Editorial

The Case for Embedded Plurilingualism and Pluriculturalism in an Era of Reglobalisation

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As the world enters a new phase of selective deglobalisation, marked by shifting geopolitical alliances, technological competition and military crises, the concept of reglobalisation helps us understand this reconfiguration of global flows. Reglobalisation is a process that reworks the "embedded liberalism" viewed by John Ruggie (1982) as the key compromise of the Bretton Woods agreement in 1944, which held nationalism and liberalism in balance through concurrent multilateralism and domestic intervention (Bishop & Payne, 2021, 16–17). Bishop and Payne call our current era's reglobalisation "re-embedded post-neoliberalism" (2021, 20).

At this epoch defining moment, as global power diffuses from America and Europe, flowing increasingly to China and burgeoning Asian economies, how should language and culture scholars respond? It is beyond the remit of this editorial to dwell on the political, diplomatic, security, economic, and societal challenges that this pivotal transformation of the world order brings. Our goal is narrower: to make the case for the paradigm shift in language and culture education policy that would help position states advantageously as they navigate the turbulent international waters of the mid-2020s and beyond.

In this emerging context, the case for promoting plurilingual and pluricultural competencies (Bowler, 2025; Coste et al., 2009) must be critically re-evaluated and re-made. Traditional models of language learning were premised on static ideas about national identity, fixed cultural content, and supposed native-speaker norms; more recent models have been predicated on globalisation's openness to linguistic and cultural exchange (Wright, 2016). Both approaches have their strengths, but both are also partly misaligned with the shifting transnational realities and obstacles to global communication flows and intercultural interaction that characterise reglobalisation.

A litmus test for conceptualising language and culture education in this era of reglobalisation is how well policies and practices embrace pragmatic engagement with both nation-state realpolitik and more aspirational visions of global openness and exchange, while at the same time recognising the opportunities and downsides of both perspectives. The language and culture learning needed in this new era is not a neutral toolbox comprising a set of grammar rules and a vocabulary list, nor is it the simple acquisition of cultural knowledge; rather, it is a mindset, a view of the world that prizes

translanguaging and transculturing as fundamental orientations to the world that enable individuals and states to meet and shape the complex and shifting power relations of reglobalisation (Bowler, 2025; Narcy-Combes & Narcy-Combes, 2024).

The development of what could be called "embedded plurilingualism and pluriculturalism" among the citizens of a state, the ability to move between three or more languages and cultures with relative ease, with due attention to domestic and multilateral linguistic and cultural interests, should be the hallmark of language and culture policy and practice in this new era. The transformation of curricula, pedagogical aims and assessment practices should see the integration of language and culture learning into interdisciplinary programmes addressing global challenges such as geopolitical instability, climate change, food and energy security, health inequalities, digital transformation, human mobilities and demographic shifts, to name a few. How can individuals and states seek to address these "wicked problems" if they are not equipped with sufficient plurilingual and pluricultural competencies? And more importantly, they require the mindset and desire to think and act plurilingually and pluriculturally, translanguaging and transculturing with ease, sensitivity and sophistication.

Establishing positive and effective national policies for the acquisition of plurilingual and pluricultural competencies to enable human flourishing is the responsibility of governments. States must be ambitious, dynamic and restless in their drive to equip citizens with the linguistic and cultural skills that will support increased individual and national prosperity, which in turn will spur prosperity across all countries that understand and grasp the spirit of the times. Successive UK governments, and many elsewhere, are abjectly failing their citizens and their national interests in this regard. In 2010, only three of the 161 British diplomats in Afghanistan spoke Dari or Pashto (Chen & Breivik, 2013, 21)! One can only imagine the impoverishment of cultural understanding resulting from this linguistic black hole. A 2013 British Academy report on the need for languages in UK diplomacy and security found an "apathy towards language skills across government and the perception that they may in fact be detrimental to an individual's career development and advancement" (Chen & Breivik, 2013, 12).

With such gross misjudgement and dereliction of leadership, it is unsurprising that successive UK governments have been unable to turn around Britain's economic and political decline, directly opening the door to rising xenophobic populist sentiment. The UK's most significant failure has been its post-Brexit inability to reshape and strengthen the UK's international connectivity, resulting in a predicted long-term reduction of 15% in trade and a 4% drop in national income (Office for Budget Responsibility, 2025). States that pull up the drawbridge do not fare well economically and can also cause great damage to global prosperity (Kutlina-Dimitrova & Lakatos, 2017). In an era of reglobalisation, the states that do understand the importance of strategically embedded plurilingual and pluricultural competencies will prosper more than those that do not.

National security takes on more prominence in policy decisions when alliances are uncertain and the international order is disintegrating. Political security requires states to support language and culture education that enables better communication with political allies and a better understanding of political threats. Economic security requires states to support language and culture education that facilitates smoother communication with business and trading partners. Defence security requires states to support language and culture education that ensures sufficient knowledge of adversaries. Societal and cultural security requires states to support language and culture education that strengthens the nation's

fabric through the flourishing of regional and heritage languages. These claims are not new in the UK context: they have been evidenced in many reports over decades; meanwhile the numbers of students in formal language education continues to atrophy and language skills are still undervalued and underused (see e.g., Bowler, 2025; British Academy et al., 2020; Chen & Breivik, 2013; Department for Education and Skills. 2002; Kowalewska et al., 2025; Nuffield Foundation, 2000).

