the past, colonial governments imposed "European culture and practices by making laws and policies, such as during the 1800s, the British government ensured that English was taught in schools in the British colonies" (p.13). Since the 1950s, the technology of White supremacy has changed. Multiple sources, media, transnational corporations, the United Nations and its affiliated organizations, religious bodies, non-governmental organization, and educational institutions have been working together to create value of Western culture and the English language (p.13), which made it difficult to combat the dominance of the English language in the Global South and elsewhere in the world. However, speaking against it and exposing colonial power relations are essential for decolonial praxis (Hwami, 2016). In this paper, I speak against White supremacy through my narratives.

My narratives as my praxis

This section explores my experiences with the English language in Bangladesh and in Canada by dividing into two subsections. First, the colonial and economic contexts of immigration to Canada from Bangladesh will be reflected on. Then, my experience as a colonized subject and my praxis in Canada, particularly at my university, will be elaborated.

In Bangladesh

I was born and grew up in Bangladesh, completed a bachelor's and Master's of Social Science in Anthropology at Jahangirnagar University and was a faculty member and scholar of anthropology at two well-known public universities before migrating to Canada for my MA and Ph.D. Bangladesh emerged as an independent country in 1971, following some two hundred years of colonization by the British and then 24 years of economic and cultural dominance by West Pakistan (Parvin, 2019). Because the territory had a long history of colonization, it became dependent upon foreign aid, particularly from the Global North. Because of this dependency, aid agencies began intervening in most of Bangladesh's so-called Western development-related plans and programs. Due to colonization, later globalization and neo-liberalization, Western ways of forming subjecthood, learning, seeing, and living have been interpreted as progress while compelling Bangladeshi people to mimic the culture of the West and language.

With respect to migration, until the 1970s, people were reluctant to migrate abroad, even to other towns and cities within the country, as preserving paternal households was considered significant to Bangladeshis (Gardner, 1995). Prior, people used to migrate to the UK and the USA, most of whom were generally from upper-class backgrounds and had formal institutional education. After the 1990s, migrating abroad has become a metaphor for power, progress, and advancement (Gardner, 1995). Migration has begun to be seen as upward social mobility that brings not only higher earnings and consumption but also higher status and education (Rao, 2014).

In the colonial and neoliberal economic restructuring, Western education systems are legitimized as the best education systems for developing oneself and obtaining economic opportunities in the world (Rizvi, 2007). As a student and faculty member of Anthropology, I observed how course curriculums of anthropology primarily include reading materials written by White scholars. Nevertheless, several scholars, including, me worked to include diverse scholarships and took up anti-colonial perspectives in courses syllabus and research, in particular at Jahangirnagar University. Despite having a critical approach against colonialism, I acted on discourses on the importance of having a Western academic degree to better serve my students in Bangladesh. In addition to that, pursuing higher studies in the West became a matter of proving my intellectual capability in academia. The policies of public universities encouraged faculties to go abroad for higher study by granting a study

leave with pay for five years. Some private universities, such as North South University in Bangladesh, prefer North American Masters and Ph.D. when hiring faculty members.

I had to submit an International English Language Test (IELTS) score for my MA admission and for a study visa application to Canada. The test fee is high for most Bangladeshi people, and the growth of the English language business is remarkable despite Bangladesh having a proud history of fighting for the mother tongue Bengali in 1952 when it was a part of Pakistan. In August 1947, British India was divided into two independent states: India and Pakistan. Pakistan was split into two areas: West and East Pakistan (Bose & Jalal, 2017). From the beginning, West Pakistan established cultural and economic dominance over East Pakistan (Parvin, 2019). As an internal colonization process, Urdu was declared to be the official language of East Pakistan, although the majority of the people spoke Bengali. Thousands protested the declaration; five died, and hundreds were injured in the protest rally. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) declared February 21 as International Mother Language Day to acknowledge the martyrs of the Language Movement. The recognition by UNESCO is interesting because it did not reduce the supremacy of the English language in Bangladesh but instead increased it at the expense of its national language Bengali, which represents the pitfalls of UNESCO's recognition as it failed to facilitate language diversity. However, as opposed to the Urdu language, the dominance of the English language has been framed as nonthreatening for Bangladeshi peoples' mother tongues through the discourses of economic progress and national and global opportunities. In order to understand the dominance of the English language in my country, situating it in the intersecting history of capitalism, colonialism, neoliberalism, and the material relations of production and distribution of resources is crucial (Heller & McElhinny, 2017).

As noted earlier, the dominance of the English language originated with European imperial domination in British India, and the territory now known as Bangladesh was a part of India. Notably, the colonial government began imposing English on the local people after 1831 when the Crown renewed the functions of the East India Company (Annamalai, 2004). In 1833, the East India Company created policies of recruiting local people for the colonial government's civil service office to offset the administrative cost of governing India. A certain degree of proficiency in English became a prerequisite for getting a civil service job. The Anglicist policy of using the medium of education in English in schools was developed in 1835 to facilitate education in English. Jobs in new industries, British government offices, law, medicine and teaching were obtained through the English medium of education, which made new urban elites and the ruling class and mediators between foreign rulers and the general population (Annamalai, 2004). English became the way of accessing jobs, resources, power, and status. This trend continued and is still prevalent due to globalization and neoliberalism. In a neoliberal economic setting, resource mobilization throughout the world and peoples' freedom and rights to access resources worldwide are encouraged, and proficiency in English became vital to avail of opportunities (Annamalai, 2004). Within this spectrum, Bangladeshis became motivated to work on their English to avail opportunities

nationally and internationally. I was a part of this process even when I knew the colonizing effects of the language on me.

Returning to the stories of my IELTS score; it was mandatory for my MA admission at my university in Canada. The British Council and the International Development Program (IDP) of Australian Universities, Colleges and Schools arrange the test in Bangladesh. The test model is highly ableist as test takers require a high reading, writing and listening speed if they aim to get the expected and higher scores. All the contents (except speaking) are basically informed by Euro-American culture and education practice, idealizing the Western ways of reading, listening and writing; ultimately, imposing the Western worldviews and negating other ways of knowing and learning. Further, IELTS scores are based on a model of standard British English, that is not even used across the board by some 'native speakers' of English in the UK. For example, the speaking test scored 'native speakers' at a lower grade if they use phrases such as 'I ain't' even though this might be one example of a vernacular used in their 'native speaker community' in the UK.

In Canada

My journey to Canada began on January 22, 2014; the temperature was -40, which was difficult as I had never experienced such cold weather before. Specific rules in the rented house were unfamiliar and discriminatory, and I began feeling like a stranger. Alongside the new environment and house rules, I started to see myself as stupid at my university due to my English language. I recall being nervous as I needed to repeat my questions to make them meaningful to many English speakers, which is arguably associated with the fact that I moved to a White-settler-dominant city (Gone, 2013). There is an increasing focus on providing culturally sensitive services to its Indigenous population, who are displaced and experiencing generational traumas due to colonial violence, racist policies, and genocide (Gone, 2013). However, to my knowledge, when I moved to Canada in 2014, the city lacked sufficient culturally diversified services for racialized immigrants, which can leave newcomers feeling lonely and excluded.

While I have many racialization experiences, for brevity, I have limited my analysis to a few experiences in the following discussions. I intend to provide messages about how newcomers suffer due to structural and cultural differences and uncover the structural incongruity but not to disrespect any individuals exposed in my narratives. I believe that individuals' actions are shaped by structures, cultures and discourses. Thus, my intention is to point out the structural gaps, not to disrespect individuals. I acknowledge that well-intended White folks can unintentionally engage in subtle forms of racism. That said, I was supported by several White professors, friends, and colleagues, my Ph.D. and Post-doctoral supervisors, who were /are active in anti-colonial movements. In several ways, my activisms are informed and strengthened by them.

Returning to my racialization experience, I reminiscence that in the beginning, in my classes, I often provided examples from my culture to explain a theme of sociology classes. One day after a class, one of my cohorts asked, as I recall: "Why do you often bring examples from your culture when most students are White and do not have any ideas about your culture?" I felt guilty immediately for my class discussions as they seemed unnecessary to my classes, which created my hesitance to reflect on my culture in next classes. I admit that the classmate might have well intentions for me, but situated in the historical context, the comments by my classmate can be read as part of a long history of devaluation and delegitimization of other knowledge and practices. Fanon (2007) and Fernando (1988) examined how a number of disciplines during the mid-nineteenth century in the West and at the height of European colonialism produced knowledge about intellectual inferiority and backwardness of Africa, Asia, and South America as well as the 'natural' superiority of Europe, which became entrenched ideals by the nineteenth century. The material effects of the construction are still prevalent; thus, my experiences and education from the Global South were viewed as incompatible in Canada.

Another example of my distress is receiving feedback on my English language in some course papers; even in one piece, some points were subtracted because of my flawed language. This experience can be linked to Maria Sílvia Cintra Martins' (2023) claim in this Special Issue that writing in English is an academic genre where speakers of other languages enter the colonizer's territory.

A writing centre was at the university to help all students with their academic writing, but booking an appointment was difficult, and no services were solely available to support the writing of students of other languages, which arguably indicates that the university did not address students' different needs, backgrounds, and languages. I seemed to be responsible for my flawed language, which represents how the university upheld neoliberal culture and nourished a colour blind approach that assumes everybody has equal resources and backgrounds for their academic progress while failing to understand how racial category, class, gender, language, and other social locations impact individuals' lives (James, 2018, p. 276). Thereby, the colour blind approach has perpetuated dominant power relations and colonial politics have broadened and deepened through the tropes of countries like Canada as racially democratic and non-racialist. My self-blame regarding my language deficit and individual responsibility to navigate this process occurred within the neo-liberal and colour blind education system that perpetuated racism by ignoring my needs.

These experiences, primarily, caused me to doubt my academic ability although I had the best academic result in my Bachelor's and Master's in Anthropology in Bangladesh. I felt I did not belong to the education system, and I was rendered as foreign as the language was colonial and not mine. The pain and suffering that were initiated because of my English language, I defined as emotional violence; and to borrow Fanon's and Du Bois's concept, I developed a double consciousness that I began to see and evaluate my strengths through the eyes of White language and structure (Du Bois, 2007; Fanon, 1961/2007; hooks, 1992), which created a threat to my self-evaluation and caused my emotional challenges. Sometimes I was

anxious in front of White people to know if they could understand my English, which reflects the work of Franz Fanon (1961/2007), who examined how Black people feel nervous in front of Whites. As to Fanon, the sensation is linked with the historical and colonial construction of Black people as inferior and backward. Fanon (1961/2007) explains that when Black people encounter the White world, they go through an experience of sensitization, and their egos collapse because of their perceived inferiority. While Fanon primarily examines the colonization of the Black folk's mind and body, Fanon's analysis is helpful to understanding my sensitization in the West. My survival strategy with the situation was to withdraw many aspects of self, and yet I suffered a chronic sickness of hemorrhage and emotional pain and trauma within four months of coming to Canada. Within this space, I was silent most often because I was afraid, sometimes justifiably, sometimes not, or to resonate with Audre Lorde (1977), I felt that if I spoke, my words would not be welcomed. I was scared and blamed myself for my English language because I absorbed the neo-liberal and colour blind approach that success and failure are individual responsibilities. Nevertheless, I succeeded academically and at my workplace by working hard and building resilience. The persons who sustained me in Canada were White and racialized individuals, my Ph.D. and Post-doctoral supervisors, some professors at my university, and my White and racialized friends in Canada, all of whom shared a war against colonial violence and subjugation. They provided care, without which I could not have survived intact. I can recall such heartwarming comments I got on my Ph.D. thesis from my committee members. If there were any errors in my thesis writing, the professors commented like this: "the English language is the culprit here." My Post-doctoral supervisor has a similar approach, providing me with comfort. These acts can be seen as their decolonial praxis to rupture the supremacy of the English language in academia and at work, which propelled me to engage more in anti-colonial activism.

