

CONTESTING LINGUISTIC IDENTITIES AND THE PERSISTENCE OF STANDARDISED PRONUNCIATION

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Abstract: Despite a global paradigm shift towards multilingualism and EIL (English as an International Language) in English language education, a stubborn adherence to so-called ‘standardised’ forms of foreign languages persists in non-English language speaking countries. Language teachers, learners and their parents, as much as policy makers and curriculum designers, insist on the adoption of ‘standard’ varieties of English as normative and unquestioned. These expectations are natural, given language users’ awareness of the cultural capital that these standardised forms of pronunciations can afford to them. This paper discusses how formal education, often through the hidden curriculum, reinforces the pressure to conform to standardised pronunciation and how this can negatively implicate language learners’ identities. One may question why a Vietnamese speaker would want to have a distinct ‘American’ or ‘British’ accent when they speak, and what real privileges these bring to them. One may also question why a Vietnamese accent in English, a distinct identity marker, can be deemed to represent less prestigious capital, and whether this may disadvantage them in certain contexts. In discussing the cognitive and cultural benefits of multilingual and culturally responsive instruction, the paper argues that as language educators we need to make our learners aware of their linguistic identities and how intelligible but non-standardised accents of foreign languages can and should be legitimate markers of one’s identity.

Keywords: linguistic identity, standardised pronunciation, accent, hidden curriculum, native speakerism, English as an international language

In a recent article, Bjork (2023) raises the concern that with the recent extensive infiltration of generative artificial intelligence platforms such as ChatGPT in academia, there is real danger of losing diversity in academic writing. Bjork is concerned that such tools will “erase” diversity by shaping dominant modes of writing, which will slowly become normalised and legitimised by such extensive practices whereby privileged groups assert power over others. Likewise, while there are many Englishes (Kachru, 1986, 1996; Canagarajah, 1999), the tendency of the Anglosphere to continue to promote standardised varieties of US and UK English in classrooms, even in EFL contexts, marginalises other Englishes, those that are collectively termed as English as an International Language (McKay, 2010). In this process, non-standard varieties, such as Vietnamese English are penalised and shamed, and this affects a learner’s identity. Yet the high status of English and the cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991) it entails in current day Vietnam are obvious, reflected in the fact that those who are considered to have insufficient competency in English are more likely to be excluded from positions of

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power and prosperity (Canh, 2018; Hoang, 2010).

In the evolving landscape of English language education, there has been a global shift towards embracing multilingualism and recognising English as an International Language (EIL). Despite this paradigm shift, non-English language-speaking countries continue to exhibit a tenacious adherence to what is commonly referred to as 'standardised' forms. This article delves into the phenomenon wherein language teachers, learners, parents, policymakers, and curriculum designers persistently advocate for the adoption of 'standard' varieties of English, such as those in the Anglosphere such as in the US and the UK, considering them as normative and beyond questioning. In countries where English is a foreign language, such inclination is deeply rooted in the awareness among language users of the cultural capital associated with these so-called 'native' varieties of the language.

This article scrutinises the role of formal education in reinforcing the pressure on language teachers and learners to conform to standardised English. It also explores how such pressures can exert detrimental effects on the identities of language learners. Such inquiry poses pertinent questions regarding the motivations behind Vietnamese speakers' desire to acquire a distinct 'American' or 'British' accent and examines the tangible privileges that may accrue from such linguistic endeavours. It also interrogates the societal perceptions that render a Vietnamese accent in English as a marker of *less* prestigious cultural capital, potentially placing individuals at a disadvantage in some contexts, such as in seeking employment. This article argues that as language educators, we bear the responsibility of fostering awareness among learners regarding their linguistic identities. It contends that *intelligible* but *non-standardised* accents, such as a Vietnamese accent of English, can serve as powerful markers of one's identity, challenging prevailing norms and fostering a nuanced understanding of linguistic diversity.

Although the scope of this article is about pronunciation, thus speaking, I transfer the above argument about how technology can homogenise writing to speaking, because it is characterised by the same concern about how such forms of standardisation are not just related to power and control, but how they also perpetuate inequity (Bjork, 2023). After all, if we are to borrow Althusser's (1976) contention that an individual's ideologies and action are shaped by their inherent philosophical positions and beliefs about social reality, we could argue that a teachers' pedagogical beliefs are *also* transferred to how they construct the identities of their learners (Fitch, 2003).

