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ANDREY ROSOWSKY (ed.). *Faith and Language Practices in Digital Spaces.* Bristol. Multilingual Matters. 2018. 264 pp. Hb (9781783099276) $149,95 eBook (9781783099290) $40.

BILL JOHNSTON. *English Teaching and Evangelical Mission. The Case of Lighthouse School.* Bristol. Multilingual Matters. 2017. 192 pp. Hb (9781783097074) $139.95 Pb (9781783097067) $39.95 eBook (9781783097098) $35.

As Hemming (2015) cogently discusses in his book *Religion in the Primary School: Ethos, Diversity and Citizenship*, traditional secularisation theories have posited the decline of religious belief and practices, and their increasing confinement to more private spaces with the concomitant diminishing role of religion in public life (Casanova 1994). Recent iterations have questioned the premise that religion is no longer important in late modernity and advanced the notion that individual religious beliefs, practices and affiliations are instead evolving and changing pointing to increasingly personalised and consumer-oriented expressions (Davie 2007). In addition, the borders between public and private, religious and secular spaces are viewed as more fluid and permeable than previously understood, unsettling long-held binaries and calling for the need to examine their interrelations within a post-secular framework (Knott 2005). In this respect, post-secularism acknowledges the enduring significance of religion as an important driving force in public life and as it is intertwined with the everyday experiences of many individuals and communities,

against the backdrop of increased plurality and diversity of religious and non-religious beliefs, experiences and practices amplified by global migration and settlement (ibid). As acts of religiously-motivated bias and violence have become commonplace and dehumanising representations or misrepresentations of religious communities have proliferated across offline and online spaces, a renewed analytical attention to the role of religion in contemporary societies is called for. This call is amplified by the ways religion intersects with a number of present-day global challenges, ranging from religious persecution and oppression, religious discrimination, prejudice and bias, to the religious dimensions of conflict and peace-building, abortion policies and reproductive health, education and learning.

Language as a primary representational resource has been central to accessing and communicating meaning as well as making sense of ourselves and others. Language in its written and oral forms has also played a key role in the development of religion; as Keane (1997) points out 'the effort to know and interact with an otherworld tends to demand highly marked uses of linguistic resources' (p 47). Thus, language has been fundamental in the maintenance, development and spread of religion and religious practices (e.g. in constructing and clarifying doctrine, representing religious beliefs and experiences and participating in religious rituals). Religion and religious practices have in turn shaped language maintenance and change, religious socialisation and personal and collective identification (Mukherjee 2013, Souza 2016a for further discussion).

The study of religion is an interdisciplinary field that defies subject boundaries, drawing on theology, psychology, anthropology, sociology, aesthetics, philosophy,

and (socio)linguistics. Despite the important socio-economic, political, educational, historical roles religion has played for many individuals and communities worldwide, the topic of language and religion has remained by and large peripheral in sociolinguistic research. It is only in the 21st century with the constitution of the Sociology of Language and Religion that language and religion developed into a distinct field in sociolinguistics (Omoniyi and Fishman 2006, Omoniyi 2010). Nevertheless, in the introduction to the Special Issue on *Language and Religion as a Sociolinguistic Field* published in *Sociolinguistica* in 2011, Darquennes and Vandenbussche trace the antecedents of this emerging field. They remind us that early sociolinguistic studies regarded religion as an important social factor central to the investigation of processes of language variation, maintenance and shift in migration contexts (e.g. Haugen 1953, Fishman et al 1966). Another influential strand of early sociolinguistic research focused on religious languages, particularly the function, form and performance of religious varieties and registers (e.g. Crystal 1966, the exploratory collection of studies in Samarin 1976). Building on this earlier work, a related line of inquiry emerged that sought to examine the religious dimension in language policy and language management (Ferguson 1982, Spolsky 2004, 2009). Religion, in particular Christian missionary activity and its colonial legacy of documentation and standardisation of indigenous languages, were critically investigated in relation to processes of language spread of European languages, especially English, and their impact on language-in-education policies (Kaplan and Baldauf 1997). Since the early years, central to the examination of language and religion was the study of identity formation, principally the salience of language, religion and ethnonational identities (Fishman 1989). Subsequent sociolinguistic studies have confirmed but also

problematised the enduring link between language, ethnicity and religion in many religious settings (see Souza 2016b for an overview).

