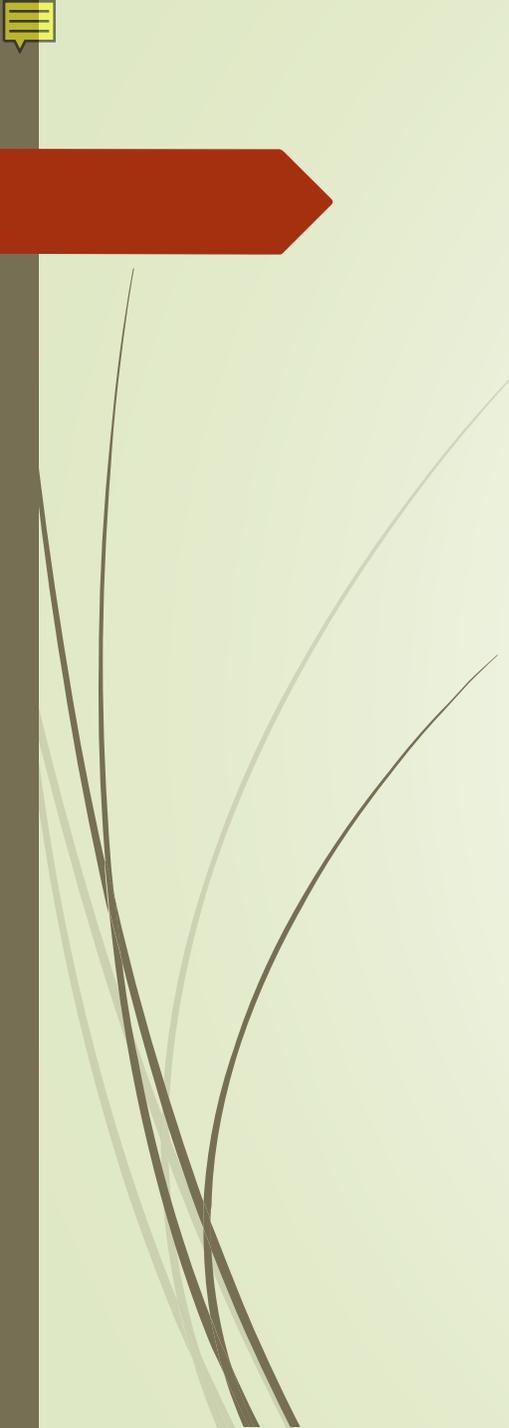# Translanguaging in Action as an Anti-Racist Practice

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The Learning Centres, KPU

Territorial Acknowledgement

➡ KPU campuses are located in the region south of Stó:lō (Fraser) River, which overlaps with the unceded traditional and ancestral lands of the **Kwantlen, Musqueam, Katzie, Semiahmoo, Tsawwassen, Qayqayt, and Kwikwetlem First Nations.** We would like to acknowledge our appreciation of being able to work, study, and live on these lands.

Presentation Agenda

- Background of Linguistic Diversity
- Multilingual Canada and Higher Education
- Translanguaging as a Decolonial Theory of Language
- The Learning Centre's approach to translanguaging
- Discussion by peer tutors
- Our Learning Aid on Translanguaging good practices

Background

Canada is known for its linguistic diversity.

"Multiculturalism within a Bilingual Framework"

Policy honours diversity but it is hard to see this in some parts of higher education.