As a way of providing context, I first discuss the global trends towards the critical and multilingual turn in recognition of English as an international language, followed by a brief historical overview of English education in Vietnam to show the complex interplay of historical legacies, cultural capital, and societal perceptions. I then discuss the cultural capital associated with standardised Englishes and the value of non-standardised accents. Finally, I discuss linguistic identity and the practice of translanguaging as a way of facilitating rich classroom environments that recognise non-standardised Englishes and celebrate linguistic diversity.

1. The Multilingual Turn in English Language Teaching

The political history of how the so-called 'standard' varieties of English became dominant have been well documented since the 90s, arguably triggered by Pennycook's seminal book, *The Cultural Politics of English as an International Language* (1994). Bjork's (2023) aforementioned article explains how in New Zealand, the 'Queen's English' became dominant because the country's European settlers had an intrinsic reason to furthering the objective of colonisation by using this variety as a tool of control to 'stamp out' Maori culture, rather than

because it was any more intelligible, to the local people, than the local Māori accent. As he points out, even in the early 20th century, students were beaten for speaking Māori in New Zealand schools.

Soon following the ‘critical turn’ in the 90s in English language teaching (Kumaravadivelu, 2006), research and practices in language acquisition saw a ‘multilingual turn’ (May, 2013). Whereas previously learners’ linguistic repertoire was seen in a fragmented and monoglossic manner by separating their first, second and additional languages, this new multilingual perspective was heteroglossic (García, 2013, 2017; García & Lin, 2017), looking into language acquisition and learning in a holistic manner. Specifically, this new orientation allowed the understanding of how learners acquire language through various social configurations both in and out of the classroom. Research from authors such as Cummins et al. (2005) showed how learner success can be enhanced by teachers’ recognition of and active engagement with learners’ home or first languages, allowing them to positively transfer knowledge from their first language (L1) to the foreign language. Such an orientation also helps students realise that their *other* languages are valued in the classroom. Such a holistic view also reinforces learners’ belongingness in the school community and can facilitate greater learning and more active literacy development (Cummins et al., 2005; Taylor et al., 2008).

In order to facilitate more linguistically responsive teaching in schools, there is a need to develop greater language awareness and adopt multilingual pedagogies in the classroom. A linguistically and culturally responsive teacher is someone who understands the importance of language and culture in a student’s learning. To this end, the role of home languages “is fundamental to the thinking, learning, and identity of every individual” (Miramontes et al., 2011, p. 12).

Research in the past two decades - since the critical turn in ELT in the 90s - has established the significant role a learner’s home languages play in their language learning in school (Cummins, 2007; Goldenberg, 2008; Ovando & Combs, 2011; Slavin & Cheung, 2005). Alisaari et al.’s (2019) large-scale study investigated 820 Finnish English teachers’ beliefs and ideologies on multilingualism and their use of home languages as learning resources. Although the study reports generally positive beliefs among teachers, results showed that in the classroom, immigrant teachers often failed to consider learners’ home languages as learning resources, reflecting Taylor et al.’s (2008, p. 270) assertion that “students’ diverse linguistic capital is rarely framed or tapped into as valuable forms of literacy”, leading to poorer academic achievement (Menken & Kleyn, 2010). In fact, such monolingual practices lead to “high rates of academic failure” (García & Hesson, 2015, p. 221) among language-minority students.

On the other hand, a *multilingual* orientation to teaching and learning, which acknowledges *all* languages as important resources for learning, affirms and facilitates the construction of multilingual identity of learners by providing impetus to feelings of belonging in the school community, while making them invest more in classroom literacy practices using *all* of their languages (Cummins et al., 2005; Taylor et al., 2008). By using a learner’s entire linguistic repertoire as a resource for learning helps them value differences in languages and cultures and promote an ethos of multilingualism in the classroom. Schools thus need to promote a multilingual attitude in classrooms to counter the dominant discourses that marginalise minority languages, consolidate monolingual ideologies and codify acceptable languages for multilingualism, through the systemic push towards negative attitudes towards speakers of these minority languages.

