Translanguaging Pedagogy: Strategies for Our Multilingual Classrooms

Jeffrey D. Meyers
DePaul University

Good teaching attends to context. It is tailored to each particular group of students. I teach differently when I teach at a Catholic seminary versus a Protestant one, a large university versus a small college, a suburban school versus an urban one. I teach differently when half my students are international students, when many are Latiné,[1] or when a quarter of them are LGBTQIA+. As professors we all do this, even if we have taught at the same school for so long that we have forgotten how tailored our teaching is to our school's particular student demographics. A lot of our knowledge of our students is hard to quantify, but it fundamentally shapes what we do in the classroom, the readings we assign, and how we craft assignments and assessments.

This article focuses on one particular aspect of student diversity: the fact that many of our students speak multiple languages. It arises out of my struggles to teach in classrooms where multilingual students are a substantial minority. Lacking good examples from my own experience, I explored research into teaching multilinguals from a wide variety of sources, with most of it originating overseas or in K-12 contexts. This required some adaptation for my various undergraduate and seminary teaching contexts, which tend to be more linguistically diverse than what is typical in other countries.

No efforts toward diversity, equity, and inclusion are complete without attention to the linguistic diversity of our students, a core aspect of our students' identities that is so thoroughly ignored in higher education in the United States that even our data-obsessed institutions do not bother collecting data on it. We know how many of our students are Hispanic, but we have no idea how many speak Spanish. We know how many students come from other countries on student visas, but we never bother to ask them what languages they speak. Given how central language is for learning, tailoring our teaching to embrace the presence of multilingual students has the potential to significantly improve its quality and effectiveness.

English Hegemony

One often encounters the assumption that education in the United States—one of the most linguistically diverse nations on earth—should take place entirely in English. This deeply-held ideology appears to arise more out of white supremacy and eurocentrism than any evidence, evaluation, or facts related to teaching and its outcomes. It is simply assumed to be right, unquestioned despite research suggesting the advantages of multilingual instruction and the rigorous debates over the languages of teaching and learning taking place in other parts of the world.[2] It reflects a subtractive model of education, where students are asked to jettison parts of their identities, histories, cultures, and competencies in order to succeed in spaces designed for others.[3] Might it be time for those of us in US higher education to reevaluate our devotion to monolingual English instruction?[4]

While the pull of English as the world's academic language is strong, this hegemonic dominance has numerous negative effects. These include the marginalization of those who are not native speakers of accepted varieties of English.[5] To be a native English speaker is a privilege that marks an unearned power and advantage over others. To continuously promote English as the language of the academy is to unduly seek to strengthen and solidify that power at others' expense. Namsoon Kang puts this well when she writes that "the discursive hierarchy of English-speaking scholars and nations over against non-English-speaking scholars and nations becomes a form of discursive hegemony."[6] She reminds us that "when people do not affirm one's heart language, the loss of one's heart language and the need to use the acquired language become a constant reminder of one's diasporic location and the life of marginality."[7] Gloria Anzaldúa *(2012, 80–81)* puts it more bluntly when she writes, in her case of Chicano Spanish, that "repeated attacks on our native tongue diminish our sense of self. . . . Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself."[8] Monolingual pedagogies keep multilingual and non-English speaking students on the margins of education and hinder them from forming community and exploring their identities with each other.

Innovation and intellectual vibrancy often arise when multiple cultures, experiences, disciplines, or languages come together. A diversity of languages complements other diversities in promoting and prompting new ideas and exchanges of ideas. We should be wary of the increasingly monolingual nature of scholarship. English is well on its way to becoming a universal academic language like Greek and Latin once were, back before the standardization and elevation of national languages. This is despite the fact that the notorious difficulty and irregularity of English makes it a particularly poor choice for the task. This process may lead, as Minae Mizumura argues, to the end of national languages as we know them.[9] Of course, many non-European languages never reached the level of a "national language," having been marginalized by the languages of the colonizing powers, which remain in many cases the languages of government, the academy, and even literature—regardless of what people actually speak in the streets. The perseverance of many local languages does not mean that they are not under threat; as Christa van der Walt writes, "local languages have to be very strong to continue living alongside English."[10] This is especially true in the academy. While there is a certain practicality and efficiency to the worldwide use of English as the universal language of scholarship, there is also a stultifying danger in limiting ourselves to the concepts and thought forms of one particular language.[11]

Emphasis on the importance of English has led to poor pedagogical choices that sacrifice much in the name of learning English faster (including, it turns out, learning English faster). The idea that restricting learners to one particular language will help them learn it faster or better remains popular, despite research which shows that strengthening and utilizing existing languages is the more effective approach.[12] If you want someone to learn English faster and at a higher level, the most effective way is to encourage the use of their existing languages in that learning process. This should be familiar to many in theological education, as it is exactly how we teach biblical Greek: with explicit comparisons to English grammar. Many of the most popular biblical Greek textbooks include lessons on English grammar, recognizing that the lack of this knowledge is a hinderance to learning Greek. The same is true for students learning English. The most direct way to help them learn English is to use and bolster their understanding of their other languages. This requires movement away from monolingual biases and toward the celebration of multilingualism and the full integration of multilingual learners into the classroom.