LANGUAGE DIVERSITY IN CANADA

In 2021, **10.7 million** people in Canada, or 30% of the population, could speak a non-official language. Of these, **10 million** (94%) also knew **English** or **French**.
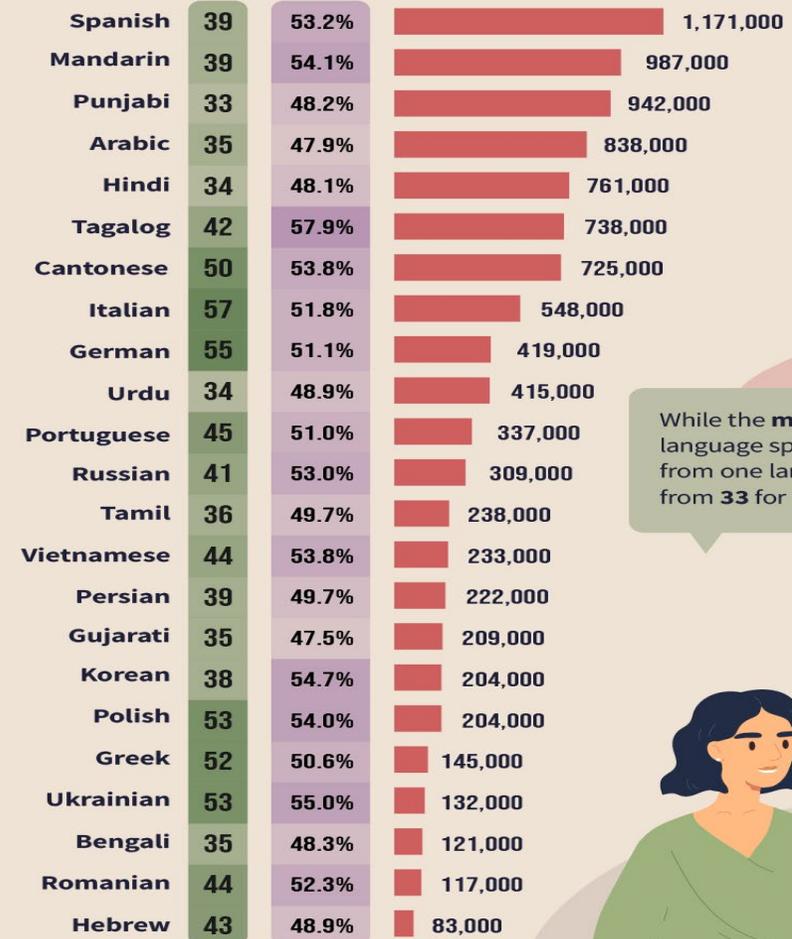
	Median age	Proportion of women+[1] speakers	Number of speakers
Spanish	39	53.2%	1,171,000
Mandarin	39	54.1%	987,000
Punjabi	33	48.2%	942,000
Arabic	35	47.9%	838,000
Hindi	34	48.1%	761,000
Tagalog	42	57.9%	738,000
Cantonese	50	53.8%	725,000
Italian	57	51.8%	548,000
German	55	51.1%	419,000
Urdu	34	48.9%	415,000
Portuguese	45	51.0%	337,000
Russian	41	53.0%	309,000
Tamil	36	49.7%	238,000
Vietnamese	44	53.8%	233,000
Persian	39	49.7%	222,000
Gujarati	35	47.5%	209,000
Korean	38	54.7%	204,000
Polish	53	54.0%	204,000
Greek	52	50.6%	145,000
Ukrainian	53	55.0%	132,000
Bengali	35	48.3%	121,000
Romanian	44	52.3%	117,000
Hebrew	43	48.9%	83,000

Spanish was the non-official language **spoken by the most people**, followed by **Mandarin** and **Punjabi**.

While the **median age** of **all** non-official language speakers was **39**, it varied from one language to another, ranging from **33** for **Punjabi** to **57** for **Italian**.

Tagalog had the highest proportion of **women+** speakers (57.9%).

1. The category "women+" includes women as well as some non-binary persons.
Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

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Statistics Canada / Statistique Canada

www.statcan.gc.ca

Canada

Higher Education and English Language

- English remains the primary medium of instruction in post secondary education in most of Canada.

- English is a dominant language in higher education globally.

- Higher education sector is responsible for producing colonial ideology of 'standard' and 'native' English (Maringe, 2023).

- The dominance of English and the disregard to the other languages translate to epistemic racism (Maringe, 2023).