I completed an MA and a Ph.D. from the same university in Canada. During my Ph.D. program, I was looking for jobs; most of the advertisements focused on excellent verbal and written communication skills in English. In some job advertisements, 'native' English speakers were given preference. Yet I wrote to one employer explaining how I fulfilled the other requirements. I was taken seriously, interviewed, and hired. As discussed earlier, some forms of racism are embedded in systems, naturalized, and often seemingly invisible and benign to White folks; even sometimes, well-intended White people can unintentionally inflict racism. Thereby, asking them to reflect and take deliberate action to unsettle the dominance of the English language is a crucial step for decolonial praxis.

After completing my Ph.D., I taught two courses in two different universities; I was appreciated by one class, while for the other, students mostly commented on my English accent, which arguably is part of the historical devaluation of different languages and the speakers of other languages. I call on White students to reflect on their positionality and privileges and would like to convey a message that speakers of other languages also struggle to understand English speakers, but arguably fear to comment on their accent as the hegemony of the English language has become so normalized that not understanding

English can be seen as an individual fault and weakness. I also invite privileged/White/ English speakers to reflect on how White supremacy has created the enduring structures of inequality and to act and make decisions to unsettle colonial structures. They must be a part of making a common platform for diverse cross-cultural people where people can sacrifice space for each other, accept marginalized knowledge, language, and practices, and disrupt discriminatory structures.

Conclusion

In this paper, by intersecting autobiography and CRT, I reflected on my colonization due to my English language. My stories signify the ways the hegemony of the English language in Bangladesh has increased at the expense of its state language Bengali and several ethnic languages. Whereas I was critical of the expansion of the English language in Bangladesh, I came to English speaking country, Canada to pursue higher studies. Passing an academic English language test to gain admission in Canada was mandatory, and the test was similarly important for getting a study visa to entry to Canada. My university in Canada in question nourishes the supremacy of the English language and is yet to be equipped to meet the needs of students of other languages. A lack of linguistic diversity and tolerance in Canada as a settler nation resulted in the marginalisation of other speakers, Indigenous peoples and French-speaking Québécois, along with preserving and continuing the colonial saga of the production of the paradox of 'native' versus 'non-native' English speakers, which is detrimental for the self-perceptions of multilingual speakers. By speaking against the dominance of the English language and its damaging effects, I deliberately unsettle White supremacy. I posit that, in addition to making a common platform for diverse cross-cultural people where they can work together to disrupt the English monolingual biases and structure, much work is needed at policy and institutional levels and beyond to value other languages.

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The role of language in diversifying knowledge production: Reflecting on the experience of *Decolonial Subversions* as a multilingual publishing platform

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Abstract

Decolonial Subversions was envisioned as a platform for the dissemination of decolonial perspectives by implementing a model that subverts current practices of knowledge production, validation and dissemination—both within and outside of academia. It does so by departing from mainstream standards of communication (which privilege English as language, text as format and intellect as the locus of knowing) and implementing a multilingual and multi-format publication model. This is based on the understanding that epistemic violence is perpetuated linguistically in significant ways, such as when converting multidimensional and embodied knowledge into rigidly mono-dimensional scholarly articles. Authors whose first language is not English are often forced to write in English in order to reach a wider audience and for their knowledge to be accepted as intelligible and valid. In response to this dynamic, *Decolonial Subversions* enables authors to submit their manuscripts in their first and working languages, as well as in an English version they can produce with the support of a translator, assistant or co-author, in addition to accepting visual and acoustic formats. This strategy aims to minimise the epistemic violence inflicted via linguistic requirements, maintain the text's original nuance, and simultaneously ensure that the work reaches and can inform Anglophone scholarship and thinking. In this essay, we discuss this approach in detail, how our contributors have engaged with the multilingual option we provide, and some of the challenges we have faced in moving towards a multilingual publishing model. The essay provides a publisher's perspective as a way of

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complementing the growing dissemination of multilingual articles reflecting authors' vantage points.

Keywords: *Decolonial Subversions*, publishing, English, linguistic violence, multilingualism, publisher perspective, paradigm shift

Riassunto

Decolonial Subversions è una piattaforma per la diffusione di perspettive decoloniali tramite l'implementazione di un modello di pubblicazione che sovverte le attuali pratiche di produzione, legittimazione e diffusione della conoscenza—sia all'interno che all'esterno dell'ambito accademico. Per raggiungere questo obbiettivo, *Decolonial Subversions* abbandona standard di comunicazione tradizionali (che privilegiano l'inglese come lingua, il testo come formato e l'intelletto come luogo del sapere) a favore di un modello di pubblicazione multilinguistico e multimodale. Questo si basa sulla convinzione che la violenza epistemica si protrae linguisticamente in vari modi, come ad esempio quando conoscenze sensoriali e multidimensionali vengono convertite in articoli accademici rigidi e unidimensionali. Autorə la cui prima lingua non é inglese sono spesso forzatə a scrivere in inglese per poter raggiungere un pubblico più ampio e per far sì che la loro conoscenza venga considerata valida e accessibile. Per contrastare questa dinamica, *Decolonial Subversions* permette ad autorə di inviare i loro manoscritti nella loro prima lingua—o nella lingua in cui si trovano maggiormente a proprio agio—in aggiunta ad una versione in inglese, che possono produrre con il supporto di traduttorə, assistantə o co-autorə; per lo stesso fine, *Decolonial Subversions* accetta anche contribuzioni audio e visive. Questa strategia ha lo scopo di minimizzare la violenza epistemica che viene inflitta tramite prerequisiti linguistici, mantenere le sfumature del testo originale, e garantire che il lavoro possa informare culture e pensieri anglofoni. In questo articolo illustriamo in dettaglio questo approccio, come autorə hanno interagito con l'opzione multilinguistica che offriamo, ed alcune delle difficoltà che abbiamo incontrato nel promuovere un modello di pubblicazione multilinguistico. Questo articolo presenta una prospettiva dal punto di vista editoriale, in modo da complementare la crescente diffusione di articoli multilinguistici che invece riflettono i punti di vista di autorə.

Parole chiave: *Decolonial Subversions*, pubblicazione, inglese, violenza linguistica, multilinguismo, prospettiva editoriale, cambio paradigmatico

Introduction

Approaches to decolonise knowledge production and to move towards more inclusive, diverse and less Eurocentric epistemological paradigms are increasing and are under continuous exploration by universities, professional organisations, communities and others. Among these features *Decolonial Subversions*, a platform and network dedicated to decolonising knowledge production and publishing by encouraging open access, cost-free multilingual and multimodal publications. *Decolonial Subversions* is composed of an international team of collaborators and like-minded researchers, practitioners, artists, activists and professionals from at least 15 countries, which include India, Ethiopia, Senegal, Namibia, South Africa, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Morocco, Hong Kong, Hungary, Greece, Moldova, Italy, Germany, the United Kingdom and Sri Lanka.

Decolonial Subversions is conceived as a platform for the expression of historically silenced knowledge systems at the margins—whether in western, eastern, northern or southern geographies—where research can be disseminated without the constraints set by publication criteria typical of neoliberal and westernised dominant societies. Furthermore, individuals from within and outside academia can share their research and thinking without the necessity to master English or to comply with rigid styles and formats set by anglophone high-impact journals. Such criteria have historically made it difficult for researchers who, operating outside of westernised systems of thinking, produce and publish research which employs non-mainstream conceptual repertoires and brings to the fore issues of regional, national or local priority that are not understood or espoused in the mainstream. We understand linguistic and epistemological injustices to be interdependent: epistemic violence is perpetuated linguistically and through the norms of academic writing, such as when one is required to convert what could be perceived and experienced as multidimensional knowledge in their linguistic and cultural contexts into rigidly contained scholarly articles in English. Authors whose first language is not English are most often forced to write in English in order to reach a wider audience, and must follow Anglophone norms of writing and argumentation for their knowledge to be accepted as intelligible and legitimate, which we see as an important epistemological injustice that needs to be rectified.

To reverse this dynamic, *Decolonial Subversions* enables authors to submit their manuscripts in their mother tongues, alongside an English version they can produce with the support of a translator, assistant or co-author. This strategy aims to minimise the epistemic violence inflicted through linguistic requirements by maintaining the text's original nuance, promote indigenous languages and, simultaneously, ensure that the original research or text reaches Anglophone audiences in some form; this can give scholars outside western Europe, North America and other neoliberal societies the opportunity to inform mainstream knowledge and thinking.

In this essay, we discuss this approach in some detail, describing ways in which our contributors have engaged with the multilingual option we provide, and illustrating some of the challenges we have faced in moving towards a genuine and sustainable multilingual publishing model. In response to the Special Issue Call, we also consider whether and how

this model could be applied more systematically, to start influencing and potentially rescripting current structures underpinning production of knowledge within and outside academia. The learnings shared in this essay contribute our perspective as publishers in an expanding scholarship on multilingual publishing, which thus far however primarily focuses on the experiences of multilingual scholars writing in English.[3]

Prior to illustrating how *Decolonial Subversions* works to promote decolonial modes of knowledge production, a caveat must be outlined. It is paramount to acknowledge that facilitating communication, no matter how decolonial and inclusive this aspires to be, is not always a desirable or innocent endeavour. An aspiration to seek and make multiple forms of knowledge accessible without reflexivity could reflect the same drive for unlimited expansion and reach informing colonial and imperialist dynamics. Marginalised individuals and communities might fear, and even become threatened, if sacred, ancestral and other intimate forms of knowledge were to become part of mainstream epistemic spaces.[4] On the other hand, communities at the margins may resist engagement in order to actively express a radical alterity, thus forcing the West to acknowledge the arbitrariness of its centrality.[5] Embodied awareness and empathy are fundamental to recognising when communication is beneficial for and desired by the parties involved, and when it is not. *Decolonial Subversions* stands for diversifying and pushing the boundaries of knowledge only insofar as this promotes and strengthens more just and equitable systems of existence—an exercise that requires constant reflexivity, awareness, empathy and respect.