2. Evolution of English Education in Vietnam

In addition to global linguistic hierarchies that have persisted for more than two centuries, the enduring impact of Vietnam's colonial legacies on its English language education contributes to today's insistence on standardised pronunciation in English. Like in other countries where English is used as foreign language, a host of socio-economic considerations and the internalisation of linguistic biases within national educational systems have shaped the perception of standardised pronunciation as a marker of prestige and socio-economic mobility. Understanding the historical trajectories of English language education in Vietnam thus provides valuable insights for shaping future policies and practices in this dynamic and evolving educational landscape.

English is now the first foreign language of choice in Vietnam. However, this was not always the case. As Canh (2018, p. 3) writes, in the 70s, "English was considered to be the language spoken in capitalist countries and as a result it did not have any social status", while "English language lecturers were... low in the social and economic ladder as compared with their Russian or French language peers." As a learner, Canh recalls that even when English became a compulsory subject at school, learners did not have any "clearly-defined reasons of learning English". The "highly centralized educational system" (Canh, 2018, p. 8) for long had a "reductionist view of teaching according to which teaching is reduced to method" (p. 9).

The roots of English language instruction in Vietnam can be traced back to the French colonial period, during which French was the dominant foreign language. The introduction of English gained momentum in the post-colonial era, influenced by global trends and the recognition of English as a lingua franca. With the influx of American personnel and aid, the Vietnam War marked a pivotal period in the nation's history with regard to English taking over as the nation's preferred foreign language of choice and significantly impacting formal education. Although the aftermath of the war brought economic challenges, and English language education faced resource constraints limiting its widespread accessibility, the powers of globalisation prompted an increased demand for English proficiency since the late 80s and early 90s, positioning it as a key skill for diplomatic, economic, and academic pursuits.

In fact, Hoang (2010) divides the history of English language teaching in Vietnam into two periods: before and after 1986, the year when the Vietnamese government initiated its national economic reform through its open-door policy, turning English into the foreign language of choice. Hoang (2010, p. 9) points out that December 1986 marks period of the beginning of the "English boom", a period of "rapid growth and expansion of English in Vietnam". Specifically, the *Đổi Mới* reforms initiated in 1986 marked a turning point, opening Vietnam to global economic integration through the adoption of a socialist-oriented market economy. The *Đổi Mới* created "mounting pressures for more and more places to teach English at every stage of the far-expanding educational system", further accelerated as it coincided with the concurrent forces of globalisation, which is the "strongest external force for English language teaching and learning in Vietnam" (Hoang, 2010, p. 10).

English language education became a focal point in the government's efforts to enhance international communication and attract foreign investment. The demand for English proficiency surged, leading to the establishment of English language centres and the incorporation of English into the national curriculum. The new century then witnessed a continued emphasis on English language education, driven by the recognition of its role in fostering technological advancement and global competitiveness. The rise of the Internet and the integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) into education in the

2000s further transformed English language instruction, with online platforms and digital resources becoming integral components, especially during and after the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Despite such progresses, concurrent challenges persisted, including disparities in access to quality English education across regions and socioeconomic backgrounds. Ongoing research and policy initiatives aim to address these disparities and enhance the effectiveness of English language education in Vietnam, aligning it with the evolving demands of the globalised world.

3. The Cultural Capital of Standardised Pronunciation

Building on this historical context, it is necessary to explore the concept of cultural capital associated with standardised pronunciation. Such a conceptual lens allows the examination of how language users, including teachers, learners, and parents, internalise the perceived advantages of acquiring a 'standard' accent and how these perceptions influence educational policies and societal expectations.

Bourdieu's (1991) notion of cultural capital is particularly salient in the Vietnamese educational context, where the mastery of a foreign language (in this case, English) is often seen as a gateway to prestigious educational institutions and lucrative career paths. This linguistic market, therefore, creates a dichotomy between the *economic* capital associated with foreign language proficiency and the *cultural* and *symbolic* capital embedded in the native language. The pedagogical implications are profound: educational institutions become sites where linguistic capital is accumulated, transmitted, and legitimised, often reinforcing existing social inequalities (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Consequently, the dynamics of language in Vietnam, through the lens of Bourdieu's theories, reflect a complex interplay of cultural identity, social stratification, and the global economic order, underscoring the pivotal role of language as a form of cultural capital within the society.

