

## DISCUSSION

# Decoloniality and healthcare higher education: Critical conversations

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## Abstract

**Background:** We explore the theoretical and methodological aspects of decolonising speech and language therapy (SLT) higher education in the United Kingdom. We begin by providing the background of the Rhodes Must Fall decolonisation movement and the engagement of South African SLTs in the decoloniality agenda. We then discuss the evolution of decoloniality in SLT, highlighting its focus on reimagining the relationships between participants, students, patients and the broader world.

**Objective:** The primary objective of this discussion is to fill a gap in professional literature regarding decoloniality in SLT education. While there is limited research in professional journals, social media platforms have witnessed discussions on decolonisation in SLT. This discussion aims to critically examine issues such as institutional racism, lack of belonging, inequitable services and limited diversity that currently affect the SLT profession, not just in the United Kingdom but globally.

**Methods:** The methods employed in this research involve the engagement of SLT academics in Critical conversations on decolonisation. These conversations draw on reflexivity and reflexive interpretation, allowing for a deeper understanding of the relationship between truth, reality, and the participants in SLT practice and education. The nature of these critical conversations is characterised by their chaotic, unscripted and fluid nature, which encourages the open discussion of sensitive topics related to race, gender, class and sexuality.

**Discussion points:** We present our reflections as academics who participated in the critical conversations. We explore the discomfort experienced by an academic when engaging with decolonisation, acknowledging white privilege, and the need to address fear and an imposter syndrome. The second reflection focuses on the experiences of white academics in grappling with their complicity in a system that perpetuates racism and inequality. It highlights the need for self-reflection,

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acknowledging white privilege and working collaboratively with colleagues and students toward constructing a decolonised curriculum.

Finally, we emphasise that while action is crucial, this should not undermine the potential of dialogue to change attitudes and pave the way for practical implementation. The paper concludes by emphasising the importance of combining dialogue with action and the need for a nuanced understanding of the complexities involved in decolonising SLT education.

**Conclusion:** Overall, this paper provides a comprehensive overview of the background, objectives, methods and key reflections related to the decolonisation of SLT higher education in the United Kingdom. It highlights the challenges, discomfort and responsibilities faced by academics in addressing decoloniality and emphasizes the importance of ongoing critical conversations and collective action in effecting meaningful change.

#### KEYWORDS

colonisation, critical conversations, decoloniality, speech and language therapy

#### WHAT THIS PAPER ADDS

*What is already known on this subject*

- Prior to this paper, it was known that the decolonial turn in speech and language therapy (SLT) was a recent focus, building on a history of professional transformation in South Africa. However, there was limited literature on decoloniality in professional journals, with most discussions happening on social media platforms. This paper aims to contribute to the literature and provide a critical conversation on decolonising SLT education, via the United Kingdom.

*What this paper adds to existing knowledge*

- This paper adds a critical conversation on decolonising SLT higher education. It explores theoretical and methodological aspects of decoloniality in the profession, addressing issues such as institutional racism, lack of sense of belonging, inequitable services and limited diversity. The paper highlights the discomfort experienced by academics in engaging with decolonisation and emphasizes the importance of reflection, collaboration and open dialogue for meaningful change. Notably we foreground deimperialisation (vs. decolonisation) as necessary for academics oriented in/with the Global North so that both processes enable each other. Deimperialisation is work that focuses the undoing of privilege exercised by academics in/with the Global North not only for localising their research and education agenda but checking their rite of passage into the lives of those in the Majority World.

*What are the potential or actual clinical implications of this work?*

- The paper highlights the need for SLT practitioners and educators to critically examine their practices and curricula to ensure they are inclusive, decolonised and responsive to the diverse needs of communities. The discussions

emphasise the importance of addressing institutional racism and promoting a sense of belonging for research participants, SLT students and patients. This paper offers insights and recommendations that can inform the development of more equitable and culturally responsive SLT services and education programmes.

## BACKGROUND

In 2014, the Rhodes Must Fall (#RMF) decolonisation movement broke out in full force across the South African higher education sector spreading to other parts of the world. South Africans, Mershen Pillay and Harsha Kathard were actively engaged in the decoloniality agenda (Pillay & Kathard, 2015) building on their 30-year history of professional transformation away from colonially saturated audiology/speech and language therapy (SLT) education and research, and disability, rehabilitation, and professions at large.

