

AILA History of Language Learning and Teaching Research Network (HoLLTnet) Symposium, AILA2024

Chaired by Rachel Mairs and Richard Smith

Colonialism and the History of Language Learning and Teaching

Overview: What part have the teaching and learning of languages played in European colonial ventures in the Americas, Africa, Asia and Oceania, or in other cases of colonialism? To what extent did colonisers and colonised learn one another's languages, through what methods and in what venues? In what ways is the 'mastery' of indigenous languages by colonisers linked to the drive to 'master' people and resources generally? And to what extent, where and why have particular languages been favoured educationally, learned informally or been denied and/or demonized in colonial settings? Much previous work in the field of History of Language Learning and Teaching has had a Eurocentric and relatively inward-looking bias (McLelland & Smith, 2018: 11), although some recent publications have begun to counter this bias (e.g. Savatovsky et al., 2023; Irving, Mairs and Sanchez-Summer forthcoming). Accordingly, a major, developing aspiration of the AILA Research Network on History of Language Learning and Teaching (HoLLTnet) is to encourage the development of research into traditions of language learning and teaching beyond Europe, into colonial encounters involving language learning and teaching, and into colonial biases within language learning and teaching historiography. Following on from a previous one-day HoLLTnet symposium on 'Colonial contact and the history of learning and teaching non-European languages (end of the 18th–mid-20th centuries)', the present symposium takes a broader perspective, including consideration of the imperial spread of English teaching but also considering the colonial/post-colonial learning and teaching of other 'European' languages, including German and Russian. Juxtaposition of these papers with contributions which provide insights into the description, learning and teaching of 'indigenous' languages by European missionaries, traders and government officials will enable new connections to be built among scholars working in different language traditions, while the cross-disciplinary and intercultural as well as plurilingual development of History of Language Learning and Teaching research is further served by the way the symposium brings together researchers in textbook studies, cultural history, applied linguistics, religious studies and sociolinguistics from a range of countries including China, Germany, India, Malaysia, Poland and the UK. In this symposium, three papers focusing on learning materials and documentary sources ('Part I') will be followed by four papers focusing largely on language choice and educational and language policy ('Part II').

Irving, S. R. Mairs and K. Sanchez Summerer (eds.) Forthcoming. *Colonial Vocabularies: Teaching and Learning Arabic in Europe 1870-1970*. Amsterdam University Press.

McLelland, N. & Smith, R. 2018. Introduction: Establishing HoLLT: the History of Language Learning and Teaching. In McLelland, N. & Smith, R. (eds.) *The History of Language Learning and Teaching*, vol. 1. Legenda (Modern Humanities Research Association), 1–19.

Savatovsky, D., Albano, M., Pham, T.K.L. and Spaëth, V. 2023. *Language Learning and Teaching in Missionary and Colonial Contexts*. Amsterdam University Press.

Part I

Rachel Mairs: ‘Malay for Mems’: Informal instruction books for Malay in Colonial Malaya

This paper examines a number of instruction books produced for teaching the Malay language to English speakers in from the 1840s-1940s. Most were published in Singapore, with a smaller number printed in Perak, Kuala Lumpur, Calcutta and London. Rather than formal textbooks or grammars for academic study, I concentrate on phrasebooks and other instruction books that aimed to equip the user to function in the colloquial, spoken language in everyday life. Within a corpus of about eighty such works, I focus on two main topics. First, the learning of Malay by Britons who were not colonial officials or missionaries. Maye Wood’s Malay for Mems (first edition 1920s), for example, grants an insight into the kind of Malay that might be learnt by women accompanying spouses or family members in colonial employ or on commercial business in the Straits Settlements and Peninsular Malaya. Secondly, the agency of native speakers of Malay in representing their own language to foreigners, and the entanglement (often unwilling) of such authors with mechanisms of colonial power and authority.

Keywords: Malay language; colonialism; self-instruction; phrasebooks; gender.

Katalin Egri Ku-Mesu: English Language Teaching and the Colonial Matrix of Power

In my talk, I will address biases in English language teaching that stem from coloniality, i.e. from the continuing control of the Western world of economy, authority, gender and sexuality, and knowledge (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018). I will start by looking at the role the Makerere Conference held in Uganda in 1961 (CELC, 1961) played in the creation of the monolingual bias and native speakerism, which still affect many aspects of the English teaching profession. I will examine the construct of the native speaker through the lens of the psychology of colonisation (Fanon, 1952; Manoni, 1964) and show how van Dijk’s (1996) ideological square reveals the ideological structure of everyday legitimation that perpetuates the seemingly unassailable position of the native speaker, hence the monolingual bias. I will then consider how the colonial matrix of power (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018) and the sociology of absences (De Sousa Santos, 2003) have shaped theories, movements and developments such as the ownership of English (Widdowson, 1994), the multilingual turn (Conteh and Meier, 2014), and the teaching and learning of English as an international language (Jenkins, 2000). I will argue that control over knowledge, including theory creation and application, by the English-speaking centre and its institutions still keeps non-native speaker English language teaching professionals disenfranchised and marginalised. Finally, I will critically appraise counter-hegemonic initiatives such as decentring English language teaching (Padwad and Smith, 2023) and decentring whiteness in English language teaching (Gerald, 2020a, 2020b, 2022).

