Toward Paradigmatic Change in TESOL Methodologies: Building Plurilingual Pedagogies From the Ground Up

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Contemporary TESOL methodologies have been characterized by compartmentalization of languages in the classroom. However, recent years have seen the beginning signs of paradigmatic change in TESOL methodologies that indicate a move toward plurilingualism. In this article, the author draws on the case of Hong Kong to illustrate how, in the past four decades, deep-rooted ideologies of linguistic purism combined with dominant TESOL knowledge claims have made it difficult to develop locally appropriate methodologies. She outlines the innovative work of some teachers who build up plurilingual pedagogies in content classrooms despite these difficulties, and on this basis proposes suggestions for future work.

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Contemporary TESOL methodologies have been characterized by the compartmentalization of languages in the classroom. As a pedagogical reaction to the grammar-translation method, TESOL methodologies in the past four decades have successively upheld classroom monolingualism, or “bilingualism through parallel monolingualisms,” for example, the direct method, audio-lingualism, the natural approach, and the communicative language teaching approach (CLT; see review by Mahboob, 2012). Recent years, however, have seen the beginning signs of paradigmatic shift in TESOL methodologies, indicating a move toward valuing more flexibility regarding classroom language practices. Researchers are beginning to differentiate between the grammar-translation method and the strategic, principled use of local resources to scaffold learning in both language and content classrooms (Cenoz, 2009; Cook, 1995, 2001; Cummins, 2007; Turnbull & Dailey-O’Cain, 2009). A central force contributing to this change is the increasing affirmation of the notion of plurilingualism and the critique of linguistic purism (e.g., Canagarajah, 2011; Creese &
Blackledge, 2010; Cummins, 2007; Levine, 2011; Lin, 2006; Pennycook, 2010; Swain, Kirkpatrick, & Cummins, 2011). However, this paradigmatic change has been slow to arrive in many Asian postcolonial contexts such as Hong Kong, where official education policy discourses have steadfastly upheld monolingual classroom methodologies. Situated at this critical moment of competing knowledge claims, this article seeks to contribute to paradigmatic change in TESOL methodologies by proposing to build legitimate plurilingual pedagogies from the ground up in various local contexts.

In the next section, the notion of plurilingualism is discussed in the context of related concepts to illustrate key aspects of a new understanding of the nature of language in society and how language competences are developed. The case of Hong Kong is then drawn on to illustrate how in the past four decades, deep-rooted ideologies of linguistic purism combined with dominant TESOL knowledge claims have made it difficult to develop locally appropriate methodologies. Despite these difficulties, however, some content teachers are developing bilingual/plurilingual pedagogies. In this article I outline this innovative work and offer suggestions for future research.

PLURILINGUALISM AND RELATED CONCEPTS

Code-mixing and code-switching in the second language (L2) classroom have been important topics in sociolinguistic research for the past three decades (e.g., Canagarajah, 1995; Heller & Martin-Jones, 2001; Lin, 1990, 1996, 1999, 2008, 2013). Recent research has further introduced the perspectives of *translanguaging* (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; García, 2009), codemeshing (Canagarajah, 2011), and *heteroglossia* (Bailey, 2012; Creese & Blackledge, in press; García, 2009). Central to these developments is the recognition of the plurilingual nature of classroom interactions and communicative repertoires of both learners and teachers in multilingual settings, and the affirmation of plurilingualism as a potential resource rather than necessarily a barrier to language and content learning. Plurilinguals may not possess a full mastery of a language, but still view it as an enriching component of their overall linguistic repertoire (Council of Europe, 2001). Underlying the notion of plurilingualism and a whole array of different but related notions such as *metrolinguism*, *flexible bilingualism*, *translanguaging*, and *hybrid language practice* (see review by Lewis, Jones, & Baker, 2012) is the rising recognition that language cannot be conceptualized (and thereby taught and learned) as a static, monolithic entity with solid boundaries (Pennycook, 2010). Canagarajah (2007), by way of a discussion of hybrid language practices and communities in precolonial and premodern societies,
stresses the importance of this view of language: “Once we acknowledge that languages are inherently hybrid, grammars are emergent and communication is fluid, we are left with the problem of redefining some of the most basic constructs that have dominated the field of linguistics” (p. 233). The basic constructs that have dominated the field of linguistics and TESOL methodologies include native-speakerism (see critiques by Holliday, 2006; Luk & Lin, 2006; Phillipson, 1992) and centralizing, standard language ideologies that underlie much of modern language policy and planning (LPP) discourses (Tollefson, 1991, 2002; Wiley & Lukes, 1996). The postcolonial state, in its attempt following independence to secure national unity and loyalty among different ethnic factions, often resorts to the modern nation-building ideologies and discourses of its former colonial masters.