The need for multilingual knowledge production and publishing

Decolonial Subversions aspires to a modus operandi that is collaborative and consultative, decentred, reflexive and bottom-up in its engagement with members, contributors and communities. The platform seeks to bridge academia, activism and practice, and to make knowledge more accessible and impactful in society at large. In publishing a vast range of texts—including specialist essays, journalistic articles, fieldnotes, opinion pieces, music

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[3] See for example, Mary Jane Curry and Theresa Lillis, 2019. "Unpacking the Lore on Multilingual Scholars Publishing in English: A Discussion Paper," *Publications* 7: 27; Françoise Salager-Meyer, 2014. "Writing and publishing in peripheral scholarly journals: How to enhance the global influence of multilingual scholars?," *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* 13, p. 78–82; Pedro Martín, Jesús Rey-Rocha, Sally Burgess, and Ana I. Moreno, 2014. "Publishing research in English-language journals: Attitudes, strategies and difficulties of multilingual scholars of medicine," *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* 16, p. 57-67; Mary Jane Curry and Theresa Lillis, 2004. "Multilingual Scholars and the Imperative to Publish in English: Negotiating Interests, Demands, and Rewards," *TESOL QUARTERLY* 38:4, p. 663-688.

[4] An exemplary contemporary case is that of the Sentinalese tribe in the Andaman Islands, who made their desire to not engage in any form with outsiders clear multiple times—a request which has been violated multiple times in the name of science, communication and proselytism. See for example Sasikumar Mundayat, 2019. "The Sentinelese of North Sentinel Island: A reappraisal of tribal scenario in an Andaman island in the context of killing of an American preacher." *Journal of the Anthropological Survey of India* 68.1: 56-69.

[5] See Monika Hirmer, 2018. "The art of Telangana women and the crafting of the decolonial subject: From dialectics of 'othering' to expressions of radical alterity." *The SOAS Journal of Postgraduate Research* 11: 48-62.

lyrics and poetry—it also seeks to open knowledge to critique by practitioners and activists, so that contributing and accessing academic knowledge are not limited to those with academic capital.[6]

In pursuing these aims, *Decolonial Subversions* places emphasis on language, recognising the historical dominance of English and, to a lesser degree, other colonial languages such as French, and the barriers that these have historically created for conveying diverse worldviews and modes of being in the world. In an effort to break the cycle of linguistic dominance and exclusion, *Decolonial Subversions* encourages contributors to submit their works in local languages, where 'local' is defined in relation to one's most proximate or relevant context, as long as they are accompanied by an English version. If contributors prefer to submit their work directly in English, we attempt to provide translations thereof, particularly into languages that are spoken by the communities who have contributed to the research, or to whom it might be most meaningful.[7] Ultimately, we welcome contributions in any and all languages, provided their publication is technically feasible. For example, in the case of written publications not all alphabets are supported by software programmes; in such cases, we might encourage the publication of an audio output instead.

While it is not our intention to accentuate the dichotomy between the dominant English language and all other languages of the world, offering an English version for each contribution submitted can ensure that a wider audience accesses it. Besides reaching audiences commonly excluded from mainstream publication spheres, publications in languages other than English fulfil the crucial need of destabilising the gaze of those whose first and/or main working language is English, thus calling for a revision of universalised language inequalities not only in principle but, also, through experiential cues. Importantly, we understand the risks of perpetuating a binary between English and non-English languages; however, we see our model as a necessary, albeit flawed, transition towards a more inclusive publication model. It should be noted that our current priorities do not reflect the ultimate publication model we envision for *Decolonial Subversions*, as we hope that future volumes will contain more publications in multiple languages, regardless of their reach, and irrespective of the provision of English translations thereof. Only then can the *Decolonial Subversions* multilingual model be entirely fulfilled.

By encouraging submissions in the languages that are most relevant to research communities, the platform seeks to make knowledge production less extractive and accessible for use and critique by those directly involved in the research, or those who otherwise have a stake in this knowledge. On the other hand, encouraging English translations of outputs produced in other languages aims to facilitate a dialogue between researchers of different cultural backgrounds and geographical locations and to increase the likelihood that historically marginalised knowledge systems will be heard in the mainstream

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[6] Márton Demeter, 2021. Academic Knowledge Production and the Global South: Questioning Inequality and Under-representation. Palgrave: Macmillan.

[7] This task is supported by *Decolonial Subversions*' Language Editor, our most recently established position.

academic framework and can begin to subvert the dominance of Anglophone thinking. Contributors are encouraged to partner with translators acquainted with the cosmological and linguistic systems of the communities they work in to produce translations. The underlying premise here is that worldviews and languages are intertwined and that terms are not mere semantics—thus, to be able to translate linguistically, one must first understand the cosmological system in which this language has been formed and is spoken.

Established academics are also encouraged to collaborate with early career researchers or students in other linguistic communities who can serve as translators, and Northern or foreign researchers are encouraged to pair with indigenous translators. This should facilitate ethical collaborative learning processes and create opportunities for training and publication for those who are less established within academia or minoritised outside of it. It is also a way of acknowledging the material and financial disadvantages that local collaborators often face vis-à-vis their western counterparts. The aim is to start to subvert current material and power asymmetries, firstly between established academics and emerging researchers and, secondly, between researchers from profit-driven industrialised societies and researchers, assistants, translators and other stakeholders in low and middle-income countries, indigenous groups, and minority communities within majority countries. The platform is adamant that translators must be fully acknowledged for their work and duly identified at their own discretion. Where authors, whether from the Global South or North, are proficient in two or more languages, they are invited to provide their own translations, but they must include adequate context and justification to their translations. This, essentially, means that translators who are translating from/into a language not their own must show clearly their rationalisations for translating in the ways they do, especially of concepts that are new or newly introduced and are being debated in specific linguistic communities. They should also avoid presenting their translation as normative, see translation rather as tentative and open to re-evaluation and reconsideration.

Decolonial Subversions is also considerate of the fact that an increasing number of people, whose first language is not English yet whose primary locus of writing is in Anglophone educational systems and academic platforms, may find it difficult to revert back to their languages of origin to write research.[8] This is a phenomenon of profound and overlooked consequences, if we recognise that a language is not isolated from and reflects distinct worldviews, modes of argumentation and systems of organising information. Thus, the assimilation of English implies that original modes of thinking and ways of relating to one's surroundings have been altered in order to adjust to Anglophone models of thinking and conveying the world into academic writing.

For example, both authors of this essay have written in languages other than English for academic purposes. R.I. previously found it difficult to translate back to one of her original languages (being bilingual) philosophical terms originating in western epistemology and, in particular, genealogies of concepts that did not necessarily emerge from the worldview that

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[8] See, for example, Ken Hyland, 2016. "Academic publishing and the myth of linguistic injustice." *Journal of Second Language Writing* 31: 58-69.

engendered and defined the contours of her mother tongues. Thus, in the process of conveying well-established concepts manufactured within a western worldview and Anglophone epistemology, she had to innovate by adjusting, altering or combining existing terms in her original language that had previously meant something different. M.H., in turn, experienced a disconcerting sense of alienation when reverting back to either of her two mother tongues in academic contexts. Beyond matters of vocabulary, non-Anglophone modes of argumentation that were once intuitive to her are now often tainted by the rigid linearity that is characteristic of the Anglophone education system.

In the Anglophone context, it is customary for authors to gain the respect of the scholarly readership by providing, usually at the beginning of their academic essay, an extensive overview of current literature in the field to show their mastering of it, explicating gaps and suggesting amendments—thus setting the author apart and above their cohort. In the Italian context, it is rather customary to gain the respect of one's audience by leaving room for negotiation and by showing humbleness. While this is most evident in informal everyday life situations, it emerges also in more formal settings, such as academic conferences, and in scholarly essays, where it is not uncommon for authors to start with an illustration of their own relation to the subject treated and an admission of their initial bafflement or mistaken interpretations.[9] Most eminently, this particular way of engaging in dialogue with the other, is conveyed by the locution "Non fare i complimenti" (semantically untranslatable, but best rendered as "don't be ceremonious"), commonly encountered in numerous Italian everyday contexts: if offered to speak or asked about something, the respectful and polite interlocutor at first refuses to take on the offer or to deliberate about the topic, claiming, among other things, that they are not worthy or capable of it and prefer not to be a nuisance; following which, the other party, if equally polite and respectful, insists on delivering the offer or wanting to hear the interlocutor's arguments. This negotiation can last from a few exchanges to extensive forth and back—depending on regional peculiarities within the country—and, usually, entails expressions of admiration for the other party. A simplified example of how a typical conversation could unfold, is as follows:

> G.: "Corrado, perché non ci illustra lei questo passaggio nel testo di Pavese?" [Corrado, why don't you explain this passage in Pavese's text?]
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> C.: "Non penso di avere molto da aggiungere oltre ciò che è già stato detto da lei, Giulio, e dal collega". [I don't think I have much to add to what has already been said by you, Giulio, and our colleague].
>
> G.: "Ma su, non faccia i complimenti, lei ha un dottorato in letteratura oltretutto". [Please, don't be ceremonious, after all you have a doctorate in literature].
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> C.: "Va bene, se proprio insiste…" [Okay, if you really insist…].

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[9] As examples, see Lia Zola, 2012. "Note sullo sciamanesimo centro-siberiano: Dal diario di campo di Marie Czaplicka (1914-1915)." La Ricerca Folklorica: 133-142 and Francesco Zanotelli, 2004. "Luoghi, corpi, denaro: Lo scambio tra vivi e morti nella narrativa orale dell'Occidente messicano." La Ricerca Folklorica: 67-76.

This example demonstrates that the premises that legitimise the process of argumentation are different across worldviews and languages, and cannot be translated linguistically, since they reflect more profound differences in modes of relating to the other, be this in an everyday context or in an academic setup.[10]

What is also untranslatable is the attitude that different communities, worldviews and language systems have towards the idea of time. For example, while conceived as mostly linear in Anglophone settings, in the South Asian contexts where M.H. works in, time is understood in rather cyclical terms. Words such as the Hindi *kal*, which indicates, at once, tomorrow and yesterday, and *parason*, which means the day before yesterday as well as the day after tomorrow, remind one of the space for negotiation and adaptability typical of the Italian context discussed earlier. They also demonstrate that context is paramount for a word to acquire meaning. While, within their contexts, *kal* and *parsaon* can, to a large extent, unequivocally be translated as either 'tomorrow' or 'yesterday', or 'day after tomorrow' or 'day before yesterday', their inherent fluidity and, importantly, the cyclicality of time within which they are embedded, cannot be conveyed in English without resorting to laborious explanations.

