Translanguaging and AI

NCLE Symposium: AI and Language Education
28th of November 2025

Dr. Kevin W. H. Tai

Assistant Professor of Language and Literacy Education

Co-Director, Centre for Advancement in Inclusive and Special Education

Faculty of Education, The University of Hong Kong

Dr. Seongyong Lee

Assistant Professor of Applied Linguistics

Director of Research

School of Education and English, University of Nottingham Ningbo China

Faculty of **Education**
The University of Hong Kong

Translanguaging

- Li Wei (2011, 2018): Translanguaging as a process of knowledge construction which involves going beyond different linguistic structures and systems (i.e. not only different languages and dialects, but also styles, registers and other variations in language use) and different modalities (e.g. switching between speaking and writing, or coordinating gestures, body movements, facial expressions, visual images).

Translanguaging as an Inclusive Pedagogical Practice

- Translanguaging is not simply allowing the students to use their L1s in the classroom.

- **Challenge the monolingual ethos and policies** that still dominates educational system (e.g. English Medium Instruction (EMI) / One-language-only policy)

- **Challenge raciolinguistic ideologies** (i.e. conforming to 'native speaker' norms and comparing multilingual students to their 'monolingual' English-speaking counterparts).

Faculty of **Education**
The University of Hong Kong

Translanguaging as a Pedagogy for Inclusion and Social Justice

- All knowledge, acquired through all languages and in all cultural contexts, should be valued.

- Teachers and students bring with them "**funds of knowledge**" – "the historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for households and individual functioning and well-being" (Moll et al., 1992, p. 133)

Translanguaging and AI

- GenAI not only offers educators numerous affordances, such as automated essay grading and student profiling but also has the potential to increase and enhance equity and access for linguistically diverse learners due to its capacity to communicate through multiple languages and modalities (Prado and Warschauer 2024; Stornaiuolo et al. 2024).

- Technological advances in GenAI encourage scholars to envision the translanguaging possibilities of multimodal and multilingual learner-AI communications.

- Although this technology seems ideal for multilingual education, it has a significant downside: it can perpetuate societal biases and favor standardized versions of content.

Faculty of **Education**
The University of Hong Kong

Empirical Evidence: Standardized Bias

- **Algorithmic Standardization and Bias**: GenAI tends to reinforce hierarchies in diverse (English) language varieties by often generating standard forms rather than reflecting the pluralistic usage common in sociolinguistic realities. (Lee et al., 2025)
- **Persistence of Bias**: Despite integrating external data and advanced prompt engineering techniques, GenAI tools tend to default to standard language norms over time. → Without deliberate intervention, GenAI reproduces monolingual ideologies, undermining language diversity.

e.g., When a Korean student's essay used *handphone* (common in Korean English), ChatGPT flagged it as incorrect and replaced it with *mobile phone*, reinforcing standardization and marginalizing local usage.

Empirical Evidence: GenAI's Dilemmas

- GenAI's dual nature——a **flexible receiver** of diverse multilingual inputs & a **stochastic parrot** (standardized outputs)——creates instructional dilemmas.

1. **Creativity-Standardization**: GenAI accepts creative, fluid input (flexible receiver) but produces standardized, non-contextualized output (stochastic parrot).

2. **Inclusion-Fixity**: GenAI's fixed data cannot capture the constant change and fluidity of human language (like algospeak), reinforcing prevalent societal biases.

3. **Meaning-Form**: GenAI focuses on linguistic form (statistical probability) rather than communicative intent or shared socio-political context (key to human meaning-making).

e.g. departyment: GenAI recognizes 'wordplay' (department + party: mocking government departments spending resources on parties) / can't grasp 'sociopolitical critique'

→ a lack of meaning-making beyond surface-level patterns.

→ Translanguaging calls for critical engagement with AI

(not passive acceptance)

Empirical Evidence: Instructional Design

- Tension between bias and practice

  1. System-level: GenAI encodes Standard English / NES biases
  2. Practice-level: Learners translanguage with AI in flexible, agentive ways

- Need for translanguaging-aware AI shared talk

  1. Shift: "AI as native-like corrector" → "AI as multilingual partner"
  2. Design prompts/tasks that legitimize L1, local Englishes, and hybrid repertoires.

- Pedagogical Implications

  1. Make biases visible and critical inquiries/discussions → critical AI literacy
  2. Scaffold students to:
   1) Use L1 strategically (planning, reflection, stance); 2) Compare AI's Standard English with local/disciplinary varieties; 3) Revoice AI output to fit their identities & culture.

Faculty of **Education**
The University of Hong Kong

AI-Mediated Translanguaging Space (Tai, Forthcoming)

- AI-mediated translanguaging space as a notion to theorise the nature of the translanguaging space that is created for and also created by translanguaging practices and GenAI-supported resources.

- AI-mediated translanguaging space can empower both teachers and students to harness GenAI, thereby expanding their multilingual and multimodal repertoires. This expansion can facilitate the creation of new knowledge and enhance participation in classroom interactions.

- Through GenAI's ability to process and generate content across various languages and modes, teachers and students can access resources that better reflect their linguistic and cultural backgrounds, lived experiences and funds of knowledge.

Thank you!

Dr. Kevin W. H. Tai

Assistant Professor of Language and Literacy Education, The University of Hong Kong (HKU)

Co-Director, Centre for Advancement in Inclusive and Special Education, HKU

The World's Top 1% Scholar and **HKU Scholar in the Top 1%**, Clarivate Analytics, 2025

The World's Top 2% Most-Cited Scientist (Languages and Linguistics), Stanford University, 2024 and 2025 (Elsevier)

Email: kevin.tai@hku.hk

Dr. Seongyong Lee

Assistant Professor of Applied Linguistics, University of Nottingham Ningbo China

Director of Research, School of Education and English, University of Nottingham Ninbo China

Email: Seongyong-Lee@nottingham.edu.cn