

# Working Towards Social Justice in Applied Linguistics Research

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ARTS, HUMANITIES &  
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# Working Towards Social Justice in Applied Linguistics Research

The *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* recently published an issue dedicated to research by emerging scholars working at the cutting edge of social justice in applied linguistics. Together, the members of the journal's editorial board developed an exciting new model that would enable the journal to act upon calls in the field to question existing review systems in academic publishing. To this end, the board devised a novel collaborative, iterative review process and actively recruited early-career and emergent minoritised scholars to publish in the issue.

## A New Approach to Traditional Peer Review

Historically, the *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics (ARAL)* has invited state-of-the-art review articles from well-known, established leading scholars for publication. As an invitational journal, the journal relies on the professional networks of its board to recruit invitees to publish. As the board planned the 2022 issue on social justice, they discussed alternatives to the double-blind peer review.

The board also purposefully sought out early career scholars in the area of social justice in applied linguistics, focusing on graduate students, recent graduates, and non-tenured professors and recruiting scholars working in a wide range of educational contexts and from a variety of different backgrounds.

The traditional approach to peer review requires scholars to submit their manuscript to their chosen journal for critical, anonymous evaluation by other expert researchers in the field. This 'double-blind' approach, most commonly adopted by journals, means that authors do not know who is reviewing their work, and the reviewers do not know who wrote the piece they are critiquing. This anonymity is meant to minimise the impact of bias for or against a particular author and ensure reviewers feel they can be honest in their critiques of the work. However, when set up this way, peer reviews can also create a gatekeeping dynamic where novice or emerging scholars are negatively impacted by unclear expectations, long wait times, and often harsh, negative or unhelpful comments. In an academic job market that puts a premium on publishing in journals, this sort of system can make it difficult to gain the publications and citations needed for job offers and promotions.

To challenge this often exclusionary process, the *ARAL* Editorial Board assembled a team of mentor-reviewers to guide and support the invited authors in publishing their work. The traditional peer-review process was replaced with the development of collaborative, constructive relationships involving incremental feedback on article drafts.

## An Iterative Process

The *ARAL* Editorial Board matched up the early-career scholars with mentor-reviewers according to their shared interests and expertise. Over the course of several months, the assigned pairs worked together to progressively improve the article in an iterative process that replaced the conventional double-blind peer review. This process represented a tremendous effort and commitment from everyone involved and also laid the foundations for fruitful professional relationships between the emerging and the experienced scholars acting as mentors for the work.

In another departure from tradition, the emerging scholars knew from the beginning that their papers would be published, another difference from the typical editorial decision process, which often results in authors catering to what *reviewers* want from a manuscript rather than staying true to their own voices. This process allowed the emerging scholars to focus on refining the manuscript while remaining authentic to what they wanted to say.



## An Impressive Volume of Research

The end result was an impressive volume consisting of 17 research articles, representing the work of emerging scholars from a range of different racial and ethnic backgrounds, geographic areas, research backgrounds, and institution types. All the abstracts are available online, and the full texts are either Open Access full-time or made freely available on a rotating basis to increase access. Authors were provided with an option to publish abstracts in the languages, varieties, or dialects of their choice, and this was readily taken up by several of the scholars. One abstract, for example, was prepared specifically 'For Family and Friends', providing a reminder of the significance attached to the opportunity to 'translate' research findings for non-specialist readers.

The collection of articles opens (alphabetically) with Obed Arango's piece. His research was spurred by his own experiences as a new immigrant to the USA. With reference to Critical Race Theory and the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, he reflects on the impact of translanguaging in multilingual immigrant communities.

Katherine Barko-Alva adopts an exploratory qualitative approach to understanding the pedagogic language used by bilingual education teachers. She argues for increased attention to reflection on the nature of language (metalinguistic awareness) as well as knowledge of how language works in multilingual classrooms.

