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Special Issue: Language Weaponization in Society and Education

Guest Editors

Luis Javier Pentón Herrera

Kisha C. Bryan

Founder and Editor-in-Chief

Serafín M. Coronel-Molina

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Guest Editors

Luis Javier Pentón Herrera
University of Warsaw

and

Kisha C. Bryan
Tennessee State University

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Language Weaponization in Society and Education: Introduction to the Special Issue

Luis Javier Pentón Herrera and Kisha C. Bryan

Abstract

In this article, we introduce the special issue *Language Weaponization in Society and Education*. We begin the manuscript with a preface, sharing an event that transpired during the dissemination of the Call for Proposals. We then situate the special issue in the literature by providing a brief overview of the term *language weaponization* and by providing a clear definition to frame the special issue. We end the article by introducing all the articles in the special issue.

Keywords: Language weaponization, language in society, language in education

Preface

During the beginning stage of the Special Issue, we disseminated a Call for Proposals through different media and social media outlets to expand the reach of our work and welcome a diversity of voices from around the world. In one of our social media posts, we received a response from someone unknown to us that surprised us. The person shared:

> The topics requested and the references supplied are very clearly titled to a specific perspective. Having encountered more than enough Imperialist English and anti-white rhetoric in the past decade, which has been in its excess made me blase [sic] towards its arguments, I am far more interested in what opposing arguments could be made. The use of the word weaponisation implies clearly that intent to harm forms the backbone of education and social policy—a position I'm sure all educators and policy makers of western nations would find absurd. The content and positions are mostly specific to the USA, and while there may arguably be analogous instances in other cultures, this display [sic] a remarkable lack of global awareness.

This individual took the Call for Proposal as an opportunity to express their discontent with the growing number of publications and academic works shedding light on the realities of racism and colonialism in societies. Certainly, as a person with a gender, race, and native language that has been historically assigned privileges, they are given social and political advantages that Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), nonnative English speakers, women, and queer individuals do not. Of

Contact: Luis Javier Pentón Herrera, University of Warsaw or Kisha C. Bryan, Tennessee State University
E-mail: luis.penton@gmail.com or kbryan@tnstate.edu

particular importance is the word this individual used in their rhetoric—the word *blasé*—to describe how their privilege grants them a reality where they can exist without worrying about how language use in societies will affect them or those they care about. We, BIPOC, women, queer, and minoritized individuals do not have the luxury to be blasé about how language has been—and continues to be—weaponized against us. For us and the communities where we dwell, language weaponization can and has resulted in negation, subjugation, mistreatment, slavery, segregation, physical and emotional harm, violence, and death.

Another point we would like to bring forth from this person's response is the assumption that language weaponization is exclusive to or related to Western societies only. This position is inaccurate and ignores recorded human history. The use of language to benefit some and offend, marginalize, or dehumanize others based on skin color, race and ethnicity, gender(s), sexuality(ies), nationality(ies), languages spoken, religion, and/or (dis)abilities can be found in every culture, as we will see in the articles of this special issue. The response we received from this person in social media reminds us, as coeditors, that the work we are doing is important and that the message we present in this special issue is becoming uncomfortably visible to those who have been historically in positions of privilege based solely on their condition of being born with the race, gender, sexual preference, and native language that is given more advantages in their societies.

Situating the Special Issue

Language—as a human-created social and political object—is used to (dis)empower individuals, cultures, and communities from all over the world (Eifert, 1987; McConnell-Ginet, 2020). Throughout history, language has been systematically used as a weapon to assert control, delegitimize, negate membership and opportunities, and disassociate groups of people who look and act differently from those in power. From barbaric representations of Indigenous Peoples from the Caribbean islands and the Americas in the 15th century to the most recent events of anti-Black (linguistic) racism and anti-Asian waves of discrimination and physical assaults in the 21st century, language continues to be used against selected groups to cause harm, affecting their livelihood and wellbeing. Minoritized languages and people struggle with the residual effects of colonization, discrimination, and globalization, which results in self-devaluating practices and in limited opportunities for global participation. Inspired by the challenges and opportunities language poses in societies, especially in issues related to language use and social justice, we introduce this special issue.

Language Weaponization: A Brief Overview

The term *language weaponization* emerged in military studies and political sciences in the early 1900s to refer to how language was controlled or manipulated. One of the first available publications referring to the weaponization of language is the document titled *Language as a Communist Weapon* by the Committee on Un-American Activities and Dr. Stefan T. Possony (1959). In this document, language weaponization, although not explicitly defined, is understood as communists' language manipulation to propagate their doctrine and dominate the world. After this initial publication, the construct of language as a weapon was propagated in the social sciences with publications such as *Language: Mirror, Tool, and Weapon* (Kelling, 1975) and *La manipulación del hombre a través del lenguaje* [The manipulation of men through language] (López Quintás, 1987), which approached language weaponization from the purview that language use (i.e., speech, media, etc.) controls thought and behavior. In 1980, the book *Language, the Loaded Weapon: The Use and Abuse of Language Today* (Dwight, 1980) became one of the first texts analyzing the construct of language as a weapon in the field of linguistics.

In the 2000s, the construct of language weaponization has continued to gain momentum in scholarly publications in the fields of military studies (e.g., Lupion, 2018; Rafael, 2012), social sciences (e.g., Pascale, 2019; Stahl, 2016), and linguistics (e.g., Fairclough, 2015; McConnell-Ginet, 2020). However, it is important to note that the construct of language weaponization remains explicitly undefined in those and other emerging publications. This special issue uses as a foundation the previously mentioned literature exploring the use of language as a weapon from different viewpoints (see also the special issue by Dovchin, 2020), and positions itself at the margins of these conversations. Our vision with this special issue is to bring a different perspective to bear on this construct in applied linguistics and sister fields (i.e., second language acquisition [SLA], TESOL, etc.) to provide a new lens through which language use can be analyzed. We hope this special issue serves as a starting point for future conversations in the field of applied linguistics that explore the use of language as a weapon with the power to affect the wellbeing of individuals and groups.

What Do We Mean by Language Weaponization?

In this special issue, we use the term language weaponization—or the *weaponization of language*—to describe the process by which words, discourse, and language in any form have been used or are being used to inflict harm on others, and how language education practices, policies, programs, and curricula are weaponized (Bryan & Gerald, 2020; Pascale, 2019; Rafael, 2016). In this definition, the term *harm* is of vital importance because it refers to how minoritized individuals, as well as their cultures and languages, are affected by ideologies and practices that normalize inequity and injustice in their environment. The contributions in this special issue advance ongoing conversations in the field of applied linguistics about the relationship of language and social justice (e.g., Baumgarten & Du Bois, 2019; Dovchin, 2020). This issue is, to our knowledge, the first special issue devoted to approaching this conversation from the lens of language weaponization.

Introduction to the Special Issue

This special issue includes eight manuscripts that approach the topic of language weaponization in society and education from different frames of reference. In the first article, "Problematizing Fluent Speakers' Unintentional Exclusion of Emergent Bilinguals: A Case Study of an English-Medium Instruction Classroom in Japan," Akiko Kiyota explores how marginalization is co-constructed in English-medium instruction (EMI) classrooms in Japan. The findings of this case study invite further dialogues on how language can be used to exclude, even if unintentionally, emergent bilinguals in EMI. The second article, titled "'A Hard Time Seeing the Relevance': Race and Discourse Identity in Language Teacher Preparation," Tasha Austin investigates the conceptual and linguistic weaponization of race evasiveness among language teacher educators (LTEs). Findings indicate that participants understood culture as racialized, which shaped the conceptions of self in accounting for various class markers including phenotype, language, gender identity, citizenship, ethnicity, and nationality. In the third article, "The Weaponization of French and Rejection of Maghrebi Arabic in a French High School: Effects on Franco-Maghrebi Students," Sandrine Pell reports on a four-month ethnographic study in a rural French high school. The results in Pell's study indicate that the school policies enacted at the high school alongside national policies and discourses promoted a culture of colonial monolingualism, delegitimizing the cultures and languages of Franco-Maghrebi students.

In the fourth article, titled "Is the Language You Teach Racist? Reflections and Considerations for English and Spanish (Teacher) Educators," Luis Javier Pentón Herrera advocates for the necessity of decolonizing language education, taking a primary interest in the English and Spanish languages and in the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas and the Caribbean islands. This author ends the

manuscript with an invitation for language teachers, language teacher educators (LTEs), and those in the field of applied linguistics to continue this difficult but necessary dialogue about decolonizing language education and the way they teach. In the fifth article, "Unpacking Language Weaponization in Spanish(es): Supporting Transnational Antiracist Relationality," Cristina Sánchez-Martín and Laura Gonzales argue for a need to center Black Latinx and Indigenous experiences in discussions and definitions of Spanish and Spanish-speaking communities in the US. The authors end the essay with an invitation for further reflection and conversation on how to develop networks of solidarity and collaborative antiracist work. In the sixth article, "(Re)constructing Gay: A Classroom,and a Journey to Rhetorical Listening," Gabriel T. Acevedo Velázquez proposes using rhetorical listening pedagogy in classrooms and illustrates a series of arbitrations that show rhetorical listening as an applicable tool for discussing issues of queer identity in the classroom. The author ends with suggestions on how to expand the usage of rhetorical listening pedagogy, including rhetorical silence.

In the seventh article, titled "Weaponizing and De-weaponizing Antiracist Discourse: Some Things for Language Educators to Consider," Peter De Costa, Lee Her, and Vashti Lee explore the close relationship between the effects of language use and weaponization in society and in education. Further, the authors reflect on two examples of anti-Asian racism and end their commentary by proposing antiracist education in the form of critical language awareness development and solidarity building among individuals and organizations. The eighth and final article, "The Weaponization of Mandarin Chinese," looks at how language is weaponized in China from a macro perspective, making a case for how the Chinese Communist Party possesses the power to manipulate language as well as to shape public discourse, public perception, opinion, and behavior. Xu Bian ends the article by stating that the weaponization of Mandarin Chinese demonstrates how authoritarian and totalitarian governments can use—and have used—language to assert control and spread fear and inequity in society.

The articles, while authored by different scholars, introduce in unison the topic of language weaponization in society and education by exploring different events where language is used to affect (either positively or negatively) the wellbeing of oneself, an individual, or group of people. The different voices and perspectives carried in these essays invite us, as a field, to continue exploring how language is weaponized in society and educational spaces, assigning or denying privilege and opportunities to individuals at different levels. We hope colleagues and scholars will use this special issue as a point of reference to continue the conversation of language weaponization in society and education in other academic spaces.

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Problematizing Fluent Speakers' Unintentional Exclusion of Emergent Bilinguals: A Case Study of an English-Medium Instruction Classroom in Japan

Akiko Kiyota

Abstract

In English-medium instruction (EMI) classrooms in Japan, less proficient English speakers are often marginalized, positioned as powerless, and quiet (e.g., Iino, 2019). This situation is problematic for inequitable access to activity and the possible consequences for their identity and emotional wellbeing. However, few studies have examined how exclusion is co-constructed in such a context. This study addresses that lack, illustrating how exclusion is co-constructed by shedding light on the microlevel social interactions in an EMI classroom. In the study, observation notes, students' weekly journals, and interview data were gathered. The findings show that fast-paced interactions and some gestures made the emergent bilinguals hesitant to participate in the discussions. Also, a mismatch of expectations from both the emergent bilinguals and the fluent speakers suggested that the exclusion was unintentional. An analysis of the findings underscores how social interactions, if not sensitive enough towards less proficient speakers, may cause unintentional exclusion and inflict emotional harm in the classroom.

Keywords: English-medium instruction, exclusion, emergent bilinguals, case study, Japan

Introduction

Being excluded from a conversation is a painful experience. People feel discomfort at least, and severe distress at worst. Research in neuroscience has shown that when people feel socially excluded, they suffer significant psychological damage (Kawamoto et al., 2013, 2014, 2015) and behave in ways to help avoid such situations (Cohen et al., 2007). Exclusion can happen when a less proficient speaker of a language can neither understand what is spoken nor take turns in fast-paced discussions regulated by more proficient—thus, fluent—speakers. Language itself is not harmful, but if used in such a fast-paced way that it excludes certain members and inflicts emotional pain, depriving them of their comfort and pride, it can become an injurious tool.

Contact: Akiko Kiyota, Graduate School of Education, Waseda University
E-mail: akiko.kiyota@fuji.waseda.jp

This study frames such language practices in microlevel social interactions in the classroom, which may harm certain members, as language weaponization. Language weaponization, in this article, refers to the process by which words, discourse, and language in any form have been used or are being used to inflict harm on others, and how language education policies, programs, and curricula are weaponized (Bryan & Gerald, 2020; Pascale, 2019). This term originally appeared in the social sciences to characterize discursive strategies in using language as a political tool (e.g., Pascale, 2019). Today, the term as a broader concept has also been used in applied linguistics. It resonates with the raciolinguistic perspective (Rosa, 2019; Rosa & Flores, 2017), which looks critically at how language practices and ideologies harm less linguistically privileged people (Ortega, 2019). For example, Bryan and Gerald (2020) specifically use this term to describe the contemporary social issues of anti-Black racism in the United States. Also, there are other studies that do not adopt the term language weaponization but problematize the harmful aspect of language use and practices at microlevel social interactions, such as linguistic violence (Baker-Bell, 2020a, 2020b) and microaggression (Corona & Block, 2020; Dovchin, 2020; Kubota et al., 2021). This study aims to apply this critical conceptual lens to a Japanese educational context where a foreign language (in this case, English) is used as a medium of instruction, and thus there are linguistically privileged (more proficient) and less privileged (less proficient) students in the classroom.

English-medium instruction (EMI) is spreading rapidly in Japanese higher education (Bradford & Brown, 2017; Brown & Iyobe, 2014; Curle et al., 2020; Macaro et al., 2018), as well as in other countries, in the current time of neoliberal globalization (Block et al., 2012; Kubota, 2020). EMI refers to the "use of the English language to teach academic subjects (other than English itself) in countries or jurisdictions where the first language (L1) of the majority of the population is not English" (Macaro et al., 2018, p. 37). In Japan, the literature on EMI reports that less proficient English speakers are marginalized in the classrooms and positioned as powerless and quiet (Iino, 2019; Iino & Murata, 2016; Kojima, 2021). Some of these marginalized students experience significant pain, which pushes some to the verge of withdrawing from a class (Kiyota, 2022). Drawing on the concept of language weaponization as a theoretical lens, this study explores how language practices in social interactions may harm others through the marginalization of less proficient speakers in EMI classroom settings.

Theoretical Considerations and Previous Research

Kobayashi et al. (2017) point out that students' language proficiency in the language of instruction exacerbates stratification and marginalization in classrooms. Marginalization is salient in discussion-based EMI classes, as proficiency plays a significant role in participating in discussion tasks. Some studies have shown that one of the top difficulties of EMI tasks for Japanese students is spontaneous speech in discussion tasks (Suzuki et al., 2017; Tahara et al., 2021). Previous research has discussed the problem by examining inhibitory factors such as language proficiency (e.g., Brown, 2017), foreign language anxiety (e.g., Chou, 2018; Kudo et al., 2017), or culture shock of "outspokenness of their international classmates" (D'Angelo, 2019, p. 131).

However, this study proposes two new, more socially oriented perspectives in applied linguistics (Atkinson, 2011; Duff, 2019; Duff & Byrnes, 2019; Hall, 2019; Douglas Fir Group, 2016) to approach the problem. One is from conversation analysis (CA). For example, some CA studies explain that the low participation rates of second language (L2) learners in group discussions that involve native speakers are due to the difficulty of turn taking in multiparty talk (e.g., Ryan & Forrest, 2021). Levinson and Torreira (2015) highlight the temporal constraints that turn taking imposes on language processing. According to them, in verbal interactions such as oral discussions, members must comprehend the L2 speech while at the same time predicting the end of the current speaker's turn

and mentally preparing their articulation. The rapid turn taking makes it more difficult for less proficient speakers to participate in the conversations.

Another new perspective is from second language socialization (SLS) studies, which recognizes more socially oriented dimensions. Taking anxiety, for example, SLS posits L2 users' discomfort not as an internally generated form of anxiety, but as something "co-constructed through interactions and other social practices" (Duff, 2010, p. 176). Through social interactions, "[users] are positioned—by themselves, by others, and by their institutions—as capable (or incapable), as worthy, legitimate, showing potential for fuller participation or membership (or not), as insiders (or outsiders), and so on," constructing identities in the group (Duff, 2010, p. 176). Taking these two perspectives, few studies have shed light on the microlevel social dimensions of the interactions in EMI group discussion activities. Therefore, the aim of this study is to examine the language practices of social interaction from a critical perspective (Pennycook, 2021, 2022), questioning the classroom norm and its inherent contextual operation of power between more fluent and less fluent speakers.

The students featured in this study are those who have already acquired a certain level of L2 English proficiency, but are less proficient and less fluent compared to their more proficient and more fluent classmates. They can handle a heavy load of reading assignments and term papers, and yet find participation in the discussion difficult and uncomfortable. I call these students emergent bilinguals rather than L2 learners, resonating with García's (2009) perspective. Emergent bilinguals refers to "students in the process of developing proficiency in a new language" (Baker & Wright, 2021, p. 12). The term emphasizes the aspect of students' potential in language development towards fuller bilingualism, whereas the term L2 learners may imply that they are limited in L2 English because they are still 'learning.' Although this term originated in the US context, the term is now used in studies on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in higher education outside US contexts, such as Costa Rica (e.g., Fallas Escobar, 2019) and Japan (e.g., Turnbull, 2019). Viewing these students as L2 learners may legitimize the monolingual norm and ideology in EMI classroom practices that the language standard of the classroom should adhere to the fluent speakers, thus dismissing the potential of contributions from less proficient speakers, which should be equally valued and respected.

Outside EMI studies, some scholars have addressed the marginalization of emergent bilinguals in terms of equity and inclusion in classrooms. For example, Pentón Herrera (2021) portrayed the marginalization of an Ixil-speaking minority student in a mainstream classroom in the US. The marginalization was due to various factors, including the medium of instruction (English) and the discrepancies between the education style and the participant's limited background in formal education. To avoid discomfort and pain, the participant chose to become invisible in the classroom, eventually withdrawing from school. In another example, Morita (2004) provided narratives of the marginalization of three international students in Canada. One student, Rie, was active in one class and was silenced in another class where the instructor imposed a deficit view on the student. Parks and Raymond (2004) depicted the ostracism of Chinese students in group presentation classroom tasks in Canada. Class members constructed a deficit view of the Chinese students and behaved uncooperatively in preparing for a presentation. While these studies have raised the issue of marginalization in classrooms, we still do not know the microprocesses of how exclusion was constructed by the people involved. Also, many of these studies concentrate on the North American context, where implicit and explicit racism cannot be separated from the discussion of marginalization.