Like plurilingualism, the notions of translanguaging and heteroglos sia focus on breaking away from the ideology of discrete, unitary languages and cutting through the pedagogical structure imposed by the monolingualism and linguistic purism that are dominant in the literature of language education and government language education policies (Lin, 1996, 2006). As pointed out by Lemke (2002),

> It is not at all obvious that if they were not politically prevented from doing so, “languages” would not mix and dissolve into one another, but we understand almost nothing of such processes....Could it be that all our current pedagogical methods in fact make multilingual development more difficult than it need be, simply because we bow to dominant political and ideological pressures to keep “languages” pure and separate? (p. 85)

Thus in Singapore, for example, after four decades of linguistic engineering by the state, the once fluid, hybrid, dynamic plurilingual landscape has changed into one of standardized and compartmentalized multilingualisms. Any local languages (e.g., Hokkien, Hakka, the often stigmatized local varieties of “Singlish”) other than the four officially recognized and standardized languages of English, Mandarin Chinese, Tamil, and Malay have been formally driven out of all public spheres and educational institutions (Rubdy, 2005). School teaching is often done by immersion in “standard English,” and use of local language varieties (e.g., local varieties of Singlish) to scaffold students’ learning in the content classroom is often frowned upon if not officially proscribed.

The knowledge production regimes (Foucault, 1980) in the institutions of second language and foreign language teaching and TESOL have further legitimized as received knowledge certain ideological claims about language, language use, and language learning and teaching. This knowledge base embodies a cluster of mutually reinforcing ideologies, which are critically examined in the next section.
Hegemonic Ideologies About Language, Language Use, and Language Learning and Teaching

Phillipson (1992) points out five central fallacies in English language teaching: monolingualism, native-speakerism, the maximum exposure theory, the early-start hypothesis, and the subtractive principle. He connects these fallacies to capitalist, imperialist, and colonialist forces and interests, and analyses the origins of these myths. Much TESOL expertise that derives from the United Kingdom and the United States and has become dominant in many Asian societies has been propounded by scholars who themselves are monolingual, as are teaching materials and principles derived from these paradigms and which, therefore, underplay the potential value of contrastive analysis and comparative metalinguistic knowledge as a learning resource. All of these paradigms form part of the normative knowledge base in the field of second and foreign language education, which can be said to have originated from paradigms shaped by a combination of monoglossia, purism, and recently also global capitalism and commodification. Building on the literature on this topic, I summarize three major strands of these ideologies.

Languages as stable, standardized, monolithic, discrete entities rather than as fluid resources for situated social practice. The literature (Canagarajah, 2007; Hornberger, 2003; Pennycook, 2010) has critiqued essentialist views of languages as discrete systems that are pervasive in the language policy and TESOL methodology discourses. The LPP discourses of policymakers both project and assert the view of languages as stable, monolithic, reified entities with clear-cut boundaries. The job of the language planner is seen in terms of the prescription and standardization of linguistic systems, culminating in the production and dissemination of authoritative dictionaries, grammars, and teaching manuals of the national and official languages. These standard languages are put forward as educational targets, and the state’s acquisition planning that is aimed at designing the most effective approaches for achieving these targets usually results in the recommendation of monolingual immersion approaches. In short, total use of the target language is presented as the best way to achieve target language proficiency.

Language learning as a zero-sum game. Closely associated with the above ideology is the belief that allowing diverse linguistic resources in the classroom will reduce the students’ exposure to the target language. Such a belief is derived from a zero-sum view, or a subtractive view of language learning: The limited cognitive processing capacity of
the individual will be dispersed over too many different linguistic systems if more than one language is allowed into the classroom (see a critique of this view by Cummins, 2007). Language learning in these terms is conceptualized within a banking model long problematized by Freire (1972). Students are metaphorically seen as limited-capacity containers, and if they are exposed to diverse languages they will be overwhelmed. Although intuitively this view of language learning might appear logical, the pitfall of this assumption lies in ignoring the human capacity for translanguaging (Canagarajah, 2011; Creese & Blackledge, 2010; García, 2009), or drawing on diverse linguistic resources to achieve one’s purpose in situated communicative practices. The real challenge, therefore, does not lie in the limited learning capacity assumed by the zero-sum game metaphor, but in how to engage students in social practices that present language learning not as the acquisition of discrete entities (such as rules or vocabulary items) but as the opportunity to mobilize various semiotic (meaning-making) resources to achieve situated purposes as well as identities deemed meaningful to the students.