Theories of English language development traditionally argued that languages should be kept separate in teaching and learning, leading to efforts to ban students from using their native languages in schools, a reluctance to make any reference to existing language knowledge in the teaching of English, and other efforts to keep students' languages separate. All of these strategies have been proven pedagogically counterproductive for developing English language ability, let alone for engagement with content—where knowing more than one language is almost always an advantage—and for students' lives and career prospects in our multilingual world.[13]

Language segregation is also detrimental for basic communication. In research focusing on interreligious dialogue, Linda Sauer Bredvik has found that the use of multiple languages "often creates a more effective dialogue than rigid monolingualism" and that "far from leading to misunderstandings . . . prolific multilanguaging practices frequently lead to greater understanding and also functioned as a linguistic means of displaying hospitality."[14]

Resistance to multilingual education often relies on the language of racial segregation, with words like "contamination" and "impurity" being used to decry "language mixing."[15] Its history is closely tied to attempts to destroy indigenous languages.[16] The ideology of monolingual education has a long history that appears more rooted in racism than in legitimate science.[17] It is no wonder that such ideologies lead to the absurd practice of judging intellect on the basis of facility with an accent-free prestige variety of English, a prejudice often experienced by our students.[18] Despite what the language segregationists claim, our different languages are not housed separately in the brain and do not need to be kept separate to avoid confusion.[19] Danling Fu, Xenia Hadjioannou, and Xiaodi Zhou summarize this well when they conclude that

> When emergent bilinguals are taught using a monolingual approach . . . . this practice assumes that becoming proficient in English is a fundamental prerequisite to [their] future success and that their home languages are far less important or even completely irrelevant to their formal schooling. . . . However, evidence suggests that individuals have a single, unified language repertoire that encompasses the linguistic features of all their languages and they naturally translanguage to fit their needs for communication in different contexts and with different people.[20]

Efforts to decolonize our teaching must recognize the appropriateness and utility of creating space for students to use all of their linguistic resources in their studies.

English Hegemony in Theological Education

Theological education, especially in seminaries, stands out in US higher education for its embrace of non-English languages in teaching. One-fifth of the schools in the US and Canada ac-

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License

credited by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) offer programs taught in other languages, most of them in Spanish, Korean, or Mandarin.[21] Many have programs and centers aimed at supporting international students through cultural orientations, language classes, writing support, library programs and acquisitions, and other means.[22] Such programs often reflect practical needs, both the needs of students and the need of the church for leaders equipped to minister to its diverse communities. As H. Samy Alim and Django Paris write, in their case of K-12 schools, "promoting linguistic and cultural dexterity is no longer about equally valuing all of our communities—it is also about the skills, knowledges, and ways of being needed for success in the present and future."[23]

The existence of such programs should not be taken as a sign that theological education is successfully including non-English-speaking or multilingual students, even those we manage to attract. In fact, these programs sometimes serve as object lessons in a failure to include: many were founded by immigrant communities precisely because higher education did not make space for them while those programs at historically English-speaking schools are frequently underfunded and kept segregated from the rest of the institution.[24] It would be a challenge to find a multilingual school where the various languages used have equal status. While there are glimmers of hope in certain places, Loida I. Martell-Otero's conclusion that "theological education seems to be working on an older paradigm, or at least on an idealized paradigm of a homogenized world, when the global—particularly the poor, brown, and broken—stayed on their respective side of the border and did not invade the lily-white towers of intellectual purity" remains the dominant reality.[25]

Most institutions continue to think of the presence of multilingual students as a problem rather than an asset, all the while ignoring the significant costs of monolingualism and the structural causes of any difficulties these students may face.[26] This lack of hospitality toward linguistic diversity adds to a situation already marked by structures and systems built around white cultural values, a reality that, as Elizabeth Conde-Frazier has reminded us, is inhospitable, discriminatory, and oppressive toward minority students and faculty.[27] What we need instead, as Chloe T. Sun writes, is the orientation to one another and offer of belonging found when we teach in the languages of our students.[28]

When not seen as a problem to be solved—whether through more rigorous gatekeeping via tests like the TOEFL or through increased support—multilingual and international students are often (and increasingly) seen as a commodity to be procured as a source of tuition or to improve the education experience of white students rather than as human beings deserving of an education themselves.[29] Extension sites overseas–and the internationally-aimed online programs that will likely replace them–can also operate out of this same mentality. Typically unquestioned are the negative aspects of the internationalization of US higher education, including the relentless exportation of Western values and culture.[30] Partnerships with overseas institutions often reflect these same values. K. K. Yeo asks whether US theological institutions are really "ready to achieve organic and symmetrical partnerships, to become conversant in the language[s] and worldview[s]" of the places they seek to build partnerships.[31] That US faculty teaching abroad typically expect to speak through translators when the reverse is almost never true speaks to the role of language in the imbalance of power present in these "partnerships." They often retain the dominance of English found in higher education in the United States, a dominance which emphasizes where—and with whom—the power resides in our societies and institutions.[32]