Nevertheless, marginalization also occurs in EMI contexts in Japan among Japanese students when there are proficiency gaps among them, although the issue of racism may not be relevant in this context. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to illustrate how exclusion is co-constructed in EMI

in the Japanese context, particularly shedding light on the multiple views of the people involved in the scenario. The following research questions guide the data analysis and the presentation of the findings.

Research Questions:

1. How does exclusion occur in an EMI classroom in Japan?
   a. How do emergent bilinguals view exclusion from their purview?

Method

The Design

This study employed a qualitative case study approach (Duff, 2008, 2012; Yin, 2018) to gain an in-depth and holistic understanding of the participants' experiences, perspectives, and context. It adopted narrative methods (Riessman, 2008) to depict the experienced exclusion of emergent bilinguals in English-medium classrooms in Japan. Also, the study examined participants' social interactions through classroom observations. Three focal participants were chosen, and their classes were observed for an entire semester. The criterion for the purposive sampling of focal students was exhibiting the required proficiency to attend EMI courses (with 500 or above on the Test of English as a Foreign Language [TOEFL] Institutional Testing Program [ITP]), yet having perceived difficulties in oral social interactions in EMI classes. This criterion for the proficiency level was set because the present study was designed to exclude cases in which students cannot participate in discussions mainly due to a lack of necessary proficiency to attend EMI courses.

The Site

The classroom selected for the study was an EMI course with a class size of 15 students, where opportunities for oral social interactions were abundant. There were three proficient English speakers whose language of instruction was English up to the end of secondary education. The other 12 students were emergent bilinguals who graduated from Japanese high schools. The instructor was an English and Japanese bilingual male. He studied and taught in several English-speaking countries and is a fluent speaker of English. The class was student-centered and evaluation was based on short quizzes based on the reading assignments and two student presentations. Every class had a minimum of four group discussion sessions (approximately 40 minutes in total). At the time of this study (2020–2021), the COVID-19 pandemic forced all courses to be held online, including this course. All the classes were conducted online synchronously, using a video conferencing system called Zoom. Group discussion sessions were conducted in separate breakout rooms with three to four students in each breakout room. Because only one breakout room can be entered at a time, the instructor had to visit each discussion group one by one. In other words, there were times when students were not monitored by the instructor.

Participant Recruitment and Case Selection Procedure

On the first day of the course, the author of this study introduced herself, explained the study's purpose, and collected online consent forms from all the students. The focal participants were recruited then. The author called for students who found difficulties with EMI courses, and then six students volunteered. All of them reported they did not have problems reading and understanding course materials, but their obstacle was spontaneous speaking in their L2 (i.e., English). Among the six students, this study particularly uses the narratives of three students due to relevance. The three focal participants are briefly introduced in Table 1 below; all names provided throughout the study are pseudonyms.

Table 1. *Three focal participants*

	Gender	Year	Number of past EMI courses taken	Overseas experience in an English-speaking country
Satomi	F	2	3	1 month in Australia
Yuria	F	2	3	2 months in England 1 month in Canada
Rintaro	M	3	6	2 weeks in Canada 1 month in Australia

Note. Country names are slightly altered to protect the participants' personal information.

Data Sources

Following VanLier (1988), the study gathered multiple data sources for triangulation and various perspectives. The first data source was the author's classroom observation notes, which provided some snapshots of exclusion. The COVID-19 pandemic forced all courses to be held online, including the observed course, which was conducted using a video conferencing system called Zoom. The author observed one ninety-minute EMI course, including group discussion sessions conducted in breakout rooms, for 16 weeks (for a total of 11.5 hours) with her video camera off while simultaneously typing her notes, including her reflections.

The second data source was the focal participants' weekly reflective journals. The participants wrote their reflections and feelings within a few days after each class and sent them to the author using a smartphone text messaging app. This method allowed the author to collect their vivid articulation regarding their experiences, since delayed interviews may deteriorate participants' memory (Heigham & Croker, 2009). The third data source was pre- and post-semester interviews to understand how participants reconstruct their past events (Duff, 2012). These interviews offered a delayed time where focal students could better articulate some topics retrospectively (Bamberg & Demuth, 2016). All data were collected in Japanese.

Data Analysis

First, on classroom observation data, including group discussion sessions in breakout rooms, analysis was conducted concerning the exclusion of the emergent bilinguals. Questions emerged during the analysis, and they were triangulated with followup questions in interviews. Second, all the weekly journals were transferred to spreadsheets and coded according to emerging themes. Third, the interview data were transcribed verbatim, which scripted the focal participants' narratives. Narrative refers to "a discrete unit of discourse, an extended answer by a research participant to a single question, topically centered and temporally organized" (Riessman, 2008, p. 5). On these narratives, I conducted thematic analysis and structural analysis, following Riessman (2008). Thematic analysis focuses on the content (what was said) and extracts themes from the analysis. Structural analysis analyzes a narrative through structural coding (how it was conveyed), which guided my interpretation of meaning—what the focal participant intended to express and communicate.

Positionality

The author briefly describes her positionality in this section, which concerns the theoretical perspective of this study and the data quality. First, her own experiences may have helped her better understand the exclusion of emergent bilinguals in interactional settings. She was a minority (Japanese)

child in the US with no English proficiency in her early childhood. She also experienced struggles through her EMI university undergraduate years. These lived experiences have made her sensitive to the issue, thus affecting her axiology (Ortega, 2005), her theoretical stance, and her understanding of the data. Secondly, her researcher identity as a graduate student and a middle-aged woman as old as the participants' mothers may have eased recruitment and data collection. For example, one participant honestly expressed frustration with fluent speakers in her classroom and how she felt so tired in her EMI classes. This kind of information might not have been disclosed to a younger teacher-researcher. Also, another participant spoke about her embarrassment when she felt her 'imperfect' English was revealed to others during oral social interactions. Being young adults, this topic might have been too embarrassing to disclose if the researcher's age was too close to the participants'.

Findings

This section starts with two classroom scenes, showing the context in which exclusion of the emergent bilinguals occurred. Then, data from the author's observation notes, weekly journals and interviews are provided to demonstrate how the exclusion was co-constructed by both fluent speakers and emergent bilinguals due to inaccurate expectations of each other. Data was collected in Japanese, and the excerpts provided below in English are the author's translations. In presenting the data, underlines are used in excerpts to highlight analytical points.

Marginalization of the Emergent Bilinguals

The following observation notes from the classroom illustrate how turn-taking in the discussion can progress quickly between fluent speakers. For clarity, neither of the students presented in this observation are focus students; however, the interaction is noteworthy in the context of this study. Of particular relevance is the experience of Tsubasa, a fourth-year student and emergent bilingual who is usually talkative and good at argumentative speech and moderating discussion (i.e., eliciting others' opinions). However, as shown in the observation notes below, he could not join the fast-paced discussion by the fluent speakers.

> The group discussion took place in breakout rooms on Zoom. There are Sally and Naomi, fluent speakers of English, and Tsubasa, an emergent bilingual. Naomi reads the discussion question, and Sally answers. She speaks very fast: "I think that's true. It sucks, but..." Naomi comments on what Sally said, and Sally speaks again. The screen displays that the breakout session would end in 60 seconds. Tsubasa could not join this discussion. There was no space in the turn-taking. The group members politely say, "Thanks guys..." and "Thank you..." to each other and go back to the main room on Zoom. (Researcher observation from the sixth-week classroom, November 4, 2020)

The two fluent speakers (Sally and Naomi) were focusing on the content of the discussion, and whether they noticed that their fast-paced turn-taking excluded the emergent bilingual (Tsubasa) remains unclear. For the emergent bilingual, it was almost impossible to stop the fluent speakers' talk to have his turn or ask for any clarifications.

Not being able to participate in the discussion leaves a pain of embarrassment in the heart of the emergent bilinguals, as shown below.

> 今日は全然会話には入っていけなくて、みんなが話しているのをウンウンて相槌打つだけで精一杯だったけど、これから頑張りたいなと思った。I agree with you.しか言えなかった自分がすごい恥ずかしい、、、。

> Today, I couldn't get into the conversation at all. All I could do was just nod and say, "Yes, yes." I was so embarrassed about myself, who could only say, "I agree with you." (Satomi's second-week journal, October 7, 2020)

The final interview with this student, Satomi, revealed that she had invested time, usually ranging between one hour to three days, on her reading assignments to be perfectly ready for the classes. However, disappointedly, she could only nod and say, "I agree with you."

The Absence of Recipient Reactions and Comments: A Gesture of Exclusion?

Rintaro, an emergent bilingual, analyzes how his discomfort varies in discussions with different types of people. He notices that speaking in English is difficult with those who do not provide recipient reactions and comments. On the other hand, the people he feels most comfortable talking with are those who show recipient reactions and elaborate his talk by giving feedback.

> 今回は、（１）ネイティブっぽくないが、意見に対して笑ってくれたり、反応を見せてくれたりする人たちのグループ、（２）ネイティブ1人とそうでない人2人がいて、反応が薄かったグループ、（３）ネイティブの人たちが沢山いて、意見に対して反応してくれるグループがありました。1番英語で話しやすかったのが、1のグループです。ネイティブの人がいなかったことでプレッシャーは減ったと思います。あと意見に対して共感や敷衍してくれる人が多かったので、話すのに不安はなかったです。2はとても英語を話すのが難しく不安でした。自分の英語が伝わっているのかわからなかったです。3はプレッシャーを感じましたが、意見に対して反応をしてくれたので、自信を持つことができました。
>
> Today, I spoke with three kinds of groups: (1) A group of people who were not native speakers but responded to my opinions; (2) a group with one native and two nonnative speakers who did not respond well; and (3) a group with many native speakers who responded to my opinions. The group that was easiest for me to speak with in English was group 1. The fact that there were no native English speakers in the group made me feel less pressured. Also, people showed empathy and elaborated on my opinions, so I was not worried about speaking. The second group was tough, and I was worried about speaking English. I wasn't sure if my English was being understood. For the third group, I felt a lot of pressure, but since people responded to my opinions, I was able to gain confidence. (Rintaro's fourth-week journal, October 21, 2020)

The following observation notes provide a scenario where discussion members do not react to Rintaro's talk. In the discussion room, there are three students: Sally, a native speaker of English, and Emi and Rintaro, who are both emergent bilinguals. Although Rintaro bravely speaks up, he must have experienced some discomfort.

> Sally, Emi, and Rintaro enter the breakout room. Emi kicks off the discussion, "Do you think there is diglossia in Japan?" Rintaro responds, giving an example of using standard Japanese at press conferences. Next, Sally, a native speaker of English, gives her opinion. "We don't use dialect in Tokyo." Sally speaks faster than ever before and ends the conversation in a somewhat unclear manner. Emi and Rintaro listen intently. Sally looks down after she speaks. I [the researcher/observer] don't know why she does so (The zoom screen does not show what she is doing). However, no one asks why. Rintaro then speaks up, but it is not communicated very well, and there are no reactions or comments from either of them. (Researcher observation from the sixth-week classroom, November 4, 2020)

Sally spoke quickly and ambiguously, but no one clarified her statement. Here, Emi and Rintaro might have thought that their inability to comprehend was due to their lack of proficiency. On the contrary, their incomprehension might have been due to Sally's ambiguity in her talk. This misconception can

lead to their—and by extension, other emergent bilinguals'—loss of confidence in an EMI classroom. Also, Sally looked down after she spoke, which could be taken as a gesture of "I do not want to talk anymore." This gesture may make the other students, particularly emergent bilinguals who lack confidence, feel that discussing with them is not worthwhile. There is no explicit discourse of exclusion; however, the absence of reactions and comments is discouraging for emergent bilinguals and may be interpreted as a gesture of exclusion.

The Oversight: The Mismatch of What Is Visible and What Is Interpreted

It is difficult to know whether the discussion members fully comprehend the speech. This difficulty may be because incomprehension is not expressed but hidden under the poker faces of emergent bilinguals. The following reflective notes by the author reveal her own oversight in interpreting the emergent bilinguals' facial expressions.

> Today, we have a presentation by Naomi, who grew up in the US as a bilingual Japanese minority. The teacher is smiling as usual. The others are listening carefully. Naomi shows some pictures of her community heritage language classes. Sally is looking down, but she is nodding. Naomi delivers a very heartfelt presentation. Everyone seems to be absorbed in her presentation. In the middle of the presentation, Naomi asks a question of Sally. After that, Naomi talks about her experience. It is very moving, I guess because the story is based on her actual experience. The teacher says, "Very important point, but we have to look at the watch..." referring to the remaining class time. Naomi says, "I have two more slides..." and continues her presentation. (Researcher observation from the eighth-week classroom, November 18, 2020)

The author took her observation notes, commenting that "everyone seems to be absorbed in her presentation." On the screen, students looked serious and focused. However, this was the author's oversight. In fact, some were struggling, as revealed in Yuria's weekly journal below.

> プレゼンターが2人ともネイティブスピーカーだったからついていくのに必死で疲れた。スライドに書いてないことを早口で言われるとつらい。
>
> Both the presenters [Naomi and Sally] were native speakers, so I was struggling to keep up with the pace. It was hard to catch up when they spoke about things very fast that were not on the presentation slides. (Yuria's eighth-week journal, November 18, 2020)

Yuria writes that she had difficulty comprehending Naomi's presentation and the impromptu interaction with Sally. Here, it should be questioned why I, the researcher-observer, could not sense that Yuria was not comprehending, but interpreted instead that she was "absorbed" in Naomi's presentation. This was because I was focused on Naomi's presentation, which was a narrative of her personal struggles. Such an intense focus deviated my attention and sensitivity away from the emergent bilinguals. Instead, I wrongly assumed that all classmates were mesmerized *too* because they looked serious on the screen and seemed attentively listening.

This episode clearly shows that fluent speakers may not correctly estimate how much emergent bilinguals understand their talk unless explicit clues are provided, such as tilting their head or verbally expressing that they do not understand. Also, speakers are so focused on the content of their talk that there simply may not be enough cognitive space to consider their classmates' comprehension. This may be particularly so with students who are not language teachers. Yuria's weekly journal exemplifies the difficulty of listening to fluent-speaking students/classmates rather than teachers.

> 先生より生徒の英語が聞き取れなすぎて集中力切れた。ほんとに聞き取れないのは先生じゃなくて、ガチネイティブの生徒なんだなと思う。ディスカッションできないから、純ジャパがいるって知ってたら、ゆっくり話して欲しい。
>
> I lost my focus because I couldn't catch the student's English. I really think it's not the teacher's English that I can't catch, but the real native English-speaking students' English. Because I can't participate in the discussion, I hope they slow down if they know there are '*Jun-Japa.*' (Yuria's second-week journal, October 7, 2020)

'Jun-Japa' refers to 'pure Japanese,' a rather self-derogatory term referring to Japanese people who are emergent bilinguals and who have never studied abroad, often associated with deficient proficiency and academic socialization in EMI (Aso, 2014).

Yuria complains that it is inconsiderate of fluent speakers not to notice the *Jun-Japa*—the emergent bilinguals—in the group and slow down. In the final interview, the author asked Yuria why she did not ask the fluent speaker to slow down.

筆者：	ちょっとでも何かあの、すいません、ゆっくり話してくださいって言いづらい雰囲気?
ゆりあ：	いや、言いづらいですよ。もう、なんか、みんなの、なんか時間だから、1人が、なんか「あ、すいません」みたいな、行くのは私は絶対無理です、それは。
筆者：	もし先生とかが、ちょっと、もうちょっと、ゆっくり話してくれないとか、誰かそういったリーダー的な人、あるいは先生がそういうこと言ってくれたら、どうでしょう。
ゆりあ：	そしたら、もう本当に感謝、もう感謝します。本当に感謝って感じ。ありがとうございます。感謝です。
Author:	Do you feel you can't say, "Excuse me, please speak slowly"?
Yuria:	No, that's hard to say! It's everyone's time, so, it's hard for one person to say, "Oh, I'm sorry, but…". No, I can't go like that. Definitely not.
Author:	What if the teacher says, "Well, can you slow down a bit?" or someone like a leader in the group…
Yuria:	Then, I would be really grateful, really grateful. It's like, really grateful. "Thank you." I would appreciate that. (Yuria's interview, February 16, 2021)

In a one-on-one situation, emergent bilinguals may make a clarification or do a negotiation of meaning; however, as explained in Yuria's interview, it is difficult to do so in group discussions. She explains that it is usually awkward for "one person" to stop the class or group discussion by consuming "everyone's time." It should also be noted that Yuria would appreciate it if someone in charge of power (such as a teacher or someone with leadership) would change the situation of fast-paced conversations in the classroom.

Discussion

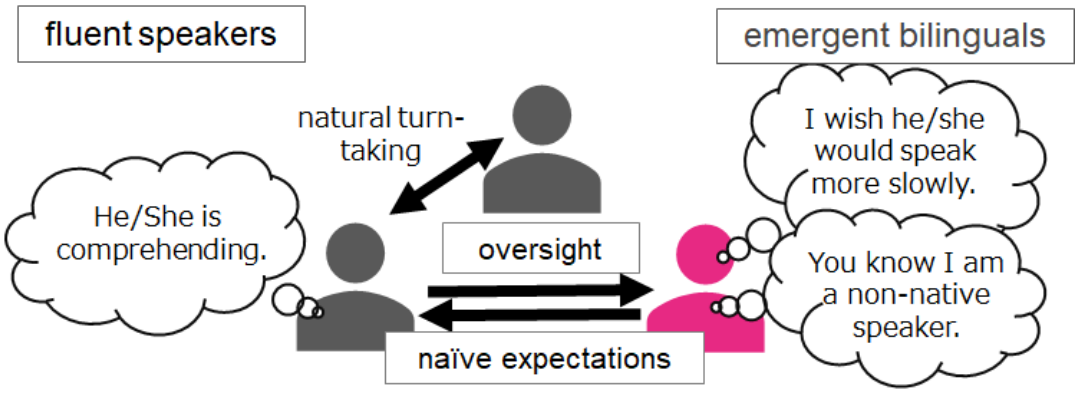
The two more socially oriented perspectives from CA and SLS (Duff, 2010; Levinson & Torreira, 2015; Douglas Fir Group, 2016) support the understanding of the data in the findings and generate the following claims. First, fast speech and fast-paced verbal interactions inhibited the participation of the emergent bilinguals, consequently excluding them from the discussions. This is supported by CA

studies that find that timing in turn-taking is crucial for any speaker (e.g., Levinson & Torreira, 2015). This is understandably so with emergent bilinguals who need to process cognitive demands in their L2. On top of fast-paced interactions, the data showed the fluent speakers' absence of recipient reactions (both physical and verbal) and detaching themselves from the conversation by looking down elsewhere (gaze). According to SLS, this behavior by fluent speakers carries critical nuances for emergent bilinguals. SLS maintains that emergent bilinguals are positioned by others and themselves regarding whether they are identified as "worthy" or "legitimate" (or not) (Duff, 2010, p. 176). In this light, the absence of recipient reactions and avoiding eye contact can communicate to the speaker (i.e., the emergent bilingual) that they are not a worthy or legitimate member of the discussion group. These behaviors can be regarded as a gesture of exclusion, which may demotivate emergent bilinguals from participating in the discussion.