Language as a commodified, standardized set of knowledge items and skills that can be bought and sold in transactions between teachers and students. Likewise, the banking model of language learning and teaching complements global capitalism and commodification of language (Heller, 2003). Language teaching is increasingly prepackaged and delivered as if it were a standardized, marketable product (e.g., “BBC English,” “Wall Street English”) of chain shops, institutes, or factories. This commodifying ideology of language teaching and learning has gradually penetrated into school practices, turning teachers into “service providers.” The invisible consequence is that language learning and teaching has become a transaction of teachers passing on a marketable set of standardized knowledge items and skills to students. This transaction is what takes place instead of seeing language learning and teaching as having both teachers and students engaged in the fluid co-creation of diverse language resources appropriate for situated social practices that are meaningful to both parties. The associated ideology is that the native speaker is the most qualified provider of the purest kind of standard language skills and knowledge.

The above ideologies underlie many knowledge claims in L2 education, with the exception of some recent cognitive approaches which try to prove the positive effect of using some L1(s) in L2 learning (e.g., Macaro, 2009). For example, immersion models, the monolingual principle, and the maximum exposure hypothesis are still dominant. These knowledge claims have great influence in the developing world, which still often imports overseas experts and knowledge (Lin,
The symbolic domination (Bourdieu, 1990) or hegemony (Gramsci, 1971) of these knowledge claims is often imposed on local, situated classroom participants, as with the monolingual principle. Teacher preparation institutes in developing and/or postcolonial societies often embrace these teaching methodologies as the most advanced language education principles (for a Chinese example, see He & Lin, 2013). The language-in-education policy in Hong Kong has been dictated by the hegemony of linguistic purism and the monolingual principle (Lin, 1990, 1996, 2000). The following quotes serve to give the reader a sense of how these ideologies have been pervasive in official and public discourses in Hong Kong:

“What we don’t want is for young people to be taught in Chinglish rather than either English or Chinese and that’s what we are trying to avoid at the moment,” said [former] Governor Chris Patten. (South China Morning Post, May 13, 1994)

“What we must ban in the classroom is mixed-code, commonly known as ‘Chinglish’—that’s not language at all,” Director of Education Helen Yu Lai Ching-ping said. (South China Morning Post, March 14, 1998)

“Efforts will be stepped up to ensure schools teaching in English do not use a mixture of Chinese and English to boost standards,” the education chief said yesterday…. “If they are found to be teaching in a mixture of languages, we will ask them to switch to teach in the mother tongue,” Secretary for Education and Manpower Joseph Wong Wing-ping said. (South China Morning Post, March 15, 1998)

Teachers and school principals have been under great pressure to stick to the government’s prescription of teaching only in the L1 or only in the L2 for fear of negative publicity for their schools, even though they know that using some of the students’ familiar language resources systematically and strategically will help students’ learning. Under such a hegemonic situation, it is almost impossible to openly research and further develop plurilingual approaches to teaching and learning (Lin, 1990, 1999, 2006, 2008, 2012a, 2013; Lin & Man, 2009), because teachers are reluctant to try out alternative approaches for fear of being sanctioned by the education authorities who carry out regular focused inspection of schools. Although the medium of instruction policy released in 2010 in Hong Kong has taken away the segregating labels of English-medium instruction (EMI) schools and Chinese-medium instruction (CMI) schools, students’ familiar L1 resources are still not officially allowed in EMI classrooms. There is thus the urgent need to break through the hegemony of existing knowledge claims in monolingual TESOL methodologies, especially in
developing and postcolonial societies, and to develop local, viable plurilingual pedagogies. Because of Hong Kong’s strong monolingual ideology, bilingual pedagogy is a revolutionary concept in Hong Kong schools. Although the teachers’ practices illustrated in this study are bilingual, they are, nevertheless, a first step toward plurilingualism.

TEACHERS BUILDING INNOVATIVE APPROACHES FROM THE GROUND UP

In this section, I outline the innovative approaches developed by several Hong Kong teachers to help students develop plurilingual academic literacies. Before doing this, I offer some background information regarding Hong Kong in order for the reader to better understand the context for these approaches.

From Colony to Special Administrative Region: Formation of the Symbolic Market of English for More Than Half a Century

From 1842 to 1997, Hong Kong was a British colony. Since early colonial days, vernacular or Chinese-medium education (usually practised as Cantonese in the spoken medium and Modern Chinese in the written medium) received little government support. By 1911, the government was providing an English-medium education up to university level mainly for children from wealthier families, and a vernacular primary education for children from less wealthy families (Irving, 1914), thus cultivating an English-conversant elite among the local Chinese population. However, due to increasing parental demand for English-medium education, by the 1980s 90% of secondary school students in Hong Kong studied in English-medium schools (Lin, 1997; So, 1992).