It is also interesting to notice how, when relaying the way in which Sanskrit words are rendered in English by the South Asian priest/esses that M.H. works with, western Sanskritists repeatedly 'rectify' these indigenous renditions. Since Sanskrit, like all languages, is contextual and evolves over time, there is not one single type of Sanskrit, as is also reflected in the malleability with which it is used—orally and in written form—in past and present South Asian contexts. Scholars, on the other hand, often acknowledge only one type of canonised Sanskrit that has been standardised by grammarians at one specific point in time and elevated to be the 'correct' one, thereby not only prioritising artificial, rigid constructs over language as a flexible and contextual entity unfolding over time but, also, appropriating a language that her never been 'theirs'.[11]

The shift towards an Anglophone terminology, grammar and syntax, alongside the predilection of text over orality—whether through external imposition, gradual internalisation or a strategic shift to other languages[12]—are intimately linked with immeasurable cultural loss, as they marginalise and delegitimise non-Anglophone ways of seeing the world and oneself, and limit one's ways of being in the world and being

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[10] For an analysis of such forms of ceremony in the Italian context see Giovanna Alfonzetti, 2009. *I Complimenti nella Conversazione*. Editori Riuniti. Suresh Canagarajah, writing with respect to Tamil, notices a similar mode of proceeding that generally starts with a confession of one's limitations (Suresh Canagarajah, 2022. "Language Diversity in Academic Writing: Toward Decolonizing Scholarly Publishing", *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, pp. 1–22).

[11] See pp. 26–27 in Ute Hüsken, 2013. "Denial as Silencing: On Women's Ritual Agency in a South Indian Brahmin Tradition", *Journal of Ritual Studies*, Vol. 27, 1, pp. 21–34, for an evaluation of the contribution of colonialism and Sanskrit scholars, alongside Brahmin priests, towards the formalisation of Sanskrit and the elevation of texts as repositories of ultimate truth.

[12] Kofi Agyekum, 2018. "Linguistic imperialism and language decolonisation in Africa through documentation and preservation." In *African linguistics on the prairie* (pp. 87–104). Language Science Press. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1251718.

empowered by it. Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o has referred to this phenomenon eloquently when he discussed the effects of colonialism on indigenous communities, stressing the importance of reclaiming one's own language as a way of feeling empowered in a post-colonial order where English is still a dominant language:

> What happens during the colonial process, whether in the case of Māori, Africans or Native Americans is that it is always a process of alienating the colonised from his base—his economic base meaning his natural resources, his political base which is no power in his own land and his cultural base meaning the disconnection to language.
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> By "secure the base" I am saying we must connect to our base in terms of those resources and return to our languages as a base. Languages carry the memory of a community and are a memory bank of our experiences in history.[13]

To counter the phenomenon of disempowerment that comes with one's alienation from one's language, *Decolonial Subversions* encourages contributors to explore ways of expression that make sense within their own indigenous and local contexts, and to break free from the limitations of standardised and rigid structures that govern written text in Anglophone epistemology. Alongside written pieces, acoustic and visual modes of expression are open for exploration by contributors as per their preferences, contexts, and needs.

Reflections on *Decolonial Subversions'* multilingual model

Despite the platform's commitment to working with all languages in the world and supporting contributors with translations and peer reviews in the languages of their preference, the transition to a multilingual knowledge production and publishing model has been challenging. We probably underestimated the combined effects of political, social, epistemological and environmental factors that continue to favour English in written form as the dominant language of academic knowledge production and publishing, media engagement and business internationally. Moreover, English is in many countries associated with elitism and advancement in life, which can foster preference for early socialisation and education in English.[14]

One consistent learning from the platform's first three years of existence is our contributors' tendency to submit written contributions and academic research papers in English, despite the majority of contributors being based or originating in Africa, Asia or

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[13] See interview featuring Ngugi wa Thiong'o in Makanaka Tuwe, "Why Decolonisation Starts With Reclaiming Language", 8 June 2018, *VICE*, https://www.vice.com/en/article/9k8zja/why-decolonisation-starts-with-reclaiming-language.

[14] Kofi Agyekum, 2018. "Linguistic imperialism and language decolonisation in Africa through documentation and preservation." In *African linguistics on the prairie* (pp. 87–104). Language Science Press. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1251718.

other non-western countries. While we invite original contributions in any language for which we are able to find reviewers, the majority of our authors have shown a consistent preference to write in English and have only contributed translations in first languages where contributions have been relatively short, non-written, less 'academic' and, thus, more manageable (e.g. a written essay, an audio recording or a video submission), allowing for more flexibility in the use of language when translating. One such example is Márton Demeter's translation into Hungarian of the essay 'Plan S and the "opening up" of scientific knowledge: A critical commentary' co-authored originally in English with R.I.[15] Another example is Elisée Byelongo's translation of his audio submission 'Kiswahili as a Language of Peace in an Environmentally friendly Approach' in Swahili.[16] João Araió's short film 'Os verdadeiros lugares não estão no mapa' is in Portuguese and accompanied by English subtitles;[17] significantly, its abstract and review are, till date, only in English. Besides receiving translations in Hungarian and Swahili, we also host contributions in Esperanto and Arabic.[18] In addition, a video contribution by Veronica Calarco featured Gunnai/Kŭrnai, an Indigenous Australian language, and Cymraeg or Welsh, a European Celtic language.[19]

Multilingual contributions such as Demeter's and Byelongo's were short and generally required less cumbersome processes to be translated. It is important to note also that it is not unlikely for some contributors to translate contributions back to first languages with the help of Google translation tools when these languages are available. While such machine-generated translations will be imperfect, they provide a helpful draft translation that can be manually refined by the contributor at a second stage, in this way significantly reducing the work they need to do on their own. Many indigenous and minoritised languages are not yet translatable via Google translation tools, which means that authors from such linguistic communities would have no facilitation for translating.

The tendency to write and submit written contributions in English could have numerous other reasons beyond the mere difficulty of translating highly academic or convoluted research papers into another language. In our conversations with colleagues across the world we have been told that often authors prefer to write in English because the publication will be considered international and will, subsequently, have more legitimacy within their own non-western academic institutions and universities contributing to their

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[15] Márton Demeter and Romina Istratii, 2020. "A Plan S és a tudományos tudás „hozzáférhetővé tétele": kritikai kommentár", *Decolonial Subversions*, Main Issue 2020 (Written), pp. 22-30.

[16] Elisée Byelongo, 2020. "Kiswahili kama Lugha ya Amani ya Kutunza Mazingira", *Decolonial Subversions*, Main Issue 2020 (Acoustic). https://soundcloud.com/elisee-byelongo-isheloke/kiswahili-kama-lugha-ya-amani-ya-kutunza-mazingira-aud-20191222-wa0001.

[17] João Araió, 2021. "The Real Places are not on the Map", *Decolonial Subversions*, Main Issue 2021 (Visual). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ucb1jFlCiaY.

[18] Giridhar Rao, 2021. "Lingvaj homaj rajtoj kaj multlingva edukado: raporto de barata universitato", *Decolonial Subversions*, Main Issue 2020 (Written), pp. 72-80; Layachi El Habbouch, 2022. "Manifesto, Arabic version", *Decolonial Subversions*, Main Issue 2022 (Written), pp. 1-8.

[19] Veronica Calarco, 2021. "Y tir wedi'i dad-dewi / The Land Unmuted: Field Notes", *Decolonial Subversions*, Main Issue 2021 (Visual). https://vimeo.com/658569672?embedded=true&source=video_title&owner=138825724.

career development and promotion. Other colleagues have noted the difficulty of selecting a local language to write in, in contexts where multiple languages are spoken and are associated with specific ethnicities or identities, making the use of language and its choice political, or easily politicised. Thus, writing in English sometimes eschews these political intricacies and enables authors to share ideas or information that can be appraised less biasedly by others who share their social and political context.

Simultaneously, many of our contributors are not financially secure, and exert significant amounts of energy and time to establish themselves in the global academic field or in other practical and activist fields. Therefore, they are unable to invest in translating lengthy publications that would have little or no direct impact on their careers, livelihoods or activist aims. While most of our contributors are genuinely keen to produce translations into languages that are relatable to the communities they work with, they know that they will need to pursue these options voluntarily, which can be prohibitive since they can afford little or no time for unpaid work.[20] While it is our vision to set aside funds for supporting the translation of works submitted to the platform (either by reimbursing the original contributors if they offer to submit a translation, or by hiring a translator to work with the original contributor towards developing a translation), we cannot yet offer this option due to lack of a stable stream of funds and donations.

Given our contributors' frequency to write in English (a trend that is, as we suggested, less visible with acoustic or visual contributions), we have found that more time and more resources need to be used to support authors with editing and proofreading their written contributions. The *Decolonial Subversions* team includes two professional proof-readers and one assistant editor who contribute their work voluntarily because they are committed to the platform's vision. The editors-in-chief (authors of this essay) are also heavily involved in the editing process of written contributions when they edit or co-edit special issues. Extensive work is done to support contributors in order to bring their papers to publication standard and, importantly, in a way that respects and maintains the original tone and intention of the authors. As it was said, the English language may lack the exact terms to convey concepts and ideas that are more easily conveyed or were originally expressed in non-English languages and terminologies.[21]

There is also the case where authors may purposely use English in a grammatically non-structured way to convey different meanings, to subvert language rigidities that they may experience as epistemic colonialism, or because they speak a version of English that

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[20] Canagarajah provides various examples of how to implement strategies of linguistic resistance by interspersing standardised English with Sri Lankan English and his native Sri Lankan Tamil. The scholar, however, admits that they could adopt such strategies only once their academic status was well established, when they could take risks junior scholars cannot afford (Suresh Canagarajah, 2022. "Language Diversity in Academic Writing: Toward Decolonizing Scholarly Publishing", *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, pp. 1–22). Besides the obvious persisting structural inequalities, there is the concern that, by the time a scholar becomes established, they may have assimilated most of the standardised modes of knowledge production, legitimisation and dissemination.

[21] See also the important work done by the *Consortium for Democratizing Academic Publishing and Knowledge*, https://sites.psu.edu/publishing/.

was affected by interactions with other languages and has its own legitimacy outside the Anglophone mainstream. Nevertheless, such intentional and historical adaptations or distortions are often delegitimised by being presented as 'bad English' in the Anglophone mainstream. Once again, Ngugi wa Thiong'o has pointed to this phenomenon in reference to colonial experience, and it is worth citing him directly:

> You think specifically the case of black speech or Ebonics for instance, what have they given us? They have given us the spirituals that were sung talking about freedom and those melodies are still used and they are so powerful. They were created by that linguistic tradition to Africa and through it new languages were formed. They also did something else which is not often recognised, they articulated freedom and independence. Through the same linguistic tradition they gave us jazz, they gave us hip-hop and hip-hop is now all over the world. If you take that linguistic tradition and ask yourself what other language in the same period of time has managed to police a cultural tradition that has an impact all over the world.

> At the same time black people are then told that the language spoken by their people is not good English, it's bad English. Yet, it's the same language that produced jazz, spirituals and yet you think 'Huh, how is that bad English?' Again the same process of linguistic disconnect. Everything comes back to the question of language and I am not saying language solves everything because there are also battles within languages but that return to our base is crucial.[22]

This brings us to fundamental questions around 'whose English' and 'whose grammar' is to be used in the context of *Decolonial Subversions* and, more generally, within and outside academic knowledge production. When official English grammar and vocabulary are distorted as a liberatory means by subcultures within an Anglophone context[23] and by populations outside (as, for example, is the case with Pidgin English or Hinglish[24]), is it not epistemic violence if these subversions are made to conform to an official, centralised, canon?