The decolonial evolution—or ‘turn’ (Grosfoguel, 2007) in SLT is the latest focus in a long line of efforts by the profession to address how practitioners, researchers and higher educators convey the story of their relationship between themselves and their participants, students or patients—all identities used with intent. Since the 1960s, these identities have been connected to culture and language, gender, class, sexuality, disability and human rights (Ferguson, 2009; Kathard & Pillay, 1993; Litoseliti & Leadbeater, 2013; Pillay, 2003). This disruption of the profession’s business-as-usual has been integrated with professional clinical, policy or research issues, for example, when focusing on communication and cultural diversity. These contemporary efforts are intended to challenge established professional norms through a decolonial lens. Proponents of decoloniality propose novel perspectives, framing participants, students and people served by SLT professionals not only as ‘human’ but even as ‘post-human’. This paradigm shift encourages a reimagining of humanity, exploring the intricate dynamics between individuals, animals, technology and more, thereby expanding the traditional understanding of human relationships and identity within professional contexts.

The primary objective of this discussion is to explore theoretical and methodological aspects of decolonising SLT higher education in the United Kingdom. Given the newness of decoloniality, not much has been written about it in professional journals (see e.g., Pillay & Kathard, 2015, Penn et al., 2017). Conversely, the various social media platforms have cross-referenced speech and language therapy and decolonisation across Facebook, Twitter, Instagram

and the like. To complement the production of ideas and debates regarding decolonisation, this discussion may be considered as a critical conversation for speech and language therapy not just in the United Kingdom, but globally, to consider some of the more overt issues, like institutional racism, lack of sense of belonging, inequitable services and limited diversity that affect the profession in the present time.

## METHODS

In November 2020, Mershen Pillay met with the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists to address their anti-racism work with clinical excellence networks and leads from higher education institutions (HEI) specifically about meeting the needs of diverse communities in their pre-registration education programmes. Later, and joined by Harsha Kathard, we met as an informal group of SLT HEI educators from 2021 to the current time (March 2023). These meetings were focused on decolonising SLT higher education programmes in the United Kingdom. Mershen and Harsha contributed to the group’s cogitations, with thoughts and experiences mainly from South Africa, but also from their work with other African/Asian countries, and recent experiences in New Zealand. Essentially, this group’s meetings may be understood as a series of reflective, critical conversations on topics related to decolonisation which were not exclusive of diversity, equity and inclusion.

The natural history of this knowledge production encounter is worth noting. At best, Pillay’s (2003) methodology—Critical Conversations—was applied to this discussion, but not in a preformatted, formal research-like approach. Instead, it developed naturally over time. A critical conversation relies on the use of reflexivity, specifically when meta-theoretical fields are considered such as social, cultural, political and related economic fields and issues including race, gender, class and heteronormativity are discussed. Significantly, our Critical Conversations represent ongoing conversation of people who came together with a common interest in decoloniality, the first of its kind in the profession with a

North-South positioning of conversational partners. While this article does focus on issues of race and culture—we do acknowledge we, the authors, come from a variety of social-class histories, and are diverse in terms of our, racial, gender and sexual identities. Via typically positivist lenses, we may be cast as having limitations by group selection of ourselves as contributors/authors to this paper. Our focus on race, and culture, not only fills a pertinent gap in the way SLT engages race/racism and cultural biases but also fulfils our goal of opening this space, of starting a Critical Conversation toward addressing intersectional identities.