These findings add a new perspective to the current research on the marginalization of less proficient students in EMI in Japan. The previous studies generally have addressed the problem in terms of L2 speaker-based issues, such as insufficient proficiency (e.g., Brown, 2017), anxiety (e.g., Chou, 2018; Kudo et al., 2017), and culture shock (e.g., D'Angelo, 2019). While these are undeniably crucial factors in the EMI problems in Japan, the author wonders whether looking only at these dimensions may entail a danger of attributing the problem exclusively to emergent bilinguals. In this regard, the data of this study additionally present the social dimension of the problem, highlighting that the exclusion was co-constructed in the social interactions. It critically problematizes the norm, ideology, and power of linguistically privileged speakers in the classrooms (Pennycook, 2021) and brings forward the social aspect of the issue as a factor to consider for more inclusive EMI classrooms.

The second point the findings indicate is that the co-construction of exclusion was unintentional. The provided data suggested that there was a mismatch of expectations on the part of both the fluent speakers and the emergent bilinguals. As exemplified, the incomprehension, frustration, discomfort, and pain were not noticed in the observer's reflective notes. To her, all these emotions and cognitive struggles were hidden under the emergent bilinguals' poker faces. Thus, it can be inferred that it was difficult for fluent speakers—including the researcher—to perceive their incomprehension and needs, such as slowing down the turn-taking. Similarly, the emergent bilinguals' expectation to be understood by the fluent speakers concerning their needs without explicitly expressing them might have been too naïve. Because of both parties' oversight, both fluent speakers and emergent bilinguals unintentionally co-constructed the exclusion of the emergent bilinguals from the discussion group, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. *The co-construction of marginalization of emergent bilinguals in an EMI classroom*



There are several limitations to this study. First, the study did not provide transcription of actual classroom interactional data. Such data would provide more credibility and confirmability of the findings. Secondly, the study did not interview the fluent speakers in the class. If the data had included the native speakers' views, confirmability could have been more robust; however, I refrained from doing so for ethical reasons. Also, due to the scope of this research, the analysis did not cover the nature of online classrooms (using Zoom) in contrast to traditional face-to-face classrooms. However, this study sufficiently pointed out the unintentional exclusion regardless of whether the class was delivered online or face-to-face.

Conclusion

This study made a novel attempt to look critically at the marginalization of emergent bilinguals in a Japanese educational context through a theoretical lens of language weaponization, where a foreign language (English) is used as a medium of instruction. The study explored the language practices in microlevel social interactions between the linguistically privileged (more proficient) and the less privileged (less proficient) in a classroom, and illustrated the exclusion of less proficient speakers, harming these less fluent speakers. The study also highlighted that the exclusion was unintentional, which is problematic since people may be weaponizing their language practices without realizing it. The point may be crucial in understanding how exclusion may occur unintentionally in classrooms, and calls for more critical investigations of the taken-for-granted language practices and norms in EMI classrooms. Considering the pain of struggling marginalized students in Japanese EMI (Kiyota, 2022), the author problematizes such unintentional exclusion of the emergent bilinguals and calls for more awareness and effort to ensure equity and inclusiveness in EMI classrooms to develop the potential of all students.

The findings of this study have the following pedagogical implications. Firstly, instructors may direct students' attention to members' comprehension when there are proficiency gaps among class members. They may choose to slow down their speech accordingly. Also, both fluent and less fluent speakers should be encouraged to always give feedback to what they hear and express appreciation of each other's contributions to the discussion. Secondly, emergent bilinguals are encouraged to not blame themselves for their emerging proficiency, anxiety, or nonacculturation, but instead recognize that they are legitimate and valuable members of their class community.

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"A Hard Time Seeing the Relevance": Race and Discourse Identity in Language Teacher Preparation

Tasha Austin

Abstract

Perceptions of linguistic deficiency represent an extension of the devaluation of Black and racialized speakers which impacts their participation and representation, particularly within language classrooms. Though racism is directly challenged in current education research, language education remains a fertile space for weaponizing seemingly race-neutral terms like 'culture' and 'identity' as a means of minimizing the importance of race and other sociocultural factors on classroom language learning. Through semistructured interviews, this critical qualitative case study investigates the racial ideologies of three language teacher educators (LTEs) at Franklin University. Findings suggest the de-racialization of 'culture' and 'identity' influences the goals, design, and execution of instruction in this language teacher preparation program. Implications include guidance for language teacher preparation research and practice inclusive of centering race and clarifying the roles of race and power in language teacher preparation. Critically confronting who benefits or suffers when we use the term 'culture' in lieu of race in teacher preparation is also recommended.

Keywords: teacher preparation, anti-Blackness, language education, raciolinguistic ideology

Introduction

Race and language, while defined differently, are difficult to disentangle ideologically (Baker-Bell, 2020; Baugh, 2015; Smitherman, 1998). Gramsci defines ideology as "the power of the ideas of the ruling class to overshadow and eradicate competing views and to become, in effect, the commonsense view of the world" (Bartolomé, 2010, p. 508). Hierarchical ideologies of race (Omi & Winant, 1993) and language (Baker-Bell, 2020; Baugh, 2015; Flores & Rosa, 2019; Hudley, 2016) are critically engaged in the literature but are challenged to a lesser degree as a unit in the ways it impacts teacher education. This omission poses persistent challenges within teacher education spaces (Chang-Bacon, 2022; Cochran-Smith, 2004). Despite the diminishing white US population (Frey, 2020), the overwhelming majority of teachers (Geiger, 2018) and teacher educators responsible for teaching students characterized as urban and multicultural are white. The absence of Black and minoritized teachers can

Contact: Tasha Austin, Rutgers University
E-mail: tasha.austin@gse.rutgers.edu

further impose white dominant ideologies (Sleeter, 2017) upon their students that are reflective of the raciodemographic positioning (Milner, 2012) of many white teachers among the 'ruling class.' While belonging to a minoritized group does not automatically ensure one's ability to address the racial and cultural complexities of teaching (Milner, 2010), the likelihood of having personally experienced the material impacts of racism as it pertains to language is not in favor of the predominant demographic category to which teachers and teacher educators belong. Taken together, this raciolinguistic ideology within teacher preparation manifests in ways that reinforce its seemingly natural stratifying power.

Racism is directly challenged in most current education research, yet language education remains a fertile space for weaponizing seemingly 'race neutral' terms like *culture* and *identity*, minimizing the importance of race and other sociocultural factors (Kubota & Lin, 2006) upon classroom language learning. While shifts towards culturally relevant (Allen et al., 2017) and sustaining (Paris & Alim, 2017) approaches that dare to name realities of Black and other minoritized populations increase, language teacher preparation often engages in neoliberal multicultural languaging politics which rebrand race and issues of power in terms of culture (Melamed, 2006). Hence, the sociopolitical consciousness necessary to effectively discuss race remains underexplored, particularly through its euphemization as *culture* (Von Esch et al., 2020) despite calls for intercultural (Byram, 1997) and cultural competencies (Ladson-Billings, 1995) within the field's continued race-evasive (Chang-Bacon, 2022) approach. The inability to connect the legacy of school as a site of racialization to language education spaces due to coded language can prevent critical and thorough research on race in (language) teacher education.

The growing awareness of how race and language are conaturalized (Rosa & Flores, 2017) has sparked language teacher educators (LTEs) to investigate their instructional practices, the impact of centering race in their curricular selections (Austin & Hsieh, 2021), and the explicit design for critical reflection with their preservice teachers (PSTs). Still, investigations centering the ideologies of LTEs themselves are less prevalent in the literature (Bacon, 2020; Chang-Bacon, 2022). The present study addresses this gap by investigating how race conceptually emerges within teacher preparation. To better understand the conceptual and linguistic weaponization of race-evasiveness among LTEs, the following research questions were employed:

(1) According to self-report, how do LTEs at Franklin University[1] understand 'culture'?

(2) How do LTEs at Franklin University discuss *tacitly* and/or *explicitly* addressing culture and identity in the preparation of language teachers?

Theoretical Framework

Language use deemed as unstandard—when and *because* it is produced from Black bodies—forms an intersectional (Combahee River Collective, 1983) racialized language assemblage (Rosa & Flores, 2017) that renders Black language users ineligible for resources (inclusive of acknowledgement and instruction) in US schools. Language remains a site of cultural gatekeeping within a US context where contradictions between race, class, and culture are mature (Leonardo, 2012) and unquestioned. In fact, teacher preparation programs treat the problem of the cultural (Bhabha, 2012) as interchangeable with that of race, absorbing it into a cluster of classifications (Hall, 2021) associated with inferiority.

The notion of a single God-given culture derives from European feudal hierarchies (Wynter, 1992) as a means to dissociate the bourgeoisie from the servant class (Stoler, 1995), and still permeates modern institutions both discursively and conceptually. Supposed cultural deficiency, or

[1] Institution and participants were anonymized per institutional review board stipulations.

nonwhiteness, is marked in language classrooms as a failure to produce standard, academic, or appropriate language (Alim, 2007; Rosa & Flores, 2017). This raciolinguistic ideology in schools can result in Black and minoritized language users' placement in long-term English language (EL) tracks (Brooks, 2019) absent from advanced levels of world language (WL) study (Anya, 2011), and pathologized for their use of Black English (Baker-Bell, 2020). These class- and race-based conceptions of culture become weaponized in 'common-sense' discussions about language teaching and learning, encouraging the surrender of nonwhite/dominant ways of being for potential access to social and material educational resources.

Since language teaching professionals demonstrate race-evasiveness (Von Esch et al., 2020) by coding colonial issues of power as 'cultural' deficits, it is essential to consider the raciolinguistic implications of what LTEs mean by the term 'culture' when reflecting upon their identities and enacted practices.

Literature Review

Until recently, a lack of literature on race in language teaching (Kubota & Lin, 2006; Von Esch et al., 2020) has impacted the proliferation of culture as an uncritical euphemism for race within language education (Von Esch et al., 2020). Considering and instructing (language) learners apart from their racialized sociopolitical context (Pascual y Cabo & Prada, 2018) yields negative results for their linguistic advancement (Anya, 2016), their ability to implement (Jacobs et al., 2015; Kohli, 2009) or transfer practices (Martel, 2015) and affirm their racialized languaging practices (Bustamante & Novella, 2019). This separation further diminishes PST ability to refute language learning as ideologically neutral (Bacon, 2020). Studies centered on the experiences of language PSTs and transfer (or lack thereof) of practices outside of university contexts reflects this inability to clearly articulate issues of power and race.

Lived experiences provide a lens through which (language) teaching and learning are understood. The ways that Black and racialized groups experience their contexts, however, are not welcomed in classrooms (Lindahl et al., 2021). Anya's multiple-case study of Black American students studying Portuguese in Brazil (2016) found that failure to recognize that Black students enter classrooms aware of their sociopolitical positioning and nondominant languaging practices limits their ability to advance in proficiency, as they are disinvested in inauthentic representations of communities of practice. For the 42 racialized heritage Spanish speakers in Pascual y Cabo and Prada's (2018) study, service-learning opportunities enhanced confidence in Spanish usage and reinforced preexisting bicultural and bilingual participant identities. Despite linguistically responsive instruction implemented with 50 Latinx teacher candidates across various disciplines, participants in Lindahl et al.'s study (2021) succumbed to naturalized hierarchical language ideologies based on their associations of language policing and schools. These findings build upon Kohli's (2009) work with twelve PSTs of color who recognized the same racial and linguistic hierarchies they recalled from their own childhood classroom experiences being replicated at the clinical placements within their urban teacher preparation program. The absence of critical discussions on raciolinguistic power hierarchies within the educational experiences of these groups did not inhibit their ability to recognize these dynamics, it simply reinforced that the classroom was not a place to disrupt such sociopolitical realities.

Bustamante and Novella (2019) confirm these findings in their qualitative multiple-case study wherein Latina heritage language PSTs had their linguistic practices devalued as not standard or grammatical enough for their WL pedagogy courses. The Black American participants from Anya's 2016 study depended on the nonclassroom community as a preferred context for Portuguese languaging in the absence of discussing sociopolitical realities within the classroom. Still, while the

Latina PSTs from Bustamante and Novella's (2019) study used their language skills in the community, they later found said skills were not valued in their university-based courses, as they were not considered academic enough. Similarly, raciolinguistic ideologies were either transferred, as with Bacon's (2020) mixed-methods study with 127 novice teachers, or endured through societal norms, as with Dobbs & Leider's (2021) qualitative study with fifteen novice and early career teachers. Participants in these mandated structured English immersion courses displayed beliefs in hierarchical racialized monolingual language ideologies (Bacon, 2020) even without direct instruction on the topic. While these studies suggest ontological understandings of race- and language-based hierarchies are strong and hard to shift within teacher education courses, the literature does not attend to the goals or orientations of the (language) teacher educators who either designed and or instructed the courses and the possible influences of their own lived experiences upon their practices.

The goals of (language) PSTs and teacher preparation programs may be misaligned, and LTEs serve an important role in creating opportunities for language PSTs to navigate these differences and create their own practice with sufficient modeling and support. At a college in the Midwest, a case study performed with a single Spanish-language PST (Martel, 2015) sought to determine how a prospective language educator's identity evolves over the course of the teacher preparation program. The qualitative methods employed indicated that the PST taught in ways that appeased her instructors despite the approach failing to center her students, as was her preference. Similarly to Bustamante and Novella's study (2019), Martel (2015) shared evidence of the shifting nature of PSTs' conceptions of language in light of university-based instruction. Nevertheless, findings indicate that the potential agency that language PSTs exert reflects the support they receive in navigating mismatches between their university programs, their clinical placement mentorship, and their individual orientations.

When aligned, direct instruction on culture and power within language teacher education can involve both critical reflection and language awareness (Lindahl et al., 2021). For example, in Jacobs et al.'s (2015) study, PSTs defined culture for themselves, reflected on the provided definition of culture with regard to their lived experiences, and connected those experiences to issues of power and race that they saw in their placements. While Bacon (2020) found an unintentional transfer of ideologies, and Martel (2015) suggests ideological transfer may not occur in spite of intent, Jacobs et al. (2015) posit an uneven adoption of critical consciousness despite overt planning and direct instruction on culture. Jacobs et al. (2015), relying on Terrell & Lindsey's (2008) work, clarify *culture* for PSTs as

> a set of practices and beliefs shared by members of a particular group that distinguish that group from other groups [including] all characteristics of human description [...] age, gender, socio-economic status, geography, ancestry, religion, language, history, sexual orientation, physical and mental level of ableness, occupation, and other affiliations. (Terrell & Lindsey, 2008, p. 16)

The definition of culture offered to PSTs in Jacobs et al.'s (2015) study did not include racialized and systemic dimensions of power despite efforts to employ culturally responsive teaching within the program. Thus, the literature indicates that while impact is possible between TEs and (language) PSTs, the influence of varying conceptions of 'culture' among LTEs upon their instruction of language PSTs remains unclear.

The literature reflects that beliefs about language and culture among language PSTs evolve, but that they are often not framed sociopolitically in terms of power and race. While these beliefs are influenced by the racialized lived experiences of PSTs outside of classrooms in addition to the institutional rigidity of school, they can also be affected, for better or worse, by LTE instruction. The degree to which this influence is reflective of LTEs understanding of and experience with critical self-reflections of their identities as cultural and racialized beings, remains underexplored. The present

study aims to determine what LTEs report as their understanding of culture (inclusive of their own), and the ways in which they draw from those understandings to address culture and identity in their practices with language PSTs.

Methodology

This critical qualitative case study (Merriam, 2009) drew from a preliminary program review (see Appendix A) from which the interview protocol found in Appendix B was derived. I was interested in the social context within which the LTEs at Franklin University were operating, as well as how they made meaning and understood their roles and approaches. In light of these goals, the critical case study method suited my questions best, as they also aimed to impact positive change (Merriam, 2009) in teacher preparation.

Context and Background

This critical qualitative case study took place at a public university in the northeast of the United States. Demographically, Franklin University's School of Education more closely reflects the state of education across the country (AACTE, 2013) with seventy-five percent of matriculated students identifying as white. An emphasis on urban social justice is a recent shift in the school's mission and vision and has been accompanied by structural and curricular changes. These shifts reflect a commitment to centering class, race, language, sexual identity, and the theoretical and ideological considerations that impact discrimination based on these categories in both pedagogy and curriculum design. Structurally, Franklin University added faculty with practical expertise to support PSTs on-site as they are strategically placed in urban districts for clinical experiences.

I reviewed publicly available program and course information for Franklin University (Appendix A) and noticed varying emphases upon sociocultural factors that impact language instruction. This, in conjunction with the literature on race and language teaching and teacher preparation, led me to address the research questions:

(1) According to self-report, how do LTEs at Franklin University understand 'culture'?

(2) How do LTEs at Franklin University discuss *tacitly* and/or explicitly addressing culture and identity in the preparation of language teachers?

Participants

The participants in this critical qualitative case study (see Table 1) were instructors from the large public research institution, Franklin University. Nonprobabilistic criterion sampling was used to identify language education instructors in Franklin University's teacher preparation program (Merriam, 2009). Participants met the following criteria: at least three years of experience teaching in the language education preparation program, including having taught a methods course. I sought to include a representative from each subdiscipline—World Languages, English as a Second Language (ESL), and Bilingual/Bicultural Education—resulting in all language methods instructors from Franklin University's Language Education program as participants in this study (N=3).