The sociology of language established and developed by Joshua Fishman introduced the interdisciplinary study of language and social life and provided the springboard for the development of the Sociology of Language and Religion in the early 21th century. In so doing, it sought to mark the systematic investigation of language and religion as a distinct sociolinguistic field of inquiry with the purpose of investigating how large scale socio-cultural, historical, political and economic conditions and changes shape social actors' language use and sociolinguistic repertoires associated with religious belief and practice (Omoniyi and Fishman 2006; Omoniyi 2010). The appearance of the inaugural volume *Explorations in the Sociology of Language and Religion* (Omoniyi and Fishman 2006) marked the emergence of this new field. In the introduction of the volume Tope Omoniyi, Joshua Fishman and Bernard Spolsky framed the edited collection along four dimensions: (1) the effects of religion on language; (2) the mutuality (interplay) of language and religion; (3) the effects of language on religion and (4) the effects of language and religion on literacy mapping out the new field. In the volume, Fishman (2006) outlined a *Decalogue* with the main theoretical perspectives of the new field. Four years later, *The Sociology of Language and Religion. Change, Conflict and Accommodation* (Omoniyi 2010) was published followed by *Faith and Language Practices in Digital Space* (Rosowsky 2018).

The two books discussed in this review build upon and extend previous scholarship on language and religion in sociolinguistics and beyond. Rosowsky's (2018) *Faith and Language Practices in Digital Spaces* broadens the field of the Sociology of

Language and Religion, by bringing together in a single publication language, religion and digital media for the first time. Johnston's (2017) *English Teaching and Evangelical Mission. The Case of Lighthouse School* is situated in the related field of Applied Linguistics and the sub-field of English Language Teaching (ELT). It broadens a robust body of work on the place and purpose of religion in general and evangelical Christianity in particular in English language teaching programmes. As I discuss in Lytra (forthcoming), this body of work has centred on the impact of religion on the goals of ELT, ethical practice in ELT, the moral and political dimensions of teaching and the formation of professional identities among English teachers (e.g. Edge 2003, Pennycook and Coutand-Marin 2003, Baurain 2007, Varghese and Johnston 2007, Wong and Canagarajah 2009, Wong, Kristjánsson and Dörnyei 2013). It also contributes to a substantial body of work devoted to the relationship between religion and language teaching and learning recently reviewed in the 2018 *Perspectives* column of *The Modern Language Journal* (Han 2018). For sociolinguists, Johnston's ethnography echoes earlier work on the effects of religion (mainly Christianity and missionary activity) on indigenous languages. Both books emphasise a social practice approach to language and view religion as a cultural practice that is historically situated and embedded in specific local and global contexts (Street 1984, Heath 1983, also Lytra et al 2016). Through primarily qualitative methodologies, they aim to provide rich, nuanced and context-sensitive accounts of the role of language and religion in everyday life, in institutions, homes and communities, privileging the participants' perspectives, voices and visions. In so doing, they can fruitfully contribute to sociolinguistic research on multilingualism in the context of globalisation (Blommaert 2010).

Rosowsky's book is the first collection of empirical studies at the intersection of language, religion and digital spaces, broadly understood as online communication and interaction through computers, hand held devices and other forms of mobile technology across a wide range of national and transnational contexts (p 2). While anchored on an interdisciplinary perspective drawing on sociolinguistic, religious and media studies approaches, in the introductory chapter (chapter 1) the editor traces the conceptual antecedents of the volume in relation to Joshua Fishman's (2006) aforementioned *Decalogue*. Drawing on a range of qualitative methodologies and approaches, a key theme of the book is the complex and symbiotic relationship between offline and online religious practices, in particular how participation in online religious communities and groups interanimates participation offline and how online religious and linguistic practices are enacted and transformed through digital technologies and the possibilities and constraints they afford for religious membership and belonging. Contributors illustrate that the boundaries between online and offline spaces are flexible and fluid, resulting in connections across time/space scales as well as across communication media and textual resources. Indeed, most of the online religious groups and communities described in the book are connected to physical religious communities and most of the contributors have researched the religious groups and communities both online and offline. The studies contribute to our developing understanding of the relationship between virtual and physical religious spaces as complementing rather than displacing one another, one where the computer or mobile screen does not replace face-to-face interaction but rather creates new possibilities for meaning making and identity construction.