Intimately connected to this version of reflexivity is what Pillay (2003) called reflexive interpretation, which is the shifting of thought processes across empirical to self-critical levels of interpretation, something that can occur in both directions. What this means is that the concept of ‘data’ is not limited to just empirical or experiential information but also encompasses self-critical and abstract thoughts. In other words, it suggests that any information or insights gained from both direct experiences and deep, introspective thinking can be regarded as data. This broader definition of data recognizes the value of not only observable and measurable facts but also the intellectual and reflective processes that contribute to our understanding of various phenomena. This links to specific lived experiences, in this case of higher education, being regarded as constituting credible data. At the micro level these critical conversations reflect the honest nature of innovative, creative topics of discussion—like decoloniality—which are unashamedly and necessarily chaotic in nature, often unscripted, fluid and without classic logic. Furthermore, these conversations cannot be construed as classic discussions or perhaps even interview-style interactions. One of the stock differences between a critical conversation and something like a research interview is that issues like race, gender, class, sexuality and so forth may be overtly raised into the discussion, challenging thinking and practice and contributing toward a grander thought revolution. The use of critical conversations, as per Pillay’s (2003) original methodology, is to (re)position what truth and/or reality (onto-epistemology) means to SLT practitioners and their Others, the latter referring to the creation of SLT practitioners’ clients/patients, research subjects/patients or learners/students. Finally, an underlying key feature of critical conversations is the nature of the relationship built, over time, toward one that facilitates collegial honesty, where there is no place for shame but a space for uncertainty and the utility of conflict. The following are reflections written by the academics who took part in the critical conversations, as an attempt to share our thoughts and learning so far.

## ‘It’s uncomfortable’: Can decolonisation be comfortably negotiated?

Discomfort has been an overwhelming feeling for me while engaging in discussions regarding anti-racism and decolonisation over the past 2 years. I (Lindsey Thiel) knew that change was, and still is, urgently needed and that as an academic I have the power to contribute to that (Arday et al., 2021). So, I started to join meetings with students, speech and language therapists and academics, but my fear and imposter syndrome were preventing me from actively listening and engaging in discussions.

Part of my discomfort, which is commonly felt by academics when engaging with decolonisation (Arday et al., 2021), comes from acknowledging that white privilege exists and that I am privileged as a white woman. I am also being introduced to new perspectives and realise that I have much to learn, which can feel challenging and scary. As Liebert (2021, p.107) states, ‘forced to see things that we do not usually see, we become extremely uncomfortable’. Moving from a state of ignorance and innocence to one of responsibility and humility can lead to a desire to move back into a position of comfort (Liebert, 2021). There is a real danger that I become disengaged from this essential work to avoid the discomfort, which I have frequently come close to. According to Leonardo and Porter (2010, p.151), ‘Disengagement is one of the symptoms of structural racism, which succeeds at isolating us from one another’.

So, is there a way of comfortably negotiating decolonisation? Fanon (1961, p. 27) argues that ‘decolonisation is always a violent phenomenon’ (1961, p. 27), meaning that there will necessarily be some disruption and discomfort and that discussions will lead to change within ourselves (Leonardo & Porter, 2010). If discussions are amicable and comfortable then there is a risk that people of colour have attempted to ease the discomfort of white colleagues; for this reason, dialogues about race, therefore, end up being about white discomfort, rather than undoing racism (Leonardo & Porter, 2010). What results, according to Leonardo and Porter (2010, p.147) is ‘a managed healthcare version of anti-racism, an insurance against “looking racist”’, in which rather than combatting racism the aim ends up being to find a safe space for white people to avoid looking racist in public. White discomfort and fragility can, therefore, prevent learning and help to preserve white privilege (Liebert, 2021; Matias, 2014).

How do I then respond to the discomfort? Through continuing to attend meetings with SLT academics and students, I have learnt the importance of listening to and acknowledging the experiences of others, learning from them, being open to change and being ready to lead this change. Collaboration with my students has been

essential to my learning. I have learnt that it is important to talk about racism, power and privilege (Arday et al., 2021; Millner, 2021), so I have started to talk openly about my discomfort and privilege and to sit with it. I have realised that feelings such as fear, anger and frustration cannot be avoided and, in fact, feeling is an important part of the reflective process (Millner, 2021). We, as academics, should not be paralysed by these emotions but should take ownership of them (Leonardo & Porter, 2010), have self-awareness, and overcome these fears through *doing* (Pillay & Kathard, 2015). It is important to pause and reflect when there is an emotional response, so that we can learn about alternative ways of thinking and feeling (Millner, 2021). We should allow discussion forums and classrooms to be a place of risk which creates necessary discomfort that leads to growth (Leonardo & Porter, 2010; Millner, 2021). As Leonardo and Porter (2010, p.153) state, 'discomfort can be liberating' because it allows us to remove our masks and to have more open, deeper conversations on race.