Table 1. *Participant Raciodemographics and Discipline Areas*

	Name	Discipline	Self-Identification
Franklin University Language Education Methods Instructors	Sharon	English as a Second Language	White middle-class Italian Catholic
	Noelia	World Languages	White upper middle-class American with (Iberian) Spanish background
	Ana	Bilingual/Bicultural Education	Working-class Dominican and American

Like more than seventy percent of faculty in US higher education (Yakoboski, 2015), the participants are adjuncts. Sharon is a part-time lecturer in ESL methods, Academic English in the Content Areas, and Educational Technology. She identifies as a white woman and has taught ESL in the K–12 setting and served on state-level associations for language educators. Noelia is a supervisor of World Languages in a K–12 district and as a part-time lecturer, has taught World Language methods, among other language education courses, for the past three years. She identifies as American with (Iberian) Spanish background. The final participant, Ana, is a bilingual middle school educator who serves as a state-level representative for a language education association. For the past three years as an adjunct, Ana has taught Assessment of English Language Learners (ELLs), Principles of Language Acquisition, and ESL Methods and Assessment. She identifies as Dominican-American. These three participants represent the entirety of the methods course instruction within the language education program at Franklin.

Instruments

I emailed each participant to solicit one-on-one interviews. The hour-long semistructured interviews were audio recorded, then transcribed and stored on a password-protected computer. I composed data memos immediately following each session, and participants member-checked their transcribed interviews. The transcripts, memos, and review of the programmatic and course data provided a comprehensive understanding of culture and identity as understood by the participants. Over multiple data analysis meetings, low incidences of coding discrepancies were resolved.

Data Analysis

After reading all transcripts and listening to the interview audio multiple times, I executed open and inductive coding (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996) to determine emergent codes. I returned to the data for a second pass using the third tenet of culturally relevant pedagogy, sociopolitical consciousness, for axial coding. I isolated this tenet based on the literature, which reflects a tendency towards race-evasiveness (Chang-Bacon, 2022) and coded language (Bryan & Gerald, 2020) frequently used in (language) teacher education. The specific definition I use for sociopolitical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 1998) can be found in Table 2.

Table 2. *Coding for Data Analyses*

Pass 1: Open Coding (Sample initial themes & codes)	**Pass 2: Sociopolitical Consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 1998)**	**Pass 3: Identity as an Analytic Lens (Gee, 2000)**
Identity *Culture* *Language* *Ethnicity* *Geography* *Beliefs* *Nationality* *Loyalty* *Pride/belonging*	(P) involves teachers partnering with students (C) challenge a racist curriculum and debunk its presentation as neutral and objective	(I) institutional: "institutional confirmation is secured by authority figures associated with said institutions" (D) discourse: "discourse confirms identity via dialogue with individuals considered rational"
Culture *Products* *Practices* *Perspectives* *SES* *Tolerance* *Race* *Social context* *Values*		
Instruction *Savior/helper:banking* *Superiority* *Comfort* *Working together* *Convenience* *Cultural adaptations* *Clarity/being explicit* *Responsibility* *Relevance* *Values* *Asset approach* *Bidirectional learning* *Modeling* *Reflection*	(S) a pedagogy through cultural points of strength that shift the locus of reference away from dominant white world views	

The first coding pass addressed the first research question: "according to self-report, what are the ways in which language teacher educators *tacitly* or explicitly address culture and identity in the preparation of language teachers?" After coding for sociopolitical consciousness, in the third and final pass, I coded the data using Gee's identity as an analytic lens (2000) to unpack the discursive systems (Hall, 2021) the participants employed to validate their identities. This constant comparison method revealed racialized and power-affiliated constructions of identity that paralleled the instructional moves the participants described as they distanced from or approximated themselves towards racialized classifications. During interrater reliability sessions, transcript excerpts were lengthened or shortened upon recommendation to better demonstrate these themes.

Findings and Discussion

I present my findings under three themes: (1) Duality and Belonging, (2) Helping You Belong Here, and (3) Limited Experience, Limited Application. Conceptually, each theme explicates the coded usage

of the term 'culture,' peripheralizing the sociopolitical realities of race and power in language teacher preparation. At the same time, these three themes attend to both research questions.

Duality and Belonging: Defining Identity

Identities as we perceive and enact them are socially situated (Gee, 2004) and our linguistic choices indicate both proximity and distance from desired classifications, or the ways in which we language the "kind of person" we are (Gee, 2000, p. 99). Conveyed below through alignment with discourse and institutional "values, norms, perspectives and assumptions" (Gee, 2004, p. 69), the participants vied to be accepted and/or removed from racialized identity categories through their lexical choices throughout the interview process. For example, Sharon understood the words *culture* and *identity* as referring to religion, language, and ethnic identity. She shared that her Italian-Catholic roots were the ones with which she most identified.

> So, growing up my parents were from two different cultures. My dad's family was Italian-American, and he was the first generation born in the United States. My grandmother spoke to me only in Italian. I'm guessing I felt more comfortable but, even then, I felt a loyalty to my mom, who did not speak Italian or understand Italian at all. Her family chases back to the American revolution. So, her great-great-grandmother participated in the Daughters of the American Revolution.

Whereas Italian as an ethnicity is important in Sharon's estimation, she peripheralizes it linguistically by affirming her discourse identity through her 'loyalty' to her mother. She then reinforces her belongingness through an institutional validation in referencing the Daughters of the American Revolution. This institution, according to their website (https://www.dar.org/), has evolved since its inception in the late 1800s and now overtly focuses on "patriotism" through a "better education" for women from "any race, religion or ethnic background" who have descended from a US soldier who fought in the American Revolutionary War (2021). Still, it is most commonly known for its vigilance against "un-American activities" between the first and second World Wars (Wendt, 2013, p. 962). In aligning herself with this specific institution, Sharon unwittingly relays her sense of belonging not just to a historically exclusive institution, but one known for surveilling and policing 'unAmericanness' by banning African American members and seeking to "Americanize" the country's foreign population (Wendt, 2013, p. 944).

While being descended of a 'first generation' Italian, and having roots in the 'American Revolution,' were points of loyalty for Sharon, she also identified as being of ethnic Jewish descent—a detail from which she distanced herself in describing her upbringing.

> Somebody in the family … [an] ancestor was married to a man who was Jewish and was then disowned by the rest of the family. And so my mom's family came from the Jewish side and so they were mostly culturally or ethnically Jewish. So, they did not go to ... I've never seen a synagogue and my mom never went to one. So that's how we grew up. The family knew nothing about Judaism at all.

To round out her 'two cultures' comment, Sharon elaborates on her Jewish background by sharing that her Jewish-by-marriage 'ancestor' was 'disowned.' The distance between Sharon and this ethnocultural designation is far in time as well as relationship, and she completes the sentiment by clarifying how unfamiliar Judaism is to her religiously since she has 'never seen a synagogue.' Belonging in this way is constructed discursively through family members for whom Sharon demonstrates a sense of closeness. Both her institutional and discourse identities are planted in a socio-political context that has, over time, aligned her with whiteness, and both religious and linguistic privilege. She has no facility or need to describe herself in terms of race, based upon her understanding of the terms *culture* and *identity*.

Noelia used language and geography markers to define her culture and identity. As she routinely summered in Spain, she described feeling 'between two worlds,' yet only the spelling and pronunciation of her name set her apart within US classrooms.

> I've always identified myself as an American, but an American with a Spanish background. Very often when people look at my name or they don't know me beforehand, they wonder, who is that? Like who is this, Noelia Martínez? Like, what does she look like? And then when they meet me with my blue eyes and very pale skin, they're like, Oh, wait a minute. Okay.

Noelia's self-description depends on the institution of school to solidify her identity as American. Phenotypic markers of 'blue eyes' and 'very pale skin' affirm this belonging. While never naming race, Noelia precisely identifies these physical features that offer assurance to those around her and affirm her Americanness. Neither Sharon nor Noelia used "white" to describe their race until I specifically asked in a follow-up interview to use race as a descriptor. Both participants, when asked, provided the direct response, "white," without further explanation.

Ana described her culture and identity in a complex, situated way. Her response depicted relationships and the impact of environment upon individuals as a means of making sense of who she was and how she understood herself.

> When I define [culture] for myself, like not the academics, it's the way I view and live life. It's the perspective with which I view and interpret and live my life perspective. That's my [definition] ... and what does that perspective run on? Traditions, histories, experiences … the people around me where I've lived, where I've worked, how I speak, who I speak with and speak with my languages ...

Ana also alludes to geography and mentions language in her definition, yet neither are described as stable categories. She is the sole participant to mention traditions and histories, which extends her understanding of culture as evolving and contextual, and the through-line of her response is plurality rather than duality (i.e., this or that). It is Ana alone who affirms her identity, 'not the academics,' or any institution—and race, still, was not a part of that description.

All participants described their identities through belongingness, but Ana, in contrast to Noelia and Sharon, identified herself as belonging more expansively to dynamic histories, perspectives, languages, and traditions. Avoiding race terminologically in these ways either, in Sharon's and Noelia's cases, approximates them institutionally to power and whiteness by surrendering the foreignness of language and physical features, or, in Ana's case, distances her from dominant categories through disidentification with a fixed monocultural norm.

Helping You Belong Here: The Role of Culture

Sharon used examples from previous cohorts with current ones to explain how she supports ESL PSTs in tolerating differences among themselves. These differences for her are centered upon class, and she shares that it is the role of the institution to provide resources to PSTs who may lack them in order to promote equality within the learning context by ensuring learners can execute tasks.

> A lot of our teachers tend to be middle class […] so they tend to teach through the eyes of a middle class person […] They come to me shocked, they'll say things like, I remember one [PST] saying "Well, what's the big deal if [the university] doesn't give you the $50 you need for some kind of resources?" [...] And I said some people don't have $50 and some people feel that it's not their place to put out the $50. I said, so you've got 2 things happening here: the schools should make sure that the resources are there, but they don't always have the money [because] it may have been allocated elsewhere.

Sharon offers institutional critique in highlighting that resources students need 'may have been allocated elsewhere' to encourage her ESL PSTs to be more tolerant of class-based diversity. In the

interpersonal critique, Sharon highlights that one's experiences may limit the way they understand people around them and identifies that 'teachers tend to be middle class' and therefore teach 'through' their middle-class 'eyes.' She encourages an additional layer of discretion when a similar theme materializes from her reflections on her direct instruction.

> We talked about how when somebody doesn't have something how you can quietly give that to that person. And you don't have to say, "Well, you don't have it," you can say, "I forgot mine as well. I sometimes cannot place my pencil. I know I put it somewhere, but I forgot where I put it." That type of thing, you know, give them suggestions rather than say, "I can't believe he comes to school every day without a pencil."

The limits of Sharon's institutional critique appear to be where they meet possible solutions. She encourages student teachers to 'quietly' provide what students need thereby helping them fit into an institution that she also acknowledges may not allocate resources properly. Thus, her instruction suggests individuals should adjust to the system, rather than challenging that system through asking critical questions about resource allocation. Through her instruction, Sharon tacitly suggests language PSTs assimilate to gain belonging within the institution.

In discussing the role of culture in instruction, Noelia too offers institutional critique in that she finds the gendered nature of the Spanish language a barrier to students who do not fit the binary of ending feminine nouns and adjectives with an 'a' and masculine ones with an 'o.'

> I feel that teachers themselves need to be aware of who they are, and they need to also be aware of who they're serving and then they can start to bring to light all of the different aspects […]
>
> Not related to culture, but related to language is the gender neutrality that has come up. There might be various [barriers] related to sexual identity that might need to be broken. So, the classroom climate is super important [...] creating a comfortable, safe space for every single student […] what we as teachers need to allow for with these languages that are masculine, feminine. So, do we let the kids put Es and Xs on everything just so that way, if they're identifying as gender neutral, they can go ahead and choose the appropriate letter that they feel works for them.

Noelia, like Sharon, centers on the lived experiences of teachers as affecting their instruction. She then clarifies that gendered language, to her, is not cultural. This response is a musing rather than a reflection of Noelia's instruction. Still, Noelia's dual role as a WL teacher educator and supervisor at a local district suggests that these insights influence her leadership with in-service Spanish (or Romance language) teachers.

> So, in Spain, [the] 'Real Academia' is rejecting everything. But, I was just having a conversation with my director of curriculum about this [topic] this morning [...] that languages evolve, as new cultures and 10,000, 50,000 people are using the X, well then we're using the X. So that is also a part of *your classroom environment* [...] being open to allowing kids to choose at this...

Noelia directly challenges The Royal Spanish Academy (RAE), which self-defines as "una institución cultural dedicada a la regularización lingüística entre el mundo hispanohablante" (RAE, 2019, para. 1), a cultural institution dedicated to linguistic regulation in the Spanish-speaking world—and concludes that it is within the teacher's responsibility to take up this challenge on a classroom level by 'allowing kids to choose' even without the expressed sanctioning of the use of *x* in place of *a* (for feminine) or *o* (for masculine) by the RAE. Unlike Ana, Noelia's response suggests that she finds immediate resistance to the institution a valid means of creating belonging at a classroom level, even if the larger context does not respond in kind.

For Ana, preparing Bilingual/Bicultural teachers prioritizes the visibility of bilingualism through her own embodied experiences. She describes her role as one of advocating for bilingual youth with monolingual language PSTs to counter deficit assumptions about bilingualism.

> We're able to assume that you don't have a language. People still look at you like, Oh, your English is too good—wait, where you from? No, no, no. Really? Where are you from? Where are you from? What is, what does that feel like? I can speak to that. A kid might not be able to speak to it […] I can trouble it.

In reflecting on experiences and how they inform her role in teaching culture and identity, Ana, like Noelia, has personally been rejected as a language user. Whereas Noelia's name seemed to not 'match' the whiteness of her physical appearance, it was Ana's English proficiency which caused a similar level of racialization. While yet unnamed, it was race that caused Noelia's belongingness to be confirmed in the same way it delegitimized Ana's. Still, Ana finds this purported languagelessness (Rosa, 2016) a valuable opportunity to 'trouble' the racially typified 'cluster of classifications' that render her unintelligible as the legitimate user of any language, through leveraging her institutional power as an LTE.

> I have one student who is adamant about English and English only and she's very deficit minded and we're working through that. I'm hoping to do that through the reality of the policy—"Here is the EdTPA [Educative Teacher Performance Assessment] rubric."

Despite Ana's affiliation with Franklin University, in her role as a Bilingual/Bicultural LTE she relies on an extension of institutional power in the language of the teacher preparation assessment (i.e., EdTPA) to discourage deficit beliefs about bilingual students. Whereas Ana can be questioned and delegitimized despite her role due to her racialization, policy offers her an institutional identity (and credibility) that monolingual language PSTs must acknowledge.

Reflecting on one's identity caused Sharon and Noelia to feel a need to choose (among ethnicities, languages, geographies, etc.). Yet, shifting the topic to culture revealed a level of engaging said binary differently for both participants. Sharon equated culture to class and suggested that those who have more, individuals or institutions, should provide for those with less and in a discreet manner, even without institutional support. Alternatively, Noelia supported resisting the either/or binary of gender altogether, and while accounting for gender outside of her definition of culture, found it important enough to address during the interview, an additional demonstration of resistance towards upholding the status quo. While acknowledging that teachers teach from who they are, neither Sharon nor Noelia found this institutional tension a space to unpack in their own identities, but under the guise of 'culture' felt more at liberty to engage ideas about power and privilege instructionally. Ana, while implicitly affirming that one teaches who they are, was the sole participant to rely upon her institutional identity, in this case, to further the mission and vision of the school towards social justice and equity through the teacher licensure exam.

Limited Experience, Limited Applicability: In Practice

In discussing her practice, Sharon explicitly uses the term 'culturally responsive teaching' (CRT) to describe her goals with ESL language PSTs. Her methods for demonstrating said practices are lecture- and video-based.

> We have a lot of articles that we have them [PSTs] read dealing with CRT and I showed them examples. I give them personal examples as well as using various videos of classroom teaching where they can see CRT and then we dissect it. What aspects of CRT do you see in this video? What do you see them doing? What could she do to improve? We always try to take it one step further, so that they understand because they're going to be dealing with Danielson as well as EdTPA, where it's always going up

> another step. So, they need to know that even though that looks like a good lesson, there's always something you could do to make it better.

Using videos and lectures, Sharon elicits ideas from language PSTs to identify possibilities for CRT and allows for institutional alignment through the Danielson Framework (a teacher evaluation instrument commonly used in the region and at Franklin) and through the teacher licensure test, EdTPA. This is meant to encourage student compliance to 'go one step further' with their instruction. To determine active rather than passive practices that might reflect Sharon's explicit teaching of culture, I asked about instances of resistance she has experienced.

> Sometimes they're able to make connections and sometimes not. There was a section of it about translanguaging, which you know is a hot issue. The students had a hard time seeing the relevance of that and understanding the difference between code-switching and translanguaging. The relevance issue went to the lack of interest maybe on the part of the clinical field observation teachers. Some of them came back and told me that the teachers outright came out and said that they felt that it was a deterrent to English-language learning. Some of the classroom teachers told the students that they felt it was something that wouldn't actually be feasible in the classroom because […] we have several different classrooms where several different languages are being used. The classroom teachers' concern was mainly in comprehending what the students were saying.

Here, unlike Sharon's previous willingness to challenge an institutional or individual class-based sentiment, she concedes to the discursive construction of translanguaging as 'a deterrent to English language learning.' Per Sharon's explicit description, it is the clinical placement (Jacobs et al., 2015; Kohli, 2009) which serves as institutional resistance to this progressive language learning approach, and the infeasibility of translanguaging was 'the classroom teachers' concern.'

In teaching WL PSTs about culture and identity, Noelia discusses her practice through activities that honor student names. She offers personal reflections about how she was academically miscategorized based on a racialized linguistic assumption—that her physical appearance as white meant she was not bilingual *enough* to be in advanced language classes. Noelia muses that this resulted in her not being challenged in her Spanish classes. This mismatch between perceived identity category and language ability is a theme maintained from Noelia's insistence on languaging gender in a way that students experience it rather than relying upon the linguistic binary that exists in Spanish (despite a lack of institutional support). Her approach to affirming names is through ice-breaker activities.

> I've always been very cognizant of pronouncing names correctly to really make sure that the students know that I value however different their name is. Because very often my name is mispronounced and it's just chopped to pieces [as a student] especially in my, in my Spanish classes, I remember very often the teachers would turn to me or relied on me or sometimes the students would gravitate towards me […] because of knowing Spanish, they were like, "Oh, well, you know, you'll, you'll get a hundred on this" or "I should work with you cause we're going to do awesome on the projects; you know everything already." So, my Spanish courses never really challenged me, and you know, the language or the, the context of learning the language.

The ability to partner with students and challenge racist assumptions reflects Noelia's previous stance on gender binaries. To better gauge additional instructional moves along other dimensions of identity inclusive of race and class, I asked that Noelia share some practices from her instruction.

> We talked a little bit about self-identity, but I could have certainly done more as the instructor of how we can know ourselves better and who we are and then how we can also tap into our students more. We did 'getting to know you' stuff like the first day of class, like and I just did different world language activities with cards and dice and icebreaker sort of things. But I could have definitely emphasized that a little bit more.