Efforts to decolonize our institutions and our teaching are one response to the imbalances of power created by colonization and globalization. Kang reminds us that "most resources for theological education in the world, in terms of institutional, financial, and human resources with enormous means to research, archive, and disseminate knowledge, have resided in the global North, while the dire need for theological education infrastructures and resources has drastically grown in the global South."[33] She emphasizes that critically examining and deconstructing how knowledge is created and disseminated is "one of the urgent tasks for US theological educators," a task that should lead us to decolonize theological education by (re)grounding it in "geopolitical sensitivity, radical responsibility, cosmopolitan justice, and hospitality."[34]

For those teaching in confessional contexts, our responses to multilingualism speak to our theology.[35] What theological claims are we making when we exclude our students' other languages from the classroom? What claims could we make by embracing them? What kind of church do we belong to? What kind of God do we worship? To embrace—or, worse, enforce—English-only pedagogies is to claim that the European-descended church matters more than the global church, that God is on the side of the colonizers, that diversity is a hinderance rather than an asset for the Christian faith. I propose we side instead with the Indian theologian Felix Wilfred, who takes up the claims of liberation theology that God is on the side of the poor, the victims, those on the margins, and argues that these imply a God who affirms difference. He writes that,

> God speaks today in the language of diversity. From the viewpoint of the centre, only one language—the language of power—is the legitimate one. Making everybody speak this language of course is the easiest way to control and manipulate. God, however, is not a partner in this programme of one language, and it is not in consonance with her creation either. The Spirit of God is the source of differences and many tongues.[36]

Perhaps our guiding story should not be that of the Tower of Babel, which focuses our attention on the difficulties of communicating across languages, but the story of Pentecost, which points us to the opportunities and joys of doing so.

Our Students

While hard data from schools, accreditors, and government agencies on linguistic diversity is lacking, we can be confident that our schools are serving large numbers of multilingual students and may have the potential to serve many more. Around sixty-six million people, 21.5 percent of the United States population, speak a language other than English at home.[37] While non-English speakers and multilinguals are almost certainly underrepresented in our student bodies, they are likely already one of the largest minority groups present in our institutions.

That is not to say that the multilingual and non-English-speaking students served by our institutions are one coherent group. They often come from different backgrounds and situations with very different needs. They include international students studying in the US for the first time, international students who have previously studied in the US as undergraduates or high school students, students who have immigrated on a permanent visa (at varying ages), US-born students whose families immigrated to the US and speak a language other than or in addition to English in the home (often known as "generation 1.5" students), domestic students from long-existing multilingual or non-English-speaking communities in the United States, and native-English-speaking students who have learned additional languages.[38]

Few students, including native speakers, arrive at college fully capable in academic English. For most students it is a struggle to learn to read the kinds of materials we assign. This should be a reminder that students from the groups above will have widely varying proficiencies in their other languages. Students coming out of US school systems are especially likely to lack full literacy in their other languages, even if they speak them fluently. Graduate students who earned their undergraduate degree in the United States will only rarely have college-level academic proficiencies in their non-English languages. This is one of the things advocates of translanguaging pedagogies hope to change. By legitimizing and encouraging the use of all the languages students speak, such teaching strategies aim to support full multilingualism, which can dramatically enhance students' readiness for their future lives and careers.[39]

Translanguaging Pedagogy

Pedagogical strategies that take into account the languages present in the classroom allow multilingual students to take full advantage of their learning abilities and develop academic skills and discipline-specific vocabulary in multiple languages. These same strategies give students who are learning new languages a chance to practice them. Such pedagogies build on more general efforts to craft diverse and inclusive courses and help students develop cultural competency.

In most of the world, translanguaging—the strategic use of our entire linguistic repertoire, regardless of artificial boundaries between languages—is the default mode of communication.[40] Multilingual people speaking to similarly multilingual people naturally switch back and forth between languages, often within the same sentence. While an ideological aversion to such language mixing is common even among those who practice it, many linguists see translanguaging as a normal, appropriate, and sophisticated linguistic practice that improves the effectiveness of communication.[41]

Translanguaging pedagogy, which we might loosely define as any incorporation of multiple languages in class materials or instruction, is most common in classrooms where a large portion of the students share a language other than the language of instruction. It may take place with the professor's participation or, in more limited ways, when the professor does not know the language in question. Unlike in bilingual classrooms, no effort is made to present all information in both languages. Navigation between languages is instead fluid and situational. While translanguaging is typically found in regions and classrooms where the language of instruction is not the local language, translanguaging strategies can also support students coming from non-dominant or non-local communities, as is most commonly the case in the United States and Canada.

So what does this look like in the classroom? The answer is dependent on what classroom we are talking about. Which strategies are appropriate and practical vary based on who our students are, our own language abilities, and what subjects we are teaching. What is consistent is that translanguaging pedagogy involves "an attitude or stance that sees the value of using all of students' linguistic resources and takes steps (some more deliberate than others) to use and develop those resources."[42] Most often I teach undergraduates at a university with large numbers of multilingual domestic students, many of whom have been denied full literacy in their other languages.[43] This is a very different situation than when I teach at seminaries with large numbers of international students. In both cases the students in a given class often speak over a dozen languages between them, which makes many traditional translanguaging strategies less useful or more difficult to implement. The trick is to get to know your students and ask them what would be the most helpful.