## White academics and decolonisation

Some of us are white, and as white academics we are aware of the need to examine our thoughts, feelings, and responses to the call for decolonisation of SLT. Our whiteness and the privileges associated with it have inevitably shaped our approach towards decolonisation. Through reflection and discussion, we identified key aspects of our experiences in engaging with this endeavour. To understand the impact of our white identities on our thinking and being, we have turned to the literature, particularly the writing of those who have been marginalised by racism, as well as those who have reflected extensively on their white identities in relation to this work.

Following the killing of George Floyd by police in Minneapolis in 2020, the Black Lives Matter movement generated a call for action across institutions, including SLT professional bodies and universities. For perhaps the first time, institutions that are historically white and shaped by colonialism were required to engage members in discussions about racism. Some of us heard and saw for the first time the daily and historical experiences of colleagues and students who are Black or Brown. Our delayed awakening to this reality can be explained through the concept of white ignorance:

'... a systemically supported, socially induced pattern of (mis)understanding of the world that is connected to and works to sustain systemic oppression and privilege'. (Applebaum, 2013 p. 22).

Ignorance of racism is part of white privilege (Glazer & Liebow, 2021; Mills, 2007). Because the structural systems promote and protect white people, we (as white people) have the privilege of averting our eyes to racism. Not knowing is convenient because it gives us an excuse for inaction which maintains the status quo and protects our privilege (DiAngelo, 2011; Glazer & Liebow, 2021; Mills, 2007)

Coming to realise our complicity in a system that perpetuates racism and inequality has led us to feeling guilt and shame. Coleman et al. (2021) suggest that white guilt can manifest either as empathy towards people who have been harmed by racism, or as fear which leads to avoidance of people who we see as different to ourselves. What we do with these emotions can make the difference between positive action and maintaining the status quo. By acknowledging our white privilege and the accompanying guilt and shame, we can use them as a starting point for disrupting unjust systems (Moore, 2019).

In our reflections, we identified a dilemma in how and whether we should be involved in decolonising the curriculum. On one hand we felt driven (by our guilt and awareness of injustice) to do something. On the other hand, we were aware of the inadequacy of our understanding and feared 'getting it wrong'. We have come to realise that our compulsion to rush to action may itself be a manifestation of white privilege. *Doing* would serve to distract us from the discomfort of *reflecting* on the harm caused by our current structures and practices (Opara, 2021). Moreover, it would perhaps assuage our guilt and allow us to regain our view of ourselves as morally 'good' (Kwon, 2020; Yancy, 2015)

As academics we have a responsibility to deliver an inclusive and decolonised curriculum, but decolonisation needs to be seen as a process of unlearning and relearning rather than a target to be achieved (Sayed et al., 2017). To truly disrupt the colonial ways of generating knowledge, we need to listen with humility to our colleagues and students of colour and work collaboratively with them to create a new pedagogy.

## On the (f)utility of dialogue

*'We are talking about anti-racism all the time in the profession now, but talk is not enough—nothing has actually changed.'*

I (Sarah Spencer) have heard this comment, or a version of it, often since summer 2020, as the repercussions of the Black Lives Matter movement were felt at an institutional level following George Floyd's murder. This sentiment pits action against thinking, as if thought was always an act of deferral, an excuse for not acting.