While English is established to such an extent that it can afford such distortions, minority languages require fixed grammatical structures and consistent conformity in order to maintain or, even, acquire official status, be protected and taught in schools to avoid extinction. Whereas Portuguese, French, Italian and Spanish among others have, through a formalisation (codification) process over the years, been established as official languages, other Neolatin languages, such as Francoprovençal, Judezmo, Gallego, Aromuno, Aragonese and many more, despite being acknowledged to a certain extent, have not yet established

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[22] See interview featuring Ngugi wa Thiong'o in Makanaka Tuwe, "Why Decolonisation Starts With Reclaiming Language", 8 June 2018, *VICE*, https://www.vice.com/en/article/9k8zja/why-decolonisation-starts-with-reclaiming-language.

[23] Judith Butler, for example, elaborates on the powerful subversion of the term 'queer' which, from derogatory, has become an instrument of pride (Judith Butler, 1993. "Critically Queer", in *Bodies that Matter. On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*, New York: Routledge pp. 169–215).

[24] See also Homi K. Bhabha's work on hybridity and mimicry, in Homi K. Bhabha, 1994. *The Location of Culture*, London: Routledge.

codified norms with regards to what constitutes 'correct' grammar and language'. This is significant, since a language's level of normativisation determines its legal status as a 'language', 'minority language' or 'cultural patrimony', with obvious implications for its diffusion and preservation.[25] One language's apparent adaptability often goes hand in hand with its domination over other languages, while another language's quest for standardisation may reflect its marginalised status and its desire to gain legitimacy.

It is evident that language implies politics, which, in turn, implies power and knowledge. As a multilingual publishing platform committed to challenging dominant systems of knowledge production, *Decolonial Subversions* needs to be acutely aware of the politics of language and must find ways to sensitively deal with these complexities through the involvement of skilled proofreaders, grassroots language speakers and informed insiders. There is no single one-size-fits-all solution or modus operandi that can overcome this challenge, but rather specific solutions that have to be devised according to context and case, some of which may involve commiting to structure and some embracing flexibility.

Oftentimes, a bigger challenge is found when certain words that contributors choose to use in English can be perceived or received differently within the Anglophone mainstream than within the contexts which these contributors operate in. This reflects the fact that terms are always imbricated in specific worldviews, political climates and genealogies of theoretical/philosophical thought, which together define the meaning of words in complex ways. When these subtle connotations are not fully understood, the use of certain vocabularies might disorient readers grounded in different worldviews, thought traditions and epistemological frameworks. To communicate across these different contexts in a way that ensures that all sides perceive the same idea, contributors would need to be fully aware of the subtle and complex meanings that concepts have in Anglophone knowledge production in order to make informed decisions regarding their word choice. This is not always easy to do, since for many of our authors English is a foreign language and, therefore, not grasped with the depth one might understand one's first or working language. Supporting contributors in conveying these intricacies can be an extremely time-consuming task, and practically unviable within the relatively short publication cycle *Decolonial Subversions* offers. It can also put off some contributors, such as individuals who are more established in their careers and whose vocabularies have ossified and who may be less inclined to new linguistic explorations. It could also put off those who may perceive such linguistic negotiations with the editors, reviewers or proofreaders as a compromise and at odds with their own decolonial, post-colonial or other sensibilities. The platform has lost potential contributors for reasons such as the above and, while this is saddening, it is also a reminder that *Decolonial Subversions* is neither the ideal publishing outlet for all, nor has full answers on how to publish effectively across diverse cultural and linguistic communities.

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[25] We thank Dr Fabio Armand for sharing his insights on these matters. For more on the complexities around this issue see Julia Sallabank, 2012. "Language Policy for Endangered Languages", in *The Cambridge Handbook of Endangered Languages*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press pp. 277–290.

One lesson we have learnt from this is that communication should be conceived of and practised as a joint effort: Anglophone readers should also make the effort on their part to meet authors whose first language is not English midway by interpreting texts with generosity and an inclination towards finding common epistemic grounds. Moreover, as noted earlier, univocal, often-rigid interpretations can be undesirable, as they may reinforce colonial legacies.

Moving the frontier of decolonial knowledge

Despite the platform's bold use of innovative approaches in engaging with diverse languages and modes of expression, more profound ontological and epistemological questions around how to produce knowledge remain unresolved and continue to challenge us, inviting us to reconsider and improve our modus operandi. Most mainstream methods of knowledge production continue to represent the majority, the physically abled and the English-speaking, who tend to associate with the elite and better-off classes, and those who meet the current normativised academic standards. The inevitable differences we have as beings existing in diverse cultural, social, economic and political conditions and geographies still keep us largely disconnected and unable to communicate with each other. If we wish to move away from the above asymmetries and exclusions in producing and accessing knowledge, we may need to critically and radically rethink the method of knowledge production at a fundamental level, which, we believe, a shift to a multilingual model alone cannot resolve.

For communication and, thus, knowledge to subvert the asymmetries it currently implies, it needs to go beyond the translation of semantic categories, since categories are themselves always already culture- and community-specific. It is well-established that the very notion of knowledge, as per Anglophone mainstream, is built on the assumption of a mind–body separation and on the idea of its abstractability.[26] This metaphysical assumption about the nature of knowledge already excludes or obfuscates embodied and pre-objectified modes of being-in-the-world.[27]

An online publishing platform such as *Decolonial Subversions* cannot counter the marginalisation of embodied knowledge and, perhaps, partially reaffirms the prevalence of representational modes of existence, despite our efforts to work at the margins and to be

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[26] Among authors criticising this dichotomy and the presumed superiority of mind over body see, for example, Tim Ingold, 2000. *The Perception of the Environment. Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*, London: Routledge, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 2003. Nature: Course Notes from the Collège de France, Illinois: Northwestern University Press.

[27] M.H. has first had the opportunity to explore how different ontological coordinates legitimise different knowledge systems within the South Indian context where she conducted extensive fieldwork. See, for example, Monika Hirmer, 2020. "'Devī Needs those Rituals!' Ontological Considerations on Ritual Transformations in a Contemporary South Indian Śrīvidyā Tradition", *Religions of South Asia*, Vol. 14.1–2, pp. 117–149.

innovative and experimental. At the same time, we are aware that representational—and, also, virtual—communication is paramount in many facets of everyday life; *Decolonial Subversions*, for example, could not exist and span across countries without leveraging on the benefits of recent communication technologies. We believe that such limitations and fundamental paradoxes need to be made explicit, acknowledged and collaboratively explored. Only then, might we be able to create new spaces that bring both embodied and representational types of knowledge centrestage. This can take different and creative forms, and is something that *Decolonial Subversions* as a network and collective seeks to explore further into the future.

Lessons and future directions

Despite the challenges and limitations experienced during the platform's first three years, it is important not to lose sight of the lessons learned, as well as the achievements made, small as they may be. While the challenges we have faced to consolidate the aspired multilingual publishing model of *Decolonial Subversions* have been substantive, the platform has contributed to new intersections between languages, contexts and cultures, languages other than English being made visible and represented in academic and public knowledge making and sharing, and a growing network of translators and multilingual writers, who are keen to make more resources available in more languages in the future. Already, a language editor has come forward to assist with producing more translations within *Decolonial Subversions*' annual publication cycle.

Moreover, the lessons learned have contributed to adapting our publishing model, and its evolution into a more intentional and practical approach. Having seen the consistent tendency among contributors to write in English, we now more strongly encourage prospective contributors to consider making their submission available in other languages other than English, alongside their main submission. This is a departure from our initial approach which was more flexible and let contributors submit an English submission at first stage and a second language translation at any time in the indefinite future. Moreover, we have become more intentional and strategic with the curation of written, acoustic and visual contributions, such as by recruiting the help of editors who can reach new linguistic communities not previously reached (for example, the editor of the 2023 volume is Arabic-speaking, a linguistic community that we previously did not effectively reach). In other words, we are currently implementing a model that largely leverages on the multilingual and multi-cultural elements and resources of *Decolonial Subversions*' immediate and extended membership, which enables us to build more relationships with different linguistic groups and communities and attract more translators inspired to support this work.

Although we do not claim that any one change seen in recent years within the publishing landscape fostering a more substantive engagement with multilingualism and diversity of media of communication should be attributed to the work of *Decolonial Subversions*, we

believe that the platform has also served as an example for influential and high-impact publishers to start to rethink some of their practices. We have noticed more journals publishing article abstracts in various languages, mainly Spanish, French and Chinese Mandarin. Serving as reviewers for diverse journals, we have also been able to observe changes within peer review processes, such as more journals seeking reviewers outside of the Anglophone mainstream, asking reviewers not to be overly concerned about 'right English' but to focus on content, meaning and ideas. We have also seen more multilingual regional journals and initiatives sprouting in recent years that are led by researchers, academics, artists and activists, which appear to be inspired by aims similar to those motivating *Decolonial Subversions*.

These lessons, achievements and larger effects suggest that the model implemented by *Decolonial Subversions* could be applied more systematically to start influencing and, potentially, rescripting current structures underpinning the production of knowledge within and outside of academia. The multilingual and multimodal model implemented by *Decolonial Subversions* stands as a reminder that language and communication should be placed at the heart of data collection, writing and publishing processes. The complexities of translating across linguistic and cultural communities we have been confronted with in the past three years are evidence that linguistic and cosmological translation needs to be considered a significant component of conceptualising and doing research and communicating this to different audiences. As R.I. has extensively argued in a decolonial study of domestic violence in Ethiopia, and M.H. in a decolonial study of a contemporary South Indian Śrīvidyā tradition, how one communicates with one's participants and stakeholders and how one decides to translate concepts in cross-cultural research will largely determine one's findings and insights.[28] The work of *Decolonial Subversions*, albeit being experimental and imperfect, has started to demonstrate in concrete ways that language matters and that publishers must intentionally and strategically promote multilingual contributions with an understanding of those factors that favour writing in English, giving non-English and multilingual publications and linguistic translation the attentiveness and transparency they merit. Engaging with languages substantively can open readers' views into worlds and conceptual repertoires not previously imagined, achieving a palpable diversification of knowledge, expression and understanding in the world.

Think freely !

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[28] Romina Istratii, 2020. "Linguistic and cosmological translation" in *Adapting Gender and Development to Local Religious Contexts: A Decolonial Approach to Domestic Violence in Ethiopia*, London: Routledge, pp. 40-62. Monika Hirmer, 2022. "'Let us now invoke the three celestial lights of Fire, Sun and Moon into ourselves': Magic or everyday practice? Revising existentiality for an emic understanding of Śrīvidyā", in Acri and Rosati (eds.) *Tantra, Magic, and Vernacular Religions in Monsoon Asia: Texts, Practices, and Practitioners from the Margins*, London: Routledge, pp. 116–136.