Most professors can practice basic translanguaging strategies, sometimes with help from librarians, instructional designers, and other support staff. These might include:

- Making textbooks and readings available in multiple languages.
- Encouraging students to read texts translated into English in the original language if they can.
- Providing abstracts or summaries of readings in alternate languages.
- Giving students permission to use multiple languages in partner or group discussions.
- Creating discussion groups organized by language preference (allowing students to self-select informally).

These strategies do not necessarily require the professor to know the language and can work well for supporting multilingual students when they come from many different language backgrounds.

More advanced translanguaging strategies, most often used when a large portion of the students speak a common language other than the primary language of instruction, include:

- Translating readings or other media from or into the primary language of instruction.
- Providing translations of assignment instructions.
- Lecturing bilingually (everything is presented in both languages) or translingually (multiple languages used fluidly).
- Preparing bilingual slideshows with all material duplicated or translingual slideshows with explanatory notes, vocabulary terms, or other additive material in a secondary language.
- Highlighting cognate relationships between key terms in various languages during lectures.
- Taking and answering questions in multiple languages.
- Offering quizzes and exams in multiple languages or allowing answers in multiple languages.
- Allowing written work to be submitted in multiple languages, accepting minor assignments in any language while requiring major ones to be in the language of instruction, or encouraging research and preliminary writing in multiple languages while requiring the final product to be in the language of instruction.
- Having students translate course texts or other materials as a course assignment.

These strategies typically require the instructor or a teaching assistant to have proficiency in the language.[44] They are usually practiced in settings with only two or three main languages and strong institutional support for multilingual education, although they can sometimes be used more broadly.

Many of these strategies are already widely practiced in the teaching of religion and theology. In a survey of students, alumni, and faculty from ATS-accredited institutions I asked respondents to indicate which translanguaging practices they had experienced in a classroom in the US or Canada.[45] The results show that a slim majority have experienced at least one of the ten strategies listed, with most of those respondents experiencing more

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License

than one. Here are the full results, ordered by what percentage of respondents chose them:

- 44.6% None of the above
- 28.7% At least some textbooks or other required readings available in multiple languages
- 23.9% Choice to complete papers, exams, or quizzes in a language other than the language of instruction
- 19.7% Courses taught entirely in a language other than English
- 19.4% Supplementary material (lecture notes, slideshows, etc.) available in a language other than the language of instruction
- 18.0% Instructor taking and/or answering questions in a language other than the language of instruction
- 15.9% Courses taught bilingually (students are assumed to know only one of the languages used)
- 13.5% Abstracts or summaries of readings provided in a language other than the language of instruction
- 12.5% Class discussion conducted partly in a language other than the language of instruction
- 12.1% Small group discussions conducted at least partly in a language other than the language of instruction
- 0.7% Courses taught translingually (students are assumed to have some proficiency in both languages used)

While most often experienced at schools with established programs for non-English speakers, many of these strategies have the potential to be used more widely and by individual instructors regardless of institutional support. The most common strategy, at least among ATS-accredited schools, is to make textbooks or other required readings available in multiple languages. This might mean listing non-English editions of textbooks in your syllabi, asking your library to purchase them, or providing students with copies of non-English editions of individual chapters. I have used this strategy extensively with both undergraduates and seminary students, primarily through posting translations of individual book chapters for students online on my schools' learning management systems. Whether my students use the non-English editions appears to vary substantially based on their backgrounds and language abilities, with many choosing to read texts in English even when given the option of reading them in their native tongue. Others find it refreshing to get a break from the arduousness of reading everything in English or choose the non-English edition to practice their other language.

Implementing Translanguaging Pedagogy

Implementing translanguaging pedagogy requires thinking critically about our goals, capabilities, and classroom communities. As with all efforts to strengthen our teaching practices, finding ways to incorporate students' other languages into our pedagogy requires research, experimentation, and learning from our colleagues. This final section highlights some of the things I have learned while trying to better serve my multilingual students.

First, translanguaging strategies complement more general efforts toward greater diversity, equity, and inclusion, such as working to create a culture of inclusion in classroom interactions, recognizing and building on the knowledge and experience students bring to the classroom, assigning readings from a diverse array of contexts and scholars, using examples and readings from students' home contexts, and taking into account the impact of cultural factors on learning styles and expectations.[46] For example, using readings and examples from Latin America usually ensures that I can make a Spanish edition of the reading available to students and has sometimes prompted me to translate material from Spanish myself.[47] Translanguaging strategies such as these are part of my efforts to craft syllabi that do not confuse the North American church for the global church. They are a reaction to the fact that our curriculums are often "circumscribed by colonial boundaries," as Musa Dube puts it,[48] and need to be broadened to reflect the full diversity of Christianity.