- Standard language ideology and monolingual view produce linguistic racism (Dovchin, 2020; Dryden & Dovchin, 2024) and exclusion of English as an additional language (EAL) speakers.
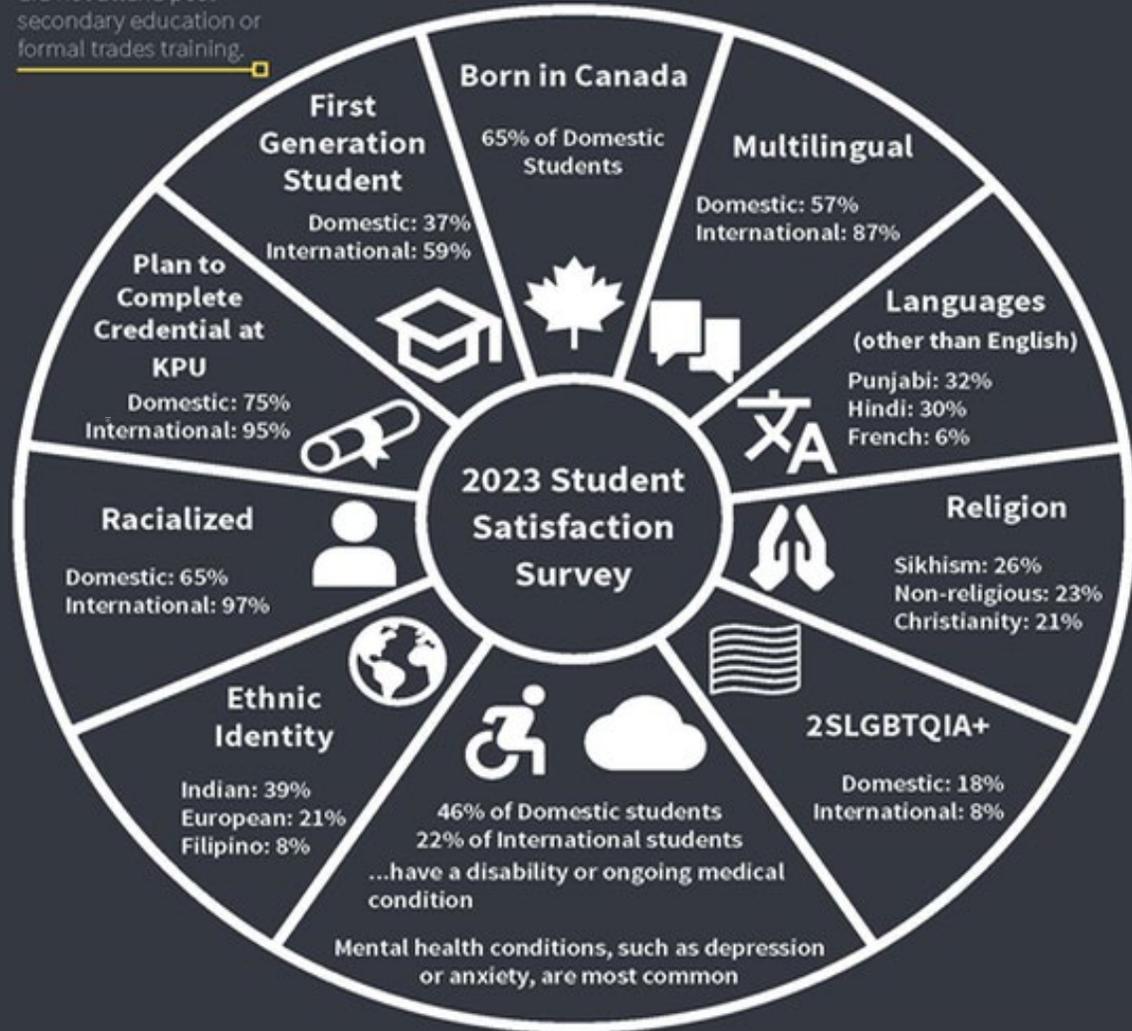
Multilingual KPU -

Our students are!