The limits of Noelia's instructional moves match her experiences with identity-affirming language. She acknowledges that she 'could have certainly done more' beyond the first-day and icebreaker activities, and there is evidence in her responses that she finds language which matches one's lived realities worth fighting for. Still, she did not explicitly provide instruction reflective of those beliefs for her WL PSTs.

Ana's work with Bilingual/Bicultural language PSTs reflects her embodied experiences in navigating a pluralistic identity. She anticipates a tension, and insists upon it for the sake of instruction.

> It helps to be bilingual when you're talking about what it feels like to be bilingual […] I helped the students, my particular student, to think different. I changed her perspective of Latinx people and culture and that she now understands that we have many histories and many different traditions and it's so beautiful. […] So, with this Methods [course] they're gonna find that I'm going to force them to bring in their experiences, what they're seeing and they're questioning into their readings and have those debates and really grapple because the expectation is that they will see value and tolerate honor or appreciate and harness [their experiences]. And I think that's where the conflict is going to come up and helping them work through that because they are mostly white coming from upper middle-class backgrounds.

Ana suggests that her own bilingualism can affect the way Bilingual/Bicultural language PSTs understand their students, and that she will 'force them [PSTs] to bring in their experiences,' not to discuss, but to debate. Without directly being asked, she contrasts this plurality with her teacher candidates 'white' and 'upper middle-class backgrounds' implicitly suggestive of monoculturalism in the way their racialized subject positions present a conflict for the 'histories and many different traditions' of Ana's Dominican-Americanness. While Ana, like Sharon, suggests her pedagogy is anchored in readings, due to the active description of her instruction, I asked Ana to explain what her goal was in explicitly partnering with teacher candidates in this way.

> I sincerely hope that I am effective in doing two things: giving them a critical perspective so that they can highlight culturally sustaining practices, and pedagogy and advocacy. I want to empower their voice to speak for the kids and for themselves; that's my objective. And every single course that I teach, a critical lens, I will create cultural sustainability and equity and advocacy.

Culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP), like CRT and translanguaging mentioned by Sharon, is a progressive equity-based approach which aligns with Franklin's mission where the participants teach. The "cultural and linguistic flexibility" however, that is central to CSP is not only terminologically important for Ana, it is reflected in how she self-describes, as well as how she approaches instruction with Bilingual/Bicultural language PSTs in terms of repositioning power. Race is central to understanding power, language, and identity (Deroo & Ponzio, 2021; Paris & Alim, 2017) and Ana expresses this implicit knowledge in her response by shifting the locus of reference away from white middle-class norms in her instruction. Similarly to Noelia choosing to fight the RAE's gendered linguistic binary despite a lack of institutional support, Ana invited 'conflict' as an opportunity for modeling teacher candidates to 'speak for the kids and for themselves.'

These findings reflect the constancy of race and racism, implicit or explicit, as a central determinant in the goals and practices of LTEs. These analyses lay bare how the racialized experiences of the participants animated their understanding of culture and identity and manifested in their capacity to instruct language PSTs. The concept of culture was expanded or contracted through alignment with valued institutions or individuals to dis/include class, gender, language, and race, demonstrating that in many ways, you teach who you are. Ana's description of her identity and instruction resisted racial Black/white binaries in addition to conceptions of language as bounded systems. She languaged her approaches through progressive and pluralistic scholarship (e.g., CRSE [culturally responsive and sustaining education] and translanguaging), which reflected her description

of self. All participants drew from ontoepistemic expertise, yet Ana, who identifies as Dominican-American, drew from her racialized experiences (Anya, 2016; Kohli, 2009) to deepen her practice with PSTs studying to become bilingual/bicultural teachers. The participants' ability to employ the term 'culture' to signal sociopolitical issues without naming race or colonial histories and their impacts undermines the ability of LTEs to norm, discuss, and grow their understandings of complex issues related to racism despite structural and curricular shifts towards equity and justice at Franklin University.

Conclusion and Implications

This study sought to address the ways LTEs at Franklin University understood 'culture,' as well as how they tacitly or explicitly addressed culture and identity in their preparation of language teachers. Findings suggest that participants understood culture as racialized, and particularly so through their conceptions of self in accounting for various class markers including phenotype, language, gender identity, citizenship, ethnicity, and nationality. Drawing upon the passive institutional power of Franklin and/or the teacher licensure exam, these relative categorical allegiances or enmities reinforced white monocultural ideals, rendering discussions of those ideals impossible through coded language. Thus, language teacher preparation at Franklin is cast as an incubator of neoliberal multicultural anti-Blackness through coded representations of race as presented through 'culture.'

This study further suggests that within the urban social justice teacher preparation program at Franklin University, LTEs are agentive irrespective of institutional support toward ends they espouse and in the ways they understand said ends. In this case, changing structures (curriculum and clinical placements) to center equity and social justice was helpful for participants, but the success of their agency could have been further buttressed by receiving ongoing institutional support for reflection and racially conscious instruction. The tendency for LTEs to use the lens of self to make sense of race and power despite not seeing themselves as racialized reinforces the need for teacher preparation programs to establish and norm how 'race' is understood by instructors in order to address social hierarchies, particularly within programs that center urban social justice.

Participants in this case demonstrated a common-sense, albeit racialized, understanding of 'culture,' upon which there was no universal agreement. For recommended future study, it is important that we investigate under which culture paradigm language teacher educators are oriented—culture as ethnoracial associations solidified politically over time, or culture as a state-endorsed politics of difference (Bennett, 1992) in which instructors are an instrument of government. Without this distinction, application of progressive CRSE frameworks within language teacher preparation are destined to falter due to a postracial multicultural tendency to evade discussions of race.

Teacher educators who feel distanced from the practical implementation of CRSE despite their theoretical knowledge may not deem progressive culture-based frameworks as relevant based on their own identity formations working from a "do as I say, not as I do" (Lindahl et al., 2021) approach. To counter this, (language) teacher preparation must increase Black and minoritized educators within their ranks whose real-life experiential knowledge and expertise (Austin et al., 2021) can amplify and center those that more closely align with K–12 student populations. It is important, however, that these professionals be tenure-track faculty to increase the likelihood that they truly possess the power to affect structures and curricula. Finally, to address race in language teacher preparation, we must avoid the euphemism of 'culture' and center race by specifically asking, *Who benefits from collapsing sociopolitically, geopolitically and historically contingent categories of race into commonsensical and static hierarchies of 'culture'?* We must further take notice of who can claim cultural and linguistic difference as positive and for whom this remains a mark of inferiority. This line of critical questioning is a starting point

towards acknowledging the centrality of race as an enduring anti-Black colonial construct in language teacher preparation.

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Appendix A: Franklin University Distribution of Credits

Urban Social Justice Teacher Preparation Program		Total Credits	Percentage of Culture & Identity credits
ESL	M.A.	54	35%
	Certificate	15	20%
Bilingual/Bicultural Education	Certificate	12	50%
World Language	M.A.	54	35%

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

1. What is your name and your position?
2. How long have you held that position?
3. How would you define culture?
4. What understandings of culture do you think preservice teachers need to be effective teachers of language and culture?
5. What activities do you plan to help preservice teachers understand culture(s)?
6. What misconceptions about culture(s) do your preservice teachers have?
7. How do you help them overcome these misconceptions?
8. How do you see your role with regard to helping future teachers teach about culture and identity with their future students?
9. What is the role of identity in language learning?
10. How do you help future teachers understand the importance of the role of identity?

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The Weaponization of French and Rejection of Maghrebi Arabic in a French High School: Effects on Franco-Maghrebi Students

Sandrine Pell

Abstract

This article draws on a four-month ethnography in a rural French high school. Through analysis of ten Franco-Maghrebi students' communicative resources, experiences of schooling, and narratives, along with educators' perspectives, the study shows that the students' home languages were rejected and perceived as a threat to France's hegemony. At the same time, French was weaponized and imposed as the legitimate language. However, the results indicate that these youths had a desire to maintain a link with their heritage language and culture, and that Islam, with its related socioliteracy practices, could represent an alternative discourse. Through a postcolonial lens, the article examines how policies to ensure the dominance of French culture and language have delegitimized the cultures and languages of its minorities, of which immigrants from the Maghreb constitute the largest and most marginalized non-European minority. Further, it demonstrates how institutional practices and sociopolitical discourses contribute to discrimination, inequity, and an exclusive school environment.

Keywords: Language policies, negotiation of identities, linguistic discrimination, language weaponization

Introduction

Over centuries, France has reinforced, through policies and discourses, a vision of its society as "monocultural, monolingual, monoethnic and monoideological" (Doran, 2004, p. 93). Writing forty years ago, Balibar (1985)—a French philosopher—argued that

> France is today the only nation in the world with legislation requiring (since 1794) the exclusive use of the national language in all public and private acts ... France is the most extreme case (*le cas limite*) of a nation totally identified with one language. (p. 9)

Since these words were written, France has remained an extreme case, and it is not only protective of its language, but also of its social, cultural, and religious practices. This can be illustrated by the law

Contact: Sandrine Pell, University of Wisconsin – Madison
Email: spell@wisc.edu

France passed in 2004 banning religious symbols and clothing, notably headscarves, in public schools. During the 2017 presidential campaign, Macron, the centrist liberal candidate who was elected President that year, sent a "letter to the French people" in which he shared his wish for French society to be "once more proud to be French, thanks to our culture, our international influence and our language" (see Appendix A). Macron's use of the singular form for both *culture* and *language*, reveals his vision of France as a nation-state associated with one language and one culture. This letter sets out a vision for what Anderson (1991) called an *imagined community*, in contrast to the reality that the population of France is culturally diverse and multilingual.

This national discourse plays out, at a local level, in very real and personal ways. French institutions have enacted this model of integration wherein, for example, school policies have reinforced the exclusive usage of French and have banned Muslim female students from wearing the veil.[1] In this model, often referred to as the assimilation model (Simon, 2012), language has played a major role. In the school where this study was undertaken, for example, there was a French-only policy in the school's 'life's principles.' Out of 10 principles, principle number 6 specifies: "Students must speak the French language outside of foreign language classes" (see Appendix B).

This ethnographic study highlights how policies enacted at the national and local levels to ensure the dominance of French culture and language have delegitimized the cultures and languages of minoritized individuals, such as immigrants from the Maghreb, who constitute the largest and most marginalized non-European minority in the country. By the Maghreb, I am referring to three former French colonies in North Africa: Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria. Because of the violence and colonial relations of power in the historical relationship between France and its former colonies in the Maghreb, this research needs to be seen through the lens of postcolonialism. Thus, the study analyzes (a) the rationale for language policies at school and national levels; (b) the systemic rejection of Maghrebi Arabic;[2] and (c) the effects on Franco-Maghrebi students and how they resist dominant (French) discourses. Findings demonstrate how institutional practices and sociopolitical discourses contribute to discrimination, inequity, and an exclusive school environment.

Literature Review: France and its Monolingual Tradition

The construction and maintenance of France as a nation-state lies in the values attributed to the French language and its role in achieving national cohesion. Key policies and institutions, which illustrate France's long monolingual tradition, are rooted deep in its history and national identity.

The first relevant policy, known as the ordinance of Villers-Cotterêts, dates back to 1539 and posits that all legal, official, and administrative documents must be pronounced, registered, and delivered in the French language only. This policy can be understood as an assertion of centralized authority, enacted in a context where there were many living regional languages and dialects, as well as the use of Latin in official and religious contexts. A century later, the *Académie Française* was created in 1636 to establish what is considered 'proper French,' and to protect the purity of the French language, especially against the influence of other languages. This institution, still active today, acts as the official authority and custodian of the French language. As Heller (2006) describes, it undertakes "the work of linguistic regimentation" and "the production and reproduction of linguistic norm" (p. 11).

[1] The participants in my research used the term 'voile' in French to refer to the different types of veils such as Hijab, Niqab, and Chador. In order to be faithful to their own words, I will use the term veil in English.

[2] Maghrebi Arabic is a vernacular Arabic dialectal continuum spoken in the Maghreb region (Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia).

A century after the French Revolution, the policies of Jules Ferry[3] not only established compulsory schooling, but also ensured the supremacy of the French language. Indeed, from 1881 on, compulsory education was established solely through the French language, thereby imposing a monolingual policy throughout the nation.

Another key policy is Section 2 of the 1958 Constitution, which states that "The language of the Republic is French" (Gouvernement Français, 1958). This section was reaffirmed in the first Section of the 1992 Constitution, in the light of the Maëstricht treaty signed by the European members to further European integration. At the time, this policy came in response to the 'threat' the English language posed to French within Europe, and its aim was to assert the position of the French language.

In contrast to these policies, Cerquiglini, a French linguist and the former director of the National Institute for the French language, was tasked with creating a list of languages that were commonly spoken in France at that time, in order to accurately depict the diversity of the linguistic landscape. The report was completed in preparation for a vote to ratify the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages. In his work, Cerquiglini showed 75 languages actively in use in France at that time (Cerquiglini, 1999). However, when faced with this reality, the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages was not ratified by France on constitutional grounds, stating it was seen as "contrary to the 'principles of indivisibility of the Republic,'" and that it was "contrary to the rule established … under which 'the language of the Republic is French'" (Décision, cited in Moïse, 2007, p. 222). This decision, again, reflected a perception that the founding principles of the French Republic were under threat from multiculturalism and multilingualism; in particular, the principle that "France is an indivisible secular, democratic, and social Republic" (Gouvernement Français, 1958, Section 1).

In line with these practices, schools play a central part in ensuring the maintenance and dominance of standard French, that is, a formal written form of the language. In doing so, schools devalue the legitimacy of the languages of its minoritized individuals, with Arabic being the second most widely spoken language in France after French (Talon, 2012). The French education system has, indeed, been a reproducer of the republican values and language policies cited above, and schools have played a major role in the reproduction of social inequalities (Bourdieu, 1966). As demonstrated in this study, schools not only favor French, the language of the dominant group, but also reject Maghrebi Arabic, thereby excluding an important aspect of Franco-Maghrebi students' identities.

Theoretical Framework

By enforcing an ideology of linguistic and cultural uniformity, French society has denied its changing social realities and the cultural and linguistic reality of its diverse peoples, leading to exclusion and rising tensions. As a consequence, although immigrants from the Maghreb constitute the largest non-European population (30% of the immigrant population in France, second to 36% of immigrants who originate from European countries), they have been the most minoritized population (INSEE, 2012). Significantly, while 19% of French people admitted having been victims of discrimination based on their origins, this proportion reached 86% for people with Maghrebi origins. Societal discourses and the living conditions of people of Maghrebi origin in France have led to increasing tension and reactions both inside and outside that community—and, at times, violence, as recently illustrated by

[3] Jules Ferry was a French statesman from 1870 to 1895. He is remembered for installing free, compulsory, secular education in 1882, and for extending the French colonial empire.

the Charlie Hebdo events in 2015. Though it has manifested directly in reaction to contemporary events, this tension is rooted in France's colonial past.

According to Mehta (2010), France's colonial past and the fact that its society has not adopted a postcolonial discourse might be at the core of the issue, and the reason why France "locates Arab-Muslims as permanent outsiders [in] an attempt to disengage with its violent past" (p. 175). Because of the violence of the historical relationship between France and its former colonies in the Maghreb, this research needs to be seen through the lens of postcolonialism.

In addition, as Begag (2007) wrote, while decolonization in the Maghreb ended "institutionalized racism" in this region, "no comparable measures were taken to address racism in the North, in France itself" (p. 27). Indeed, when immigrants started to move to France during the 1960s, French politicians "denied or minimized the existence of ethnic discrimination" (p. 27), and as a result, colonial relations of power were reproduced. The present study will confirm how this denial reinforces a damaging power dynamic that continues to diminish people from Franco-Maghrebi communities for expressing their identity, and to exclude them from full and equal participation in French society.

Methods

The Research Site

The Town

I conducted this research in a town of about 36,000 inhabitants, which I call Vire (pseudonym). Vire is the largest town in an otherwise rural department one hour from Lyon, the second biggest city in France. Vire is, therefore, strategically situated close to a major city while providing the characteristics of a more rural lifestyle. In 2014, the inhabitants of Vire elected a right-wing mayor, and the extreme right party (i.e., Front National) received 15% of the votes. In the 2017 presidential election, Le Pen—the candidate from the Front National—came second after Macron, with close to 22% of the votes.

Vire is a typical, nondescript market town in rural France; it is neither a tourist attraction, nor thriving, nor particularly well-known. The site contrasts with the work of several researchers (Doran, 2004; Killian, 2006; Mehta, 2010) who have previously studied the Franco-Maghrebi population in Parisian suburban ghettos or *banlieues*. In France, there is a sense that Paris is the main economic, cultural, and political focus, and that the rest of the country is ignored. During my time in Vire, several people commented about how living in a small town is harder than living in a city because they could not identify with a community, and that they felt more isolated in Vire.

The School

The study site, which I call Charles Dupuy (pseudonym), is a high school that prepares students for the mainstream *baccalauréat général* (the national exams students take at the end of high school) as well as a community college, in the sense that it also offers technical *baccaleuréat* and pre- and post-*baccalauréat* technical courses. There are about 800 students, who are typically aged between 16 and 22. It is a public school with the reputation, according to the principal, of having the most ethnically diverse population of students of all the schools in Vire. As I explain in the next section, no statistics were available to confirm the principal's statement; however, the principal claimed that 28 nationalities were represented in the school. Charles Dupuy has a high rate of failure on the *baccaleauréat* and other national exams, again according to the principal, but statistical data was not found to confirm it.

The Students

The students of Maghrebi origin represented the main focus of this study. According to Galland (2015), a contemporary French sociologist, this group constitutes the "blind spot of social sciences" (para. 1). It is important to acknowledge that the lack of research among this population is due to the 1978 law called Loi Information et Liberté. This law forbids data collection and analysis related to ethnicity, race, and other demographic information (i.e., sexual orientation, religion, political opinions, etc.) in France. For Azouz Begag, French Minister of Equal Opportunities from 2005–2007, this lack of data on ethnic origins prevents France from dealing with inequalities and providing equal opportunities. Begag (2007) wrote that, "as victims of multiple forms of color-based discriminations, young ethnics will have to be identified statistically in terms of the features by which they are handicapped in the field of equal opportunities" and that consequently, France "needs the technical and legal means with which to compile statistics on ethnic origins" (p. 117).

I recruited a total of ten student participants; Table 1 shows the names (all pseudonyms) and relevant information for all of them.