The notion of 'cultural capital' originates from Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction (1986) and helps understand educational inequality. Essentially, it can be described as an asset which embodies some cultural value (Throsby, 1999), and is distinct from technical knowledge, ability, skills or competence, which are referred to as *human* capital. Some like Lareau and Weininger (2003) would argue that cultural capital entails an appreciation of 'highbrow' cultural values, and this seems to be the case of the perceived cultural capital associated with *standardised* forms of English.

Indeed, the cultural capital of standardised pronunciation serves as a multifaceted lens through which linguistic and sociocultural dynamics intersect. Standardised pronunciation, often associated with prestige and social status, functions as a symbolic marker of linguistic competence and cultural capital within a given society (Roshid & Chowdhury, 2013; Roshid, Webb & Chowdhury, 2022; Roshid & Chowdhury, 2023). This phenomenon is particularly evident in societies where linguistic norms are codified and linked to cultural identity. In education, the cultural capital of standardised pronunciation manifests as a crucial component in language acquisition and assessment. Educational institutions often uphold specific pronunciation standards – such as British and American – reflecting societal norms and reinforcing linguistic hierarchies, and thus learners who acquire and demonstrate proficiency in any of these standardised pronunciations are perceived as possessing a form of cultural capital that facilitates social mobility and acceptance.

Needless to say, the cultural capital of standardised pronunciation extends beyond educational settings to impact professional spheres and interpersonal relationships. Individuals with mastery of standardised pronunciation are often afforded advantages in employment and

social interactions, as their linguistic competence aligns with prevailing cultural norms.

However, such myopic adherence to standardised pronunciation can contribute to the erasure of unique linguistic identities - much in a similar way to how generative artificial intelligence can erase the richness and diversity in writing – as explained above, perpetuating a cycle of conformity to dominant groups and undermine the rich tapestry of global linguistic diversity. More importantly, the cultural capital associated with standardised pronunciation raises questions about linguistic diversity and inclusivity. Examining how societal values are embedded in pronunciation standards provides insights into the intricate interplay between language, culture, and social structures, offering a foundation for critical discourse on linguistic equity and cultural representation in diverse linguistic communities.

After all, language, as conceptualised within the ambit of Bourdieu's theoretical framework, transcends mere communication, embodying a form of cultural capital that profoundly influences social mobility and the stratification of society (Bourdieu, 1986). It can be said that in the context of Vietnam, a nation marked by its colonial history and rapid economic transformation, language serves as a pivotal axis around which cultural capital is accrued and manifested. The Vietnamese language, deeply entrenched with indigenous cultural nuances and historical intricacies, operates as a symbol of national identity and social cohesion. However, as discussed above, the linguistic landscape of Vietnam is also characterised by the valorisation of foreign languages, particularly English (and historically, French), which are perceived as *symbolic* capital that facilitates access to global economic opportunities and positions within the global hierarchy (Le Ha, 2008).

4. Linguistically and Culturally Responsive Teaching

The concept of linguistically and culturally responsive teaching, which Valdiviezo and Nieto (2017) call every child's right, recognises that the linguistic and cultural resources and prior knowledge of every learner must be considered in all instructional scenarios (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Language policies often hierarchise languages leading to discrimination and marginalisation of linguistically minority students, thereby viewing multilingualism as a deficit. A *linguistically responsive teaching* approach considers a learner's *entire* linguistic repertoire into account and affirms a language learner's linguistic identity by considering *all* of their languages as resources for literacy and learning in the classroom. Similarly, a *culturally responsive teaching* approach is understood as an instructional orientation that “empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (Ladson-Billings, 1994, pp. 16). By connecting learners' cultural experiences and knowledge to academic (content) knowledge, it recognises and invests in what students *already* know (Gay, 2000), which can be seen as a form of scaffolding.

Since schools are sites for the development of students' identities, it is imperative for teachers to create environments that promote a sense of belonging for all students, regardless of their cultural or linguistic backgrounds. Such a practice not only affirms students' home languages and cultures, it also develops their learner identities (Paris, 2012).