Another key theme constitutes how the movement from offline to online religious experience and expression influences linguistic innovation and change in form and function, as well as the linguistic and cultural authenticity of mediated religious expression and the visibility and access (or lack of) to mediated religious practices. Linked to issues of authenticity and accessibility of adherents and non-adherents is the declining salience and fragmentation of traditional religious authority and the shift to individual choices and personal interpretations of religious traditions, which chimes with a post-secular framework. In this context, contributors productively discuss convergence, divergence and tensions in the transfer of religious belief and practice online, processes that have been explored in previous scholarship in the field of the Sociology of Language and Religion (Omoniyi and Fishman 2006, Omoniyi 2010). The studies in the book invite us to explore complex diversities and mobilities, including the mobility of languages and language varieties, questioning dominant, bounded and frozen representations of religious communities, language use and linguistic repertoires. In addition, the studies highlight the wealth of linguistic, cultural, social, scriptal, and embodied resources and competences situated in specific times and locales adult adherents come into contact and utilise for religious belief and practice online. As the editor asserts concurring with Androutsopoulos (2006), the studies move away from a focus on the medium to a focus on language users, the heterogeneity of their sociolinguistic repertoires and trajectories, historically, socially and biographically located. This analytical lens resonates with Blommaert's (2010) call for the development of 'a sociolinguistics of mobile resources' (p 41). Moreover, repertoires include new communicative resources creating hybrid and creative practices of combining multiple modes with text on the screen of computers, mobile and other hand-held devices (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006). In tune with a broader

turn to the visual dimension of communication (Mills 2015), meaning making practices become more multimodal, intertwining linguistic, visual, aural and embodied modes alongside the technological dimensions of religious practices online. With regards to linguistic practices in particular, the contributions confirm findings from other studies on multilingualism online, namely that digital communication is becoming more multilingual (Leniham and Kelly Homles 2017), as 'language varieties turn up in unexpected places' (Omoniyi 2018, p 137). Yet, they also highlight the uneven distribution of linguistic resources and the constraints dominant language ideologies and hierarchies offline impose upon language users online, such as the use of English and other former colonial languages in many of the transnational digital spaces discussed in the book. Taken together, the studies demonstrate how an analytical focus on situated language practices can shed light on how religious groups and communities have developed, adapted and transformed as a result of local, translocal as well as broader social, political and historical forces. In a similar vein, they point to new ways of thinking about religious membership and belonging. By decentering traditional religious institutional authority, digital spaces allow for the creation of new spaces for self-expression and relationship building. In what follows I present a brief overview of each chapter.

The edited book consists of nine empirical chapters followed by an Afterword by Bernard Spolsky. The first section of the book examines social media, mainly Facebook and to a lesser extent blogs, as spaces for the discursive negotiation of religious identities and for the exploration of links between language practices, ideologies and policies. Sawin (chapter 2) discusses three virtual Christian parishes constituted around marginalised or vulnerable Christian identities, namely

Evangelical Christian Koryo-saram (ethnically Korean Russophones) originally from Central Asia in South Korean, Christian academics and 'Side B' (celibate) LGBT Christians. He argues that virtual parishes allow for the construction and affirmation of minority intersectional identities, which may otherwise be underrepresented, invisibilised or misunderstood in their respective physical parishes. Employing the framework of Language Planning and Policy (LPP), Souza (chapter 3) investigates the interrelationship between varieties of Portuguese and other languages (English and Italian) in four Brazilian Pentecostal transnational churches in Portugal, Italy, the US and the UK, which are part of the same main church in Brazil. The author focuses on the language choices of the faith leaders when posting on Facebook, arguing that they reflect the various ways faith leaders seek to address different target audiences (speakers and non-speakers of varieties of Portuguese) and how the dynamics of language use impacts on the audiences' responses, linguistically. Souza's comparative analysis across transnational religious communities affords readers a glimpse of the tension between supporting the transmission of the minority language for religious experience and expression and deploying local languages to reach out to local communities and bring others into the church.