It is of course not enough for speech and language therapists to merely talk about decolonising both clinical practice and clinical education. But this use of the phrase ‘not enough’ is itself problematic. It downplays the potential of thought and dialogue in changing attitudes. As bell hooks once argued:

...even their use of ‘enough’ tells us something about the attitude that they bring to this question. It has a patronising sound, one that does not convey any heartfelt understanding of how a change in attitude (though not a completion of any transformative process) can be significant for colonised/oppressed people. (Hooks, 1993: 147)

Dialogue certainly must be joined by a form of action which embodies and enacts theories and qualities. However, those who frame the problem as a need to move from talking to acting as soon as possible express their impatience by demanding that something must be done, as if impatience itself could be an act of solidarity. This impatience is, of course, understandable (and potentially frustrating for scholar-activists who have been working on these issues for decades (Beliso-De Jesús, 2018)). And yet, the demand that something needs to be done, right now, risks trivialising the severity, the extent, of institutional imperialism. It also overlooks the way that ‘-isms’ (racism, classism, ableism, sexism etc) never break, they bend—they morph, they adapt, they mutate, they get stronger, more immune to us, they become less easy to perceive’ (Farah, 2022: slide 19). Changing reading lists, introducing mentoring schemes, increasing diversity on programmes and all other possible, but nonetheless discrete actions, are important. But these problems need to be approached as symptoms—surface characteristics—of a far more extensive set of underlying structural problems, given the impact of racism (and intersections with classism, sexism, ableism, heterosexism and other forms of oppression) within and upon our profession.

Urgency itself can become a reason for not thinking, not problematising any further, not committing to ongoing self-reflection, if it is driven by the desire to ‘solve’ and ‘remedy’. Urgency risks ‘widespread calls to decolonise our universities further embed[ing] rather than dismantle[ing] whiteness’ (Doharty et al., 2021: 233). This is why such anti-racist institutional work, laudable as it may be, should be accompanied by dialogue and not set against it.

This would be a form of dialogue, following Freire, that is at the same time an investigation *and an intervention* in the mechanics of power at play in both SLT services and in academic departments (Freire, 1970). In other words, this

dialogue would not operate as a means of deferral, just as action should not be allowed the satisfaction of closure, of believing a ‘solution’ has been arrived at.

Rather than reach a state of satisfaction, in conversation, thought or action, each might be pursued as a driver of further and unmitigated dissatisfaction, where that dissatisfaction then functions to propel further and continuing action *and* dialogue. This is why dialogue is necessary, and intervention is necessary; each has utility, but each needs to be shadowed at the same time by suspicion of its respective futility.

Our unresolvable project is to dismantle the professions’ cultural capital its white, Western and middle-class biases (Pillay & Kathard, 2015)—just to name a few of them—and the normative frames that inform its professional identities (Abrahams et al., 2019). The concept of ‘normal’ is determined in relation to others being rendered as lesser or invisible, creating hierarchies of worthiness. The professional’s work is currently to impose a definition of normality onto the lives of ‘Others’ (Pillay, 2001). To decolonise SLT we can build on what Freire emphasises as an important initial stage of transformation, described by hooks (1047) as occurring when one begins to think critically about oneself and identity in relation to one’s political circumstances. Without ongoing and sustained critical dialogue as a means of reflection on Western models of health and care, and schooling and education, we are unable to understand the damage our clinical practices have on ‘marginalised’ communities (Gibson, 2020). These clinical practices can be seen as ‘familiar words, experiences, situations, and relationships’ (Shor, 1993: 31)—by problematising these all-too-familiar ideas through dialogue and praxis, we can reimagine clinical practice, education and research (Abrahams et al., 2019). Continued and committed ‘positioning of the profession of SLT as entangled with coloniality allows for ingrained knowledges and practices to be questioned, critiqued and reimaged in a context of prevailing inequality’ (Abrahams et al., 2019: 8). This is a dynamic process of self-propelling dissatisfaction.

## How else can speech and language therapists do decolonisation in higher education

Now that decolonisation, albeit late and in varying intensities, has arrived at the door of SLT higher education. Now that at its tables sit some Black, Brown, queer, and Other academics. Now that conversations are peppered with ‘co-designing,’ ‘collaboration’ or ‘humanising;’ that reading lists are armed with diversity-equity-inclusion texts, email signatures declare gender makers and research

reports contain statements about authors' racial-ethnic-class-gender-Other positionalities. Now, what?

Empowered speech and language therapists say sorry for being white, that they cannot—authentically—do decolonisation but will be allies. For some Global North SLT academics, this truth telling minimizes/bypasses their liability in reproducing heteronormative whiteness. Occupying a safe neoliberal space, they imagine Others' liberties in SLT education, research and clinical practice.

