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On Foreign Western Languages and the Cosmopolitan Worldview in Oceania

As an intercultural & literary scholar I am exercising my skill sets to deconstruct the discourse of so-called ‘foreign western languages’.

It is difficult to speak on behalf of such a linguistically, culturally, ethnically diverse group as the Oceania. More so today when our youths are attached to not just one ethno-cultural identity. For example, the generation of university students in my extended family are all bicultural and I would hate to dictate to them binary opposites of west-east, foreign-native, English-Malay/Tamil/Hindi/Bajau/Mandarin/Cantonese. I use them as my point of reference when I make these suggestions.

Phrases like “Foreign curriculum”, “western sources” and “foreign western languages such as English”, in my opinion, need to also address the global/cosmopolitan worldview that our youth living within the Oceanic ecosystem bring into the classroom through their engagement on the social media and their rich bicultural heritage. Failing which, we perpetuate the monocultural, binary mindset that for example my grandparents’ generation had to develop as Indian Muslim migrants in colonial “plural” (See JS Furnivall’s operationalizing of the term) Malaya.

So, I personally take ownership of the English language as one of my languages and my most preferred medium of communication and self-expression, and do not consider it a ‘foreign western language’. Even if I am a minority in this case, should we not also take the perspectives of the (cosmopolitan) minority who make up the Oceania population?