

# Editorial

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## 1. Introduction

The *Journal of Second and Foreign Languages* is an open access, peer-reviewed and copyedited journal concerning all aspects of second and foreign languages. The journal provides a platform for emerging interdisciplinary research on language education and language practices in multilingual societies and increasingly digitalising environments of learning and communication. The journal aligns with the wider intellectual movement of decolonising knowledge, language, and education, and focuses distinctly on the research of/for underrepresented languages, minoritised and endangered languages, less-widely taught languages, and other smaller languages as well as alternative approaches and pedagogies. The journal promotes open access to quality work of early career researchers and all other stages of career, particularly those of the Global Majority and the Global South. We aim to give equal voice to researchers and practitioners and foster intercommunication of theoretical research and practice-based studies in teaching and pedagogy. The journal publishes two issues per annum, plus guest-edited special issues where there is an interest.

We welcome submissions that contribute to relevant subareas of applied linguistics, sociolinguistics and pedagogical studies, including but not limited to language teaching and learning, language acquisition and development, bilingualism and multilingualism, digital and technology-mediated language, critical language pedagogies, heritage language, language endangerment and revitalisation, language policy, language and identity, language and culture, and intercultural communication.

## 2. Decolonising Languages

In the context of decolonising initiatives, Black Lives Matter, #MeToo, climate emergency protests and other global movements for social and environmental justice, a key mission of the *Journal of Second and Foreign Languages* is to encourage interdisciplinary and innovative research on languages that aim to challenge rather than reproduce linguistic and social inequalities. Languages are fraught with inequalities and hierarchies, adversely affecting indigenous languages, heritage languages, minority languages, less widely taught languages, endangered languages, underrepresented languages and smaller languages. Global North-centric notions of language ontologies and epistemologies prevent the emergence of theories from the Global South. As Boaventura de Sousa Santos points out, truly emancipatory changes in the global social order may require “grammars and scripts other than those developed by Western-centric critical theory” (2014, viii).



Decolonising and decanonisation of languages require rejecting the banking model critiqued by Paulo Freire (2005) and its assumption of the neutrality of education. It involves language users, including researchers, teachers and students, gauging their positionality in colonial hierarchies through open and critically reflective discussion as well as critical reflection on the role of language teaching in furthering colonial and hegemonic oppression of minority languages (Hird, 2023; Kubota, 2021; Macedo, 2019). Unfortunately, language theorists and practitioners are often complicit in reproducing inequalities. For example, the choice of English as this journal's main linguistic medium is driven by the role of English as an academic lingua franca around the world, which is a taken-for-granted aspect in the expected market and readership for global academic outputs (Pennycook & Makoni, 2020, 96). As this journal develops, we hope to publish increasing numbers of papers in languages other than English, as a starting point in the long struggle to address this imbalance.

Regrettably, language education is still mostly taught as a technical process of decoding and encoding, based on an enduring assumption of "ideological neutrality" in models of language teaching and learning (Kramersch, 2020; Morgan & Mattos, 2018). Yet, languages are never neutral (Phipps & Guilherme 2004): for example, they are often used to legitimise social inequalities and marginalise minorities in ways that serve the interests of elites (Bauman & Briggs, 2003). The languages and cultures of dominant groups are set as standards to be aspired to; conversely, the languages and cultures of minority groups are viewed as intrinsically deficient. A dominant "standard" language is enforced through state language and educational policies, which enact linguistic symbolic violence by stigmatising "non-standard" speech (Alim & Paris, 2017; Kramersch, 2020). Language teaching that uncritically seeks to reproduce "standard" forms of language unwittingly or otherwise enforces normative discourses and policies. However, if languages can produce discrimination and inequality, they can also challenge and subvert oppressive practices (Pessoa & Urzêda-Freitas, 2012).