The second section of the book shifts to online transnational practices and how linguistic and cultural practices that involve physical presence have transitioned into digital spaces. The first two chapters explore how traditionally oral religious practices and cultural and belief-based resources (taboos) among the Yoruba in Nigeria have been transformed and have become translocalised through the use of digital technology. Combining a web search with a questionnaire survey and in-depth interviews with Ifa priests, Salami (chapter 4) investigates the perceptions and

attitudes of religious practitioners and non-practitioners regarding the use of the internet and mobile phones for divination, a central aspect of Ifa religious worship. In the chapter 5, Akande studies the traditional oral genre of taboos, an important aspect of the Yoruba religious belief system, and how they are recorded, discussed and disseminated on discussion forums, such as the popular forum Nairaland, on Facebook and on online news. In both studies, the efficacy, authenticity and linguistic innovation of mediated religious practice is scrutinised. Chapter 6 recasts the impact of the socio-historical and political contexts on discussions of language, religion and identity online. Soldat-Jaffe introduces us to the Yiddish Wikipedia as a virtual community and interactions among its different users, zooming in on a proposal allegedly by users of the Hebrew Wikipedia to close it down and the subsequent discussions it elicited. She traces how competing voices concerning the proposal reflect the long-standing cultural and ideological conflict between Yiddish, regarded as a quintessential diaspora language, and biblical Hebrew, viewed as the sacred language of Judaism, and by extension modern Hebrew. The chapter cogently problematises the one-to-one link between religion, ethnicity and language.

The third section of the book focuses on digital televangelism in times of extensive mobility and contact and how digital platforms open up possibilities for new language practices and identity constructions as faith leaders address multiple audience-congregations that are not territorially confined. Drawing on the fields of the Sociology of Language and Religion and World Englishes, Omoniyi (chapter 7) combines observations of web pages across a number of platforms with transcripts of online broadcasts of faith leaders affiliated with a Nigerian Pentecostal church with a global reach to investigate the mobilisation of different languages and language

varieties of English by faith leaders and congregants, including varieties of Nigerian English, for religious belief and practice. The author asks whether religious experience and practice can indeed be accessible in one specific language or language variety in a globalised digital world. Nevertheless, he cautions that the mobility of languages and language varieties does not erase dominant language hierarchies (e.g. the use of English and other former colonial languages as the de facto official language(s)) and language dynamics (e.g. the incursion of English in francophone Africa). El Naggar (chapter 8) explores the phenomenon of televangelism through two case studies of popular American Muslim televangelists and their YouTube sermons. Using Critical Discourse Studies, the author compares the multimodal and discursive strategies the televangelists deploy for self-presentation and the construction of authoritative voices. Here contemporary religious discourse is understood as hybrid where religious themes are infused by political and colloquial discourses as well as creativity and playfulness.

Linking the forth and last section of the book on religious rituals online with previous chapters are the common themes of the religious efficacy and authenticity of religious practices as well as the extent to which religious rituals online have changed when moving into digital spaces. Bridging ritual performance with religious studies, Pandharipande (chapter 9) explores two online rituals, *satsang* (conversations between spiritual teachers and devotees) and *puja* (the worship of deities), both central to Hinduism, in the context of the US diaspora. The comparison of performances of online *satsang* with its offline counterpart and its reception by devotees and spiritual teachers reveal a democratisation of ritual practice as it is not restricted to time, space or to a particular group of devotees and a broader language

choice beyond English based on the linguistic repertoires of different religious communities and individuals as the use of Indian regional languages increases in the diaspora. Unlike *satsang*, the *puja* ritual is more institutionalised and standardised in language use, sequence of ritual actions and ritual objects for worship, thereby allowing for less linguistic flexibility (for instance, less dialectal variation in the performance of worship). Deploying a multimodal-inflected discourse analysis, Rosowsky (chapter 10) examines the online ritual of pledging allegiance to a spiritual leader, an initiation rite to Sufi fraternities across three websites aimed at English-speaking audiences where English serves as lingua franca. The hybridity of ritual discourse emerges as a key element across websites manifested in the multilingual practices, including the use of Islamic varieties of English, as well as in translation, transliteration and transcription practices pointing to different religious and cultural sources. Bernard Spolsky' Afterword concludes the collection with a personal exploration of the impact of digital media in Jewish religious observance and access to religious learning. He links his reflections with the relevance and significance of one of the principles underlying Joshua Fishman's *Decalogue*: 'all sources of socio-cultural change are also sources of change in the sociolinguistic repertoires vis-à-vis religion, including religious change per se' (: 2006, p 18 reported in Spolsky 2018, p 238). The studies in this book meticulously capture the ubiquitous presence of digital technologies in everyday life, and the extent and different ways they come to shape the circulation, range and complexity of religious and linguistic practices across time/space scales.