Within this orientation to linguistically and culturally responsive teaching, when it comes to the teaching of pronunciation, there is need to examine the potential drawbacks of adhering to a monolithic, native-norm-driven standard and explore why *non*-standardised accents should be celebrated and valued, emphasising the importance of recognising and appreciating linguistic diversity in an increasingly globalised world. Valuing non-standardised

accents is imperative in fostering linguistic inclusivity and dismantling language-based hierarchies. Accents, reflective of regional and cultural diversity, are intrinsic to the richness of a language. However, prevalent linguistic biases, such as those described above, often elevate standardised accents, marginalising those with non-standard varieties. Recognising the inherent value in non-standardised accents is thus a step towards acknowledging the diverse linguistic landscapes that contribute to the global tapestry of languages. By embodying the lived experiences and histories of communities and thus offering unique perspectives within the linguistic spectrum, non-standardised accents carry cultural and regional significance, serving as distinct markers of identity and heritage. Embracing these accents challenges the notion of linguistic superiority associated with standardised varieties, promoting a more inclusive understanding of linguistic diversity.

Educational institutions such as schools play a pivotal role in shaping perceptions of accents, while the curriculum is the primary mechanism through which educators can actively incorporate and celebrate linguistic variety. Valuing non-standardised accents contributes to the empowerment of speakers whose accents have been considered as deviant, fostering a linguistic environment that reflects the multifaceted nature of language. Emphasising the legitimacy of diverse accents not only promotes linguistic equity but also enriches our collective appreciation for the inherent diversity encapsulated within language.

5. Formal Education and Linguistic Conformity

Educational systems play a pivotal role in shaping linguistic norms, and the selection of pronunciation standards within curricula reflects broader sociocultural dynamics. Through the formal education system, curricula and teaching methodologies contribute to the entrenchment of standardised pronunciation norms, which is deeply intertwined with the curricula and teaching methodologies. The deliberate inclusion and reinforcement of specific pronunciation norms in teaching methodologies thus shape the perpetuation of linguistic hierarchies.

In other words, influenced by societal perceptions of prestige and acceptability, the curricula - as structured frameworks for learning - often *prescribe* particular pronunciation models as benchmarks for linguistic proficiency and markers of linguistic competence. Textbooks, instructional materials, and language assessments further reinforce these norms, creating a pedagogical environment that prioritises specific pronunciation features. Teaching methodologies, on the other hand, including pronunciation drills, phonetic exercises, and oral assessments, play a crucial role in shaping learners' pronunciation habits. The repeated exposure to and reinforcement of standardised pronunciation in classroom settings contribute to its normalisation and acceptance as the linguistic ideal. Teachers, as agents of linguistic socialisation, thus play a key role in disseminating and upholding these norms, inadvertently perpetuating linguistic biases already embedded in standardised pronunciation.

Furthermore, the influence of global English language teaching trends, often driven by native-speaker models, contributes to the entrenchment of standardised pronunciation norms. The privileging of 'native-like' pronunciation in teaching materials and teacher training reinforces an idealised linguistic standard that may not align with the linguistic diversity present in the nation. This issue is further complicated by practices that are determined by forces outside teaching practices not endorsed by educational policies and the formal curriculum, which I discuss next.

6. The Persistence of the Hidden Curriculum

In Vietnam, the school English curriculum is meticulously structured and documented, guided by national educational standards and objectives, and designed to equip students with a command of English, viewing language proficiency as a crucial skill in the globalised world, aligning with the nation's broader socio-economic goals (Le, 2016). As Nguyen (2011) explains, textbooks, standardised assessments, and pedagogical guidelines constitute the backbone of this curriculum, aiming to provide a cohesive and comprehensive framework for English language education across the country.

However, teachers are often unaware of what is known as the “hidden curriculum” (Rossouw & Frick, 2023), which can pose significant challenges in teaching (Koutsouris et al., 2021; Thielsch, 2017) and learning outcomes. The notion of the hidden curriculum is not new (see, for example, Jackson, 1968; Anyon, 1980), however, it is still often not understood well by teachers, especially as a lot of issues in the hidden curriculum originate from normative expectations and assumptions that are not officially documented or communicated (Alsubaie, 2015, p. 125), or codified into the formal or official curriculum (Uleanya, 2022) and seep into day-to-day teaching practices. Such hidden curriculum can play a significant role in shaping learner’s linguistic and cultural competencies. By encompassing implicit academic, social, and cultural norms, it can shape their attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions about the English language and the cultures it represents (Giroux & Penna, 1983).