Table 1. *Information for student participants*

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Generation	Origin	Track/classroom
Khaled	16	M	1st	Morocco (Berber)	Technical/STMG
Leila	18	F	2nd	Algeria	Technical/STMG
Jasmine	17	F	2nd	Algeria (Kabilie)	Technical/STMG
Azouz	18	M	3rd	Algeria	Technical/STMG
Asmae	17	F	1st	Morocco	General/ES
Abdel	16	M	1st	Morocco	General/ES
Nora	17	F	2nd	Morocco	General/ES
Salima	16	F	2nd	Algeria	General/ES
Farid	15	M	2nd	Morocco	General/ES
Soukaina	16	F	3rd	Morocco	General/ES

Data Collection and Analysis

In order to collect data, I conducted an ethnography in a French high school. Over four months, I observed French literature classes taught by two different teachers, interviewed teachers, students, and administrators, and conducted focus groups. The data collected consist primarily of scripts of interviews and focus groups, field notes, classroom observations, and school and state documents. The first round of interviews was semistructured, and as I established a relationship with participants, the interviews became unstructured. The data was collected in French, but for the purpose of this article, due to word limits, I am sharing the data in English.

I analyzed the data through several cycles of coding using MAXQDA, an analytical software for qualitative, quantitative, and mixed research projects. During the first cycle of coding, I coded chunks of data, which allowed me to identify major recurring themes. For the second cycle, I used "pattern coding" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 236) as a method to examine social patterns and processes and to

form theoretical constructs. I looked at how these patterns were connected and what their relationships were. I examined how the individual components could be integrated or woven together to create a narrative based on the data.

Findings

Franco-Maghrebi Students' Communicative Resources

To learn about the students' communicative resources, I asked them, "What languages do you use, where and with whom do you use them?" The answers to that question varied greatly according to their family histories and current circumstances. The two main criteria that affected their linguistic practices were the length of time they and their families had been living in France and the ties they had maintained with their countries of origin. Indeed, there was a noticeable difference of practices among the students of first, second, and third generations.

Before I interviewed the students, I had already observed them inside and outside the classroom. During all this time, I had only heard them speak a few words in Arabic with their Franco-Maghrebi friends, but these were rare occurrences, which only took place during recess. The rest of the time, they spoke French, which explains why, before asking them this question, I did not know that they were able to use any other language besides French. I was then impressed by the linguistic diversity and the students' wide communicative repertoires, which I understand as "the collection of ways individuals use language and other means of communication […] to function effectively in the multiple communities in which they participate" (Rymes, 2014, p. 4). Indeed, the majority reported moving between languages, which they strategically deployed according to their communicative needs and their interlocutors; what García (2009) referred to as *translanguaging,* and which she characterized as the "multiple discursive practices in which bilinguals engage in order to make sense of their bilingual worlds" (p. 45). This was especially the case for first-generation students.

Translanguaging Practices

Abdel is a first-generation immigrant. His parents were born in Morocco, but he was born in Italy and lived there until he was 10. Abdel had been in France for five years when I first met him. He reported using multiple languages: French, Italian, Arabic, and Darija—or what the students referred to interchangeably as "Moroccan" or "dialect," which is a variety of Arabic and the most commonly spoken language in daily life in Morocco.[4] After Abdel listed the languages he uses, I asked him to walk me through a typical day of how these languages are deployed:

> **Abdel:** Ok, it's … at home: Arabic, well Darija. Outside: French. It's going to be like this … the morning I wake up, hmm … I perform my ablutions, I do my morning prayer, I eat breakfast, I speak with my family, always in Arabic, I go out, from the elevator: French. When I open the door: "Good morning, Sir; good morning, Madam." There I go out: "Good morning, caretaker [Sir]," and I go on the road and there is my Moroccan friend, the entire way in Arabic, in Arabic … after he is in another school "As-Salaam-Alaikum, ok, see you this afternoon." I go to school, sometimes I meet French classmates, I arrive, Farid: "As-Salaam-Alaikum, ok, cool everything is going well," so I go to class, I see Arabic, Tunisian, Algerian friends, "ok, you're well …"
>
> **Sandrine:** In French, there?
>
> **Abdel:** Yes, there in French.

[4] According to Sadiqi (2006), *Darija* is the lingua franca in Morocco because it allows for intercomprehensibil-ity between the many Moroccan Arabic dialects spoken in different regions of the country.

This quote shows how skilled Abdel is at using his multiple discursive practices and captures the complexity of translanguaging where, from the perspective of a bilingual, languages are not bounded entities but constitute a unitary repertoire.

Asmae's story is very similar to Abdel's. She is also a first-generation immigrant, and her parents were born in Morocco. She was born in Italy, and she lived there until she was nine, when she and her family moved to Morocco. She lived in Morocco for four years before moving to France with her parents and two brothers. She had been in France for five years when I met her. When I asked if she spoke Arabic at home with her parents, she said she speaks Darija and Italian with her parents because they would not understand her if she spoke French, but that she speaks French with her brothers. Asmae, like Abdel, is constantly and simultaneously adapting to different contexts by using these languages or varieties of languages from her repertoire. Not every participant, however, had this experience with languages. Some students had a much narrower communicative repertoire.

Language Shift or Loss

Leila is a second-generation immigrant, and Azouz and Soukaina are both third-generation immigrants. All three of them reported speaking very little or no Arabic. During our interviews, I asked these three students if they knew or understood why they did not speak Arabic. Azouz and Leila explained that their parents used to talk to them in Arabic when they were young but that once they started school, their parents thought it would be better for their academic success to only speak French, therefore describing a clear sense of the linguistic shift in time. Leila said she remembered that her mother used to speak to her in Arabic and that she "knew the basics since I was little, so she spoke Arabic, but then we did not broaden this language after [starting] school." Leila then clearly explained this shift, "because we were in France, we had to speak French at school" (Interview 3, May 6, 2016).

In the same way, Azouz explained that he used to speak Arabic but no longer did: "When I was little and until I was two, and then, yes, I spoke French. Since I [have been] at school, in fact, since I started school. But before, no, I spoke Arabic" (Interview 2, September 28, 2015). Azouz could put a definite date to when he stopped speaking Arabic, or rather, when his mother stopped speaking Arabic to him, which is when he started school. In all three cases (Azouz, Leila, and Soukaina), starting school meant stopping bilingual practices and shifting to monolingualism. The students' parents had incorporated the common myth that learning more than one language at a time can be confusing for children and that it is in their best interest (academic and later economic) to speak only the dominant language. Indeed, Azouz said his mother chose to speak to him only in French "for my future, I think, so that I would have more opportunities, and more open doors," illustrating the cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991) accorded to languages, with French being seen as vital to opening doors.

While Azouz was clearly aware of this language shift in his family practices, he did not express regrets. Besides, Azouz said he was not at all interested in learning Arabic. In contrast, Leila and Soukaina expressed regrets about this shift, and to them, it felt more like a loss. Leila said, "Yes, it's true that I would really like to know how to write, read and speak well" (Interview 3, May 6, 2016). Various feelings resulted from this language loss. Leila and Soukaina explained how difficult it was for them when they visited their families in Algeria and Morocco. Soukaina explained that when she visited her family in Morocco, she felt like a stranger. I asked her why, and she said, "It's above all the language. Sometimes I can't say what I want in Arabic like in French, and that makes me angry" (Interview 2, September 28, 2015). For both Soukaina and Leila, this language loss prevented them from fully communicating with their families, and this situation creates some feelings which go beyond regret to shame and anger. After looking at students' communicative resources and how these were

constrained in school, I wanted to understand the rationale behind Regulation Number 6 enforced in their school (see Appendix B).

Rationale for Language Policies

I asked the principal and the student counselor why Regulation 6 had been implemented. The principal said, "It's more this desire that first, they do not speak between each other, saying that the teacher is a big moron in Arabic, that no" (Interview 1, May 17, 2016). The counselor also mentioned the desire to avoid allowing students of similar origins to gather and use their language to insult staff members, "Yes, it was done precisely to avoid, mmm … this gathering and that … or that sometimes insults of this kind of thing towards a teacher, a supervisor, a counselor" (Interview 1, May 13, 2016). When I asked if she was thinking of a language in particular, she said yes, that Arabic would be the most common one. Although the school regulation does not specify that Arabic should not be spoken, when asked about it, administrators and the school counselor admitted that Arabic (in particular) was in their minds when writing Regulation 6. Their answers reflected an implicit prejudice and the stigmatization of a particular group. I would argue that Pavlenko's (2003) concept of the "language of the enemy," which the school counselor used to demonstrate how sociopolitical and ideological considerations may affect foreign language policies, applies to this particular school policy.

What is also concerning about Regulation 6 and its underlying agenda is that Arabic is not among the foreign languages taught at Charles Dupuy. It would make sense indeed that the second most widely spoken language in France (Talon, 2012) was taught in one of the biggest schools in Vire. Vire is the biggest town in an otherwise rural area and, as Nora said in one of our interviews, Arabic "is becoming a power, well, like Saudi Arabia, so it would not be a bad thing to learn it" (Interview 4, May 4, 2016). Nora and Asmae were the first participants who drew my attention to why Arabic was not taught in their school. They would have personally liked to be able to continue studying Arabic in a formal way. They had previously studied Arabic at the mosque in Vire, but there were no longer any courses. Asmae and Nora both listed all the languages that had been taught in the school for a long time (e.g., Spanish, German, English, Portuguese), and Asmae said that Arabic is a language like any other, suggesting it should be taught like any other language. As they continued to reflect on the matter, Asmae said:

> Besides, we are right next to them [Arabic-speaking countries], first we are already inside, they have to adapt to us as well a little bit, we adapt here but only one way and also us in Morocco, it's the Francophone countries, we speak French … it must happen both ways. (Interview 4, May 4, 2016)

Asmae's comments are valid: first, when she says "we are already inside," Arabic is the second most spoken language after French; second, when she says "we are right next to them," countries where Arabic is spoken are geographically, historically and culturally close; and finally, as she points out, in Morocco French is widely used and taught. For all these reasons, Asmae feels French people could also adapt to these youths; it should not be a one-way system where they are the only ones who have to integrate. After this conversation with Nora and Asmae, I wondered how the school staff would explain why Arabic was not taught in the school. I was surprised to see how their answers varied according to their roles within the institution, and how much they were willing to be critical of this decision.

Systemic Rejection of Maghrebi Arabic

M. Leroy, the school principal, explained at length that Arabic was not offered in their school because there was no demand for it. These are the three comments he made during our interview, which all repeat the same idea: "but it was not a big success because, in fact, there were very few fans for this

option;" "it was not met with an audience. Very few students were interested;" and "But when a few years ago this option was offered, it did not get any customers."

Without giving any specific statistics, M. Leroy used many different terms to express this idea that the course had no "audience, no fans, no customers" and concluded that "even the youth of Maghrebi origins who would have liked to learn their own language did not take this step [of enrolling in Arabic courses when they were offered]. There was nobody, so as a result, it was the end." The 'option' or elective that M. Leroy referred to is called 'Mediterranean basin language and culture.' This course was introduced in 2011, and as described on the French Ministry of Education website (Éduscol, 2017), its goal is to teach Arabic, Latin, and Greek languages and cultures, "the wealth of cultural and scientific work and projects of the Mediterranean basin (archeology, museography, agronomy)" (para. 2). Therefore, this elective is not a language class and was not designed to teach Arabic as a living language, but rather, the ancient culture of a region of which France is a part. Its focus on other languages such as Greek and Latin, as well as the historical approach, frames Arabic as an ancient language, and not as a vibrant language spoken in the modern world. This might explain why even people of Maghrebi origins did not show any interest in this course and why the school's attempts to offer it were not successful.

The school counselor, Mme. Durantet, remembered that the previous principal had tried to offer Arabic as a Foreign Language, but that the regional education authority had declined this request, although she could not remember what reasons were given. Mme. Durantet said that in spite of this, some students studied Arabic through a national independent learning course (known as CNED in France), and some chose it as a subject for the *baccalauréat*. Some of the students knew of this possibility but also realized that it was very hard to study by themselves. Contrary to M. Leroy, Mme. Durantet addressed the teaching of Arabic, and she was aware that there was a demand, but could not comment on why it was not offered in the school.

As for M. Lambert, a French teacher, first, he wondered if it was "our history it remains in our heads, and yes, always there is always this difficulty to move forward, to accept" (Interview 2, May 12, 2016). M. Lambert did not say exactly what part of "our history" would prevent students in France from accepting Arabic as any other language, but I believe he was referring to France's colonial past with the Maghreb.

I argue that this resistance to the teaching of Arabic in Charles Dupuy School, and in French schools in general, is the result of a deliberate historical and political decision. As Nora and Asmae said, immigrants who come from the Maghreb have to integrate and adapt. However, France is not willing or ready to accept that its culture and the Maghreb's cultures and history are connected, and that there should be a two-way relationship. If this perception could be changed, France would see Arabic not as a threat, but as a legitimate, valid language that both Franco-French and Franco-Maghrebi people would benefit from learning and understanding. However, as I discuss below, this is still a controversial topic.

Arabic in French Schools

M. Jahid was the French as a Second Language teacher. He was born in France, and his parents were Moroccan. His comments provide a comprehensive description of the wider picture, starting with a history of the teaching of Arabic in France and the more current trend; for this reason, I will cite an extensive part of his comments:

> Yes, for Arabic, so for the teaching of the so-called standard Arabic, hmm … there have been a lot of failures, that is to say, it's when we began, when the appointment, the decision to open an Arabic section, or the teaching of Arabic was no longer at the Ministry level, was dependent on the heads of schools,

> many heads of schools, who closed Arabic for budget reasons or other reasons … I don't want to get into the details, but the problem is that, hmm … me I know that at the time, it's already been more than 15 years, when the teaching of Arabic started to decline, some colleagues said, that it is either the teaching of Arabic in a secular context, by trained people, or it is the mosques, and we see sometimes what that leads to … We have changed our minds now to try to plug the gaps … (Interview 1, May 26, 2016)

M. Jahid was initially trained to be an Arabic teacher He has been involved in the discussion for a long time, and his comments bring more depth and are intriguing answers in relation to what was said by different staff members of the school. He agreed that there had been many failures in the attempt to teach Arabic but, contrary to M. Leroy, who saw the lack of interest as the main reason for failure, M. Jahid introduced an interesting point about decision-making levels. Indeed, what used to be a ministerial decision was now left to the head of the school, which, according to M. Jahid, was one of the main reasons for all the failures.

Once it became up to the heads of schools to keep offering Arabic as a foreign language or not, many decided to eliminate Arabic classes. M. Jahid first listed funding as a possible issue, but he also said there were other reasons, and that he did not want to get into the details, thereby choosing not to comment on what would probably be too contentious or political. Later, during our interview, he actually said more about this, by talking about the suppression of Maghrebi Arabic as an elective for the *baccalauréat*, a decision made by the Ministry of Education, which could be seen as a political decision, and which highlights the lack of recognition of this language:

> There is no recognition of the dialect [Maghrebi Arabic] as such. There was a time when we could present it as an elective to the bac [baccalauréat]. The Maghrebi dialect and then after, hmm … there was an interview with the teacher, hmm … without knowing how to read. After we moved on the … another stage where they needed to read the text, but the text was transcribed in Latin characters (laughs), and now the candidate needs to read Arabic, so we went from … we can give him a text in Maghrebi Arabic, but written in [Latin] characters. We have fewer candidates … and then on top of this, we have to ask them questions in a so-called median ['standard'] Arabic, that is to say between Maghrebi Arabic and literary Arabic. So there too, at the institutional level the move to Arabic for the bac [baccalauréat], it's hmm … confusing. (Interview 1, May 26, 2016)

In the excerpt above, M. Jahid succinctly summarizes what has happened with Maghrebi Arabic in France during the 1990s. In 1995, the Ministry of Education decided to add written Maghrebi Arabic as an elective for the *baccalauréat*. Before this, the Arabic test was only in oral form. Contrary to what M. Leroy suggested, this option rapidly became very popular. Indeed, in 1999, candidates could take an optional test for nontaught languages, and out of 28 possible languages, 76.6% of these candidates (a total of 9,886 students) chose Maghrebi Arabic (Barontini & Caubet, 2008). In spite of this success, the Ministry of Education decided to remove Maghrebi Arabic from the approved list of nontaught languages, forcing students to show proficiency in written standard Arabic.

Although there are no exact numbers, Caubet (2000), a French sociolinguist specializing in Maghrebi Arabic, reckoned that a few years after this decision by the Ministry of Education, the number of students who chose Maghrebi Arabic as an elective dropped from almost 10,000 to 2,000. According to him, this decision was based on the idea that the extra points students could get were worthless because "points gained in Maghrebi Arabic are points too easily gained, as though the knowledge of this language had no value" (translated from French). Caubet argued that what is actually at the core of the decision is a will to not recognize nor value the Maghrebi Arabic language, a language learned and used at home, outside of the school context. I find in this political decision an answer to the question of why Arabic is so rarely taught in France—by reinforcing standard Arabic as the only

option, the government deliberately devalued and rejected the language that is actually used on a daily basis by the Maghrebi and Franco-Maghrebi populations.

Finally, M. Jahid commented on the issue France is now facing with regard to students learning Arabic. After schools stopped teaching it, the only place students could learn it was in mosques, not necessarily by trained educators and, more importantly, with a heavier focus on religion. As a matter of fact, M. Jahid implied that in some cases, political or radical ideologies were transmitted during these classes. According to him, as France faces Islamic radicalism, it is trying to find a compromise, and he believes that the situation is likely to change, and that Arabic may be taught more widely in French schools. His optimism is, therefore, tainted with France's motivation, which would not be an openness to Arabic but rather a reaction to the fear the rise of Islam has created in France.

M. Jahid's statements resonate with the current discourses on the teaching of Arabic in France. Indeed, in September 2018, the Institut Montaigne[5] published a report about Islamic fundamentalism in Europe and France (El Karoui, 2018). The author, Hakim El Karoui, lamented that the number of students learning Arabic in French schools had halved in the past twenty years. Only 0.2 percent of students in public secondary schools took Arabic classes in the 2017–2018 school year, putting the language far behind the widely taught English, Spanish, and German. However, El Karoui also reported that the number of students studying Arabic in mosques had multiplied tenfold. Thus, he recommended that Arabic be taught in French schools as a way of fighting the rise of fundamentalism.

El Karoui's (2018) recommendation reignited a contentious public discourse about Arabic in French public schools. A few days after the publication of the report, the Minister of Education, Blanquer (2018), said on a radio program that Arabic, alongside Russian and Chinese, had to be taught more commonly and be given more prestige: but especially Arabic, which should be learned not only by students of Maghrebi origins, but by other students as well. This announcement provoked violent reactions, especially among the right and extreme right political parties. For example, Marine Le Pen—the leader of the French extreme right party—immediately argued that she wanted people to learn French culture in France. Nicolas Dupont-Aignan (2018)—a right-wing lawmaker—said on a radio program that this would be the "beginning of the Islamization of France," which would lead to "communitarisme," and that instead, young people who come from Arabic-speaking countries should assimilate.