The second book, Johnston's (2017) ethnographic account of an Evangelical Christian English language school in Poland, *English Teaching and Evangelical Mission. The*

Case of Lighthouse School, extends previous work Johnston undertook with colleague Manka Varghese on teachers' religious beliefs and how they impact pedagogy among pre-service English teachers in two evangelical Christian colleges in the US (Varghese and Johnston 2007). Both Johnston's (2017) ethnography and the earlier 2007 joint study aimed to capture the participants' perspectives, while avoiding essentialising representations of participants' identities and treating them as a homogenous group with fixed views and clear denominational demarcations. Johnston starts with an honest and thoughtful reflection of his personal motivation and academic interest in exploring the role of Evangelical Christianity in English Language Teaching (ELT) and the global spread of English as an outsider with non-religious beliefs (p 2). Sparked by negative reactions against evangelical Christians, including reactions by fellow colleagues in academia, and stereotypical representations in mainstream media in North America and elsewhere, Johnston asks why that might be case: 'what is it about evangelical Christianity that non-evangelicals in North America and elsewhere find so objectionable? (p 4). This question becomes all the more pertinent, he contends, if one considers that evangelical Christianity is one of the fastest growing religious movements worldwide. Conceptually, Johnston draws on several 'entering perspectives', including theories on identity, globalisation, from gender studies, critical pedagogy, discourse analysis and discursive psychology (p 7).

In Chapter 2, Johnston grounds his ethnographic account in the socio-political and religious landscape of Poland. While acknowledging the historical significance of Roman Catholicism, he alerts readers to the country's religious and ethno-linguistic diversity, including the long-standing presence of Protestant denominations in the

country in order to contextualise the cross-cultural encounter between Polish Catholicism and evangelical Christianity. The resurgence of religious belief after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc in 1989 led to an increase in evangelical missionary activity in the form of reinvigorating existing churches or establishing new ones, including the evangelical church the school in his study is affiliated to. He also helpfully explains what evangelical Christianity means. More specifically, Evangelical Christianity encompasses a wide range of denominations and churches without a centralised authority structure or formalised official creed. Nevertheless, evangelicals are united by shared beliefs in the centrality of Jesus Christ and developing a personal relationship with Christ (crucicentrism), the authority of the Bible as the Word of God (biblicism), the necessity of being 'born again' spiritually (conversionism) and sharing one's faith with others (witnessing) (p 12). Many of the evangelical Christian Poles the author came into contact in 2008 for his study had converted from Catholicism in the early 1990s as a result of North American or European missionary activity. For many Catholic Poles evangelical Christians are regarded 'with suspicion' and in everyday discourse evangelical Christian groups are pejoratively referred to as a 'cult' ('sekta' in Polish) (p 14). While Catholicism is still an influential force in Poland, similarly to other European nations, religious observance has been declining with many Poles having become what Johnston calls 'cultural Catholics' where 'social and cultural -identitarian- aspects of Catholicism are more important than its spiritual dimensions' (p 17).

Chapter 3 traces the intersection of TESOL with evangelical Christianity in the context of the on going debate within Applied Linguistics and ELT on the place and purpose of religion in general and evangelical Christianity in particular in ELT