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Strategizing Decolonial Subversion: A Dialogue

Suresh Canagarajah[1]

interviewed by Victoria Odeniyi and Gillian Lazar

Suresh: I am glad we can have this conversation on the complex issues behind your special topic issue in *Decolonial Subversions*, Victoria and Gillian. My life experiences comment relevantly on your thematic concerns. I first came to United States for graduate studies from the small South Asian island of Sri Lanka. After my doctorate in Applied Linguistics, I went back to my regional university in the north of the island, University of Jaffna, as I was interested in contributing educationally to my local community. However, the ethnic conflict and civil war there drove me away to seek refuge for my young family. Though I have been working in the United States since 1994, I have been shuttling between diverse communities in the Global South and my American academic home to develop more inclusive scholarly exchanges. Among the countries I have visited to teach, speak, or mentor are Kenya, Rwanda, India, Iran, Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, Turkey, Lebanon, and Cyprus. These engagements have educated me richly on the challenges in global knowledge production.

Democratizing academic communication and knowledge construction has been a lifelong concern of mine because I personally experienced the inequalities when I was studying and working in Sri Lanka. My first article on this question was published 1996 in *Written Communication*, very soon after I arrived in the US for work, because I felt that this inequality had to be addressed urgently. When I later published my book *A Geopolitics of Academic Writing* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002), some of the publishers I solicited were not convinced that a meta project of "publishing on publishing" was a worthy academic enterprise. As academic publishing is central to all fields and yet not problematized in any field, they were not sure which field my book falls into. I wish to respond to your questions from my personal experiences.

Victoria: *One theme emerging from the Special Issue is the continued dominance of English-only policies and practices in many universities. It's a theme present across several contributions to the Special Issue, that I had not anticipated would emerge quite so powerfully. It relates to how language use intersects with race, indigeneity and White supremacy. In what ways, if at all, do you think that it is possible to decolonise universities without tackling the dominance of English?*

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[1] Edwin Erle Sparks Professor of Applied Linguistics, English, and Asian Studies, Department of English, College of the Liberal Arts, PennState.

Suresh: The dominance of English is important, but we have to tackle this resistance in relation to a few other related and more important considerations. I come from a former British colony, where we "hijacked" English and changed it for our purposes in our own image. As we inherit very embodied orientations to language, we embedded English into our diverse local semiotic resources—such as multiple local languages, gestures, tools, land, and other ecological resources. Thus we used English critically in relation to our local identities, interests, and values. However, it is true that we were discriminated against in translocal spaces, including higher education, for deviating from privileged norms. When I sent manuscripts for consideration in American journals, reviewers were always quick to point to deviations from their native speaker usage to reject my paper. Ironically, at times, American reviewers even treated my British English spelling as a sign of bad editing (since they assumed US spelling as the only norm available or they knew about).

So it is important to combine the concern about the medium of knowledge construction and dissemination with considerations relating to ontology and epistemology. That is, what is the status of language in life, and how does it represent knowledge? Walter Mignolo says in one of his publications that English promotes an ideology that it is superior to other languages by enforcing the ontological assumption that it is a thing (i.e., it is out there as an objective and natural reality) and that it contains within itself superior knowledge and reasoning capacity destined to advance any community that uses this language. This is exactly the argument put forward by Thomas Macaulay the British education officer in 1855 when he wrote a report to London on why English should be made the medium of education in South Asia.

Ironically, we can adopt the same ontological assumptions to our own local languages as well. That will limit us in our mission to democratize knowledge. So if I think of Tamil as a pure language that works autonomously to represent more logical and reasoned knowledge than any other language, I am adopting the same limiting ontological assumptions to my heritage language. It will limit me in my ability to undertake transformative scholarship and engage with scholars from other language groups in constructing inclusive knowledge. So it is important not to get too obsessed with which language to use for education. We have to also decolonize the ontological and epistemological orientations towards language and knowledge.

Besides, what will replace English when we succeed in overthrowing it from the seats of power in academia? Demographers like David Graddol have forecast that Chinese might take over English around 2050. But does that satisfy our transformative and progressive agendas for knowledge construction when another global language takes over the place of English?

One might say that the ideal is where all of us can talk simultaneously in our various languages and we are all understood with transparent and shared meanings. That's the vision presented by the event of Pentecost in the bible. It is not impossible. In South Asia, we talk of practices like "polyglot dialogue" whereby multiple people use their own languages in a single conversation without translations effectively. However, meaning making takes

work. We exercise values of relationality to engage with others by adopting diverse nonlinguistic resources (such as gestures and other ecological resources). And meaning is not transparent or guaranteed, as there is a give-and-take in meaning negotiations, with compromises and sacrifices when we face challenges in intelligibility. And yet, to get to that stage, there have to be a lot of changes in our language ideologies and habitus. We have to gradually train all of us to treat communication in simultaneous multiple languages as resourceful, develop relational ethics to collaborate with each other, and negotiate meanings as always mediated and not transparent.

I don't know what a translingual university will look like. What I am focused on is the struggle at hand. Since English has become the language for knowledge construction and dissemination, I am working from within that language to democratize it. It involves all the things we did to English in my country two centuries ago: embedding it in our own languages and cultures, embodying it with the diverse ecological resources in relevant settings, and transforming English for our own linguistic, cultural, and material conditions—while promoting local languages in education and publishing. My desire is not to hate English or other languages in favor of the exclusive use of my own language. I aim to engage with all languages while drawing from the strengths of my vernacular. This is a humble way to start moving towards the translingual Pentecost in global higher education!

Gillian: *Particular genres of writing are imbricated in the dominance of particular languages in higher education. What can be done to foster the development of genres which enable students who are speakers of minoritised languages to 'speak back', by drawing on the knowledge and linguistic repertoires central to their identities?*

Suresh: I am glad you frame your question this way. You remind all of us that there are existing communicative conventions and practices we cannot ignore--though we all dream of a world where we can talk in all contexts in any language or genre we want. It is because of existing genre conventions that "speaking back" involves "speaking to." That is, even to speak back relevantly, we have to frame our conversations with relevance to the specific genre conventions and languages of that conversation. "Back" assumes that there is already a conversation taking place. If we don't relate our speech to that conversation, it will not be heard in that interaction. It will be mistaken for a different conversation for a different circle or different genre.

So, the genre of "research articles" (given the acronym RA by the famous analyst of academic genres, John Swales) is considered the sine qua non for knowledge production. This genre refers to double blinded referred articles published in academic journals. And this genre has some conventions that have evolved over time, and modeled as the IMRD (Introduction-Method-Results-Discussion)—though Swales himself concedes that this archetype refers to the structure of articles in natural sciences and will differ variably for other fields. But we can generally assume that RAs in all disciplines come with the presumption of being data driven (however broadly we define "data") and explicit about the assumptions and claims so that other scholars can verify them or analyze them for validity. While this is a very focused and high-stakes genre, there are other broader genres in

academia. "Academic writing" or "academic literacy" has been used to discuss other genres, and can refer to a range of other texts that include RA but extends to book monographs, chapters for collections, conference proceedings, classroom essays, and even professional newsletters and essays. As we know, the genre conventions for these texts are not as rigid as the IMRD structure. At an even wider scale, we can talk about "academic communication" as a meta genre—and this can include diverse oral and multimodal genres such as symposia, colloquia, conference presentations, and classroom lectures, with some genre conventions much closer to everyday conversation. Though all these genres are knowledge producing and intellectual, it is unwise to treat them as equal in status or structure to RA. Under the current conditions it is difficult to publish a conference paper or book chapter through an impersonal double blinded peer review in a high impact factor research journal. The submission might earn an immediate desk rejection as the editor might say that it is not "talking back" relevantly to the ongoing conversations in that journal. So talking back doesn't mean the ability to write anything we like in any genre or language for any context.

It is for this reason that I would consider this very collaborative text (reflecting a genre that is dialogical and narrative) as part of "academic communication" but not an RA. It is (hopefully!) eminently intellectual and scholarly, but not suitable for a double blinded refereed journal. However, this doesn't mean that we cannot gradually expand and democratize the conventions of RA and other genres. But that has to involve the careful and strategic work of bringing our voices and diversities to bear on the dominant current conventions and conversations. That is precisely the definition of "talking back." So, many scholars are now bringing diversified languages, tones, and discourse structures *into* RAs to gradually make spaces for Southern knowledge-making traditions and vernaculars. But this is a slow process because we have to gain uptake. That is, the readers, editors, and reviewers of that journal have to be taught to understand such articles, recognize them as academic, and revise their assumptions of how RA works. If we go too fast, our writing will be treated as a different genre for different context, and not an RA. So resisting dominant genres is a careful, cautious, and strategic activity.

Of course, we should all write in diverse genres of scholarly publications (including op-ed pieces in newspapers) as we should not always privilege the credentials of a refereed publication. And we should start alternate academic journals with the intention of publishing diverse genres of academic writing. These platforms can feature creative forms of academic writing and academic communication to promote the cause of decolonizing publishing. It is in this way that *Decolonial Subversions* is playing a valuable role in decolonization. And thanks to journals such as this, our very collaborative text with genre conventions that deviate from RA can be published as an academic article. Also many other articles in this issue, some framed as poems or personal reflections or standup comedy, can be featured as academic articles. I consider *avant garde* journals such as this as promising. Some might find it a limitation that they are treated as lacking the prestige of double blinded refereed research journals. Of course, *avant garde* journals cannot be judged according to impact factor and acceptance rate, as we are against that kind of quantification of

assessment. We are investing valuable time and resources into this writing and these journals because we are convinced that they have a valued readership and contribute immensely to knowledge production—in fact, more so than high impact factor journals.

But are we satisfied with stopping with this kind of writing and these "alternate" journals? Not me! I don't want to let those so-called high impact factor professional journals go unchallenged. I want to democratize their pages too, so that the readers there will also be challenged by resistant knowledge. We have to "occupy" (or take over) those prestige journals! But I have to adopt a different strategy to publish there, differing from the rhetorical strategies and genre conventions we are adopting here. I have to strategically resist the RA conventions from within. Over time, it is possible that we will not only revise the dominant assumption of what an RA means, but also hopefully develop an ideological openness to treat *Decolonial Subversions* and other alternate journals as no second cousin to *Nature, Science, Written Communication, Modern Language Journal, or New Literary History.*

To amplify this position, I like to reproduce a letter I wrote to a colleague who recently called me very conservative for adopting the above position of strategic and gradual resistance. He told me that it is people like me who are sustaining and promoting the dominant norms. He advised me that if I simply refused to conform to the dominant RA genre conventions of prestigious professional journals and started writing in my vernacular, I can bring about change immediately. He said that it is in the hands of all scholars to write differently, use their own languages and voices freely, and reject the genre conventions of prestige journals. He was interested in the use of African American Vernacular in his RAs. I responded as follows:

> Dear xxx,
>
> Though I share your concern for change, all communicative contexts have certain conventions on how people in those interactions should discourse. For example, when I was working as a social worker in South Bronx, the young Black children in the neighborhood would laugh at my Sri Lankan accent and academic/formal vocabulary. I couldn't fit into their "club" there. Some even joked among themselves that my ways and words were "crazy." There is a convention about "proper" ways of talking in the 'hood (with a required accent, tone, and vocabulary) that relates to that context and community. Educated black people might also not fit that club in that neighborhood. Such communicative conventions are true of all contexts/genres, whether formal or informal, educated or vernacular. Academic language or genres also work in a similar way as having their own social convention. This point doesn't make academic language neutral or innocent. The conventional ways of talking in any interaction (i.e., any register or genre) is always partisan (preferring the interests of specific groups of people who dominate that "club"). Such somewhat impersonal and long social and historical processes by which genres and registers evolve need to be acknowledged as we engage in resistance.
>
> For the above reason, I consider the alternative as also a bit more challenging. Change is not fully or solely left in the hands of individuals. Dismantling any register

or genre also takes a long historical, social, and structural process of reconfiguration. Change won't be immediate or even guaranteed. You say that we can refuse to communicate according to the existing norms of academic communication and walk away from important journals and institutions, leading to their demise. Though that is one possible outcome, there are also other possible outcomes. Those privileged journals and institutions that adopt the dominant academic language may not suffer, but continue their power with others propping up those norms. In fact, walking away from those sites of power only serves those institutions better as they can continue to exert their power without the critics there to challenge them. My preferred strategy is to stay working within those institutions and journals to cautiously and gradually "renegotiate" and "rework" the norms. (But I respect those who decide to walk away from academia to write and work in other contexts for other own good reasons.)