Faced with these criticisms, a few days after his first statement in favor of the teaching of Arabic in schools, the Minister of Education had to backtrack, explaining that he never said he wanted to make Arabic compulsory. These reactions indicate that France is not yet ready to accept Arabic as a language that could be taught routinely in public schools. As a matter of fact, even if the Minister of Education were in favor of the teaching of Arabic, I see his recommendation as a reaction to El Karoui's (2018) report and, therefore, more as part of France's fight against Islamic extremism than a true recognition of Arabic as a legitimate language in French society.

Regulation Number 6's Effect on Franco-Maghrebi Students

To find out how this regulation affected the students, I asked them if they wished they could use their home language more freely in school. Abdel replied with this powerful image: "When there is a Moroccan with a Moroccan, even if, I don't know, we are on top of the mountain, we are going to speak Arabic" (Interview 4, May 13, 2016). Abdel explains that when two Moroccan people meet, it is obvious that they will speak Arabic, no matter the circumstances; it is, as he had previously told me,

[5] The Institut Montaigne is a transpartisan organization whose purpose is to suggest public policy to ultimately improve social cohesion.

"in your blood." According to Abdel, speaking Arabic is how he connects, how he enacts a shared identity. Despite this powerful image, giving the impression that two Moroccan people cannot *not* speak Arabic, when I asked if that was still the case in the classroom, he answered: "in class, it's a bit tricky." He then explained that because of the Regulation [Regulation 6] students were not allowed and that, as a result, he only said very few words [in Arabic]. This regulation prevented students from using their full linguistic repertoire the way they reported doing outside of school. This means that it affected more particularly students who were used to translanguaging and who would have had the opportunity to maintain this practice at school.

Nora, Abdel, Farid, and Asmae usually sat together and they all shared a common language. Asmae and Nora shared Abdel's point of view, both wishing they could use Arabic. Nora explained that "in fact, there are words in French we can't say, we can only understand them; in Arabic there are direct words" (Interview 1, September 21, 2015). Nora's quote demonstrates how, for bilinguals, there is the need and ability to be more efficient and that some words are more "direct" or have a stronger meaning in one language than the other. Regulation 6, then, prevents students from being more efficient and truly understanding each other on a deeper level.

For Asmae, this regulation was even more of an issue because Arabic was her dominant language, and she was not confident in using French. For her, the regulation meant she could not be as expressive as she would like to be because, as she explained, "in Arabic, I loosen up, I speak fast and all. But in French, I hold back a bit. I'm scared to make mistakes or stuff like that." This feeling of not being able to express herself the way she would in Arabic, together with her fear of making mistakes in French, justify why sometimes in class she admitted, "I try to be discreet, but there are just some expressions, I can't say them in French, at the time I am forced to say them in Arabic" (Interview 1, September 21, 2015). In this quote, Asmae suggests that the need to speak Arabic is beyond her control; she feels she has no choice.

I argue that Regulation 6 has affected the students' linguistic practices, and although Canagarajah (2011) reported that the majority of studies among bilinguals showed that "acts of translanguaging are produced unbidden" and that they cannot "be completely restrained by monolingual educational policies" (p. 402), the data show that languages cannot always be used freely, not when there is a regulation that forbids students from using their full linguistic repertoire. For the participants, stepping into school meant stepping into a (forced) monolingual sphere, with French being used as a tool—and a weapon—to assert control. What is more, from an identity perspective, Charles Dupuy School's monolingual policies are forcing the students to repress an aspect of who they are, because their home language is part of their identity. This policy reinforces the symbolic power of French, the language of the colonizer. To some extent, some of the student-participants complied with the symbolic power of the dominant group, but they also resisted that power through linguistic practices directly in opposition to the dominant discourse.

Arabic as a Way to Connect with Islam

Several students expressed their desire to reconnect with the language of their parents or grandparents. The students' desire echoes what Barontini (2016) referred to as "ressurgissment" (resurgence) among young Franco-Maghrebi whose language had been "enfouie" (buried) or suppressed. Indeed, nine out of ten students cited the importance of Islam and its sociolinguistic practices in their lives. For example, Abdel explained, "I speak classical Arabic; my parents taught me to read and also to write Arabic, for a purpose, for the Muslim religion." This represents Abdel's and his parents' investment in Islam and its sociolinguistic practices, and the link between Islam and the Arabic language, which is perceived by Muslims as the language of God (Sadiqi, 2006). Actually, six students out of ten (Salima,

Leila, Jasmine, Nora, Asmae, and Abdel) reported currently attending or having attended evening classes at the mosque to learn classical Arabic and study the Qur'an. As Suleiman (2003) pointed out, the Qur'an encourages Muslims to read in Arabic because the language of the Qur'an is said to "be devoid of any crookedness" (p. 43). In addition to being the recommended medium to read and study the Qur'an, Arabic is also the unifying language of the Arab world. The concept of *Ummah,* which means 'mother' in Arabic, provides Muslims with a "super-ordinate identity to an otherwise hugely diverse community" (Shah, 2006, p. 218), transcending political boundaries.

Several student-participants referred to their religion and its related community as an important part of their identity, one that France had prevented them from enacting. Nora explained how learning Arabic could give her access to a wider Muslim community, "I would like to learn literary Arabic since I don't want to stay in France, and I would like to move to the countries of Saudi Arabia … somewhere other than Morocco or France. I would like to go to Dubai. Settle in Dubai or Qatar." Nora clearly wanted to distance herself from both France and Morocco, two countries that have positioned her as a foreigner. As a matter of fact, Nora explained that once a classmate had told her to "go back to her country." She felt angry about this because, as she said, "Morocco is not my country; I was born in Vire." She then lamented, "when I am in my parents' hometown [Morocco] I am [considered] French, and when I am in France, I am [considered] Moroccan! Where am I from, in fact, in the end?" (Interview 4, May 4, 2016). In her work in the UK on Muslim youth identity, Shah (2006) wrote, "to a young teenager's self-esteem, an association with a 'powerful' cosmic identity would be more appealing as compared to a negative racialized identity" (p. 229). All the countries Nora would like to live in have in common Islam as a religion and represent this more "powerful" cosmic identity. In this sense, Islam, as shared in the section below, offers Franco-Maghrebi students an identity they can all safely share, one that bridges their ethnic, linguistic, and cultural differences.

Islam as a Third Space

During my fieldwork, I became more aware of the role Islam played in the students' lives and I asked them if they wanted me to add the word 'Muslim' to Franco-Maghrebi students in the title of my research. Nine students out of ten said they would prefer if I added Muslim to identify them. Azouz, however, was the only one who said he would rather not be identified with a religion, although he said otherwise during a conversation with his best friend (shared below). Five students said they would like "Muslim" to come first, implying it was the most salient trait of their identity or, as Khaled said, "it's in my personality, in fact." When positioning themselves as Muslims I could feel a sense of pride, which Abdel clearly stated, "I am Moroccan, Maghrebi and Muslim and proud."

In addition, students often explained that their religion was a deciding factor as far as friendships were concerned. For example, the discussion below took place between Azouz and his best friend, a first-generation immigrant from Turkey. Just before this excerpt, they had been talking about their friendship:

> **Friend:** Yeah, you say Arab or Turk, it's the same culture, in fact, the same religion.
> **Sandrine:** Really? For the French, then?
> **Ami:** For the French, but also for us, no? I think that it's the same.
> **Azouz:** Yes, for me, it's the same.
> **Sandrine:** You feel close?
> **Friend:** Uh yes, the culture and especially the religion … only the language changes, in fact, but otherwise we are more the same. (Interview 1, September 20, 2015)

Azouz and his friend agree that their religion is what makes them feel close but, in their case, religion is presented as the main deciding identity factor, even if they do not share a home language or a

country of origin. Azouz's friend's usage of the comparative adjective "more" suggests an implicit comparison with other people who are not Muslim. I was surprised that Azouz agreed with his friend's statement because he had initially said he did not want to be identified with a religion, and nothing in what he said implied he was practicing his religion the way the other students did by going to the mosque or reading the Qur'an. However, as Shah (2006) reported, "there is abundant research claiming that even when the Muslims may not be practicing faith in many matters, they tend to emphasize their religious identity," and this identification is no longer connected to the practice of the religion but rather to a "political opposition to racism" (p. 223). I believe Azouz's affiliation to Islam acted as a way of resisting the racism he had been exposed to; specifically, to a traumatic event Azouz and his friend faced in their history class in which the teacher asked them to comment on the 'good deeds' of colonialization. This experience of "shared exclusion" (Shah, 2006, p. 223) may have contributed to their need to distance themselves from 'the French or the non-Muslim' and to create a shared identity as an expression of collective resistance.

The data suggest Islam allowed Franco-Maghrebi students to enact identities which diverge from the French hegemony. Bowen (2010) made similar claims in his book *Can Islam be French?* He argued that Islam provides French Muslim youth with "a third possibility for constructing a subjective identity, beyond the undesirable 'North-African,'" or in my data 'Arab,' and "the unattainable 'French'" (p. 22). I argue, then, that for most student-participants, Islam represented "a third space of enunciation" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 2), which initiates the creation of new identities, as well as sites of collaboration and contestation. With its related social and literacy practices, Islam represents an alternative discourse or a third space through which participants can align with their peers while resisting the dominant monolingual, monocultural, and monoideological discourses of the school environment that marginalize Franco-Maghrebi students and their cultural backgrounds and perpetuates colonial relations of power.

Discussion

The findings in this article demonstrate that a majority of the students have a wide linguistic repertoire from which they can draw to adapt to their various needs, depending on the contexts and their interlocutors. The first-generation immigrants tend to use all the languages in their repertoires more freely, and a pattern of gradual linguistic loss was identified in the second and third generations. Further, the data showed that these rich and dynamic practices clash with the school's monolingual and monoglossic discourses and policies, illustrated by Regulation Number 6 (see Appendix B). French is the language of hegemony within the school, often weaponized to control students' use of their home languages, which are stigmatized and rejected. Arabic is perceived as a threat, and the decision to not teach it in schools has been, and still is, a political one.

Therefore, I argue that the school did not provide the supportive environment students needed to thrive as emergent bilinguals. The school could have acknowledged the students' languages and could have allowed for their full linguistic resources to be visible in the school. This inclusive practice would have allowed student-participants to use their languages to build on their knowledge and express a side of their identity that, under the present practices and policies, they must repress. Instead, their home practices were devalued, stigmatized, and discriminated against. This represents a violation of human rights, of the dignity of humans, for according to Skutnabb-Kangas (2009), "language is one of the most important of those human characteristics on the basis of which people are not supposed to be discriminated against" (p. 223). For this reason, no individual should be forced to give up languages, which are integral to their identities.

From a postcolonial perspective, I interpret the weaponization of these languages, more specifically the imposition of French as the only legitimate language and the rejection of Arabic, as a residue of colonialism which, as Begag (2007) noted, did not end with the decolonization of the Maghreb and has been carried over from the former French colonies to France. This study highlights how France, through numerous policies, has maintained colonial relations of power with the Franco-Maghrebi communities. More specifically, it uncovers how institutional racism in schools continues to exclude Franco-Maghrebi students from expression of their full identities, and ultimately equal participation in French society.

Implications and Final Thoughts

Given the disconnect between Franco-Maghrebi students' communicative practices inside and outside the school, the first implication is for teachers and leaders to acknowledge, accept, and value the linguistic and cultural diversity and resources of every student. Administrators and teachers need to be aware of the negative effects French-only policies have on bilinguals—how it limits not only their cognitive abilities, but also the expression of their identities.

Additionally, given that Arabic is the second most widely spoken language in France, I support the case for bilingual education in French and Arabic, in alignment with trends to include the languages of minority populations that are increasingly prevalent in many countries, as, for example, in many parts of the USA with Spanish. I am aware of the debate over which variety of Arabic should be taught in schools, and I argue in favor of teaching the varieties of Arabic most commonly used by Franco-Maghrebi youth. Bilingual education would further legitimize Franco-Maghrebi students' linguistic and cultural home practices. In addition, as Hélot and Erfurt (2016) claimed, bilingual education is the only type of education that is really equitable. Because bilingual education implies sharing the education space with another language, it would result in a more inclusive environment where several languages coexist, granting them equal status, while leading to greater equity and empowerment for all students.

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Appendix A: Letter from Emmanuel Macron

CITOYENNES, CITOYENS,

J'ai décidé de me présenter à l'élection présidentielle car je veux construire une vraie alternance, redonner à chaque Française et chaque Français confiance en soi, confiance en la France et dans notre capacité collective à relever nos défis. Ce faisant, nous redonnerons à l'Europe et au reste du monde confiance en notre pays.

"Le projet que je vous propose, c'est de bâtir avec vous une France nouvelle."

Depuis plus de trente ans, nous ne parvenons pas à régler le problème du chômage de masse, de la sécurité ni celui de l'intégration.

Des transformations radicales nouvelles bouleversent nos vies et nos certitudes.

La révolution numérique change nos manières de produire, de consommer et de vivre ensemble.

Le changement climatique nous oblige à repenser notre organisation et nos modes de vie.

Le terrorisme djihadiste a frappé notre pays ces dernières années et demeure la première menace. Le monde est de plus en plus incertain.

Pour faire face à ces transformations et ces défis, je propose de bâtir avec vous une France nouvelle qui crée et entreprend, une France de sécurité et de progrès pour chacun. Une France plus forte dans une Europe plus efficace. Une France qui répare les injustices de départ et protège les plus faibles. Une France qui dépasse les vieux clivages pour mettre en place les solutions qui marchent, et qui conduit enfin une vraie moralisation de sa vie politique.

Je veux que nous soyons à nouveau fiers d'être français, grâce à notre culture, notre rayonnement international et notre langue.

Je veux que nous soyons libres d'entreprendre, d'innover, de réussir quel que soit notre milieu d'origine.

Je veux que nous soyons solidaires car la réussite de quelques-uns ne peut pas être le projet pour tout notre pays.

Je veux auprès de vous prendre des engagements clairs sur les chantiers essentiels pour l'avenir de notre pays. Car présider, ce n'est pas s'occuper de tout. Ce sont ces mêmes engagements que je demanderai à l'ensemble des parlementaires qui constitueront la majorité présidentielle, parce que nous avons besoin de transformations innovantes et radicales, pas de petits ajustements.

Je veux qu'ensemble nous retrouvions l'énergie du peuple français : être fiers, libres et solidaires. Car la France est une chance.

Emmanuel Macron

Appendix B: Principes de vie dans l'établissement (Principles of life in the establishment)

Principes de vie dans l'établissement

① L'élève doit **assister** à tous les cours et activités prévues.

② L'élève doit **faire**, en classe et à la maison, l'intégralité du travail demandé par les professeurs.

③ L'élève doit **posséder** l'ensemble de son matériel scolaire (livres, cahiers, calculatrice, tenue de sport…).

④ L'élève ne doit, durant les cours, ni bavarder, ni se déplacer, ni utiliser des objets inutiles à la scolarité.

⑤ L'élève ne doit pas quitter la salle de cours avant la sonnerie.

⑥ L'élève doit parler la **langue française** en dehors des cours de langues vivantes.

⑦ L'élève doit pouvoir présenter à tout moment son **carnet de correspondance** à tous les personnels adultes de l'établissement.

⑧ L'élève doit avoir une **attitude respectueuse** des biens et des personnes, et bannir de son vocabulaire les injures et les grossièretés.

⑨ Tout **comportement perturbateur** est passible de punitions et de sanctions. Les déplacements au sein de l'établissement doivent s'effectuer dans le calme.

⑩ L'élève doit **justifier** ses absences et retards auprès de la vie scolaire.

Signature de l'élève :
(Précédée de la mention : *Je m'engage à respecter les principes de vie dans l'établissement*)

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Is the Language you Teach Racist? Reflections and Considerations for English and Spanish (Teacher) Educators

Luis Javier Pentón Herrera

Abstract

In this manuscript, I weave personal and professional stories with available literature to advocate for the necessity of decolonizing language education, taking a primary interest in the English and Spanish languages and in the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas and the Caribbean islands. Thus, I first set the stage by providing a brief historical overview of the effects caused by colonialism on the Indigenous Peoples, languages, and cultures of the Americas and the Caribbean islands. Then, I introduce my journey toward personal and professional decolonization and share practical examples of how I decolonize my teaching with the vision that this information will be helpful to readers. I end this article with final thoughts and an open invitation for further dialogue. My hope is that language (teacher) educators will use this essay as a critical reading for their language teacher pre- and in-service preparation programs and in other academic spaces.

Keywords: language and racism, decolonization, colonialism, language teacher educators, English and Spanish

Introduction

Can a language be racist? This was probably the first question that came to mind when you read the title of this article. To answer this question, we must keep in mind that languages are not sentient beings with feelings and emotions; thus, in that sense, languages do not have the capacity to learn how to be racist. However, we must also recognize that languages are human-made social and political objects (Otheguy et al., 2015) and that, throughout history, they have been used as weapons to assert control, delegitimize, negate membership and opportunities, and disassociate groups of people who look and act differently from those in power. In this sense, language is not innocent. Furthermore, the history that we (fail to) acknowledge in our schools about the language we teach, learn, and use in societies affects people's views, identities, and self-perceived privilege—or lack thereof—as speakers of those languages.

Contact: Luis Javier Pentón Herrera, University of Warsaw
Email: luis.penton@gmail.com

In this essay, I weave personal and professional stories with available literature to advocate for the necessity of decolonizing language education, taking a primary interest in the English and Spanish languages and in the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas and the Caribbean islands. Thus, I first set the stage by providing a brief historical overview of the effects caused by colonialism on the Indigenous Peoples, languages, and cultures of the Americas and the Caribbean islands. Also, I briefly delve into the residual effects of colonialism in societies today. Then, I introduce myself by briefly sharing my journey toward personal and professional decolonization. Next, I provide practical examples of how I decolonize my teaching, with the vision that this information will be helpful to readers. I end this article with final thoughts and an open invitation for further dialogue. My hope is that language (teacher) educators will use this manuscript as a critical reading for their language teacher pre- and in-service preparation programs and that scholars in the field of applied linguistics will continue this conversation in other academic spaces.

