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SPECIAL ISSUE

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**Language, Education, and Rights in Motion: Decolonial Perspectives on Ideologies and Displacement**

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This Special Issue, *Language, Education, and Rights in Motion: Decolonial Perspectives on Ideologies and Displacement* in the Journal of Education, Language, and Ideology (JELI), explores the intersections of migration, displacement, language ideologies, and struggles for linguistic justice in educational contexts. We aim to highlight scholarship that interrogates how global and local forces shape the lives of immigrant and refugee learners (including those labeled “ESL”), Indigenous peoples navigating settler-colonial education systems, and others marginalized by nation-state language policies. At the same time, this issue foregrounds the structural inequities—embedded in borders, schools, labor markets, and legal regimes—that delimit access to education, mobility, and full participation in civic life.

We invite contributions that center on how language users themselves define, claim, and enact rights in relation to colonialism, systemic racism, migration, globalization, nationalism, and neoliberalism. Rights-based approaches to language are often framed in abstract or technocratic terms that obscure the unequal power relations that sustain them. Detached from context, rights risk being commodified, co-opted by dominant groups, reduced to “conflict,” or narrowed into discourses of endangerment that erase the voices and struggles of those most affected.

Following Kaveh (2023), we encourage perspectives that move beyond static civil or human rights frameworks to emphasize the agency and creativity of language users. As Kaveh (2023) writes, “the central ideas in language planning become verbs … language users (both the speaking and listening subjects) are defining orientations toward language planning for a given time and place based on their intersectional roles” (p. 18). This framing underscores that orientations to language are lived, shifting, and historically situated, while highlighting the everyday practices through which rights are enacted and contested.

At the same time, the hegemonic power of languages, rooted in colonialism, nationalism, and racial hierarchies, continues to gatekeep access to resources, institutions, and opportunities for racialized and minoritized multilinguals. Orientalism, as theorized by Said (1978), remains a powerful frame shaping discourses of language and rights: languages of the “East” or Global South are frequently exoticized, essentialized, or subordinated in relation to those of the “West.” These discourses obscure the fact that hierarchies of language are inextricably linked to hierarchies of race, empire, and nation, and how they influence the legitimization of various forms of knowledge, literacy, and communication in education and policy.

This issue is also guided by Patel’s (2015) call for research that is answerable to learning, knowledge, and context. By framing research as an ethical and relational practice, Patel reminds us that scholarship on language, education, and rights cannot be divorced from the power relations that shape both knowledge production and the lived experiences of displaced and marginalized communities. In the context of migration, colonialism, and racialization, “answerability” calls on researchers to resist extractive logics and instead engage with learners, communities, and knowledges in ways that are dialogic, transformative, and accountable. Patel urges us to treat research as an ethical and relational practice:

* *Answerability to learning* requires conceiving of research as “a constant transformation between the known and the unknown” (p. 85), resisting colonial logics of accumulation and ownership.
* *Answerability to knowledge* entails recognizing that all knowledge is contextually created, partial, and perspectival, shaped by histories and relations of power.
* *Answerability to context* demands attention to the legacies of colonialism as well as to the specific social, cultural, and material relations through which communities determine what knowledge matters and why.

### **Areas of Contribution**

We are specifically looking for empirical work that focuses on:

* How linguistically minoritized communities define and enact their language rights in educational contexts.
* How language ideologies are reflected in *human-centered* (rather than state- or institution-centered) definitions of language rights.
* How language communities advocate for their rights across diverse educational spaces: classrooms, K–12 schools, higher education, informal and community-based programs, districts, and national policy contexts.
* How current (im)migration patterns, policies, and global conflicts shape how communities (re)define and advocate for their language rights.
* How language communities and individual language users (re)imagine language rights in ways that resist and counter Orientalist framings.
* How colonialism, racism, and neoliberal globalization intersect with language ideologies and policies to structure educational access.
* How subaltern voices—youth, families, educators, and community members—articulate counter-hegemonic perspectives on language rights and ideologies.

This Special Issue highlights the need to move beyond colonial and Orientalist framings of language rights by centering decolonial perspectives. In doing so, it amplifies the lived experiences and voices of marginalized communities and contributes to JELI’s mission of advancing both theoretical insights and transformative practices in education, language, and ideology.

**Submission**

Please submit your abstract (max. 300 words, excluding the references) along with a working title for the article, your institutional affiliation and contact email as well as a short bio (max. 150 words per author) in a Microsoft Word document (in English) to yalda.kaveh@asu.edu and cbuckband@asu.edu before the deadline.

**Timeline**

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| Abstracts Due  | October 15, 2025  |
| Invitation for full manuscripts sent  | November 15, 2025 |
| Full Manuscript Due | February 15, 2025 |
| Publication of the MS in Vol 4, Issue 2 | 2026 |

**References**

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Patel, L. (2015). *Decolonizing educational research: From ownership to answerability*. Routledge.

Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. Pantheon.