Book Review: Criser, R., & Malakaj, E. (Eds.). (2020). *Diversity and Decolonization in German Studies*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

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We have collaborated on this book review as part of our broader involvement with research on inclusion in language education and social justice. With this article, we aim to introduce the social justice framework into Chinese language education to foster a recognition of increasing student diversity and a responsibility for redressing social inequalities. Amongst the many principles put forward by advocates of social justice since the 19th century, four core concepts – Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access (IDEA) – are now guiding our present-day efforts to create a more equitable and just learning environment for every individual student, regardless of their backgrounds and experiences, so that they are able to access all learning opportunities (Tan, 2019). The IDEA initiative is a timely call for Chinese language education to take actions. The emergency remote teaching (ERT) has profoundly challenged Chinese language teaching and learning for many Chinese courses in the world. Wang and East (2020) pointed out that the widening digital divide – the unequal access to and knowledge of information technology – has affected the delivery of the curriculum and limited students' learning opportunities.

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They also suggested Chinese language teachers develop equity-minded instruction to ensure students can participate equally in various learning and assessment modes.

Furthermore, the recent social justice movements have moved the IDEA initiatives forward by calling for a critical examination of the root issues that caused and reproduced the inequalities and injustice in our education and societies founded in the history of colonialism and its Eurocentric knowledge and power systems. Many universities in the West have started to actively engage in discussions towards a decolonising approach in language teaching and learning (Macedo, 2019), and work on "models to deconstruct the presumed superiority and universality of Western culture as well as the dominance of Eurocentric perspectives" inside and outside educational sectors (Criser & Malakaj, 2020, p.4). Decolonisation, which previously used to refer to the process by which formerly colonised countries reclaimed independence from colonial powers, is now used as a new theoretical tool to challenge the cognitive colonialism that still robustly governs our lives and consolidates structural inequalities, discriminations, bias, and racism. The most recent few years have seen a surge of research related to IDEA and decolonisation in many disciplines. The book we reviewed here is one of the seminal works that contributes to a "decolonial turn" in applied linguistics research (Pennycook & Makoni, 2019, p. 19).

Diversity and Decolonization in German Studies is a co-edited volume by two North American scholars in German Studies, Regine Criser and Ervin Malakaj. They co-founded a project known as "Diversity, Decolonisation, and the German Curriculum" (DDGC) in 2016, and the initiative has become a biannual conference since 2017. The collective DDGC has brought together scholars and practitioners from their discipline to foster a criticality that pushes global German Studies "forward into a more just and equitable future" (Criser & Malakaj, 2020, p. 12). This edited book grew out of these collective efforts and stood as an inspiring call for other disciplines to perform similar self-critique collectively. This is one

of the first volumes that was born out of a collective goal to not only recognise inequalities and injustice in language and culture education, but also provide concrete pedagogical examples of diversifying the curriculum. While the book centres around German Studies, it has immediate relevance to Chinese language education internationally, and particularly in the context of Hong Kong, where this journal is based.

Before we introduce the chapters, we find it essential to provide more background knowledge for readers to better engage with the book, and also to understand the relevance of the book to our scholarly and pedagogical work in Chinese language and culture teaching. "Diversity" was previously understood as differences in ethno-racial backgrounds, which formed the conceptual "basis of exclusion or segregation or differential treatment" of social lives in both public and private spheres (Criser & Malakaj, 2020, p.2). It now denotes not only populations who are ethno-racially minoritised but also groups that are marginalized in other ways, such as through faith, ability, sexuality, etc. Diversification therefore is no longer simply numerically adding people from different ethno-racial groups, but it also has to align with the three other concepts in IDEA and include meaningful efforts to cultivate a working and living environment in which people from disenfranchised communities can have an equal opportunity to thrive in school and society.

In the past two decades, Chinese language classrooms have seen an increasing number of students from diverse cultural, linguistic, and religious backgrounds; in the case of Hong Kong (and elsewhere), these social differences further intersect with the widening socioeconomic gaps and exacerbate existing educational inequalities. A recent study found that compared to other Chinese metropolitans such as Macau, Shanghai, and Taipei, Hong Kong has the highest level of social segregation in secondary schools; students from one socioeconomic background are often deprived of the opportunity to even encounter people from another class (Zhou, Cai & Wang, 2016). In particular, in the Chinese language

classroom, teachers often have little knowledge of non-Western cultures and peoples. Gao (2012) found Chinese language teachers knew very little about the culture, religion, dietary habits, and learning styles of students from South Asian backgrounds. The IDEA framework can offer excellent and practical guidance to Chinese language teachers for making their teaching more equitable and accessible to all students. In a similar vein, "decolonisation" can be broadly understood as diverse efforts to resist the intertwined processes of cognitive colonisation and hegemony of Western ways of being, knowing and doing. While IDEA requires us to take concrete actions to address inequalities in classrooms and societies, decolonisation calls for a new paradigmatic perspective to address diversity-focused issues.

The book contains 17 chapters, each addressing a topic closely related to diversity and decolonisation in German Studies and interconnecting a diverse array of perspectives from the lived experiences in different local histories from across the globe. Collectively these chapters problematise the myth that Germany is a white nation and German as a language is being spoken only by whites; each chapter tackles this critique from a particular aspect of the German Studies curriculum. We selected five chapters that are of particular connection and impact to first and foreign language teaching.