In the context of Vietnam, as Phan (2008) argues, the hidden curriculum might manifest in the valorisation and privileging of certain accents of English, subtly imparting a hierarchy of linguistic prestige and power within the classroom. It may also involve the uncritical dissemination of cultural values and ideologies embedded in teaching materials, thereby shaping students' worldviews and cultural identity in nuanced ways (Apple, 1979). Additionally, classroom interactions, teacher attitudes, and peer dynamics contribute to the hidden curriculum, subtly reinforcing or challenging prevailing social norms and expectations related to English language use and proficiency.

Understanding the interplay between the explicit and hidden curricula in English language education in Vietnam is thus pivotal for educators and policymakers. It calls for a reflective and critical approach to teaching and curriculum development, ensuring that English language instruction not only imparts linguistic skills but also fosters a *critical* awareness of the cultural and ideological underpinnings that influence language learning in a globalised context.

7. Linguistic Identity as a Marker of Diversity

Just as standardised Englishes, non-standardised varieties, such as Vietnamese English, can serve as powerful markers of linguistic identity, and educators have the responsibility of making learners aware of the richness that diverse linguistic expressions bring into global communication. Individuals develop a profound connection to their linguistic identity, viewing language not merely as a tool for communication but as a fundamental aspect of their cultural and social identity. This connection is deeply rooted in the ways in which language reflects historical narratives, traditions, and societal values. Linguistic identity works as a distinct marker of diversity and encapsulates the rich tapestry of human communication and culture, and a manifestation of the multitude of human experiences and perspectives, enriching the global mosaic of languages and dialects.

At its core, linguistic identity refers to the unique linguistic attributes and practices that individuals or communities employ, reflecting their cultural heritage, geographical origin, and historical experiences. This intricate interplay between language and identity in turn serves as a critical lens through which we can understand and appreciate the diversity inherent in human societies.

However, the coexistence of various linguistic identities within a single geographical or sociopolitical space also highlights inherent complexities and fluidities. These linguistic variations contribute to the uniqueness of communities and underscore the importance of preserving and celebrating linguistic diversity as an integral part of global heritage.

In contemporary discourses, the recognition of linguistic identity as a marker of diversity is crucial for fostering inclusivity and respect for different cultures. Efforts to preserve endangered languages, promote multilingualism, and challenge linguistic biases contribute to creating a more equitable and diverse linguistic landscape. By acknowledging and valuing linguistic identity, societies can cultivate a deeper understanding of each other, fostering a global environment that embraces the richness of human expression and communication.

8. Towards Translanguaging

A heteroglossic or holistic orientation to languages instruction allows the practice of translanguaging, which García and Hesson (2015, p. 230) label as a critical 21st century skill and an “important communicative resource” in the language classroom. However, the notion and practice of translanguaging is relatively new, and only became a legitimate practice of language instruction in the 2000s. Since then, it has grown as a practice in promoting bi-/multilingualism as a sustainable learning resource, rather than as a subtractive model (Baker & Wright, 2021) of transition into a majority language (MacSwan, 2017). Scholars like García have promoted translanguaging practices by emphasising on the heteroglossic view on languages, arguing that in the linguistic repertoire of a language user, languages do not exist discreetly and in isolation of other languages (García & Otheguy, 2014), but are unified in a holistic and inseparable way and as a unified system (Canagarajah, 2011).

Importantly, such a view also allows a positive appreciation of bi-/multilingualism as a resource rather than as a deficit. Authors such as García and Hesson (2015) and García, Ibarra-Johnson, and Seltzer (2016) have thus advocated language pedagogies to be designed within a translanguaging framework, by making translanguaging practices as an essential and everyday tool of bi-/multilingual education. Practically, such a view allows students to use *all* of their linguistic resources in a classroom to experience rich and engaging learning of a foreign language, by investing in all of the languages they use. This also means teachers using L1 in their instructions and in providing feedback, and in planning assessment, but also allowing students to use their first languages for classroom interactions. Rather than insisting on students acquiring standardised accents (such as US or UK), they would accept and acknowledge local accents as a marker of their identity.

Specifically for the teaching of pronunciation, the practice of translanguaging offers a unique and effective framework for the acquisition of intelligible pronunciation in a foreign language by significantly enhancing phonetic acquisition and linguistic competence in several ways.