María Cioè-Peña takes a different perspective in pointing to the necessity of identifying, acknowledging, and challenging the ways in which colonialism has influenced linguistics, and, specifically, has led to the over- and disproportionate representation of Black, Indigenous, and/or Latinx students classified as special education and as English learners.

Yaqiong Cui presents a case study of a young Uyghur woman in China. Her work advances our understanding of multilingual learning by minority groups in a complex sociolinguistic context and the development of social identity, in which individuals form a unique view of themselves.

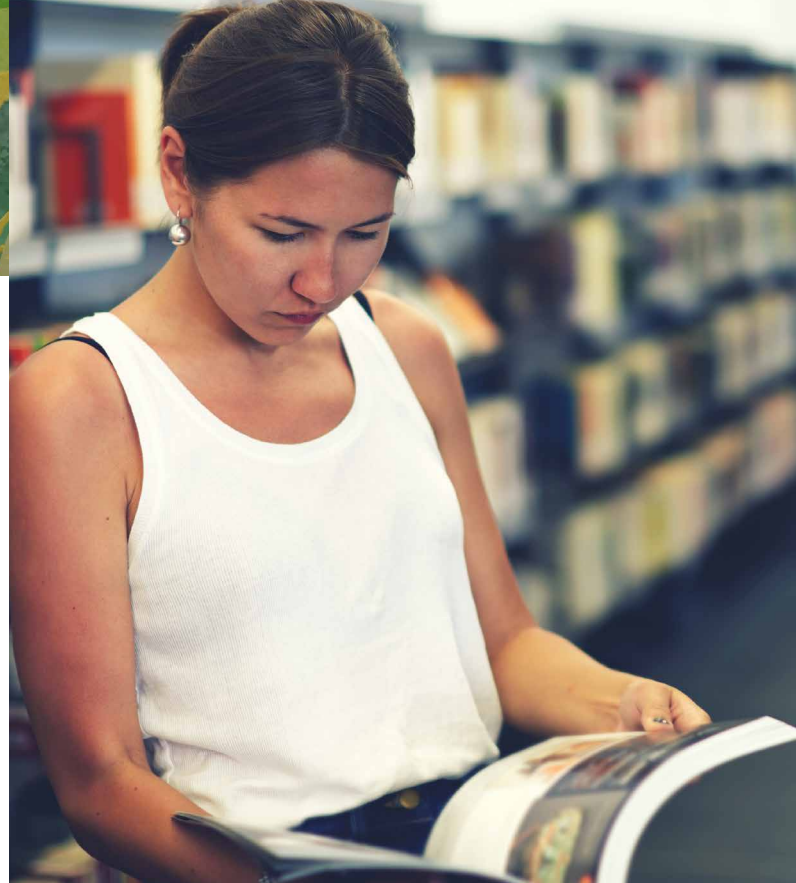
Paywalls require internet users to pay subscriptions to access otherwise restricted digital media content. Megan Figueroa discusses the negative impacts of paywalls on academic discussion and in facilitating the dominance of specialist and elite communities in linguistic research. She highlights the exciting potential of podcasts to overcome some of the barriers to the sharing and challenging of ideas.

Brittany Frieson explains that certain school-based practices in dual language programs can be damaging for Black American children and observes that bilingual education is often complicit in educational injustice. She makes critical recommendations for ensuring that bilingual education is equitable, just, and affirming.

Pejman Habibie takes a social justice perspective in calling for scholarship to be more diverse, inclusive, multivocal, and transformative, especially in relation to emerging and early career researchers. He emphasises the value that more junior researchers can bring to academic discourses and practices.

Jin Kyeong Jung reports on the use of cosmopolitan language practices by South Korean high school students. She emphasises the role of digital technologies in supporting students in cultivating a sense of global citizenry.

Addressing historical trauma and healing in Indigenous language cultivation and revitalisation forms the key focus of James McKenzie's article. He concludes with recommendations to support these processes from a range of perspectives, including educational and governmental agencies.