Second, as with other efforts to diversify our pedagogy, translanguaging strategies often involve letting go of some control over the educational process. This may mean students having discussions with each other that you cannot understand. They may choose to research topics you know nothing about and use sources you cannot read. While such realities can make us uneasy, they allow students more control over their own learning and often lead to increased engagement and motivation.[49]

Third, like pedagogical practices driven by the needs of students with disabilities, efforts to recognize and value linguistic diversity provide benefits to a wider range of students.[50] Many of my native English-speaking students report reading texts in non-English languages, for example. For some this is a way of practicing languages they are learning; others are following my encouragement to take an advanced scholarly approach by reading texts in the original language. I see similarly mixed participation of native and non-native speakers in both classroom and online small group discussions conducted translingually or entirely in another language.

Fourth, efforts to embrace the full diversity of Christianity and of our students will always be incomplete. When I post translations for my students, that small act of resistance to English hegemony can easily replicate the very hierarchy of languages I seek to challenge. Whether a translation is available in a particular language is a sign of the language's prestige and of the economic wealth of its region of origin. Translations—and even original works—in regional and indigenous languages are virtually unheard of compared to translations in national and colonial languages. Other hierarchies of power are also replicated in what is available in translation. Translations of works by women are far less common than translations of works by men. In my own courses, only four of ninety-four non-English editions (4.3%) that I have been able to get for my students is of a work written by a woman—and I had to purchase three of the four from overseas because no US library had them available through interlibrary loan.[51] My courses also tend to privilege Spanish—itself a colonial language—because it is usually the only language spoken by a sufficient number of my students that translanguaging strategies beyond posting non-English editions of readings are practical and useful.

Fifth, it often makes sense to use multiple translanguaging strategies in tandem with one another. On days when all of the readings are available in Spanish, I will often encourage Spanish-speaking students to find each other for paired or small group discussions and use whatever mix of Spanish and English they like. This is even easier in online discussion forums, where I sometimes create parallel English and "Spanglish" threads for each discussion question and allow students to post in whichever mix of threads they prefer.

Sixth, students have been bombarded with messages that lead them to underestimate the value of building their literacy in their native languages, which may cause them to ignore pedagogical efforts designed to help them develop their reading, writing, and speaking abilities in non-English languages. This is a common challenge faced by educators worldwide.[52] Similarly, students have often been convinced that their language is inappropriate for academic contexts.[53] This reflects the relative power and status of English and can only be countered by attempts to increase the status of other languages. The use of translanguaging strategies is in part an effort to signal that students' other languages are important and valuable.[54] The more such strategies are used, the less power English hegemony will have.

Seventh, there is no substitute for institution-wide commitments to valuing linguistic diversity. The goals of translanguaging pedagogy—inclusion, enhanced teaching effectiveness, and a reclaiming of the value of non-English languages—are achieved most fully when multiple professors or an entire institution commit to it. While translanguaging strategies can be used in traditional English-speaking classrooms, this might also mean offering courses in a variety of language modalities. It may be that in many contexts a fully non-English degree program is not as necessary or helpful as allowing students to choose from courses taught in English, in another language, bilingually, or translingually.[55] English hegemony is a systemic problem. What I can do in my classrooms is minimal in comparison to the systematic devaluing of my students' languages. Yet if we know anything about academia, it is that systemic change often starts with small experiments initially pursued without institutional support or resources.

Finally, we should not allow translanguaging practices to justify the infusion of English into non-English spaces. Guillaume Gentil argues that "the celebration of fluid multilingualism and free language mixing should not lead us to forget that one original rationale for language separation in bilingual education programs was to avoid the natural tendency for dominant languages to displace minority languages in asymmetrical contact situations."[56] This means that "if the goal is the cultivation of linguistic diversity, then preserving some language separation and having rules over which language may be used in a given context may indeed be desirable."[57] This reflects what Django Paris calls the "paradox of pluralism," the need to "bridge . . . lines of division so that groups can cooperate in society, while at the same time maintaining spaces for particular groups to thrive."[58] The adoption of translanguaging pedagogy is best done intentionally, collaboratively, and with clear communication, and consensus about expectations. The goal of providing students the opportunity to use and strengthen their proficiency in their other languages should always inform curriculum and pedagogy that aims at inclusion and honoring linguistic diversity, lest these efforts devolve into mere tokenism.

Conclusion

Pedagogical strategies that seek to include and value the linguistic diversity found in our classrooms have the potential to enhance learning (including the learning of English), increase the inclusion of marginalized students, and validate all languages as valuable and important. Efforts toward linguistic inclusion should be part of our larger efforts to shape classrooms and institutions that thrive by bringing diverse students and faculty together to encounter the full diversity of the religious traditions we study. As one seminary graduate who filled out my survey wrote, "The predominance of English is just one salient manifestation of a deeper predominance of Western thought and culture in theological education." Such students, their families, and their communities all see the value of education but, as Linda Tuhiwai Smith reminds us, "they do not want this to be achieved at the cost of destroying people's Indigenous identities, their languages, values and practices."[59] A move to embrace all of the languages of our students—and of the church—is an important means of opening up education to the experiences and knowledge of those who have experienced Western hegemony as oppression and marginalization. Even the small efforts of individual professors can show hospitality and challenge the power hierarchies embedded in higher education.