### 3. Reimagining Language Research and Teaching

Reimagining language research and teaching entails, importantly, a "decolonial turn" (Ndhlovu and Ndhlovu-Gatsheni, 2024, 2) in the world view (Kramersch 2019) to seek a change in the limits and conditions of the way we talk about languages, cultural identities and regimes of knowledge. A key task involves pluralising language materials so that they include differing voices, accents, vocabularies and grammars, as well as multiple viewpoints on language issues in the target culture (Phipps, 2019). It needs the dialogic co-creation of "new, multilingual ecologies of the postdecolony" (Phipps, 2019, 93). This kind of radical collaboration between students and teachers builds a social justice model of education founded on criticality and decolonisation. "Cognitive justice" requires a wider circulation of forms of knowledge, including theories from the Global South (de Sousa Santos, 2014). Raewyn Connell therefore calls for "theory on a world scale" (2018). If language research and teaching are to contribute meaningfully to Connell's vision, it cannot continue with the assumption of language as something natural to "pick up" and the familiar models of foreign language pedagogy premised on the claim of neutrality. As Pennycook and Makoni (2020) argue in their call for a southern applied linguistics, the disruption of existing hierarchies of global knowledge production enables the emergence of alternative epistemologies. For example, translanguaging approaches offer inspiration by emphasising the actual practices of speakers of the target language, rather than relying on the



“standard” language of state language policies and uncritical textbooks (Li, 2024). The *Journal of Second and Foreign Languages* shares this vision of putting everyday language interactions at the heart of language research and teaching and problematising norms (re)produced through language policies, textbooks and normative discourses of correct and incorrect linguistic practices (García et al., 2021).

#### 4. Contents of This Issue

In this issue, Justyna Drobnik-Rogers and Sandra Torres, the convenors of the [Less-Widely Taught Languages \(LWTLs\) Special Interest Group](#) of the UK’s [University Council for Languages](#), examine the state of the field of LWTLs in the UK. They point out that UK Higher Education institutions (HEIs) currently offer courses in over seventy foreign languages other than French, Spanish and German, and that the role of HEIs, especially in the context of LWTLs, should be to promote the diversity of languages, equal in status, spanning from indigenous, through community and heritage to foreign languages. They compellingly demonstrate that while the core values of many universities include social inclusion, internationalisation and a focus on preparing graduates to become global citizens, languages do not seem to have a prominent place in this agenda. Similarly, in the US, the [National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages](#) reports that over 90% of students choose to study French, German, or Spanish, while only a small minority learn languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, Swahili and other languages spoken by most people across the world.

Ming Qu’s article on dialogic co-creation of speaking tests between students and staff in a Japanese HEI pays attention to a relatively neglected area in the growing body of research on staff-student collaboration. Leading readers through the diverse phases of implementing student-staff partnerships, she examines the validity of student evaluations and analyses students’ perceptions of student-staff partnerships. Her findings show that when students have clarity about the expectations set by the teacher and are familiar with the learning methods that support those expectations, they are better equipped to take control of their learning journey.

Contributing to research on minority representation in the linguistic landscapes (LLs) of public domains, Feiyang Tian and Sjaak Kroon present a multi-level analysis of signage in Los Angeles (LA) Chinatowns. Through combined methods of ethnographic observations, interviews and textual and visual analysis of language orthographies, they explore the relationship between the linguistic landscape and people’s language perception and the changing social indexicalities of different linguistic variables. The paper concludes that the LL can be taken as a form of informal language input that impacts Chinese immigrants’ language perceptions and their identity transformation.

From a perspective of minority children’s bilingual development, the study by Ifigeneia Dosi, Eleni Kouki, Anatasia Lada and Stefanie Keulen offers insights into the written narrative skills of Greek-Turkish bilingual children, a structurally distant and less studied language-pair, to their monolingual peers in a Greek primary school. Their study reveals that monolinguals and bilinguals perform similarly with the macrostructural organisation of storytelling, exhibiting no significant differences related to their dominant L1 languages. Whereas with microstructural features, bilinguals are found to show more features of weakness in some predicted areas, but less so in other areas, contrary to the hypothesis. The authors further identify contextual factors of children’s literacy practices in preschool and outside



school settings as predictor variables for understanding the development of narrative skills for these monolingual and bilingual children respectively.

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