As Britain prepared for its retreat from Hong Kong in the early 1980s, the government began introducing some democratizing elements into its political system (Ho, 1995) and expanding a largely English-medium higher education from a formerly elitist two-university system to eight publicly funded universities. Given the long-standing English-medium higher education policy in most of the universities in Hong Kong, a symbolic market has formed where literacy in English is key to socioeconomic advancement (Lin & Man, 2011). These forces have significantly shaped language-in-education policies and practices in Hong Kong. On July 1, 1997, the sovereignty of Hong Kong was formally handed over by Britain to China as a Special Administrative
Region. The status of the English language in Hong Kong has remained as important as, if not more than, it was in the pre-1997 years. For the majority of working-class, Cantonese-speaking children in Hong Kong, however, English remains beyond their reach. Although they accept the dominance of English and recognize that English is very important for their future prospects, they also readily believe that they are not good users of English. For instance, in the words of a working-class adolescent girl (G) to the ethnographic fieldworker (F):

F: Yes, yes, and you, do you have any aspiration, what do you want to do?
G: I want to be a teacher.
F: Teacher [chuckling], Miss Chan [playfully addressing the girl as a teacher], it’s good to be a teacher; it suits you well. At this moment it seems to suit you.
G: Don’t know if it will change in the future.
F: You have to be patient; you have to proceed gradually.
G: I have to meet the requirement, my English is poor. (Candlin, Lin, & Lo, 2000, p. 33; original utterances in Cantonese)

This exchange shows a working-class girl’s lack of confidence in fulfilling her dream of becoming a teacher because of her own self-image as someone with “poor English.” Her resigned acceptance of both the importance of English for her future prospects and her poor status in terms of her English ability leads to her indication of a lack of confidence in fulfilling her aspiration despite the fieldworker’s encouraging remarks.

It is against this background that one appreciates teachers’ innovative approaches to provide access to English academic literacies by building on the students’ L1 academic literacies, thereby defying the monolingual principle of strict compartmentalization of languages in the classroom.

**Developing Bilingual Academic Literacies: A Bilingual Notes Approach**

In 2010, I came into contact with a school and learned from the vice principal, Mr. Cheung, and the science teacher, Mr. Choo, about their innovative efforts to provide students with incentives and support to learn English academic literacies, with the aim of preparing the students for future English-medium studies. To protect the confidentiality of the
The school has been trying out a bilingual notes approach, which I describe below. The school is a Band 2 school (schools are broadly classified into three bands in Hong Kong according to students’ academic standards, with Band 1 at the top of the scale). Being classified by the Hong Kong government as a CMI school after the 1998 linguistic streaming policy (see Lin & Man, 2009), the school has nonetheless strived to provide students with access to academic literacies in English. The school has done so by creating school-based English notes to supplement its Chinese notes on selected topics in the science subject for its Form 3 (Grade 9) students. In 2005, the school started printing bilingual notes on the same topic on the same page to facilitate students’ access to L2 English academic literacies in correspondence to their L1 Chinese academic literacies. Figure 1 shows an excerpt from a set of bilingual notes on a science topic, *The wonderful solvent—water.*

It can be seen in Figure 1 that the bilingual notes juxtapose the same academic topics in parallel presentation formats to facilitate students’ cross-referencing. This use of bilingual parallel texts is an attempt to provide students with access to bilingual academic literacies. In this set of notes, students learn key terms for this topic: *boiling, sedimentation, filtration.* Parallel key terms are underlined in the parallel Chinese and English texts. Figure 2 shows an excerpt from a bilingual laboratory report designed to scaffold students’ learning of bilingual academic literacies. To scaffold students’ completion of this task, the

### Figure 1. Chinese-English bilingual notes on a science topic (Credit: Mr. Cheung & Mr. Choo, 2008).

<table>
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<th>(a)</th>
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<tr>
<td>第五課: 奇妙的溶劑</td>
<td>Chapter 5 The Wonderful Solvent-Water</td>
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</table>
| I.沸騰法/煮沸法 | i. b. 
Heating water up to 100°C, so as to kill the microorganisms inside. |
| 蒸水加熱至 100°C，從而將當中的微生物殺死。 |  |
| II.沉澱法 | ii. f. 
* Large solid impurities settle to the bottom of dirty water, forming a layer of sediment. 
* so as to remove solid impurities. |
| 當較大的固體懸濁沉聚在污水底部，便形成一層沉澱物。 |  |
| 從而去除固體懸濁。 |  |
| III.濾過法 | iii. f. 
* Let dirty water passes through filters/filter paper, so as to remove impurities inside. 
* liquid resulted is called filtrate; 
* impurities that cannot pass through filters / filter paper are called residue. |
| 當污水通過濾紙/濾紙，從而去除懸浮物。 |  |
| 當的表面稱為濾紙； |  |
| 不能通過濾紙/濾紙的懸濁稱為 |  |
| 濾紙懸濁。 |  |
specific vocabulary items related to this topic are provided to students in a bilingual lexical table (Figure 3). With carefully designed bilingual support, students are gradually led to accomplish the task of recording observations in English. Figure 4 shows a sample of students’ work.