Firstly, translanguaging enhances a metalinguistic awareness that is pivotal for pronunciation proficiency in a foreign language. By alternating between languages, learners become acutely aware of the phonetic and phonological contrasts between their native language

and the target language. This heightened awareness facilitates a deeper understanding of the specific articulatory mechanics and sound systems unique to each language, thereby enabling learners to fine-tune their pronunciation in the target language (García & Wei, 2014).

Secondly, as García (2009) explains, a translanguaging approach nurtures a low-anxiety learning environment, which is conducive to the practice and repetition necessary for mastering foreign language pronunciation. The inclusive and validating nature of translanguaging pedagogy alleviates the stress and inhibition often associated with speaking in a foreign language using a standardised accent, encouraging learners to experiment with and practice new sounds more freely and confidently (García & Beardsmore, 2009).

The practice of translanguaging also aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory of cognitive development, particularly the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). By leveraging the linguistic resources of both the native and target languages, learners can scaffold their language learning process, progressively advancing their pronunciation skills from what they can achieve independently to higher levels of proficiency with guidance and interaction (Vygotsky, 1978).

Finally, translanguaging pedagogy recognises and capitalises on the dynamic and fluid nature of language practices in real-world communication. As learners engage with authentic communicative tasks, integrating their entire linguistic repertoire, they develop a practical, functional (intelligible) pronunciation proficiency in the target language, which is more aligned with the goal of achieving intelligible, effective communication rather than native-like pronunciation perfection (Canagarajah, 2012).

Incorporating translanguaging strategies in the classroom thus recognises the diverse linguistic backgrounds of learners and leverages these backgrounds as valuable resources for language development. As explained above, research has shown that the strategic use of translanguaging can enhance learning in multiple ways by providing a robust framework for learners to develop intelligible pronunciation in a foreign language, ultimately enriching their communicative competence and linguistic dexterity. Perhaps most importantly, it scaffolds learners into bridging new learning with prior knowledge (including that of L1) and experiences.

9. Recommendations and Conclusion

Unintelligible pronunciation containing native-like features of the target language does not make any sense; it is intelligible pronunciation, not native-like pronunciation, which essentially contributes to communicative competence. (Tuan, 2021, p. 176)

This article has addressed some of the complex dynamics that shape individuals' perceptions of linguistic identity and the socio-cultural implications of conforming to standardised language norms. By examining the nuanced interplay between language, power, and identity, the article shows the potential drawbacks of subscribing to a monolithic standard in a world that increasingly recognises the legitimacy of diverse linguistic expressions. It emphasises the urgent need for educators, policymakers, and society at large to recognise the intrinsic value of linguistic diversity and propose practical recommendations for fostering a more inclusive approach to English language education, ultimately contributing to a global discourse that celebrates the myriad expressions of linguistic identity.

In a recent article, Tuan (2021, p. 176) argues that first language (L1) phonological transfer to second or foreign language (L2/FL) is "unavoidable". He emphasises that

“international intelligibility” (p. 176) should be the real target in ELT. While acknowledging some of the challenges in this, such as teaching qualifications and experiences of English teachers in Vietnam, he explains that L2 pronunciation only need to “approximate”, rather than “imitate” L2 sounds resulting in “personalised L2 speech” in a manner where it is “understandable to other L2 speakers” (p. 181).

As responsible educators, we advocate for a paradigm shift in English language education in non-English speaking countries like Vietnam by emphasising the need for educators to transcend the confines of standardised pronunciation, encouraging learners to embrace and celebrate their linguistic diversity. By doing so, we can empower individuals to navigate the complex terrain of linguistic identity with confidence, fostering a more inclusive and equitable language education landscape that reflects the rich tapestry of not just global communication but the linguistic and cultural diversity *within* the country.

In order to promote multicultural understanding and intercultural communication, all languages and cultures need to be utilised in the classroom (Taylor et al., 2008), which would not just affirm the linguistic diversity of students in the classroom - even when they all have a shared language - but promote diverse identities and alternate ways of thinking of diverse students. In this regard, García and Kleyn (2016) argue for the need for language teachers to embrace *linguistically and culturally responsive pedagogies* as the core to their knowledge, belief and practices. To make this happen, we could follow Alisaari et al.’s (2019) recommendation that teacher education programs too need to include topics such as better understanding multilingual students and their families, adequate knowledge of language and multilingualism, and, perhaps most importantly, understanding how to implement multilingual pedagogies.