What is happening in our Classrooms?

What KPU Students Tell Us

Over 5,000 KPU students participated in the annual Student Satisfaction Survey in fall 2023.

First generation students are those whose parents did not attend post-secondary education or formal trades training.

2023 Student Satisfaction Survey

First Generation Student
Domestic: 37%
International: 59%

Born in Canada
65% of Domestic Students

Multilingual
Domestic: 57%
International: 87%

Languages (other than English)
Punjabi: 32%
Hindi: 30%
French: 6%

Religion
Sikhism: 26%
Non-religious: 23%
Christianity: 21%

2SLGBTQIA+
Domestic: 18%
International: 8%

46% of Domestic students
22% of International students
...have a disability or ongoing medical condition

Mental health conditions, such as depression or anxiety, are most common

Ethnic Identity
Indian: 39%
European: 21%
Filipino: 8%

Racialized
Domestic: 65%
International: 97%

Plan to Complete Credential at KPU
Domestic: 75%
International: 95%

Office of Planning & Accountability | August 8, 2025

Translanguaging: A Theory of Language

"Translanguaging is a theoretical lens that offers a different view of bilingualism and multilingualism. The theory posits that rather than possessing two or more autonomous language systems, as has been traditionally thought, bilinguals, multilinguals, and indeed, all users of language, select and deploy particular features from a unitary linguistic repertoire to make meaning and to negotiate particular communicative contexts."

"Translanguaging also represents an approach to language pedagogy that affirms and leverages students' diverse and dynamic language practices in teaching and learning."

(Vogel & Garcia, 2017, p.1)

What does it Mean for Education?

- Language is not neutral and its entangled with our identity, for example, race, gender, class, etc.

- Racialized students/EAL speakers are often seen from the 'deficit' perspective due to the perceived 'lack' in their English language (Rosa & Flores, 2017)

- Applying translanguaging in pedagogy acknowledges languages as a unitary system and disrupts the hierarchy of 'standard' English

- It also disrupts the ideology of assessing students' intelligence by their fluency in a particular language, namely English in Canadian education system

"Translanguaging should not become another way to erase the history and current practices of hə́n̓q̓əmin̓əm̓ oral tradition but rather to support its revitalization."

(Yoshimizu, 2023)