About the Author

Jeffrey D. Meyers (Ph.D., the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago) teaches Peace, Justice, and Conflict Studies at DePaul University. He has previously taught at Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana, Elmhurst University, Gonzaga University, The Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, and Catholic Theological Union.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License

Notes & Bibliography

1 While "Latinx" has gained popularity in the US as a gender-inclusive alternative to "Latino" or "Latin@," it is a difficult construction to apply to other words. Here I follow some Spanish-speakers who have begun to substitute a gender-neutral "e" for the traditional masculine "o" and feminine "a" noun endings, which works much better with Spanish grammar and pronunciation.

2 To cite some examples: Canada has long experienced fights to protect its francophone citizens and universities from the encroachment of English; universities in western continental Europe, some of which have negotiated instruction in multiple languages for generations, are now embracing (and resisting) the worldwide trend toward more instruction in English; universities in former Soviet states, many of which previously abandoned Russian instruction for national languages, are now facing pressures to adopt English; many formerly Afrikaans-speaking universities in South Africa have switched to English and are trying to elevate African indigenous languages; and universities in the Middle East and parts of Asia are increasingly conducting instruction in English and inviting US universities to open up satellite campuses.

3 H. Samy Alim and Django Paris, "What Is Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy and Why Does It Matter?" in *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies: Teaching and Learning for Justice in a Changing World*, edited by D. Paris and H. S. Alim (New York: Teacher's College Press, 2017), 1–21. Alim and Paris use this language of "additive" versus "subtractive" education, noting that state-sponsored education has often been central to the white assimilationalist colonial project, a "saga of cultural and linguistic assault [that] has had and continues to have devastating effects on the access, achievement, and well-being of students of color in public schools"(1). We could say much the same about private universities and seminaries.

4 What are we afraid of? Is it possible that the conviction that English is the only appropriate language for the academy is as racist, nationalistic, and xenophobic as it sounds?

5 See Chloe T. Sun, *Attempt Great Things for God: Theological Education in Diaspora*, Theological Education between the Times (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020), 126.

6 Namsoon Kang, *Diasporic Feminist Theology: Asia and Theopolitcal Imagination* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014)195.

7 Kang, *Diasporic Feminist Theology*, 27. That said, Kang also argues that a diasporic condition can give such individuals an advantage, turning into "a site of inventive engagement with the world because the person of marginality can become deliberate in seeking, cultivating, and constructing a space of relationship with others and society. . . . The diasporic mentality of homelessness can offer theological grounds of radical hospitality, responsibility, and critical engagements with the life of living together, the potential site for a radical solidarity without a sense of claiming the ownership of a unitary we" (27–28).

8 Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 2012), 80-81. The same is true of communities, since, as Carmen Nanko-Fernández writes, "language is created by community and in turn facilitates the creation of community" (*Theologizing en Espanglish: Context, Community, and Ministry* [Maryknoll: Orbis, 2010] 73).

9 Minae Mizumura, *The Fall of Language in the Age of English*, translated by Mari Yoshihara and Juliet Winters Carpenter (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 166–68.

10 Christa van der Walt, *Multilingual Higher Education: Beyond English Medium Orientations*, Bilingual Education and Bilingualism 91 (Buffalo: Multilingual Matters, 2013), 92.

11 Robert Phillipson, *Linguistic Imperialism Continued* (Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan, 2009), 206. As Phillipson points out, the trend toward English-language instruction outside of the English-speaking world also comes with an embrace of Anglo-American academic culture to the detriment of the alternative approaches found in other cultures.

12 See Masahiko Minami and Carlos J. Ovando, "Language Issues in Multicultural Contexts," in *The Handbook of Research in Multicultural Education*, 2nd ed., edited by James A. Banks and Cherry A. McGee Banks, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 577–88.

13 See Robert Phillipson, *Linguistic Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 185; Minami and Ovando, "Language Issues," 577–88; Ofelia García, *Bilingual Education in the 21st Century: A Global Perspective* (Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 2008), 160; Angela Creese and Adrian Blackledge, "Translanguaging in the Bilingual Classroom: A Pedagogy for Learning and Teaching?" *The Modern Language Journal* 94, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 104-5; van der Walt, *Multilingual Higher Education*, 5, 122.

14 Linda Sauer Bredvik, *Discussing the Faith: Multilingual and Metalinguistic Conversations About Religion*, Diskursmuster – Discourse Patterns 25 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2020), 84. She found that "the most communicatively effective conversations were comprised of participants who sought to go where the less powerful were, who changed or adapted their linguistic behavior to co-create meaning with interlocutors who possessed less competencies in a target language or who were a minority faith group in the conversation" (177).

15 Van der Walt, *Multilingual Higher Education*, 115. Van der Walt, who describes this tendency, also notes the use of derogatory jokes like those sometimes made about "Spanglish" and "Franglais."

16 Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, (London: Zed, 2021), 22, see also 278-79. As she writes, "the colonizer did not simply design an education system. They designed an education system especially to destroy Indigenous cultures, value systems, and appearance." This reality continues—and extends to language—since "the Indigenous language is often regarded as being subversive to national interests and national literacy campaigns, and is actively killed off" (169). Robert Phillipson also addresses the history of the promotion of English as part of the colonial project (*Linguistic Imperialism; Linguistic Imperialism Continued*).