Another outcome in the process of genre formation and language enregisterment is that rather than reaching an utopian state of "no norms," other/new norms will evolve to guide the interaction in that context. I don't think we will ever have a situation where ANY AND ALL ways of talking will be acceptable in any social interaction (as in "anything goes"). There will always gradually evolve alternate norms (perhaps accommodating more diversity, but still excluding some communities). We have to therefore conceptualize resistance and transformation as a long struggle of gradual changes, rather than a snap change of all or nothing. La lucha continuaa, indeed!

So, I prefer a cautious and relational change of language and discourse whereby I chip away at the power of normative academic language and genre conventions gradually. This way, I continue to engage with the conventions of the academic community, stay inside, and write and publish differently, while continuing to talk back to this community within their own circles and prepare them for alternate language and genre norms.

Victoria: *How is it possible for university colleagues/peers from the Global North to enter into dialogue about language diversity and decolonising with university colleagues/peers from the Global South without igniting extractive relationships?*

Suresh: Currently, many Northern scholars are engaged in dialogue and collaboration in arrangements that are institutionalized or mutually rewarding for them. So Southern students and scholars who come to the North adopt a mentoring relationship with their supervisors in degree programs. In other cases, Northern colleagues enter into research and writing collaborations with Southern scholars. I can understand such motivation, as "there is no free lunch" Americans say! However, these arrangements do pose the danger of knowledge extraction, however altruistic people are. We have to be wary how Southern knowledge is mediated by the language and discourses of Northern scholars in these collaborative activities. Often certain forms of ideological distortion and control are not visible, explicit, or deliberate.

While I was working in Sri Lanka, what I expected most from Northern scholars was simply access to resources. I was confident in my ability to read and process the relevant publications for my own research and arguments. What was difficult was getting those books or journals that helped me write and publish. Such service calls for types of generosity and help that don't yield benefits to Northern scholars. It calls for a sacrificial act of generosity. The question is whether Northern scholars who care about decolonization are generous enough to sacrifice their time, energy, and resources to help Southern scholars overcome their resource limitations without any personal benefits in return. This will involve facilitating the research and writing of Southern scholars while keeping a safe distance, so that Southern scholars have the freedom to represent their voices and knowledge, critically processing the dialogue, mentoring, and resources in their own way.

Here are some examples of the types of help I needed while working from Sri Lanka:

1. Latest journal articles on my area of research. Though I had a few limited journals in the local library in Sri Lanka, they were not always relevant for the topic I was writing on. And reviewers and editors in the North are always quick to recommend that I have to read up an article that appeared just a few weeks ago in the latest issue of a journal to revise my submission!

2. Information on the most relevant journal for a research project, and its publishing guidelines—and perhaps a copy of that journal. There were countless times I sent an article to a journal that was not suitable for my study because I didn't know the range of journals available in the field and didn't have anyone with knowledge about them to advise me on that question.

3. Access to the relevant style conventions. I didn't have access to all the range of style manuals beyond the better known ones like APA and MLA. Unfortunately, sometimes publishers adopt their own in-house style sheets, and some journals adopt their own atypical conventions. There have been a few times when journals returned my manuscripts because I had not prepared them according to their style sheet. I wasn't lazy; I simply didn't have access to their style sheet (compounded by poor internet access).

4. Help with reading and commenting on a work in progress. Offering feedback and peer commentary is a huge favor, and it was difficult to find anyone who was willing to give me their valuable time. It is hard to find anyone who will sacrifice the time to read and comment on a Southern colleague's work, when Northern scholars are themselves caught up in the publish or perish race. Such comments can provide a window into the expectations of the Northern journals, reviewers, and readers so that Southern scholars can revise them in our own way by taking those concerns into consideration.

5. Consultation on interpreting editorial decision letters and reviewer comments, and strategizing for resubmission. One of the most difficult challenges I faced was in interpreting what exactly the reviewers expected in my revision or even understanding their estimation of my chances of publishing in their journal. In addition to the usual academic hedging and other idiomatic peculiarities in

different English-speaking countries (i.e., does "quite good" mean excellent or not so impressive?), there are also different categories of acceptance which can be difficult to interpret (i.e., is "substantial revision" hopeful or damning?). There are occasions where I misinterpreted a "revise and resubmit" decision as hopeless and gave up the project, when a senior American scholar read the decision letter many months later and discerned that the tone was promising!

Now that I am on the other side of the access divide, I receive emails from colleagues in diverse Southern communities for help like those listed above. After having responded to these requests for a long time, I thought I can expand the scale of this service through a consortium. Therefore, I have set up a web-based network for work of this nature in the Consortium for Democratizing Academic Publishing and Knowledge: <u>Consortium for Democratizing Academic Publishing and Knowledge | An academic mentoring site! (psu.edu)</u> This consortium brings together senior scholars in the Global North to read manuscripts in progress and respond to relevant queries from Southern scholars to facilitate their publishing. I match the scholar from the South with a suitable mentor from the North, based on their research project. The mentors provide a range of advice: where this article might fit; whether the article ready for submission; how to frame the article with relevance to the journal's style and guidelines; sending pdfs of articles relevant to their project; helping interpret decision and reviewer comments; and help with serial drafting and revising of manuscripts. This is a selfless service for the cause of decolonization, and not extractive. I admire the scholars who are giving their time selflessly to their Southern colleagues. One interaction between a British faculty member and an Indian graduate student has gone on for about 8 months since the beginning of this year, through diverse drafts, revisions and resubmissions—with conversations on the requirements of journals, style conventions, framing of the paper, interpreting editorial decision letters, etc. I am moved to see the selflessness of scholars like this who are willing to help!

Gillian: *What advice would you give multilingual post-graduate students from minoritised backgrounds about 'making their way' in English-dominated universities, whether these are in the Global South, such as South Africa, or the Global North, such as the UK? Or should an alternative metaphor to 'making one's way' be sought?*

Suresh: I prefer the metaphor "shuttling between" to "making one's way." I do care about cautious, informed, and strategic making of one's way into any new professional community. However, it is important to always process the knowledge and discourses of the professional community from other communities one is part of. One's family, village, social group, and affinity groups (such as activist or community groups) provide a critical edge for the way one might process the dominant insider discourses. I borrow this orientation from socialization models such as Communities of Practice. The CoP model argues that people who engage in "boundary crossing" are always open to new knowledge via their diverse networks, and they hold the best prospects for diversifying and transforming the knowledge and practices of a community. And this practice of "shuttling between" is relevant not only

for those in the South; it is important for all of us engaged in the process of democratizing knowledge whether in the North or the South.

I have always advised my students from multilingual and minoritized backgrounds that their difference is an asset. They are sometimes deferential towards the dominant languages and discourses of the University in the North, and feel pressured to acculturate to the dominant conventions too quickly. Though I encourage them to familiarize themselves with the dominant academic discourses and practices, I also tell them that their own languages, cultures, and communities offer a reality check on dominant knowledge. This is the value of the restless and resistant periphery against the stable and invested center. Because we are outsiders, the differences and contradictions in dominant knowledge stand out starkly. Because we are not invested in maintaining the center through any inherited privileges, we are motivated to change them. And because we are not fully socialized into those discourses, we have the relative detachment to interpret them differently.

Thankfully, "shuttling between" was not just a metaphor or attitudinal, but a physical reality for me. As I mentioned earlier, my professional trajectory involved shuttling between Sri Lanka and the US. The differences were obvious to me in many ways when I first arrived in US as a graduate student from a former British colony. I was more familiar with British critical linguists than my American peers. While they knew Labov and Hymes, I was also familiar with Basil Bernstein, Gunther Kress, and Roger Fowler who had introduced a more edgy Marxist orientation to critical linguistics in the '70s. I enjoyed bringing this alternate strand of scholarship to complicate the liberal orientations to criticality in the US. And rather than feeling embarrassed about the code switching and creolizing practices in my home community, I actually leaned into them to complicate the structuralist approaches in graduate school.

And after earning my doctorate, when I returned to Sri Lanka, the dominant Northern orthodoxies felt irrelevant in the context of stark poverty and chaotic civil war. I realized that the liberal, student-driven and activity-based, Communicative Language Teaching was difficult and irrelevant in a context of resource limitations. The students didn't have the space, time, or materials to play language games! They were under pressure to pass standardized tests such as TOEFL, and seek possibilities for higher education or employment abroad. It is in this context also that I found some of the progressive and radical positions in critical pedagogy not relating to my context. I read Phillipson's 1992 *Linguistic Imperialism* while teaching in Sri Lanka. While I was heartened that someone was addressing the politics of English teaching in an OUP publication, I was unsure when Phillipson recommended that ELT efforts of funding and textbooks should be halted because of their imperialistic outcomes. What I found was that my poor rural students wanted English—but wanted to use it in their own terms for their own purposes—and not take away the meager resources to this language. That occasioned my first book, *Resisting Linguistic Imperialism in English Teaching*, with the clarification that resisting is different from rejection—as the former involves engaging with English to transform it from within.

That kind of resistant teaching and scholarship emerges from the process of "shuttling between." And these are the stories I tell my graduate students to encourage them to shuttle between communities for transformative scholarship.