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ARAL Editorial team

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Most exciting of all is their observation that the approach undertaken by the *ARAL* Editorial Board in collaboration with the emerging scholars provides a new model with which to progress social justice in and beyond linguistics and academic publishing.

**Shakina Rajendram** describes the transformative potential of translanguaging as a theory and a pedagogy to liberate language practices in English classrooms in Malaysia. A collaborative translanguaging pedagogy designed through teacher-researcher collaboration is discussed.

**Vijay Ramjattan** explores the role of speech accent in reinforcing racism, particularly in the context of labour migration to the English-speaking Global North (including Northern America and Europe). He calls on linguists to ask not what an accent is but what it does.

**Sheena Shah, Letzadzo Kometsi, and Matthias Brenzinger** provide valuable insights into the preservation of siPhuthi, a Nguni Bantu language spoken by only a few thousand marginalised individuals. This paper is the culmination of their six-year collaboration working to empower the ebaPhuthi people, as well as protect and elevate the siPhuthi language and include informants as authors.

**Jaran Shin** embraces the key concepts of criticality, identity, and ethics to discuss how applied linguistics can move beyond the rhetoric of inclusion, social transformation, and justice to concrete actions. She places particular emphasis on the need to reorient linguistics towards promoting the public good.

**Patriann Smith** shares her vision for the future of applied linguistics in a 'global metaverse', by which she refers to a highly immersive and global virtual world. Her valuable work is particularly concerned with ensuring the adaptation of applied linguistics in this virtual sphere and was also profiled in this publication [here](#).

**Hassan Syed** reflects on his experiences as an English language teacher in Pakistan to consider the benefits of translanguaging in the classroom, and the limitations of

translanguaging in challenging unjust linguistic and social structures.

**Jamie Thomas** takes an autoethnographic approach in emphasising how communication strategies impact the language users, identities, and communities researchers connect with and learn from. She argues that multilingual, multi-person interviewing can enhance and expand linguistic research.

In the final article, **Rachel Weissler** argues that social justice in applied linguistics requires an understanding of both the production and perception of speech. She highlights the importance of cognitive and social factors relating to linguistic perception in combatting linguistic discrimination.

### **A New Model of Social Justice**

The volume opens with an [introduction](#) that contextualises and explains the board's work by Alison Mackey (Editor-in-Chief), Erin Fell, Felipe de Jesus, Amber Hall, and Yunjung (Yunie) Ku, and concludes with an important contribution by Anne Charity Hudley (Stanford University) and Nelson Flores (University of Pennsylvania). These leaders in linguistics research are well-known for being vocal advocates for social justice. Aptly titled '[Social justice in applied linguistics: Not a conclusion, but a way forward](#)', they underscore the fundamental importance of paying attention to the challenging new perspectives that emerging scholars bring to the academic table. Most exciting of all is their observation that the approach undertaken by the *ARAL* Editorial Board in collaboration with the emerging scholars provides a new model with which to progress social justice in and beyond linguistics and academic publishing.





## MEET THE RESEARCHERS


### Annual Review of Applied Linguistics

The *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics (ARAL)* publishes research on key topics in the broad field of applied linguistics. The journal is committed to publishing cutting-edge and timely articles on a wide number of areas, including language learning and pedagogy, second language acquisition, applied sociolinguistics, language policy and planning, language assessment, and research design and methodology. In March 2022, the journal published an issue dedicated to the work of early-career emerging scholars, led by Professor Alison Mackey (Editor-in-Chief), with the support of the ARAL Editorial Board and Cambridge University Press.