The teachers have developed a set of systematic principles in their design of this bilingual academic literacies approach. These principles can be summarized as follows:

1. The students’ existing needs and academic abilities are first understood and considered in the design of the materials.
2. The aims of the bilingual program are explained to students at the beginning of the program.
3. In proceeding with this bilingual program, the students’ familiar languages (spoken Cantonese and written Chinese) are used

<table>
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<th>5. Observation (i.e. What do I observe?)</th>
<th>Table 1: The color of red cabbage juice in different chemicals</th>
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<td><strong>Chemicals</strong></td>
<td><strong>Red cabbage juice</strong></td>
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<td><strong>酸1 (鹽酸)</strong></td>
<td><strong>酸1 (hydrochloric acid)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>酸2 (醋酸)</strong></td>
<td><strong>酸2 (acetic acid)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>鹼1 (氫氧化鈉)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>實驗</strong></td>
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a. In acids, the color of red cabbage juice changes from _______ to _______.

b. In alkalis, the color of red cabbage juice changes from _______ to _______.

**FIGURE 2. 實驗報告 Laboratory report (Credit: Mr. Cheung & Mr. Choo, 2008).**
to present the content at the beginning of the program, and then later in the program some English is gradually introduced: first at the level of vocabulary, then at the sentence level, followed by short paragraphs and short texts.

4. The introduction of English texts is fully contextualized and students are led to use English to achieve a specific task (e.g., bilingual quizzes).

5. Teachers in the language panels collaborate with teachers in the content subject panels in the design of the program.

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<td>10</td>
<td>red cabbage</td>
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FIGURE 3. Providing vocabulary support through a bilingual lexical table (Credit: Mr. Cheung & Mr. Choo, 2008).

FIGURE 4. Sample of students’ work (Credit: Mr. Cheung & Mr. Choo, 2008).

to present the content at the beginning of the program, and then later in the program some English is gradually introduced: first at the level of vocabulary, then at the sentence level, followed by short paragraphs and short texts.

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5. Teachers in the language panels collaborate with teachers in the content subject panels in the design of the program.
Teachers need to have confidence in the program in order to persist in carrying it out systematically and gradually. Because many students understand that English is needed for their future academic studies, the students (according to their teachers) are willing to put in the extra effort to gradually learn the academic English vocabulary and sentence patterns for the various topics. To provide further incentives for learning academic English, some assignments are designed with about 20 English multiple-choice questions and 1 or 2 bilingual short questions (see Figure 5 for excerpts from an assignment). In certain assignments, the multiple-choice questions are also bilingual and graded according to the level of difficulty. The contents and style of the assignments, quizzes, and tests follow those of the bilingual notes. Students are thus encouraged to complete the short questions in English by referring to the bilingual notes.

**Miss Cheung and the Science Journaling Method in Another School**

While Mr. Cheung, Mr. Choo, and their colleagues use carefully designed bilingual presentations of curriculum materials to help students access bilingual academic literacies in science, Miss Cheung, who is from a Band 1 school which has always used English as the medium of instruction, also finds it useful to allow students to sometimes switch to Chinese to express their ideas in their science journals. Miss Cheung has been using science journals as a means to encourage Form 1 (Grade 7) students to engage in scientific inquiry at home, to document their findings, to reflect on their inquiry process, and to share this journey with other students. In this process, the science journal is a key textual means that contributes to the building of a community of scientific inquirers in Miss Cheung’s class. Even though the medium of instruction is English, Miss Cheung is not dogmatic about this language policy, because her aim is to encourage students to engage in scientific inquiry through recording, discussing, and explaining their experimental observations with scientific concepts and theories. At times, a student might need to express a point for which the L2 English resources are not available. However, instead of simply using the communicative strategy of avoidance, such as speaking less when one runs out of L2 resources, the student continues the discussion in Chinese. Figure 6 shows an excerpt from a student’s science journal that shows how the student switches to Chinese to continue recounting her experimental journey.
F.3 Chemistry 2007-2008  
Assignment 1:  Unit 1 - Safety in Laboratory  
Unit 2 - Matter  

Class:  
Date:  

Name:  
Marks/Grade:  

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Part 1: Multiple Choice Questions  
Choose only ONE answer for each of the following questions.  
Put a 'v' into the corresponding box.

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1. You are NOT allowed to enter a school laboratory unless  
   A. a monitor is present.  
   B. a school prefect is present.  
   C. a teacher is present.  
   D. a technician is present.  
   
   C

2. If you pour some chemicals onto your hand accidentally, you should  
   A. wash the hand with plenty of acid.  
   B. wash the hand with plenty of alkali.  
   C. wash the hand with plenty of salt solution.  
   D. wash the hand with plenty of water.  
   