17 Minami and Ovando, "Language Issues," 577. They note that if one goes back in the literature, one finds such patently absurd claims as the idea that bilingualism is so damaging to children as to cause intellectual disability.

18 Sun, Attempt Great Things, 50, 86–87, 129.

19 Catherine M. Mazak, "Theorizing Translanguaging Practices in Higher Education," in *Translanguaging in Higher Education: Beyond Monolingual Ideologies*, edited by Catherine M. Mazak and Kevin S. Carroll (Blue Ridge Summit: Multilingual Matters, 2016), 2.

20 Danling Fu, Xenia Hadjioannou, and Xiaodi Zhou, *Translanguaging for Emergent Bilinguals: Inclusive Teaching in the Linguistically Diverse Classroom* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2019), 24.

21 Jeffrey D. Meyers, "The Importance of Linguistically Diverse Collections: Decolonizing the Theological Library," *Theological Librarianship* 14, no. 2 (October, 2021): 26n5, https://serials.atla.com/theolib/article/view/2889.

22 Of course, others provide very little support at all, even when they have student populations that would justify more substantial efforts.

23 Alim and Paris, "What Is Culturally Sustaining," 5.

24 In my experience, students in such programs seldom have opportunities to interact with other students, are often taught by adjunct faculty excluded from the life of the institution, and are frequently provided with academic resources (such as those in the library) far inferior to those available for English-speaking students. Van der Walt also notes how officially bilingual or multilingual schools often unnecessarily build strong separations between programs taught in different languages. This is despite the fact that many of their students are to varying degrees multilingual and could easily take a mix of courses taught in different languages or courses taught bilingually or translingually (*Multilingual Higher Education*, 134).

25 Loida I. Martell-Otero, "Hablando Se Entiende la Gente: Tower of Babble or Gift of Tongues?" in *Teaching Global Theologies: Power and Praxis*, edited by Kwok Pui-lan, Cecilia González-Andrieu, and Dwight M. Hopkins (Waco: Baylor, 2015) 146–47. The result, Martell-Otero writes, is that "we have ill-prepared our students to live in a global world. We provide educational credentialing, but too many of our students graduate *mal educados—with* a lack of a holistic spirit of hospitality toward, or concern for, the cultural, religious, and linguistic 'other'" (147).

26 See van der Walt, *Multilingual Higher Education, 5; Smith, Decolonizing Methodologies*, 105.

27 Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, *Atando Cabos: Latinx Contributions to Theological Education*, Theological Education between the Times, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021), 82.

28 Sun, *Attempt Great Things*, 94.

29 See Peter Fleming, *Dark Academia: How Universities Die* (London: Pluto, 2021) 14, 30, 135; James F. Keenan, *University Ethics: How Colleges Can Build and Benefit from a Culture of Ethics* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015), 158–62).

30 Namsoon Kang, "Global Politics of Knowledge and US Theological Education: From Globalization to Planetarization," in *Locating US Theological Education in a Global Context: Conversations with American Higher Education*, edited by Hendrick R. Pieterse (Eugene: Pickwick, 2019), 25.

31 K. K. Yeo, "'Made in the USA': A Chinese Perspective on US Theological Education in Light of the Chinese Context," in *Locating US Theological Education in a Global Context: Conversations with American Higher Education*, edited by Hendrick R. Pieterse (Eugene: Pickwick, 2019), 147.

32 Sun, *Attempt Great Things*, 87.

33 Kang, "Global Politics of Knowledge," 32.

34 Kang, "Global Politics of Knowledge," 35, 41.

35 Lucretia B. Yaghjian, "Pedagogical Challenges in Teaching ESOL/Multilingual Writers in Theological Education," *Teaching Theology and Religion* 21, no. 3 (July, 2018): 162–76. Similarly, Yaghjian writes that "when we work with ESOL/multilingual students. . . . We carry across the ethos of an institution, its values and its commitments, our openness to the student's culture and our fears of embracing it" (168).

36 Felix Wilfred, *Margins: Site of Asian Theologies* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2008), xvi.

37 US Census Bureau, "2020: ACS 5-Year Estimates Detailed Tables," 2020, https://data.census.gov.

38 Johnnie Johnson Hafernik and Fredel M. Wiant, *Integrating Multilingual Students into College Classrooms: Practical Advice for Faculty* (Bristol: Channel View, 2012). I have adapted this typology from Hafernik and Wiant. They stress that the differences within each group are often as significant as the differences between groups.

39 See Edwin I. Hernández et al., *Spanning the Divide: Latinos/as in Theological Education* (Orlando: Asociación para la Educación Theológica Hispana (AETH, 2016), 193. Career-readiness is especially important for seminarians, for whom fluency in the languages of their future congregations is essential.

40 Ofelia García, *Bilingual Education in the 21st Century: A Global Perspective* (Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 2008), 109.

41 García, *Bilingual Education*, 115.

42 Catherine M. Mazak et al., "Professors Translanguaging in Practice: Three Cases from a Bilingual University," in *Translanguaging in Higher Education: Beyond Monolingual Ideologies*, edited by Catherine M. Mazak and Kevin S. Carroll, (Blue Ridge Summit: Multilingual Matters, 2016), 72.