#### FEATURED SCHOLARS


 Obed Arango,  
University of Pennsylvania  
[oarango10@gmail.com](mailto:oarango10@gmail.com)


 Katherine Barko-Alva,  
College of William & Mary  
[kbarkoalva@wm.edu](mailto:kbarkoalva@wm.edu)


 María Cioè-Peña, University of  
Pennsylvania (at publication,  
Montclair State University)  
[cioepena@upenn.edu](mailto:cioepena@upenn.edu)


 Yaqiong Cui,  
Chinese Academy of Sciences  
[cuiyaqiong@ucas.ac.cn](mailto:cuiyaqiong@ucas.ac.cn)


 Megan Figueroa,  
University of Arizona  
[megan@arizona.edu](mailto:megan@arizona.edu)


 Brittany L. Frieson,  
University of North Texas  
[Brittany.Frieson@unt.edu](mailto:Brittany.Frieson@unt.edu)


 Pejman Habibie,  
University of Western Ontario  
[phabibie@uwo.ca](mailto:phabibie@uwo.ca)


 Jin Kyeong Jung,  
Texas Tech University  
[jinjung@ttu.edu](mailto:jinjung@ttu.edu)


 James McKenzie,  
University of Arizona  
[jmckenzie@email.arizona.edu](mailto:jmckenzie@email.arizona.edu)


 Shakina Rajendram,  
University of Toronto  
[shakina.rajendram@utoronto.ca](mailto:shakina.rajendram@utoronto.ca)

 Vijay A. Ramjattan,  
University of Toronto  
[vijay.ramjattan@mail.utoronto.ca](mailto:vijay.ramjattan@mail.utoronto.ca)

 Sheena Shah, University of the Free  
State and TU Dortmund University  
[sheena.shah@tu-dortmund.de](mailto:sheena.shah@tu-dortmund.de)  
(at publication, University of  
Hamburg)


 Letzadzo Kometsi,  
National University of Lesotho


 Matthias Brenzinger,  
University of the Free State


 Jaran Shin, Kyung Hee University  
[jaranshin@khu.ac.kr](mailto:jaranshin@khu.ac.kr)


#### CONTACT


[araljournal2022@gmail.com](mailto:araljournal2022@gmail.com)  
[www.cambridge.org/apl](http://www.cambridge.org/apl)  
[@CambUP\\_LangLing](https://twitter.com/CambUP_LangLing)  
[@CambridgeCore](https://twitter.com/CambridgeCore)


 Patriann Smith,  
University of South Florida  
[psmith4@usf.edu](mailto:psmith4@usf.edu)

 Hassan Syed, Sukkur IBA University  
[hassan.ali@iba-suk.edu.pk](mailto:hassan.ali@iba-suk.edu.pk)

 Jamie A. Thomas,  
Santa Monica College  
[thomas\\_jamie@smc.edu](mailto:thomas_jamie@smc.edu)

 Rachel Elizabeth Weissler,  
University of Oregon  
[rweissle@uoregon.edu](mailto:rweissle@uoregon.edu)

 Anne H. Charity Hudley,  
Stanford University  
[acharity@stanford.edu](mailto:acharity@stanford.edu)

 Nelson Flores,  
University of Pennsylvania  
[nflores@upenn.edu](mailto:nflores@upenn.edu)



#### MENTOR-REVIEWERS

We are grateful for the investment of time, mentorship, and self to our mentor-reviewers who engaged in a months-long collaborative and iterative review process with each of our authors. These established scholars not only provided content expertise but have also served as professional support for our emerging scholar authors (in alphabetical order):

Uju Anya, Alfredo Artiles, Mary Bucholtz, Peter de Costa, Fernanda Ferreira, Nelson Flores, Ofelia García, Jeff Good, Shelome Gooden, Socorro Herrera, Kendall King, Wesley Leonard, Rosa Manchón, Elizabeth Miller, Suhanthie Motha, Shondel Nero, Lourdes Ortega, Terry Osborn, Bryan Smith.

#### EDITORIAL TEAM

Alison Mackey (Editor-in-Chief), Erin Fell (Lead Editorial Assistant), Felipe de Jesus, Amber Hall, Yunjung (Yunie) Ku.

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