   D

3. Which hazard warning label would you put on a bottle of concentrated hydrochloric acid?  
   A. corrosive  
   B. irritant  
   C. oxidizing  
   D. toxic  
   
   A

4. Which hazard warning label would you put on a bottle of hydrogen peroxide (雙氧水)?  
   A. corrosive  
   B. irritant  
   C. oxidizing  
   D. toxic  
   
   C

FIGURE 5a. Form 3 (Grade 9) chemistry assignment 1, page 1: English MCQ (Credit: Mr. Cheung & Mr. Choo, 2008).
Part 2: Short Questions

Write your answer in the space provided.

21. The following process shows the changes of states of matter.

以下過程顯示了物質之狀態轉變。

(a) Which process(es) involve(s) the absorption of energy?
哪些過程涉及能量被吸收？

Process A and B / 過程 A 及 B

(b) Which processes are involved in the following changes?
以下之轉變涉及哪些過程？

(i) Ice-cream melts.  Process A / 過程 A

(ii) Water boils.  Process B / 過程 B

(iii) Making of ice cubes in the freezer.  Process C / 過程 C

(iv) A pot of boiling soup.  Process B / 過程 B

(c) Name the following processes.
寫下以下過程的名稱。

(i) Process A / 過程 A  melting / 熔解

(ii) Process B / 過程 B  boiling / 沸騰

(iii) Process C / 過程 C  freezing / 凝固

(iv) Process D / 過程 D  condensation / 凝結

(d) The temperature at which ice changes into water is called
冰變水時的溫度稱為
The melting point of ice. / 冰的熔點。

(e) The temperature at which 'dry ice' turns into a gas is called
「乾冰」變氣體時的過程稱為
sublimation / 幹冰

FIGURE 5b. Form 3 (Grade 9) chemistry assignment 1, page 5: Short bilingual questions (Credit: Mr. Cheung & Mr. Choo, 2008).
As the student writes a procedural recount of what she has done in her experiment, she switches to Chinese to continue to write up Step 8. She signals this switch by prefacing it with the following two words in brackets: (use Chinese). Miss Cheung, when reading the student’s journal, writes in the margins some L2 sentences that are needed to express the student’s idea in English. In using this process, the student can express her ideas to the fullest even when she runs out of L2 resources, and at the same time, the student is provided with the necessary L2 resources to express similar ideas in the future. To encourage students to express their ideas freely and fluently and not dampen their excitement in writing and discussing their journey of scientific inquiry, Miss Cheung allows Form 1 students to write in the present tense when they are doing a procedural recount in their journals. Miss Cheung’s principle is to encourage students to first become excited about writing and sharing their experiences of inquiry. Then, in a whole-class setting, she shares some suggestions and language tips for writing in their science journals. In this spirit, Miss Cheung allows students to sometimes draw on their L1 resources and L1 register.

For instance, in Figure 7 we see that the same student whose work was featured in Figure 6 has pasted in her science journal a photocopied Chinese academic text about a theory in physics, Hooke’s Law, to explain her experimental results from the stretching of a rubber band. It is noticeable that the student is also free to use some “Hong Kong

![Figure 6](image-url)
style English” in excitedly writing about her experimental discovery: “2. This is another force to push it back ga!” (The Cantonese particle ga indicates involvement and excitement.) Instead of correcting her English as nonstandard, Miss Cheung puts a tick over it, focusing on the exciting discovery that the student has made. We also notice that the student appends an English sentence in brackets to the Chinese academic text: “(I understand ar! So great!).” The student here expresses excitement about her understanding of the mechanics theory conveyed by the Chinese text. Again, even though the student has used what some government officials may call Chinglish, as evidenced by the Cantonese particle ar at the end of the sentence to indicate involvement and excitement, the teacher focuses on the student’s devotion and exciting journey of discovery without censoring her vibrant, dynamic language use.

By allowing students to freely express their ideas using whatever meaning-making resources—pictures, drawings and other visuals, Chinese, Hong Kong–style English—they find fit for the purpose, the teacher is encouraging students to become “little scientists” (in Miss Cheung’s words). The students can therefore exercise their agency as active inquirers through writing and sharing their scientific discoveries. With this flexibility in allowing students to draw on plurilingual and multimodal resources in expressing their budding ideas, Miss Cheung is encouraging students to cultivate a strong desire to think, to write, to share, to discuss, and to relate theories to their experimental observa-