Critically, any decolonisation of the SLT curriculum should reference the Global South, Indigenous authors, researchers, practitioners and Others' worldviews. Thinkers like Ibn Khaldoun, Claude Ake, Frantz Fanon, José Rizal, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Kwame Nkrumah, Steve Bantu Biko, Chandra Mohanty, Gayatri Spivak, Ranajit Guha, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Syed Hussain, Syed Farid Alatas, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Anabal Quijano, Walter Mignolo, Kuan-Hsing Chen and many other may all be resources for SLT higher education. However, when educators include Others to sit at *its* tables then there are two key conditions speech and language therapists need to consider:

Firstly, Others must be taken seriously enough to be fully hired, paid participants; and for their Otherness as black/brown SLTs, as trans\_ and gender diverse/queer people; as people with (communication, swallowing) disabilities, Indigenous people and non-academics like artists, storytellers, novelists and traditional healers. Notably, student stewards/leaders should also be similarly positioned.

Secondly, Others need to be integrally involved in curriculum design, delivering teaching and assessment, doing, and evaluating research, amongst other SLT university programme activities. Indeed, SLT student and staff recruitment, selection and admission criteria and processes need to be evaluated for their use of gatekeeping criteria like knowledge/subject areas, and English language competence alongside ableist orientations to application processes. Using colonial metrics like university rankings and student evaluations, SLT may expand by adding new knowledge units (e.g., 'culture'), allowing more informal assessments and penalising culturally unsafe practices. These actions continue coloniality instead of enabling how the aforementioned other educators should be engaged toward a worldly and wildly novel, even artistic positioning of 'communication' and 'swallowing.'

## What actions may be effective to decolonise SLT in HEI?

Decolonising the curriculum is about being prepared to reconnect, reorder and reclaim knowledges and teaching

methodologies that have been submerged, hidden or marginalised (HEA, 2016). Although decolonising the curriculum can mean different things, it includes a reconsideration of who is teaching, what the subject matter is and how it is being taught (Muldoon, 2019).

Attention to who is being taught is fundamental to understand the importance in driving meaningful curriculum change. Historically, custodians of knowledge within the academy have been predominantly White which has resulted in the shaping of a curriculum that heavily leans towards a Eurocentric paradigm as the dominant knowledge canon (Alexander & Arday, 2015). The UK education system throughout its varying tiers (primary, secondary, further, and higher), in both policy and practice has often been accused of lacking a coherent conceptualization of the dynamics of race with the elimination of the contributions from people of colour (Heleta, 2016). The absence of a curriculum that is reflective of an ever-increasingly diverse and multicultural society remains problematic and continues in some way to be complicit in facilitating racial inequality and disparities regarding academic achievement. Decolonising the curriculum therefore requires disruption, in this context, referring to meaningful, radical change, not only to the content of what we teach, but also a whole systems approach of awareness and actions gravitating towards inclusive pedagogical practices, fostering a sense of engagement and belonging (Pillay & Kathard, 2018). Prescribing specific actions/solutions is not the purpose of this paper given that we suggest that SLT professionals engage in Critical Conversations such as what we have begun around race, accessibility, minoritized populations, indigeneity and so forth.

Decolonisation is not about deleting knowledge or histories that have been developed in the West or colonial nations but rather blending in new constructs. Arguably, completely erasing existing structures and canons of knowledge could distance some academics from engaging with decolonisation whilst actions such as including multicultural names on slides may be described by students as 'cosmetic' change. The development, through co-design, of new units that discuss structural racism discrimination, intersectionality and allyship within programmes may be a balanced start towards embedding diversity within the core philosophy (Arday et al., 2021).

Aiming for a universally inclusive curriculum (Mace, 1997), intended to improve the experience, skills and attainment of all students, might be the gravitas required for unifying accessible learning environments; however, the following paragraphs offer a few suggestions towards sustaining a sufficiently disruptive environment to inform meaningful change.