Keywords: coloniality, sociology of absences, native speakerism, ownership of English, multilingual turn, decentring.

Tim Giesler & Joanna Pfingsthorn: ‘Go East, Where the Skies are Blue’:

The Post-1989 Polish ELT Publishing Landscape Between Soviet and Western Impacts

In 1992, Francis Fukuyama proclaimed the ‘end of history’, foreseeing the victory of Western liberal democracies. While his assertion proves not entirely accurate from today’s standpoint, it certainly applies to the cultural and economic Westernisation of former parts of the Soviet Block. In many of the former

Soviet satellites, in which Russian had been the dominant and encouraged foreign language (Wojdon 2018: 121ff.), the implementation of English as a foreign language was welcomed due to the fact that even before 1989 English had been seen as a ‘symbol of modernization and freedom’ (Kasztalska 2014: 242). Although not unchallenged and a political battle term during the cold war, this Soviet influence on Eastern Europe has indeed been termed ‘Soviet Imperialism’ (e.g., Duchacek 1959). At the same time, from a post-colonial angle, the change of the foreign language curriculum with a growing significance of English might also be interpreted as an act of Western imperialism, i.e., establishing cultural and economic hegemony over a potentially vulnerable region adjusting to the implications of a significant political change.

The ever-increasing importance of English naturally not only ‘created a new need for English teachers, teaching programs, private tutors, and immersion camps’ (Kasztalska 2014: 242), but also opened a market for Western coursebooks publishers, who brought with them their methodologies and ideologies. In our contribution, we are going to examine the share of Western coursebook publishers in the Polish textbook market by a) analysing the government approved textbook registers and b) looking into the processes of textbook approval from the perspective of national reviewers. Our results shed light on the interplay between both local traditions, Soviet imperial influences as well as global or Western imperial influences. We also contrast and discuss possible resemblances of the post-Soviet imperial Eastern Europe to contexts which are traditionally seen as post-colonial.

Keywords: ELT publishing landscape; post-1989 Poland; Soviet impact; Western impact; textbook approval processes

Part II

Xi Li and Wei Chen: Choice of Medium and Subject of Instruction in Protestant Missionary Schools in 19th-century China (1840s–1860s): Why Chinese?

This paper focuses on the language choices and teaching strategies employed by 19th-century missionaries in China, with a particular focus on the 1840s–1860s. During what can be seen as their attempted cultural and ideological colonisation of mainland China, in contrast to their initial language teaching endeavours in Chinese settlements outside the Qing government’s control, such as Malacca and Macao, Protestant missionaries opted to impart Chinese, particularly classical Chinese, rather than English in the institutions they established after the First Opium War. Several factors contributed to this phenomenon, including widespread social hostility towards foreigners, motivations of Chinese students and their parents, and the attractiveness of classical Chinese to local populations. The language choices missionaries made served a higher purpose, i.e., evangelisation, for “Christian instruction is the best preaching, and the school is the best chapel” (Plumb, 1890, p. 447), but differed according to context.

The paper aims to shed light on this differentiation in choice of language, delving into possible underlying reasons. We analyse contemporary debates and discussions among missionaries about language choice, based on records, reports, essays, correspondence, and so on. The factors behind the divergent language teaching practices adopted by missionaries inside and outside mainland China will be particularly addressed and language choice and teaching practices of missionaries will be situated within the broader context of their evangelisation efforts.

Keywords: Language choice; History of missionary education; Chinese language teaching; Language education in China

Sharon Harvey: Discursive constructions of the ‘need’ for Māori tamariki to learn English in New Zealand parliamentary debates, 1850–1900

At the time of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi between the British Crown and more than 500 Māori Chiefs from around Aotearoa New Zealand (ANZ) in 1840, the indigenous language, te reo Māori was by far the dominant language, with many Māori tamariki attending Māori-medium mission schools and European settlers needing to learn the Māori reo to carry out their business. By 1840 the rate of Māori literacy was relatively high as Māori people taught each other literacy and numeracy in te reo Māori. The language had been systematised in written form by missionaries and Māori leaders by the 1820s. A feature of the of the mid nineteenth century in ANZ was the plethora of newspapers written in te reo Māori and published by the government, as well as Māori people themselves. However, in the second half of the century, as colonisation gathered pace, the language hierarchy in ANZ shifted markedly to English being the dominant language. By the early twentieth century it was thought that Māori as a language would die out.