Along with these, of course, it is important to make alignments between language policies, the curriculum, assessment and the actual classroom pedagogies. As Edwards (2017) puts it, both future teachers (pre-service teachers) and early-career teachers need institutional support in furthering their skills through sustained professional development opportunities as well as pre- and in-service experiences of working with students from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This will ensure the creation of sustainable and accountable classroom environments which recognise the diverse learning proficiencies that students in any classroom represent and nurture them into developing and affirming their identities through the respectful use of *all* of their languages.

Along with these, sustained teacher professional development is also needed to facilitate a transition from monolingual to multilingual instructional practices in accordance with the changed realities of the classrooms, as Alisaari et al.’s (2019) study recommends. Any respectful language pedagogy in a multilingual classroom must accept that every student has the right to study in a context where all their languages are seen as a potential for learning. Accordingly, instructions need to be designed in a way that will enhance learners' ability to transfer their knowledge and skills of L1 into the target foreign language. Miramontes et al. (2011) call this a pedagogy that includes tasks and activities in class that allows a range of interlinked and meaning-focused language use opportunities.

When learners can employ their entire linguistic repertoire, their cognitive skills develop more holistically. The curriculum thus needs to formally recognise multilingual instruction, feedback and assessment and scaffolding. The need for responding to linguistic diversity in the classroom is imperative to transcend the confines of standardised pronunciation, encouraging learners to embrace and celebrate linguistic diversity. After all, as Canh (2018, p.

9) affirms, “small imperfections of grammar or accent often just add to the charm”.

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BÀN VỀ BẢN SẮC NGÔN NGỮ VÀ SỰ TỒN TẠI CỦA CÁCH PHÁT ÂM CHUẨN HÓA

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Tóm tắt: Bất chấp sự thay đổi mô hình toàn cầu theo hướng đa ngôn ngữ và EIL (tiếng Anh như một ngôn ngữ quốc tế) trong giáo dục tiếng Anh, việc tuân thủ nghiêm ngặt các dạng ngoại ngữ ‘chuẩn hóa’ vẫn tồn tại ở các quốc gia không nói tiếng Anh. Giáo viên ngôn ngữ, người học và phụ huynh của họ, cũng như các nhà hoạch định chính sách và thiết kế chương trình giảng dạy, đều nhấn mạnh việc áp dụng các loại tiếng Anh ‘chuẩn’ như một quy chuẩn và không cần bàn cãi. Những kỳ vọng này là tự nhiên, dựa trên nhận thức của người sử dụng ngôn ngữ về vốn văn hóa mà những hình thức phát âm tiêu chuẩn hóa này có thể mang lại cho họ. Bài viết này bàn về cách giáo dục chính quy, thông qua chương trình giảng dạy ản, gia tăng áp lực phải tuân theo cách phát âm chuẩn hóa và điều này có thể tác động tiêu cực đến bản sắc của người học ngôn ngữ như thế nào. Người ta có thể đặt câu hỏi tại sao một người nói tiếng Việt lại muốn nói giọng ‘Mỹ’ hoặc ‘Anh’ riêng biệt và những đặc quyền thực sự này mang lại cho họ là gì. Người ta cũng có thể đặt câu hỏi tại sao giọng Việt trong tiếng Anh, một dấu ản nhận dạng riêng biệt, lại có thể bị coi là kém uy tín hơn và liệu điều này có gây bất lợi cho họ trong một số bối cảnh nhất định hay không. Bài viết lập luận rằng với tư cách là nhà giáo dục ngôn ngữ, chúng ta có trách nhiệm làm cho người học nhận thức được bản sắc ngôn ngữ của họ và những giọng không chuẩn nhưng dễ hiểu có thể và nên là những chỉ dấu đúng nhất về bản sắc của một người.

Từ khóa: bản sắc ngôn ngữ, phát âm chuẩn hóa, giọng điệu, chương trình giảng dạy ản, cách nói bản xứ, tiếng Anh như một ngôn ngữ quốc tế