Lawrence (2022) argued that when we position inclusive academic practices as a core component of paedagogic

competence, it serves several crucial purposes. Firstly, it prompts educators to actively address their unconscious biases. Secondly, it encourages continuous evolution of teaching methods to adapt to changing educational needs. Thirdly, it emphasizes self-awareness regarding one's own cultural and social perspectives. Lastly, it underscores the importance of prioritizing the diverse educational requirements of students. In essence, this approach fosters a more equitable and effective educational environment by promoting awareness, adaptability and a commitment to catering to the needs of a diverse student body. The approach requires commitment and responsibility of the educator in examining the subject discipline and facilitating opportunities for rich discussions on cultural worldviews. Opening these platforms will acknowledge a range of voices and perspectives, reflecting wider global and historical perspectives, benefiting both educator and student. In this way, actively developing learning communities, whilst fostering a sense of engagement and belonging (Shay, 2016).

Perhaps raising consciousness appears to be the first step (as individuals and as a collective), in making these discussions integral to circumnavigate a multicultural society (Arday et al., 2021). Intercultural interactions and relationships among students, staff and clients from diverse backgrounds encourage an understanding of multiple cultural perspectives and how these influence therapeutic relationships ultimately leading to culturally responsive services (Godsey, 2011).

Another step for the educator is to ensure learning content moves beyond Western to more global frameworks (Arshad, 2021) by presenting international reference lists to include evidence that previously sat outside those of the colonisers. According to Mountford-Zimdars et al. (2017), universities could introduce citation policies that recommend a percentage of marginalized scholars are included in reading lists.

In the context of this paradigm shift is learner-centred assessment (Rust, 2002). A consideration of assessment variety and the opportunities for choice towards demonstration of learning, is necessary. To secure the core knowledge, there should be creativity in assessing for understanding (McConlogue, 2020). Inclusion of a practical component via discussion or presentations of case studies might be a fair addition to the assessment process, unequivocally still drawing on reflective, adaptive practice.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we believe that discomfort should not deter individuals from engaging in decolonisation work and participating in discussions. Instead, it is crucial to spend time reflecting on and addressing this discomfort, allowing for

growth and the ability to engage in meaningful conversations. Additionally, we have highlighted the significance of listening to and learning from Others, recognizing the complexity of decolonisation processes beyond a mere checklist of actions. To achieve inclusivity within higher education institutions, suggested approaches include supporting value-based recruitment processes and increasing opportunities for underrepresented groups through degree apprenticeships. Integrating paid employment with practical experience and course theory can pave the way for a diversified workforce. Throughout our conversations, we have recognized the importance, urgency and time required to create space for reflection, dialogue and subsequent steps towards progress. By fostering ongoing and committed dialogue and intervention, we have the potential to establish a new institutional radical praxis within our profession.

## DECLARATION OF INTEREST

We, the authors of this paper, hereby declare our vested interest and commitment to advancing the field of speech and language therapy (SLT) through the lens of decoloniality. Our interest stems from a deep recognition of the existing gaps in the literature concerning decoloniality in professional journals, particularly within the context of SLT education in the United Kingdom. We acknowledge the importance of expanding the discourse on decolonisation in this field, which has historically been shaped by a transformative professional history in South Africa.

Moreover, we recognize that the implications of this study extend beyond academia and have tangible clinical implications. The insights provided in our paper underscore the urgency for SLT practitioners and educators to critically examine their practices and curricula, ensuring inclusivity, decolonisation and responsiveness to the diverse needs of communities. We advocate for addressing institutional racism and promoting a sense of belonging among research participants, SLT students and service users alike. The recommendations stemming from our study can inform the development of more equitable and culturally responsive SLT services and education programmes, ultimately improving the quality of care provided to individuals and communities.

As authors, we disclose our vested interest in promoting decoloniality within the field of SLT, driven by a commitment to social justice, equity and inclusive practices. We acknowledge the potential influence of our perspectives and backgrounds on the study's findings and conclusions. Nevertheless, we have endeavoured to maintain rigour, reflexivity and transparency throughout the production of this discussion paper to ensure the integrity of our work.



In conclusion, we firmly believe that by engaging in critical conversations, reflection, collaboration and open dialogue, we can foster positive change within the field of SLT, leading to more inclusive and culturally responsive services and education programmes.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

None of the authors have any conflicts of interest.

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

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