In this paper I discursively analyse the parliamentary debates around schooling, particularly for Māori tamariki, from the period following the signing of the treaty, through the ANZ wars, massive land confiscations and the inauguration of ANZ’s first educational legislation. In these debates that resulted in the establishment of English-only education in ANZ for more than 150 years we see the circulation and recirculation of colonial discursive formations of the innate superiority of English and the need to make Māori more European. This research is part of ongoing work tracing back through primary sources (parliamentary debates and newspaper articles) to understand how the ANZ language education landscape came to be what it is and to imagine how it could have been otherwise.

Keywords: Aotearoa New Zealand, Treaty of Waitangi, English-only schooling, te reo Māori, language education, educational legislation

Azirah Hashim, Richard Powell and Lim Beng Soon: Language Policies from Colonial Malaya to Contemporary Malaysia

The current balance among Malay, English, Chinese and Tamil in Malaysian education reflects patterns established over centuries of European colonialism and Asian immigration. While the British to some extent continued the practice of Portuguese and Dutch predecessors of granting an administrative role for Malay, the long-established lingua franca in the Malay peninsula, demand for English increased from the later 19th-century, particularly in the Straits Settlements, but was tempered by differential policies for different communities. With Malays largely wary of the cultural effects of British schooling, the English-medium schools that appeared from the early 19th century were attended mainly by Straits-born Chinese, but the exponential growth of the Chinese population in the 20th century also saw a surge in Mandarin-medium schooling. For the Malays, considered the indigenous inhabitants of the peninsula, English instruction for the Perak royal family in 1888 set a precedent for preparing an Anglophone elite for administrative positions while favouring Malay for the majority. A minority of Indian migrants were also educated in English in view of their role as clerks and merchants, with the majority receiving limited schooling in Tamil and other languages. When the country emerged from colonial status in 1957, linguistic nationalism increased the importance of Malay education, but English remained a compulsory school subject, while Chinese- and Tamil-medium instruction were supported at elementary level. The rise of economic globalisation has again raised the profile of English but also given rise to fears of neocolonialism. This presentation will explore language education by sampling pre-war archives, the milestone Barnes (1951), Fenn-Wu (1951) and Razak (1956) reports on the eve of independence, and key developments in

vernacular and English education in postcolonial Malaysia. The presentation will thereby shed light on the socio-political impact of colonial education policy in transforming a plural society into a multi-racial modern citizenry.

Keywords: language policies, education, colonial, Malaya, Malaysia, English,

Henning Radke: German as an Educational Language in Postcolonial Settings: Language Maintenance, Change and Shift

This presentation aims to investigate the educational and social conditions that have led to language maintenance, change and shift of German in (post-)colonial environments. It therefore analyzes three historical and contemporary cases, i.e., German in Namibia, in Papua New Guinea and in Brazil. All of these countries were once subject to a considerable amount of migration from German-speaking Europe – either during the time of colonialism (Namibia, and Papua New Guinea) or during the time of industrialization (Brazil). The presentation investigates the key factors that affected local language learning and teaching, such as the (dis-)continued presence of German as a local language of instruction, the degree of group cohesion within school communities, (multi-)lingual educational policies and the density and effectiveness of the education system sur place. The three cases show interesting differences: in Namibia, German has an uninterrupted history as a local language of instruction since the late 19th century. Therefore, Namibian L1 speakers of German are usually proficient in both, standard German and Namdeutsch (Namibian German). In Brazil, this history of German as a local school language of instruction came to end after World War II. Hence, Brazilian L1 speakers of today usually grow up learning and speaking a dialectal variety of German that has gained the status of a koiné among the community. In Papua New Guinea, a strong group cohesion and identity was formed (and forced upon the pupils) by a German missionary school prompting the children of a mixed background to develop a German-based creole language called Unserdeutsch ('Our German'). Based on these three cases, the analysis presents a model outlining the complex interplay between educational policy, language learning and teaching and the evolution of language, i.e., language maintenance (Namibia), language shift (Brazil) and language change (Papua New Guinea). The topic is part of a postdoctoral research project on the German language in postcolonial settings.

Keywords: German, language teaching a learning, maintenance, shift, change, postcolonial settings.

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