programmes. Critics have scrutinised the use of English language teaching for the purpose of Christian mission work and religious conversion. They have highlighted concerns regarding English language teachers concealing their religious goals and exploiting English as a vehicle to promote neocolonial relations and an alignment with capitalist and conservative values (e.g. Edge 1996, 2003, Pennycook and Coutand-Marin 2004, Varghese and Johnston 2007, Wong and Canagarajah 2009). Christian (evangelical) educators have responded to these critiques by advocating being respectful towards their students' values and beliefs and transparent about their own religious beliefs rather than seeking to covertly impose them on their students and their families (e.g. Stevick 1996, Purgason 2004, Baurain 2007, 2015 and more recently the collection of papers in Wong, Kristjánsson and Dörnyei 2013). Attempts to establish a dialogue between scholars with religious and non-religious perspectives on the role of faith and spirituality in English language teaching resulted to the publication of an edited volume by Wong and Canagarajah (2009). The on going debate has been shaped on the one hand by a secular stance advocating the separation between religion and education. On the other hand, there is growing recognition within a post-secular framework that neither teachers nor students' spiritual and moral beliefs can be separated from the educational process (Hemming 2015). This position is echoed in Canagarajah's foreword to Wong, Kristjánsson and Dörnyei's (2013) edited book on the interrelationship between Christianity and English language teaching and learning where he argues for the need to explore 'the complex interconnections' between religion and pedagogy (p xxii). It also chimes with the aim of Johnston's study to examine what happens when North American missionary teachers interact with Polish Catholic learners in an English language school, which he calls Lighthouse School and uses a 'Bible-based curriculum' (p 29). In the

remaining of the chapter, Johnston discusses the theoretical orientations that underpin his 'ethnography of contact' (p 34), describes the research design and his own positionality which he sums up as follows: 'the spirit of the present study is that of dialogue, of listening, rather than dogma' (p 39).

Chapter 4 introduces Lighthouse House, established in a small town close to Warsaw as part of the missionary activity of a North American evangelical church to attract new members among the Polish middle classes, its founders, teachers and adult learners. The next chapter (Chapter 5) focuses on the unique 'Bible-based curriculum' which was designed and written by the school's founders and sets this particular school apart from other evangelical language schools. The curriculum drew on and adapted selected stories from the Bible and classic literature, such as Daniel Defoe's 'Robinson Crusoe' and Mark Twain's 'The Prince and the Pauper' chosen for their religious or spiritual content coupled with a 'heavy language focus' (p 55). Activities drew on communicative and interactive approaches to language teaching and included a reading comprehension section entitled 'Digging Deeper' which sought to open up the floor to discussions of religious and spiritual nature based on the texts and trigger self-reflection about moral and spiritual matters. While Johnston acknowledges that students had positive attitudes towards the teaching materials, he highlights two main concerns: the lack of the materials writers' professional training and critical engagement with the racial, colonial and social class dimensions of 'Robinson Crusoe'. Rather he observed that the textual adaptation of the book revealed an alignment of its content with 'contemporary evangelical discourse' (p 66).

In Chapter 6, Johnston shifts his analytical focus to the pedagogic practices of three evangelical teachers, zooming in on interactional moments when discussions of religious or spiritual issues emerged in the forefront of classroom talk. These moments surfaced in classroom discussions triggered by the curricular materials (questions raised in 'Digging Deeper'), followed by what the author calls impromptu 'mini-sermons' and unscripted personalised prayers (p 71). His close analysis of these verbal activities illustrates how one of the teachers (Sydney) was able to create a discursive space for all learners to actively engage in meaningful conversations and share personal feelings and desires within the English language classroom without proselytising nor creating a gulf between the beliefs of the Polish Catholic learners and North American evangelical teachers. From a pedagogical point of view, although the deeply spiritual and moral content of these activities placed high demands on the learners' linguistic resources, they elicited complex contributions in terms of length, syntax and vocabulary. A key discursive strategy to foster student participation in classroom discourse was the use of an 'ecumenical discourse' understood as 'a way of using language to address religious and spiritual matters that carefully eschews any reference to denomination-specific terms, practices and values, and that restricts itself to words, phrases and concepts that can be readily understood and accepted (even if in different ways) by anyone who thinks of himself or herself as a Christian' (p 135). Sydney's discursive moves were contrasted to those of another teacher (Allie) who appeared to use mini-sermons for prosyletising. Allie's mini-sermons were characterised by 'a simplistic and rather naive form of sermonizing', which constricted students' participation in classroom talk (p 90). The pedagogic value of these verbal activities was further undermined by the teacher's limited teaching experience with adult learners and lack of training in language pedagogy.