Victoria: *In your email you inquired about the accomplishments during the curation of the Special Issue, perhaps one accomplishment has been the embracing of difference and the unevenness that goes with it. One example of this is the inclusion of different publishing style guides within the same Issue, APA 7th edition and Chicago. On the surface this may appear to be a small, even trivial, shift as they are both Anglo-American style guides. Even so, I hope that changes in praxis like this has the potential to open up possibilities for new dialogue. Could you comment on what you might/have let pass, or encourage, in order to diversify academic knowledge production?*

Suresh: Yes, your approach addresses something I mentioned earlier about the problems Southern scholars face with Norther style manuals and conventions. Let me elaborate further. For many of us in the South, teaching is the primary professional expectation. We are not expected to publish or given time-off and resources for research. For someone to devote their energies to doing a research study and publishing it is a rare privilege. Factor in also that as our university jobs don't pay us adequately, we are all doing many jobs on the side to look after our families. And then consider that when I was working in Sri Lanka, I had to prepare all my submissions in manual typewriters. Consider the difficulties on top of those when every resubmission requires not just working on your rewriting and editing, but also reformatting the references. It is a crime to expect Southern scholars to toil for hours on changing their references! Imagine the hours spent on checking commas, semicolons, capitals, and parentheses according to the whims and fancies of every journal and publisher! We in the South used to wonder whose cruel joke it was to ask us to spend our valuable time on these hair-splitting citation conventions when we had other more important things to do in life. I proposed in my *Geopolitics of Academic Writing* that editors and publishers in at least different disciplines and professions should get together and agree on some uniform style conventions so that it becomes more predictable for others, especially to Global South scholars who don't always have the style manuals from everywhere. However, as software developers have now offered convenient ways to change the style conventions with the press of a key on laptops, it is not imaginable that publishers will consider the needs of scholars in the South who don't have such resources. In my academic community in Sri Lanka, I found that my university's guidelines for dissertations and intramural publications simply requested internal consistency, whatever style one wanted to adopt, making sure that we provided the necessary information for readers to access that publication for their reference. So you did the right thing about style conventions, and I am sure many Southern scholars will appreciate this concession.

Other requirements to be loosened can be the following:

- Tolerate language diversity as long as the article demonstrated internal consistency. That is, respect the norms of the author, especially in cases where they bring a variety like Indian or Nigerian English. Note that, even British writers complain when copyeditors in American journals change their spelling

and grammar into American conventions. Some journals now allow either variety as preferred by authors.

- In copyediting, focus on intelligibility rather than correctness. When I edited *TESOL Quarterly*, I asked the in-house copyeditor to adopt the practice of "minimalist copy editing." I interpreted it for him as "don't put your red pen on the manuscript unless you see a major infelicity or unintelligibility in usage." This is not only to favor differences in language and style. I found that copyediting is ideological! Certain formulations went against the footing, positioning, and ethos of certain social groups. So APA's preference for using the active voice was resisted by women, transgender, and ethnic authors who found it overly direct, agentive, and impositional.

- Don't insist on everyone framing their article or argument in relation to the most current publications out there. Often, this required "new literature" is published in privileged journals in the West and is not available for scholars in the South. When I was publishing from Sri Lanka, I found that I was familiar with the general theoretical paradigms I was critiquing or adopting, but not the latest papers using those paradigms. But the editors wanted the absolute latest publication for my reference or literature review. I found this too rigid and unfair. Those latest references are not critical for someone to understand my argument. Literature review had become a fetish—a rule for its own sake.

- Allow a fairer range of citations. In fact, we can go further in citational justice. That is, rather than expecting only the scholars from the North to be cited, we should also give space to scholarship from elsewhere. The notion of citing the latest (Northern) scholarship is ideological. This is not just a neutral publishing convention on starting your paper with relevance. Those citations frame your argument and might constrain what you are able to say. Imagine representing knowledge from the South by framing the article with citations from French and American scholars relating to their contexts. So, editors have to be prepared to countenance a greater range of Southern scholarship in other languages, which might be more relevant to that article.

- Allow references, quotations, and citations from other languages without translating them into English. Readers now have a lot of help from AI to translate or locate multilingual sources, and even to translate them for their purposes if they are interested. It is not the responsibility of multilingual scholars to offer all this scholarship to English readers on a platter—when English journals don't translate everything into other languages for other readers!

These kinds of changes are easy for me to list, as they are the ones I suggested in my 2002 book *Geopolitics of Academic Writing*. It is sad to realize that we haven't progressed much towards accomplishing them after 20 years. But not all hope is lost. This special issue and journals like *Decolonial Subversions* show that there are hopeful developments on certain fronts. You have allowed for a greater diversity of genres and languages in your articles in

this issue. There is also greater code meshing in the way authors freely use qualified uses of other languages when they need them for rhetorical reasons in an English essay. This is becoming more common in different mainstream journals, suggesting that code meshing is gradually becoming a new convention. Congratulations on a worthy publication!

And we mustn't ignore the value of having this conversation on how to decolonize publishing and academic work. I didn't expect Northern scholars to sincerely wrestle with these challenges when I was struggling as a novice scholar in Sri Lanka 30 years ago. So, thanks for this opportunity to talk about this important concern. I hope more journals and editors will take up these meaningful suggestions and directions!

Victoria: Dear Suresh,

Thank you for responding to our questions in such a scholarly but also deeply personal way. I recall attending a talk you gave at a UK university in 2007 on academic writing, multilingualism and the coloniality of language (my paraphrase) when I was a doctoral researcher. It has been fascinating to read about your life trajectory shuttling between diverse academic spaces as well as traversing other communities in the Global North and the Global South. I lived in Ghana for a short time and what you touch on - for me – is a stark reminder of some of the material inequalities between those who live and work in parts of the world where essential resources such as electricity are scarce, intermittent or simply unaffordable. The South is more than a metaphor. You continue to give me much to think about.

Who does the work?

The question above echoes Sara Ahmed's 2012 and 2021 monographs which highlight the academic labour involve in doing transformative work in universities, albeit in the Global North. One theme that stands out for me from your extended responses is rejection and persistence. For instance, you refer to the rejection of your manuscripts by American journals, and their reviewers, who may well have responded from a position of ignorance with reference to American English and British English norms of academic writing. It has been very helpful to learn of some of the obstacles navigated as you state, for 'deviating from privileged norms' of language use as you simultaneously pushed into new areas of scholarship. Many would, understandably, give up or compromise.

You write that in decolonising the university we must consider dominant 'ontological and epistemic orientations towards language and knowledge' production; but also that being overly concerned with which named language to use for academic purposes may – inadvertently – limit 'transformative' scholarship'. You articulate further the many advantages afforded dominant speakers of English, who are privileged by virtue of their accidental relationship with prestige varieties of former-colonial languages. This is important as the power afforded certain forms of academic communication need to be separated from the value of contributions made.

Your deliberate strategy of 'strategic and gradual resistance' from within is enlightening. It constitutes a kind of gentle activism, the effects of which are - it is hoped - long and enduring, and yet, you also remind me of the important role of translanguaging practice as an integral part of decolonising universities in order to make space for the further diversification of knowledge.

What can we do?

Those of us located in - or who otherwise identify with - the Global North must consider what we can do to ensure this essential work continues. Hamja Ahsan and Sarah Corbett, in their respective books, advocate for a gentler form of protest which involves ignoring the 'loud elite' in order to be more attentive to quieter voices. I think this is something I can do more of more frequently. This listening involves careful work that subtly resists institutional and epistemological domination. At the same time, your detailed strategising provides detail on what can be done in more practical terms to mitigate such inequalities. For instance, you recommend forging a 'mentoring relationship' which is not as it may initially be interpreted, as it is the supervisors and scholars from the Global North who have much to learn from their peers in the Global South. As you say, it is, important to avoid one way traffic.

I read your responses as a manifesto, a call for action to everyone considering academic decolonising through careful and deliberate change. And related to this, I sometimes ask what people are prepared to give up (power, privilege, material resources, time?) in their efforts to decolonise the academy, including, by extension, where and with whom we choose to publish. This seems like an insurmountable amount work for scholars from the Global South to tackle alone and, indeed, why should they?

During the process of curating the Special Issue, it's been great to read about your online Consortium for Democratizing Academic Publishing and Knowledge. Gillian and I wanted to encourage our contributors to experiment with the research paper genre, multilingual praxis and to consider visual and/or acoustic contributions, in doing so aligning with the *Decolonial Subversions* platform and vision. You underscore the importance of what language is and does; and that it is more than an artefact or transparent medium for communication. Different conceptualizations of language (language as a resource or repertoire versus artefact) are important for institutionalized contexts of knowledge production, yet are possibly less well familiar to readers working, teaching, researching outside language and translation studies, so thank you for that. At the same time, there is continued deep frustration expressed about the role and status of many languages in many universities because of the power and status of English. Speaking back involves dialogue, but an unequal one.

Victoria.

Gillian: Dear Suresh,

Thank you so much for your thought-provoking and highly self-reflective responses to our questions, and indeed for suggesting this way (a genre-in-the making?) of producing an 'afterword' for this Special Issue. Your responses to our questions will fuel even further debate, dialogue and forms of activism moving forward.

I found myself reading many of your insights and suggestions as somebody who has worked as an academic practice developer for the last seven years, teaching and supporting academics in how best to design curricula and deliver teaching and assessment in their own disciplinary areas. I think the term 'deliver' teaching is, in itself, very loaded as it suggests a model of education which is highly transmissive, as in Paolo Freire's 'banking model of education'. And so much of what is 'banked' is banked via the medium of the English language, whether the subject taught is nursing, criminology, fine arts or computer science. I have been inspired by your responses to begin to frame these questions for myself going forward:

- so many academics now 'shuttle between' the dominance of 'standard' academic British or American English and the vigorous, expressive 'hijacked' (as you put it) English of their own local communities. How can I support academics to draw on all these repertoires in their teaching and research, and how can I continue to make the arguments about language diversification to monoglot colleagues who insist on one dominant standard only?

- how can I encourage debates around assessment design which enable the development of new genres – genres which are responsive to the often stark material conditions which impinge on the lives of the students writing them? You speak eloquently about what many scholars in the South may not be able to access, such as the latest journals, particular referencing conventions, time to research or the internet. There are so many students in both the global North and South who also have limited access to all of this, yet when academics devise assessment genres do they ever consider which particular resources, including creativity and resilience, students can draw on in completing that genre?

- how can I genuinely listen, and give up the power that genuine listening involves? I am struck by your mention that in the early 1990's your 'poor rural students wanted English—but wanted to use it in their own terms for their own purposes—and not take away the meager resources to this language'. Your careful listening to your students led you to engage with current ideological debates, and in response, to write *Resisting Linguistic Imperialism in English Teaching.* It seems that real listening may involve giving up on particular ideological convictions, and if we are to move beyond a purely Anglophone environment, this will also entail being present when others express themselves in the richness of other languages, languages some of us may not know or understand. It is our job to do the hard work of translation, rather than placing even more burdens on others to do this. Yet so many of us in the Global North demand that it is our language – our English- in which talking, listening and knowledge production take place. But of course, listening is not

enough, and you provide many practical suggestions of what we can do to democratize our academic communities and their knowledges.

I say knowledges advisedly. Knowledges because this is used in many versions of English round the world. Knowledges because there is debate to be had in the Global North and its affiliations about why some regard this as 'wrong grammar'. Knowledges, because perhaps this is a good question to pose to academics when they consider what they do: 'Are we helping our students to construct knowledge or knowledges? And if so, whose?'

Thank you for sparking these further questions for me to ponder.

Best wishes,

Gillian