FIGURE 7. Excerpt 2 from a student’s science journal in Miss Cheung’s Form 1 (Grade 7) Integrated Science class.
tions. This does not mean, however, that the teacher cannot help students acquire linguistic resources with more symbolic value, such as school- and exam-required English writing styles. However, such explicit teaching is not to marginalize the dynamic, plurilingual meaning-making resources available to both teachers and students in their learning processes. As Delpit (1988) points out, the principle is not to denigrate students’ local semiotic resources as substandard or “not language at all” (as one former Hong Kong official put it), but to make explicit to the students that, although under certain circumstances the dominant groups in society might value certain registers and styles, the resources that the students bring to the classrooms are equally valuable in their learning process. We can easily envisage a follow-up project in Miss Cheung’s class in which students are encouraged to share some of their science journals online with a partner class in another country, thus providing an authentic reason for students to edit their language for a broader audience. All this can well be done without denigrating students’ plurilingual resources and identities in the classroom.

The bilingual presentation of teaching materials has been actively researched by R. K. Johnson, a professor of education at the University of Hong Kong, since the early 1980s. Johnson experimented with different bilingual ways of presenting teaching content in both oral and written modes, and documenting the effects of different modes of presentation (bilingual vs. monolingual; oral vs. written) on students’ comprehension of content in Hong Kong secondary schools (Johnson, 1983, 1985; Johnson, Chan, Lee, & Ho, 1985). He also analyzed the code-switching strategies used by experienced bilingual teachers in English-medium schools. Research studies in the early and mid-1980s in Hong Kong were generally characterized by optimism about the possibility of developing bilingual oral and written strategies in English-medium schools. These studies intended to solve the dilemma created by overwhelming parental demand for an English-medium education for their children and the often limited English proficiency of the majority of children. The production of knowledge along this line, however, was not consistent with the dominant theories in TESOL and applied linguistics during that time. Johnson’s program of research came to an end in the late 1980s, and his innovative and eclectic approaches to researching plurilingual written and spoken classroom practices were not widely circulated.

Since Johnson carried out his research, almost three decades have gone by, and the fields of applied linguistics and second language learning have broadened and embraced alternative theoretical perspectives, including sociocultural, critical, and postcolonial theories. Many scholars have significantly changed their stance toward bilingual and plurilingual classroom practices. Pioneering studies in this direc-
tion include the important work by Cenoz (2009), Cook (1995, 2001), Cummins (2007), Levine (2011), and Turnbull and Dailey-O’Cain (2009). Swain and her colleagues have also published a handbook titled *How to Have a Guilt-Free Life Using Cantonese in the English Class* (Swain et al., 2011). It is worth pointing out that, in the Hong Kong context—as in many similar contexts in Asia and other parts of the world where English is learned by many students as a foreign language—it would be helpful to stress the potential value of including some metalinguistic analysis of the differences between the students’ local language(s) and English, a point also highlighted by Swain et al. (2011). How best to do this systematically should be actively researched rather than being dismissed from the outset from the TESOL research agenda.

This discussion has, so far, centered on the value of researching and building plurilingual pedagogies from the ground up. However, the normative dimensions of schooling cannot be ignored, as many schools are under the state’s standardized language testing regimes which impose syllabuses and assessment imperatives that focus on monolingual language competences. The recent rise of a plethora of new terms celebrating plurilingualism in academic work, such as *trans-languaging*, *metrolinguism*, and *flexible bilingualism*, should not lead us to underestimate the difficulty of changing hegemonic testing practices, especially in many societies in East Asia where public examinations greatly influence how teachers teach and how students learn. However, there has been some recent work that points toward a plurilingual conception of communicative competence and language testing. For instance, Alptekin (2002) points out that native-speakerism portrays a monolithic notion of the target language and culture to be taught and learned in English language teaching classrooms. Alptekin instead argues for a new notion of communicative competence that involves local and international settings for language use and intercultural communication among speakers of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Likewise, McNamara (2011) points out that language assessment plays a key role in the enforcement of language policies established by governments and other educational and cultural agencies, leading to the near-universal adoption of inflexible curriculum and assessment frameworks. Instead, in the context of international civil aviation communication, McNamara argues for testing competence in English-as-a-lingua-franca communication, stressing the importance of flexibility and sensitivity to multiple accents and ways of using English in realistic intercultural communicative contexts (Kim, 2012).

Although neither Alptekin, McNamara, nor Kim have mentioned plurilingual interactional competences as part of the new notion of communicative competence, their ground-breaking work hints at
future research in this direction. This research can focus on the reconceptualization of target communicative competences that encompass plurilingual and plural–cultural interactive strategies and skills. In today’s increasingly globalizing world, this kind of plurilingual, plural–cultural, interactive competence is likely to have increasingly greater value than monolingual, monocultural interactive competence.