Chapter 7 probes further into the interactional potential of the 'ecumenical discourse' exploring in particular how North American evangelical teachers and Polish Catholic learners build and express relationships at Lighthouse School, both inside and outside the classroom. The significance of nurturing relationships is a central belief of evangelical Christianity linked to the notion of 'community building'. It is based on the premise that membership in the evangelical faith community involves active participation in all aspects of church life (p 100). Some teachers developed what Johnston referred to as 'a person-centered pedagogy' (p 109). They encouraged the sharing of personal experiences and cultivated interpersonal relations between teachers and learners as well as between learners, which extended beyond the classroom, through personalising religious and spiritual discussions while abstaining from issues of divergence of belief between Catholics and Evangelicals. At the same time, Johnston identifies moments of conflict in the interactional management of relationship building, which problematicised the process of nurturing relationships. He critically reflects upon moments in his own cross-cultural encounter with evangelical teachers and others affiliated with the language school. He discusses the common practice among evangelicals of being prayed for which he interpreted as patronizing and insulting and which foregrounded the entirely different values, practices and perceptions of the parties involved.

Chapter 8 delves into the values, practices and perceptions that framed the cross-cultural encounter between North American evangelicals and Polish Catholics at Lighthouse School, leading to points of divergence and conflict but also convergence and boundary blurring. Notable points of difference included the lack of knowledge of

the cultural practices of the other and the unequal language relations between students struggling to speak in English and teachers unwilling to speak in Polish. Points of convergence were driven by the use of the 'ecumenical discourse' and the discursive space for religious and theological discussions it enabled across denominational lines. Yet, Johnston draws our attention to how these discussions fell short of engaging with teachers and learners' differing religious beliefs. To this end, the author argues that the deployment of the 'ecumenical discourse' created 'the *illusion* [italics in the original] of common ground that kept the participants from engaging with their actual differences in many crucial aspects of faith. [...] in creating the appearance of discursive concord, it masks and thus effectively denies divergent beliefs' (p 138-9).

The concluding chapter revisits the on going debate on the contentious relationship between ELT and evangelical mission work. In what follows I focus on findings that have emerged from the empirical study associated with three sets of concerns Johnston discusses in the concluding chapter and explore how these findings might complement and extend existing literature. One set of concerns has been questions of transparency of missionary goals, particularly student coercion and conversion to evangelical Christianity. It transpired that conversion to evangelical Christianity was not the leading purpose of English language teaching at Lighthouse School. Rather, teachers sought to attend to their learners' broader spiritual needs and 'share the Word of God' (p 155). These findings resonate with previous studies on the complex and dynamic relationship between teachers' Christian beliefs and pedagogic practices. Varghese and Johnston's (2007) interviews with ten pre-service evangelical teachers illustrated that teachers developed a complex and nuanced relationship with teaching which they saw as a form of Christian service and their role as being an exemplar of

their faith, 'acting Christlike' (p 25). In his examination of how volunteer tutors in one church-run adult ESOL programme translate their religious beliefs into pedagogic practice, Baurain (2013) found that tutors sought to cultivate interpersonal relationships with learners, show empathy, love and caring and prioritise learners' goals and interests in the learning process. Crucially, tutors regarded their volunteerism as 'a form of practical Christian service; that is, they saw their tutoring as a way of serving God by serving people' (p 145), a form of living out their faith. The discourse of Christian service teachers articulated was not equated with imposing one's faith on others through proselytising and conversion. These findings confirm Johnston's (2017) remark that 'the matter of conversion is infinitely more complex than it seems' (p 155), calling for further research in this area. Far from being portrayed as victims of missionary work, learners in Johnston's study were represented as social agents who made a choice to attend the school attracted by the teachers' native speaker status, the Bible-based curriculum and the personal discussions about moral and spiritual matters despite negative representations of evangelical Christianity in Poland. Crucially, they chose not to align with the mission work of the church with which the school was affiliated.

Another set of concerns in the final chapter is connected with using the global spread of English to advance neocolonial relations and encourage capitalist and conservative values. Writing from a critical pedagogical stand-point, Pennycook and Coutand-Marin (2003) have argued that among certain Christian Evangelical circles teaching English for mission work was exploited as a vehicle to promote a particular set of beliefs, 'a particular vision of globalisation, neoliberal values and capitalist accumulation [is] celebrated as part of a missionary message' (p 345). Johnston's