Decolonization

Translanguaging

Standard English Ideology   **Epistemic Racism, Linguistic Racism**
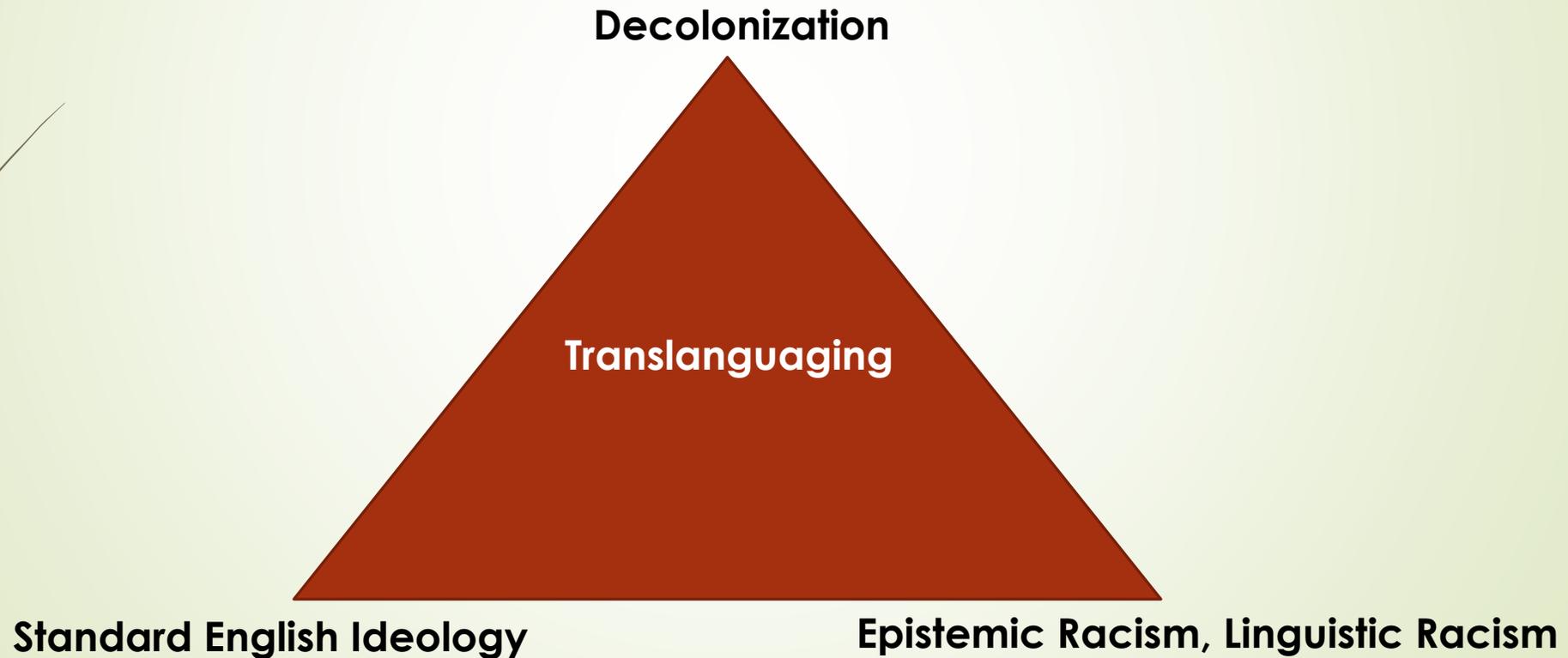
Why Translanguaging at KPU?

- Using students' whole linguistic and semiotic repertoire help with increased cognition, problem solving, and understanding (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2020)

- It helps teachers create more meaningful and relational connection with students (Mashala & Sanders, 2025)

- Translanguaging facilitates and embraces the hybridization, diversification, and transformation of language—it is a very creative and beautiful practice (Yoshimizu, 2023)

TLC Peer Tutors in Action

Muskandeep Kaur

- Science and Mathematics Peer Tutor at The Learning Centres.

- Studying for a Bachelors in Health Sciences with a minor in Biology and Counselling at KPU.

- Spends time as a volunteer research assistant at the molecular and cell biology lab at KPU.

Manvinder Rayat

- Information Technology Peer Tutor at the Learning Centres.

- Studying for a Bachelors in Technology with a minor in Cooperative Education.

- Leads the Kwantlen I.T. Club, represents students at the Melville Standing Committee for Education Quality & Chairs the IEEE KPU Student Branch.

Discussion by KPU TLC Peer Tutors

- When do you use a language other than English during your tutoring sessions?

- How does it help students?

- How does it support your tutoring practices?

Learning Aid from The Learning Centre

- Understanding learning as a relational practice and viewing learners as 'whole persons' from a holistic perspective, we use Translanguaging to Support Student Learning

- Learners can more easily express themselves and be acknowledged for their primary language(s).

- This makes it easier to participate in peer, group, and class oral discussions.

- Learners are more likely to comprehend, analyze, and interpret content area texts and materials more fully (rather than skimming over unfamiliar terms.

- This process encourages critical thinking and meaning making, using all of our linguistic resources.

- This process facilitates both cognitive and affective aspects of learning

https://www.kpu.ca/sites/default/files/Learning%20Centres/Comm_Translanguaging_PA.pdf

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Thank You!

From The Learning Centre Team

Questions and Comments Welcome