Decolonial Subversions Special Issue: Open Call

Special Issue Guest Editors: Victoria Odeniyi & Gillian Lazar

Decolonising the university and the role of linguistic diversity

Abstract summary

Over the last few decades there have been movements to decolonise universities, which encourage university communities to challenge traditional ways of knowing and representation in order to reverse unequal access and educational outcomes. This Special Issue seeks to interrogate the role of linguistic diversity within universities across different geo-political contexts with the aim of refining current understandings of how multilingual practices can be deployed as a tool for decolonial praxis. We are seeking contributions that draw on a range of different languages, modes, formats and contexts in order to offer new and under-represented perspectives, which are linked to the role of linguistic diversity in universities.

Keywords

Decolonising; praxis, linguistic diversity; inequality; language(s); multilingualism; translanguaging; higher education; university; social justice; classroom practice; teaching and learning; pedagogy

The Call

In engaging in decolonial praxis, this Special Issue seeks to subvert dominant (Western) epistemologies as 'the' authority on what counts as knowledge and whose knowledge counts. Drawing on Mignolo and Walsh's (2018) 'practices of decoloniality' we seek to create a critical space in which to explore linguistic diversity through a decolonial lens applied to Higher Education contexts around the world. Over the last few decades there have been movements to decolonise universities, most notably in South Africa and Latin America, but also more recently in the US, Europe and elsewhere. These encourage university communities to challenge traditional ways of knowing and representation in order to reverse unequal access and educational outcomes within higher education and society more broadly. Yet, 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 scholarship. Language ideologies persuade us that

language is somehow a neutral tool for communication when in fact what counts as appropriate language in any context is a complex cultural, political and social matter. At the same time, the dominance of the English language in scholarship and teaching within universities globally is not unrelated to Britain's colonial past, where English was imposed at the expense of other languages, and the more recent effects of globalisation, which has continued the dominance of a single lingua franca community. Themes related to this Special Issue are beliefs about the dominance of colonial languages, the denigration of some groups of people for the way they speak and write and the elevation of others who have access to powerful language(s) spoken by powerful people. Language really does matter.

The Special Issue seeks to interrogate and unpack the role of linguistic diversity within universities across different geo-political contexts with the aim of refining current understandings of how multilingual practices can be deployed as a tool for decolonial praxis (see Stroud and Kerfoot, 2020). The Special Issue also seeks to create a critical space for contributors to *speak back* in languages other than English in order to look beyond and to resist some of the dominant epistemologies and ideologies that disproportionately affect the Global South, resulting in unequal access to resources and power. Cintra (2018) for example, writes and translates indigenous languages of Brazil to create a space for dialogue with speakers of those languages.

As guest editors of the Special Issue of *Decolonial Subversions*, we invite contributions from a range of disciplines and higher education contexts from scholars, researchers, teachers, practitioners and activists. In line with the Vision of *Decolonial Subversions* we are seeking contributions that draw on a range of different languages, modes, formats and contexts through which to offer new and under-reported perspectives and traditions of knowledge-making linked to the themes outlined above while remaining accessible to a diverse multilingual audience.

More specifically, we are seeking contributions that:

1. theorise multilingualism through a decolonial lens
2. build on current understandings in order to subvert taken for-granted assumptions about language
3. view writing, scholarship and university teaching as a form of decolonial practice and therefore engage with multiple languages, scripts and modes
4. explore the role of language in effecting social/educational change

We welcome contributions that are demonstrably related to linguistic diversity, decolonial praxis and marginalised groups and individuals within higher education, and we encourage abstract proposals from those working within or affiliated to universities in diverse contexts around the world. We recognise that we speak from a position of relative privilege as academics based in the UK and we wish to acknowledge that there are different ways of engaging in decolonial research, scholarship and practice and that our effort is neither comprehensive nor without flaws. We invite contributions from all regions of the world to enlarge our own horizons and create opportunities for learning from others that are appropriate for different contexts: contributions from all regions of the world are welcome.
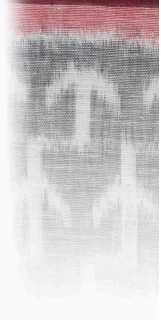
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- Cintra, M, S. (2018). Nheengatu Language and Its Role in the Tactics of Construction of Indigenous Identity, *Advances in Anthropology*, Vol.8 No.4, November 2018. DOI: 10.4236/aa.2018.84012
- Mignolo, W. and Walsh C. (2018). On Coloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis, Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Stroud, C. and Kerfoot, C. (2020). *Decolonising Higher Education: Multilingualism, Linguistic Citizenship & Epistemic Justice* In Working Papers in Urban Language & Literacies, no 265, 1-21.

Topics for Authors to consider (not exhaustive)

- Challenging dominant discourses/developing counter narratives
- Multilingualism as decolonial praxis to Higher Education
- University language policy and practice(s)
- The multilingual university
- Multilingualism and translanguaging
- Linguistic diversity across modes and physical/virtual spaces
- Stability versus mobility as a linguistic norm
- Language ideologies/Anglo-normativity
- Linguistic citizenship
- Non-standard language(s)
- Creativity and language
- Classroom pedagogy and practice
- The role of language in tackling ableism in the academy
- The role of languages on unequal practices in knowledge production, publishing and/or peer review
- Multilingualism/translanguaging as a tool for learning
- The multilingual university teacher
- Strategies for promoting linguistic inclusion
- Foregrounding language in assessment practices

Guidance for submissions

We welcome research reports, conceptual pieces, provocations, practical accounts of teaching, multilingual and multimodal submissions, contributions in languages often excluded from higher education; and in alternative (hybrid) genres such as poetry and/or auto/duo-ethnographies. Given the scope of possible contributions we ask potential authors to read the guidance Become a Contributor on the website of *Decolonial Subversions* before submitting an abstract of max. 700 words including references, which communicates directly how the contribution aligns with the theme of the Special Issue as well as the aims and scope of *Decolonial Subversions* as a platform. If accepted, we envisage that final contributions will be between 3,000 and 7,000 words including references.

To submit, please email Dr Victoria Odeniyi Victoria.odeniyi@gmail.com and Dr Gillian Lazar G.Lazar@mdx.ac.uk writing **Decolonial Subversions Special Issue** in the title field attaching a PDF file that includes an abstract, title, name(s) of author(s), institution affiliation and a 50-word biography.

Tentative timeline

Abstract of proposed Contribution (up to 700 words)	5th November 2021
Notification of acceptance	Mid November 2021
Submission date for authors for peer feedback	End June 2022
Final manuscript submission date for authors	November 2022
Projected publication date	Mid 2023