43 Strikingly, school systems in the US often actively suppress students' other languages while simultaneously investing in helping English monolinguals learn the very languages they refuse to allow students growing up in multilingual or non-English speaking households to use.

44 K. K. Yeo, "'Made in the USA': A Chinese Perspective on US Theological Education in Light of the Chinese Context," in *Locating US Theological Education in a Global Context: Conversations with American Higher Education*, edited by Hendrick R. Pieterse (Eugene: Pickwick, 2019), 134–57. Linguistic competence in multiple languages may need to become a much larger factor in faculty hiring, PhD program admissions, and PhD requirements. This might also facilitate increased language requirements for students studying for ministry. K. K. Yeo, for instance, argues for a modern language requirement for all theological students (148). As Chloe T. Sun reminds us, "speaking different languages is not a curse, but lack of understanding of different languages is" (*Attempt Great Things*, 95).

45 The research survey was conducted November 2020 through April 2021 and primarily focused on perceptions of how programs and libraries are supporting non-English speaking and multilingual students and faculty. Academic deans (or similar leaders) from one hundred randomly-selected schools were asked to forward the survey link to their students and faculty via email. Twenty-six agreed to do so. In a few cases it was forwarded only to a subset of students (like those in particular degree programs). Alumni were recruited primarily via social media during pilot and follow-up phases, which generated a handful of current student and faculty responses as well. The survey received 301 responses from 223 students, thirty-one alumni, and fifty-nine faculty members (some respondents identified with more than one role), 172 of whom (58%) identified as multilingual or non-English speaking. The survey was available only in English and Spanish, which resulted in students in Chinese- and Korean-language programs being underrepresented.

46 On the last item, see Glenn Fluegge, "How Online Learning May Disadvantage Students from Some Cultures and What to Do About It in the Theology Classroom," *The Wabash Center Journal on Teaching* 2, no. 1 (March 2021): 187–202.

47 I have also worked with a Spanish professor at one of my schools to have her students translate material into English for use in my classes (I make the original Spanish available as well). Such collaborations may be fruitful ways of producing needed translations. Additionally, I am slowly amassing a collection of readings translated by my graduate students as a course assignment that I share with their permission.

48 Musa W. Dube, "Curriculum Transformation: Dreaming of Decolonization in Theological Studies," in *Border Crossings: Cross-Cultural Hermeneutics*, edited by D. N. Premnath, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2007), 125.

49 Danling Fu, Xenia Hadjioannou, and Xiaodi Zhou, *Translanguaging for Emergent Bilinguals: Inclusive Teaching in the Linguistically Diverse Classroom* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2019), 107.

50 Yelena Luckert with Lindsay Inge Carpenter, eds., *The Globalized Library : American Academic Libraries and International Students, Collections, and Practices* (Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2019), x. Luckert and Carpenter note how a number of authors have come to the conclusion that pedagogical efforts aimed at multilingual students provide benefits to monolingual students as well.

51 I suspect that this reflects both lower rates of translation of works by women and higher rates of translation for older works, which were more likely to be written by men. The plummeting rates of US library purchasing of non-English titles exacerbate both of these factors (see Meyers, "The Importance of Linguistically Diverse Collections," 11–28). Of the non-English editions of books I assign a single chapter from, that I know exist but have been unable to or have not tried to acquire, two of sixty-two (3.2%) are works written by women. A small grant from the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Religion and Theology allowed me to purchase thirty-one books to add to those I was able to obtain through interlibrary loan.

52 See van der Walt, *Multilingual Higher Education*, 79–87.

53 This is also true for non-prestige varieties of English.

54 See Yanitsa Buendia de Llaca, "Chisme and Spanglish as a Pedagogical Tools," *Religious Studies News: Spotlight on Teaching* (July, 2022): 10–12. Buendia de Llaca describes how in the US Spanish has been both racialized and relegated to the private and familial realms. She writes that giving students the opportunity to use Spanish in their learning "breaks parameters of exclusion and domination" and "can be a powerful and healing experience" (11).

55 See Sun, *Attempt Great Things*, 70, 114. Sun, who teaches at one of the Mandarin-language seminaries in the US, writes of the lack of structures for helping students learn English at many such institutions and the ways this can limit and impede their ministries, especially as the younger generations in their immigrant communities switch to English. Despite highlighting the value of such institutions, she argues that "limiting the instructional language to one [language] tends to limit the global nature of the kingdom of God. . . . God's kingdom does not belong only to those who speak English, nor only to those who speak Mandarin, but to people from all nations and all tongues" (71).

56 Guillaume Gentil, "Afterword: Moving Forward with Academic Biliteracy Research," in *Academic Biliteracies: Multilingual Repertoires in Higher Education*, edited by David M. Palfreyman and Christa van der Walt (Blue Ridge Summit: Multilingual Matters, 2017), 214.

57 Gentil, "Afterword: Moving Forward," 214.

58 Django Paris, *Language Across Difference: Ethnicity, Communication, and Youth Identities in Changing Urban Schools* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 16.

59 Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 154.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License