study found signs of an alignment with such values at the Lighthouse School. The author identified the unequal language relations between teachers and students and the dominant role of English at Lighthouse School (and at the evangelical church the school was affiliated) as a form of neocolonialism, reinforced by the confluence of free-market capitalist and conservative values and beliefs of North American evangelicals and Polish Catholics in the setting. In *The modern mission: The language effects of Christianity*, Pennycook and Makoni (2005) critically comment on how Christian missionary activity supported the promotion and spread of European languages, especially English, in the context of the problematic historical relationship between colonisation, empire building and language teaching as well as in more recent missionary work. In an attempt to redress the hegemonic position of English and reinforce the value of all languages, Snow (2009) urges English language teachers to become language learners themselves: 'as speakers of a powerful language who are concerned with issues of dominance and power, one response should be at times to step out of the power role by becoming learners of other languages, both because of how the experience of learning the other's language transforms us and because of the message that such a choice sends about our vision of what kind of place we think the world should be' (p 183). Snow's call propels English language teachers, particular those from Inner Circle nations as is the case of the North American evangelical teachers in Johnston's study, to acknowledge their powerful and privileged status and maintain a reflexive and critical stance.

This point leads to the last set of concerns Johnston raises related to teachers' professionalism and the quality of teaching. Johnston highlighted the lack of critical engagement with the racial, colonial and social class dimensions of the curriculum

materials at Lighthouse School. Recent work by Damico and Hall (2014) has illustrated how educators can mobilise primary school students' religious knowledge to make sense of the legacy of systemic racism in American society and interpret on going injustices. The authors convincingly argue for teachers to recognise the learning potential of students' religious beliefs, practices and perceptions and 'capitalize on teachable moments in the curriculum when religious knowledge or experience might be crucial to more deeply engaging academic content. This includes not only helping students understand and value the ways that their religious frames are important and powerful; it must also involve helping them understand the potential constraints and limitations of these frames' (p 196). As schools strive towards pluralistic, democratic and equitable approaches to education, Johnston's study reminds us that it is important to inquire further into: (a) the opportunities and limitations of student and teacher engagement with religious and non-religious beliefs, experiences and practices in schools and classrooms, (b) the development of critical knowledge and pedagogies and (c) the development of professional preparation and teacher education necessary for such engagement (Lytra forthcoming).

For sociolinguists, Johnston's ethnography of contact provides compelling 'thick descriptions' (Geertz 1973) of English language teachers' religious beliefs and pedagogical practices, acting as a reminder of the central role language has always played and continues to play in the mediation of religious experience and the negotiation and construction of religious and professional identities. An important contribution of the study is that it shifts the empirical focus from what teachers report about their religious perspectives, about how they use them to make sense of who they are and how they teach (which hitherto has been the focus of most studies) to

teachers' practices, through classroom discourse patterns, interactions around texts between teachers and learners and between learners. In so doing, the study yields multilayered contextualised portraits of the teachers, learners and other participants at Lighthouse School. It show cases the diversity of personal histories, motivations and desires situated in local and global contexts while bringing to the fore the opportunities and limitations of inserting religious or spiritual issues in classroom talk from an ethnographic and critical perspective. Finally, the study contributes to on-going reflections on the role of the researcher, their personal and professional identities, values and beliefs in shaping the research practice and the power relationships between them and the teachers and learners with whom they work (see papers in Martin-Jones and Martin 2017). In a post-secular era of increased plurality and diversity of religious and non-religious beliefs, experiences and practices, Johnston's study illustrates how it might look like to engage in researcher reflexivity and construct polyphonic research narratives. Reflecting upon how the one-year ethnography might have changed him, Johnston remarks: 'what happened was that my world was expanded to include the voices, views and wishes of those I worked with, evangelicals and Catholic alike. I did not embrace those views, but I came to understand them better. And it is my deepest belief that understanding and dialogue are the only valid ways to engage with those different from ourselves' (p 164).

Both books point to new ways of thinking about language, discourse and religion in social life. Their focus on empirical analyses of a range of different kinds of text and talk illustrates how language creates and sustains religious belief and practice across contexts and how religion remains a primary identity marker for many individuals and communities, thereby contributing to dynamic conversations in this emerging

interdisciplinary field of study. Within a post-secular framework, the studies confirm the importance of investigating further the interrelationship between language and religion in the constitution of individual and collective identities and in sustaining but also transforming language and cultural practices. Echoing Johnston's self-reflection, they remind us that in the current climate of political and ideological entrenchment and polarisation 'understanding and dialogue' between people of same, different or no religious beliefs is crucial.

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