CODA: HOW TO CARVE OUT ALTERNATIVE SPACES FOR THE CULTIVATION OF PLURILINGUAL SUBJECTIVITIES IN THE SCHOOLS

Not being satisfied with celebrating the local resilience and agency of individual school teachers and principals, we also need to ask ourselves a central set of questions: What can initiate change in monolingual TESOL methodologies and testing practices? What resources and strategies can local actors mobilize to create conditions that affirm students’ linguistic and cultural resources and identities while at the same time helping them gain access to global resources? As Luke (2009) writes about the stratifying nature of schooling and the production of certain kinds of subjectivities through schooling,

As teachers, teacher educators, administrators, curriculum developers, educational bureaucrats, and public intellectuals, we have within our grasp the everyday possibilities of setting up fair and equitable rules and procedures for the evidence-based recognition of students’ capital, and for establishing enabling conditions via curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment for the optimal valuing, exchange, and conversion of these complex forms of capital into a normative model of new human subjects: multilingual, transcultural subjects who remain grounded and engaged with their communities and cultures. (pp. 300–301, emphasis added)

What is the relationship between the global domination of English and the production of subjectivities in Hong Kong? Cultural studies researcher Stephen Chan (2002) presents the following perspectives:

Hong Kong as a community of needs, aspirations and solidarity could not have taken the form of the dominant culture of modernity we see today without the substantive rule by the British colonizers, especially during the post-War period. In conclusion, colonial rule was not simply about political domination but a persistent rhetoric of colonial dominance that has grown with capitalist modernity itself. This is a situation we may investigate via the case of the global popular in Hong Kong, asking whether colonialism is in effect a complex modern regime of culture, a dynamic mechanism of control in which power is meant not to prohibit but to produce subjectivity. (n.p., emphasis added)
The linguistically purist ideologies of the ruling elite, the one-classroom-one-language pedagogical straitjacket, and the symbolic market established by a largely English-medium higher education system all conspire to produce two stratified kinds of subjectivities in Hong Kong: the “purely” Chinese-medium educated subject, and the “purely” English-medium educated subject, with the former largely subordinated to the latter. In the past four decades, TESOL as a discipline has largely promoted English teaching methodologies as universal, neutral techniques to develop language skills and competences (see a critique by Lin, Wang, Akamatsu, & Riazi, 2002; Pennycook, 2001). However, recent critical studies have raised awareness of TESOL’s hidden ideological assumptions. For instance, the CLT approach is not simply a neutral teaching methodology but is intimately linked to the production of a certain kind of student and worker subjectivity suitable for participating in a certain kind of political economy (Ouyang, 2000). Likewise, the monolingual classroom principle of developing multilingualism through compartmentalized monolingualisms, while being ostensibly motivated by pedagogical concerns, is likely to produce a certain kind of student subject who is monoglossic. Bakhtin’s (1935/1981) observation on the absurd ideology of monoglossia still rings true today:

It is as if these languages were in different chambers. They do not collide with each other in his consciousness; there is no attempt to coordinate them, to look at one of these languages through the eyes of another language. (p. 295)

How would it be possible to create schooling and classroom conditions conducive to the development of the kind of new human subjectivities that Luke (2009) hints at and that will escape the stratifying, reproduction function of modern schooling: plurilingual, heteroglossic, and transcultural subjects who remain grounded and engaged with their communities and cultures? Plurilingualism is therefore about fostering plurilingual competences but, more important, also about creating and affirming plurilingual identities and subjectivities. Luke (2009) proposes one possible way of working toward this goal:

Accurately and fairly recognise and evaluate the cultural capital that students bring to school: This would entail a much more detailed understanding and engagement with student habitus beginning with systematic, face-to-face developmental diagnostic procedures that would evaluate students’ competence in their community languages, engage with their “stocks of knowledge” (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992, p. 132) and repertoires of practice gained in community (McNaughton, 2002). The aim would be to identify and validate cultural scripts and schemata, skills, knowledges, and practices, in order to set the optimal
conditions for transformation and conversion of these into a substantially modified and augmented version of school knowledge. A principled, culturally and linguistically sensitive, sociologically grounded evidence-based teaching would supplant deficit thinking. (p. 302, emphasis in original)

Although these suggestions appear theoretically sound, it is up to teachers like Mr. Cheung, Mr. Choo, and Miss Cheung, and up to students, school principals, researchers, teacher educators, educational bureaucrats, TESOL knowledge producers, and gatekeepers to exercise their agency “to disrupt hierarchical exchanges of value, the agency to make exceptional cases, the agency to be rule bound by various degrees, the agency to challenge and alter the discourses of law” (Luke, 2009, p. 301). These law-like discourses include native-speakerism, linguistic purism, language commodificationism, and monolingual methodologies and testing imperatives. Building locally viable plurilingual pedagogies from the ground up in different sociocultural contexts is, therefore, an important step toward paradigmatic change in the field of TESOL.

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