Senel's chapter proposes a new frame of goals and outcomes of language education in higher education. Currently, the 5C model (communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, communities), as listed in the *World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages* by the American Council of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), is perhaps the most commonly used set of goals for foreign language curricula across K-16 schools in North America. Senel argues that these widely accepted 5C's are inadequate to prepare our students for engaging in the work of equity and justice through language learning. Instead, she proposes another set of Cs – Criticality, that is, to incorporate materials and activities for students to reflect on their identity and position while learning to express themselves in a different

language; Complexity, which focuses on teaching cultures as heterogeneous, evolving, and multidimensional; Contexts, which is to link local issues in the language classroom to regional, national and global struggles for equity and justice; Connectedness, which highlights the need to build solidarity and empathy across groups; and finally, Civic engagement, which includes "action" as "an integral component of education" to help address problems and conflicts of our time (Criser & Malakaj, 2020, p.77).

Janice McGregor's chapter draws from her research with minoritised American students studying abroad in Germany to argue for the need to critically examine ideological structures that are imbued in language education. For example, language teachers often promote students' interactions with "native speakers" in the target language exclusively as the ideal situation for studying abroad. Yet the student "Mayden," a queer and Black German language learner who preferred "they" as their pronoun, experienced discriminatory insults and yet did not have the language to defend themselves. Their highest concern was not living up to the ideals of language learning in the study abroad setting, but rather wellness and safety.

Byrd's chapter provides strategies for faculty mentors to incorporate IDEA in the work of mentoring and training graduate students as future German scholars and teachers. By focusing on what faculty members can do to support students of colour to succeed in graduate programs – rather than simply being present as token minority students – Byrd moves our attention from "inclusion" as a measurement of ethno-racial differences to "diversification" as active and ongoing work that builds solidarity and alliances with graduate students from minoritised backgrounds. Byrd cautions us that students of colour may simultaneously feel *invisible* and *hypervisible* because of their racialised identity, as their voice is often not heard and yet they are expected to "represent" their cultures and communities at the same time. Therefore, the suggestions offered in the chapter highlight the need for faculty mentors to actively listen, reach out, share the responsibility of

learning and activism, and help students cope with emotional trauma that racism can cause.

Watzke guides us in his chapter to attend to another important ideological structure commonly found in language education – ableism. A wheelchair user himself, Watzke exposes how the ideology in the academy assumes our students are of the same physical abilities, and why it is overdue for us to dispute this prevalent assumption. He rightfully points out that many of our students do not conform to this ideal, and structural exclusion of people of different abilities can convincingly present language learning as irrelevant to them. Popular language teaching methods, such as communicative language teaching or task-based approaches, often ask students to navigate real-life situations in their target language, and as such they have also failed to recognise differences in mental and physical abilities to interact with the world outside the language classroom. Indeed, even though many of us have met students and colleagues of varying abilities, disabled students tend to be viewed as individuals with medical needs who should prioritise other aspects of life instead of language learning. Watzke's chapter is a powerful reminder that the problem in fact lies in our social structures that are perpetuated by ableism.

Finally, Gramling's chapter is written as a letter to graduate students as our future colleagues. His chapter asks graduate students to not simply focus on making themselves more competitive in the increasingly neoliberal academic job market or limit their academic pursuit in the framework of passion or interest in the one language or culture, such as German. A more important and meaningful goal should be to cultivate a sensibility about the multilingual world and a humility in the limitations in our own knowledge and teaching. As the closing chapter of the entire book, Gramling's advice is not only of significance to graduate students in German studies. It is also meaningful to colleagues in the field of language education in general.

This book has immediate relevance to Hong Kong. Decolonisation may appear to be a new concept for many Chinese scholars and teaching professionals,

but not so new to those in Hong Kong, especially for researchers and teachers of Chinese working with ethnic minority students. Ethnic minority students' academic failures tend to be associated with a perceived lack of proficiency in Chinese as individuals, rather than structural issues that inhibit change in the Hong Kong society (Bhowmik & Kenny, 2017). Based on a systematic review, Wang and Tsung (in press) pointed out that the majority of research on Chinese language teaching and learning in Hong Kong over the past ten years has been predominantly focusing on social justice for South Asian students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. They argue that it is impossible for South Asian students to become a legitimate user of Chinese while discrimination against them remains rampant. Researchers have been aware of the IDEA issues as the root problems to ethnic minorities in Hong Kong. Unless Hong Kong takes actions to thoroughly decolonise its education system, it is not likely to see the underrepresented minority youth being truly recognised as legitimate Hong Kongers.

As a post-colonial territory, the legacy of colonialism is still evident in the Hong Kong's education system. Being a monolingual English speaker remains strongly associated with high social status and power, while multilinguals who are proficient in South Asian languages but are not white English speakers continue to juggle multiple language skills to survive in low-end service businesses (Wang, forthcoming). Learning Cantonese to integrate into mainstream society seems only to be directed towards ethnic groups, which serves the purpose of maintaining a stratified social structure. The exclusive emphasis on ethnic minorities to learn Chinese glosses over the fact that Caucasians and affluent Chinese children in Hong Kong do not need any Chinese skills to gain access to the most privileged education resources. This inequality is exactly what IDEA initiatives intend to address.

Finally, with this review, we urge teaching and research professionals in Chinese language education to respond to the IDEA initiatives in both local and global contexts. We hope to foster criticality towards the linguistic inequities and

exclusion in Hong Kong and elsewhere where Chinese is being taught as a second, foreign, additional, or heritage language. Our prototype students still seem to be cis heterosexual, male, young, white, and physically able. In fact, they could be students of colour who are searching for racial solidarity through learning Chinese (e.g., Diao, 2020), LGBTQUIA students, and/or of varying abilities. We urgently need an updated knowledge repertoire for addressing IDEA topics in our professional work. While we see ourselves as vanguards in bringing the most impactful initiatives in the third decades of the 21st century, we look forward to establishing a Chinese version of the DDGS – "Diversity, Decolonisation in Chinese Studies", and working collectively against discrimination and toward the goal of dismantling racism, sexism, and ableism in education and society.

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