Reglobalisation's focus on security necessitates a rethinking of global supply chains. During the recent era of globalisation, outsourcing production beyond one's national borders became a prominent trend. It is now widely accepted across the political spectrum that outsourcing has damaged the production capacity and skills base of advanced economies, with adverse effects on national security (Joint Economic Committee Democrats, 2022; Merlin-Jones, 2012). In language and culture education, the native-speaker fetish of the communicative paradigm, which was dominant during the peak years of globalisation, has resulted in the neglect of the UK's own supply chain and skills base in languages. University language education in the UK is now particularly reliant on large numbers of tutors from overseas (Critchley, this issue). Mother-tongue speakers make a valuable contribution to the language and culture education landscape, but they should not be viewed as a convenient substitute for supporting home-grown talent, including speakers of heritage languages. Over-reliance on overseas mother-tongue speakers also raises national security implications. A rebalancing of "outsourcing" and "onshoring" language and culture education, teaching and research capacity is overdue; it can be framed as a positive need to build local talent in teaching and researching languages and cultures across the education pipeline.

Imagine a campaign that promotes language and culture education as a patriotic duty. This may be abhorrent to uncompromising globalists, but the neglect of domestic inequalities under globalisation by both left and right has proven to be a key factor in the emergence of crude xenophobic populism. The most effective counteracting political stance is neither to ape the populists nor to stubbornly cling to idealised visions of a world without borders. A progressive values-based civic nationalism serves as the best political framework for embedded plurilingualism and pluriculturalism. In this era of reglobalisation, it is civic nationalism that can facilitate a sense of national identity, community and spirit that unites people, but which is simultaneously open and receptive to respecting and strengthening linguistic and cultural diversity (Paul, 2021). It is civic nationalism that most naturally aligns with the liberal culturalism put forward by prominent theorists such as Will Kymlicka, which supports the main historical language(s) of a nation while simultaneously supporting the rights of minority ethnicities (Kymlicka, 2001). The language and culture sector cannot afford to ignore the rising tide of patriotism and nationalism; bringing language and cultural education into dialogue with patriotism can help shape a nationalism that is civic and open, not ethnic and closed: "a civic nation has reason to allow the promotion of second languages in order to publicly demonstrate its respect for members of minority national cultures" (Stliz, 2009, 283).

Beyond their historic positioning as having mostly "sentimental value", regional and heritage languages should be considered part of a "civic multilingualism" rather than being relegated to the private or community realm (May, 2012). A reglobalisation security perspective would recognise that heritage speakers of non-indigenous languages represent a significant resource for strengthening the security of a nation, encompassing economic, social, defence and other forms of security. In the UK,

for example, this would mean government support for heritage languages such as Polish, Urdu, Bengali, Gujarati, and Cantonese, as well as for smaller linguistic populations e.g., Arabic, French, Portuguese and Spanish.

Iceland provides an interesting example of what could be termed a civic nationalist language education policy, the aim of which is "economic mobility and democratic participation" (Stliz, 2009, 276). Icelandic is the main medium of instruction; English education starts at 10, Danish at age 12, and students can then add French, German or Spanish in secondary school (Stilz, 2009, 275). In Education Policy 2030, Iceland's education strategy, the promotion of Icelandic is core to ensuring the future health of the Icelandic language and culture, yet the study of other languages and heritage languages is also emphasised "to tackle global challenges, and to stimulate the resilience of individuals and societies" (OECD, 2021, 5). Iceland's language education policy already provides a good example of embedded plurilingualism and pluriculturalism, contributing to Iceland's economic prosperity and social cohesion. However, it could and should go further. In today's geopolitical environment, one could argue that secondary school children in Western countries should also, for example, be given the opportunity to study Russian, Mandarin, Korean and Arabic as key languages for national defence security.

In conclusion, in this era of reglobalisation, we hold that a language and culture education policy of embedded plurilingualism and pluriculturalism is most effective in addressing the national interests of states both domestically and multilaterally. Nations that do not grasp the urgency of reshaping their language and culture education policy accordingly will suffer the consequences of lower economic growth and political influence. Sadly, the UK currently provides a textbook example of a nation in decline with little indication from its beleaguered governments and civil service that they grasp the severity of the UK's language gap and its significance in a fast-changing world. By contrast, more nimble states that better support plurilingualism and pluriculturalism will provide their citizens with a better chance to flourish and prosper.

In this third issue of New Perspectives on Languages, we continue our mission to support emerging interdisciplinary research on language education and language practices in multilingual societies, with a decolonising focus on research on underrepresented languages, minoritised and endangered languages, less-widely taught languages, and other smaller languages, as well as alternative approaches and pedagogies. In this issue's 'State of the Field' article, Mark Critchley explores what a UK national strategy for languages would mean, emphasising the need to find a way to coordinate the disparate interest groups within the academic discipline addressing languages, cultures and societies towards a common agenda for change. Pan et al. shine a spotlight on translanguaging in Chinese EFL classrooms at the senior high level, finding that teachers are generally positive towards it, especially for student participation (e.g., helping low-proficiency students) and scaffolding students (e.g., understanding concepts, acquiring metalinguistic knowledge, critical thinking expression), although they hold a cautious attitude towards the proportion of translanguaging practices in EFL classroom discourse as a whole. Cornips & Hovens investigate the notion of a multi-actant community of practice in the context of two dairy farms, composed of farmers, cows, robots, and various other non-human actants, finding evidence of mutual engagement between different actants (such as cows and robots) leading to routinised work practices. Lada et al. investigate the relationships between Greek idiom familiarity,

predictability, and participants' bilingual/multilingual profiles and reading habits, finding that the number of foreign languages spoken negatively predicts correct idiom completion, in line with studies showing that there is cross-linguistic interference in bilingual speakers. We hope you enjoy all these articles.

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