Setting the Stage: Languages, Colonization, and Residual Effects

Languages

What is *language*? This may be a simple yet difficult question to answer. Throughout recorded history, language has been used to share, document, communicate, and negotiate human experiences, as well as to connect us with speakers who came before us. Harrison (2010) tells us that language is a technology packaging "knowledge in radically different ways, facilitating certain means of conceptualizing, naming, and discussing the world" (p. 59). Certainly, when we speak our words, we are speaking the words, phrases, and memories of our ancestors and of the people who maintained our collective linguistic wealth and heritage. Language, as a form of passing ancestral knowledge, remains inextricably connected to who we are and to the relationship we keep with our communities.

In the field of applied linguistics and language education, language has often been discussed from a *nature* (also known as innatist or nativist) vs. *nurture* (also known as social constructivist) perspective. Proponents of the *nature* view believe that human beings have the innate ability to acquire and make sense of language. From this perspective, language is viewed as a genetic inheritance and a natural result of the prewiring in our brains (Chomsky, 2006). On the other hand, scholars supporting the *nurture* view believe language originates and is the result of social interactions. From this perspective, language is viewed as the product of humans' need to communicate with one another and convey our intentions (Vygotsky, 1962). Regardless of how it is conceptualized, linguists on both sides of the *nature* vs. *nurture* debate agree that language is deeply connected to who we are as human beings and is tied to our identities, emotions, and culture (Brown, 2014).

Colonization

Human history tells us that language users have been coming into contact or clashing for millennia (Ostler, 2005). In many cases, these contacts or clashes have been recorded as irruptions of one language into another where one community of speakers has been forced to learn another language, sometimes at the cost of their own. In the Americas and the Caribbean islands, the irruption of Spanish and English had devastating consequences for the Indigenous Peoples, as these two European languages were employed by their speakers to control, impose, and condemn. White-skinned English and Spanish-speaking *colonizadores*, who "viewed themselves as innately superior in intelligence and ability to people with darker skin" (Yellow Bird, 1999, p. 3), used their language—and their abilities as speakers of those languages—as symbols of intellect. Through this practice, language became a vehicle for granting intelligence to (native) speakers of English and Spanish while simultaneously

representing Indigenous Peoples—speakers of Indigenous languages—as violent savages (Johnson, 1881), *bárbaros* (barbarians), and *incultos* (uneducated) (Las Casas, 1876a, 1876b).

Colonizers' use of language to assert legitimacy and impose the label of inferiority onto Indigenous Peoples in the Americas can be explained through the lens and practice of linguicism. According to Phillipson (1992), linguicism is defined as "ideologies, structures, and practices which are used to legitimate, effectuate, and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (both material and non-material) between groups which are defined on the basis of language" (p. 47). The practice of repeatedly exalting their status as speakers of colonial languages while simultaneously associating Indigenous Peoples with dehumanizing labels reinforced in the minds of *colonizadores* the idea that they were a superior race and that their inhumane actions were justified because Indigenous Peoples were 'an inferior race.' Language-based racism (i.e., linguicism) and discrimination remain directly connected to the history of European colonization in the Americas and the Caribbean islands, and their residual effects continue to afflict us in the present day.

Residual Effects

Today, in the 21st century, we struggle with the residual effects that colonialism has left in societies. From 'English Only,' White nationalist politics (see McIntosh, 2020) in the United States to the systemic implementation of politics seeking to negate, invisibilize, or assimilate Indigenous Peoples and languages in Latin American countries (see Coronel-Molina, 1999; UNICEF, 2009), societies continue to battle racism and discrimination. The residual effects of colonialism in societies can be explored and felt from different dimensions. However, for the purpose of this article, in the following section, I use a linguistic lens to briefly extend the conversation about two forms of residual effects: (1) *aggressive* (i.e., evident or overt) residual effects such as linguistic racism, and (2) *passive* (i.e., less visible or covert) effects such as linguistic appropriation.

Aggressive Residual Effects

The practices associated with aggressive residual effects of colonialism usually come from individuals at the top (e.g., politicians, policymakers) or from individuals who are part of a majority group of the populace, and affect those who are minoritized or made vulnerable at the bottom (e.g., everyday citizens). In the Americas and the Caribbean islands, colonizing language practices have made evident that certain languages are exalted and legitimized over others. For example, Ecuador and Guatemala are countries with large numbers of Indigenous Peoples and languages, but only Spanish is recognized as their official language. Another example is found in the United States, where Spanish speakers represent a large demographic population of the nation, yet the Spanish language remains a language with little cultural and intellectual legitimacy due to its link to immigration and poverty (Pentón Herrera, 2019a). This phenomenon, known as linguistic racism, embraces "ideologies and practices that are utilised to conform, normalise and reformulate an unequal and uneven linguistic power between language users" (Dovchin, 2020a, p. 773). Linguistic racism affects the emotional wellbeing (Dovchin, 2020b; Oliver & Exell, 2020) of individuals from Indigenous backgrounds, minoritized groups, and people who are culturally and linguistically different (Dovchin, 2020a). At the same time, linguistic racism can also lead to racially motivated attacks against these vulnerable groups (De Costa, 2020).

In societies, racially motivated, physical attacks against minoritized groups are often accompanied by the use of language. Labels or slurs continue to be used by those who see themselves as 'superior' to dehumanize individuals from minoritized groups, just as colonizers once did with Indigenous Peoples. In the United States, more specifically, pejorative language such as 'illegal,' has

been repeatedly used to represent people as *something* (i.e., not human), reinforcing the language users' feelings of superiority and "quietly [paving] the way for violent action" (Alim, 2016, p. 26). We may not be living in a time where English- and Spanish-speaking colonizers killed, murdered, and eradicated the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas and the Caribbean islands, and yet we continue to witness how language is used as a systemic mechanism of colonization to dehumanize others in societies.

In my view, language is weaponized in societies through a three-step process. The conceptualization of this three-step process of language weaponization emerged as a result of deep research and extensive readings, which led me to identify similar patterns in different historical events where language was used to vilify, subjugate, criminalize, exterminate, invisibilize, dehumanize, marginalize, and/or segregate a group (or groups) of people. As an important point of clarification, in this conceptualization, I view *racism* through a Fanonian lens, wherein it is recognized that racism can happen on the basis of skin color, ethnicity, language, culture, or religion, among other factors (see Fanon, 2008). The three steps in which language can be weaponized are:

- **Step 1: Begin the process of dehumanization.** Colonizers, dictators, and those in positions of power use their language to create hierarchical structures/divisions and represent vulnerable groups—or those they see as inferior to them—as violent, barbaric, uneducated, and/or unwanted. In this step, groups of people are assigned labels, slurs, or names considered unclean, undesired, or subhuman (i.e., labels are usually related to animals or infections).
- **Step 2: Solidifying a culture of dehumanization.** By repeatedly imposing their language as legitimate and anything else as illegitimate or illegal, and by using labels, slurs, stereotypes, and pejorative language to refer to vulnerable groups, colonizers, dictators, and those in positions of power accept these groups of people—or those they see as inferior to them—as subhuman, solidifying the culture that these groups are *something* (i.e., not human) rather than *someone* (i.e., human). In this step of dehumanization, language weaponization evolves from covert to overt racist discourse (e.g., hate speech).
- **Step 3: From linguistic dehumanization to physical harm.** Colonizers, dictators, and those in positions of power, justified in their mind by their sense of superiority and righteousness, use force, violence, and any means necessary to erase the identity, languages, and presence of vulnerable groups—or those they see as inferior to them. In the minds of dictators and those in positions of power, these groups of people are subhuman, abhorrent, barbaric, filthy, unwanted, and/or a disease, so violence is permitted and justified as acts of nationalism to preserve their 'superior' race, language, and/or culture, and to eradicate those deemed undesirable from society.

Passive Residual Effects

In addition to aggressive, or more evident residual effects of colonialism, societies also struggle with passive—or less visible—residual effects, most commonly in the form of linguistic appropriation. Linguistic appropriation is defined as the process where speakers of the "target language (the group doing the borrowing) adopt resources from the donor language, and then try to deny these to members of the donor language community. They attempt this denial through formal legal prohibition and informal monitoring and censure" (Hill, 2008, p. 158). In the United States, specifically, Whites' and other non-Hispanics' appropriation of linguistic resources from Spanish has been used "to display *covert* racism toward people of color" (Mendoza-Denton, 2016, p. 145). This racist practice of linguistic appropriation "goes largely unnoticed and is broadly accepted by the majority [of] society, giving the impression that the speaker is a relaxed, easy-going sort of person with a surface familiarity with

another culture" (p. 145). These linguistic appropriations also access negative stereotypes. For example, when Whites and non-Hispanics use *mamacita* (little mama), *muy caliente* (very hot), and *muy picante* (very spicy), they perpetuate the culture of stereotyping the sexuality of Spanish-speaking individuals (Hill, 2005, 2008; Mendoza-Denton, 2016).

Some disagree with the concept of linguistic appropriation—whether or not they call it so—and believe 'borrowing' words from other languages is natural. For example, Dent (2019) wrote an article in the *National Review* where he attempts to make the case that using terms/words from other languages and cultures is a normal course of how languages 'naturally' evolve over time due to cultural interaction and exchange. Notably, in his article he uses phrases like "the English we speak today was heavily influenced by French and Latin" (para. 3) and "though other languages may still affect English" (para. 4), which make it seem as if the English language and speakers were passively being influenced and affected by other languages. However, linguistic appropriation can be traced back to invasions (e.g., military, religious, etc.), wars, and the appropriation of words that English speakers did not have in their language—similarly to Spanish. Throughout recorded history, we learn that English speakers, the same as Spanish speakers, were not being passively 'affected' by other languages and speakers, as Dent (2019) writes. Instead, they were colonizing and appropriating resources.[1]

As the famous saying goes, "history is written by the victors." When individuals write about languages that were used as weapons of colonization to depict passivity, like Dent (2019) does, it creates an alternate, romanticized reality of colonization for readers. As language (teacher) educators, we must recognize that, in the past, colonizers *forcefully took* anything they thought was enriching to them or their culture from those they colonized, which includes forcefully taking linguistic wealth. In the same way that Spanish-speaking colonizers *forcefully took* and modified vocabulary words from the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas and the Caribbean islands when they colonized these lands (e.g., *barbacoa* from the Taíno, *alpaca* from the Aimara, *chapapote* from the Náhuatl, to name a few), so did English-speaking colonizers (i.e., *opossum* from the Powhatan, *kayak* from Native tribes like the Inuit and Yup'ik, and *bayou* from the Choctaw, to name a few). In the same way that colonizers appropriated words and vocabulary they deemed necessary to enrich their own language and culture, they forcefully imposed their own language and sought to eradicate other languages by deeming them less important. In simple words, colonizers *forcefully appropriated* the linguistic resources they deemed enriching to their own language and culture, and attempted to erase the languages they deemed inferior.

There is a plethora of publications retelling how colonizers imposed their languages on Indigenous Peoples, contributing to the extinction or near-extinction of many Indigenous cultures and traditions as a result. Some examples of how colonizers imposed their language to vilify Indigenous Peoples' languages and cultures in the Americas include the Indian boarding schools in the United States and Canada (see Lomawaima, 1994; Sellars, 2013), and the forced *castellanization*, or teaching of the Spanish language, in Latin American (e.g., Makarán, 2016; Martínez Sagredo, 2020). I mention all of these examples to circle back to my main point, which is that colonizers, as language users, have forcefully taken linguistic wealth from Indigenous Peoples and speakers of minority languages, and imposed their own languages on them. From this factual acknowledgment, we must understand that the languages we teach and speak (such as English and Spanish) have been used as weapons to colonize others, and it is our duty to clarify their history for our teachers and future speakers of those languages. Through this process of teaching historical facts about the languages we teach and speak, we engage in the practice of decolonizing language education and, by extension, in

[1] See Bryson (1990) for more information about the history of the English language, and Torres Torres (2016) for more information about the history of the Spanish language.

the practice of disrupting all privileges that colonizers have assigned to those languages of colonization in the past.

Introducing Myself: Decolonizing My (Teacher) Self

Now that we have gone through a brief overview of language, colonization, and the residual effects we experience in societies, I would like to use this section to share my story. I was born and raised in Cuba, an island that was home to two Indigenous groups, the Taíno and the Guanahatabey, before Spaniards colonized it. Throughout my formal education in Cuba, Indigenous Peoples were always talked about in the past tense, and they were commonly referred to as uncultured or unadvanced. Parallel to this reality was the teaching that Christopher Columbus 'discovered' the Americas and that he 'brought' the Spanish language to us—often taught as if the Spanish language was a gift to the 'New World.' The history of Cuba taught at schools omitted details about the atrocities the Spaniards committed against the Taíno and the Guanahatabey, and there was little emphasis on the Taínos' and the Guanahatabeys' cultures, civilizations, and languages. Instead, the emphasis of the history of Cuba and the language we learned in our schools (i.e., Spanish) was solely dedicated to the Spaniard *conquistadores*' legacy, and the Spanish language.

Interestingly, the discourse the Cuban regime maintains to this day to talk about the United States and its people stereotypes 'el gringo americano' or 'el yuma' (The American *gringo*, or *yuma*[2]) as White. In Cuba, the stereotypical representation of a native of the US is a blue-eyed, blond, and White individual. *Ella parece una gringa* (She looks like a *gringa*), is a common phrase used in Cuba to describe individuals who look like Americans (blue-eyed, blond, and White). In the English classes I took in Cuban schools, I never learned about the history of the United States, or about the fact that the actual Native Americans are the Indigenous Peoples of these lands, not White people. It was not until I immigrated to the United States that I realized the Eurocentricity of Cuban formal schooling. In Cuba, Spanish and English were taught from the colonizers' perspective; that is, the education I received enforced the invisibilization of the Indigenous Peoples of Cuba, the Caribbean islands, and the Americas, and only referred to them as individuals from the past.

My journey of decolonization began with my student Diego (pseudonym) in a US English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classroom. One day, I was teaching my English learners (ELs) when I suddenly learned from Diego that he was Ixil Maya. Until that point, I had wrongfully assumed that he and all my other students from Latin America were Spanish speakers and that, as I had learned in Cuba, Indigenous Peoples were part of the past. In a previous publication, I shared my inner struggles the moment I learned that Diego, my student, was Ixil:

> Learning that Diego was Ixil shattered everything I thought I knew from Latin America. I remember asking myself, "Why didn't I learn this in Cuba? Why weren't we taught in Cuba that Indigenous [P]eoples and languages are very much alive in Latin America?" More importantly, I asked myself, "Why isn't this vulnerable group more visible in the academic literature addressing Latinx English learners?" I remember feeling confused, guilty, and unprepared all at the same time. One thought that I could not shake out of my head was the fact that Diego was struggling [in our classroom] because I did not know about his reality; I had not been trained to help Indigenous ELs and I had no idea how to look for academic resources in Ixil to support him in learning English. All along, I had been taught and trained to teach English to Latinx ELs using Spanish, but what about Diego? What about other Indigenous Latinx ELs? (Pentón Herrera, 2019b, para. 5).

[2] Although the history behind the term *yuma* remains unclear, this word is commonly used in Cuba to refer to individuals from other countries and, more specifically, to Americans.

Since that moment, I recognized the necessity of unlearning the history that I had been taught in Cuba, and in schools in the United States. As a Spanish and ESOL teacher and a language teacher educator, I recognized that my ignorance about Indigenous Peoples was unacceptable. Thus, I began to relearn the history of Cuba, purposefully looking for information about its Native Peoples—the Taíno and the Guanahatabey. Then I expanded my reading list to include information about Indigenous People from the Caribbean islands and the Americas. During this time, I was also pursuing my doctoral studies and gravitated toward researching the language and literacy experiences of adolescent Ixil students (Pentón Herrera, 2018). The more I read about the history and present struggles of Indigenous communities from the Americas and the Caribbean islands, the more I realized the atrocious effects that colonialism and racism had, and continues to have, in societies. For me, learning with an open heart about the past and present histories of the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas and the Caribbean islands became the beginning of my decolonization journey.

My process of decolonization has been and continues to be deeply emotional. While reading the book *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (Las Casas, 1999), I learned of the ravages and atrocities of the Spanish *conquistadores* against Indigenous Peoples. One particular account that stayed with me was: "one woman, determined that the dogs should not tear her to pieces, tied her child to her leg, and hanged herself from a beam" (p. 73). "How cruel can people be?!" I often asked myself in disbelief while flipping through the pages in tears. While reading about Cuba, I felt a sense of guilt for not knowing the history of where I come from, for contributing to the invisibilization of the Taíno and the Guanahatabey, and for once believing in a romanticized version of the invasion, imposition, and genocide of Spanish colonizers. The process of decolonization—of breaking away from colonizer-centric history, rhetoric, and education—involves constant mental and emotional negotiations. As an individual who chose to immerse myself in decolonizing research to (re)learn the history of my ancestors, I often struggle with the emotional toll resulting from relieving colonization through my readings, and from the constant reshaping of the reality I thought I knew.

A couple of years ago, I received a DNA test as a birthday present. Up until that point, I had been taught by my family that our ancestors were from Europe (Spain and England) and Africa. "El que no tiene de Congo, tiene de Carabalí" (one who does not have something of Congo, has of Carabalí), is a common phrase we use in Cuba to acknowledge that all of us are *mestizos* (mixed-race). When I received my DNA test results, I was surprised. In addition to having Spain, England, and different African countries as part of my ancestry, I also learned that I had Indigenous blood in me. According to my DNA test, my Indigenous roots are from Cuba (identified in the test as Taíno) and from an area in Central America known today as the countries of Honduras, Costa Rica, and El Salvador.

My DNA test results clarified why some of my family members have distinct Indigenous physical features, but it also generated many more questions for me. To this day, I continue to search for any familial connections that may point me to my Indigenous ancestors, but it is a topic that is often avoided by older family members. When I try to engage in conversations about our family tree, my grandparents talk about their Spanish or English ancestors, and when I ask about our Indigenous roots, they respond with "no sé, Luisi, en mi tiempo no hablábamos de eso" (I don't know, Luisi, in my time [during my childhood] we didn't talk about that). As I write this article in 2021, I realize that the effects of colonialism continue to affect people like me who remain in search of their family roots, and who hope to one day know their ancestors' names and words. Through this conscious process of uncovering the history of my ancestors, I often question my identity—*Can I consider myself Taíno? What does 'being Cuban' truly mean?* These and other questions remain unanswered to this day.

From Theory to Practice: Decolonizing Language Teaching and Education

In the constant quest to reclaim knowledge about my ancestors, I often realize I speak two languages that were used to colonize cultures and extinguish other languages. As a speaker of English and Spanish, I am, thus, connected to their history and to the speakers who came before me. I do not resent or hold any negative emotions toward either of these languages, because I know they are not sentient beings. However, as a speaker, language teacher, and language teacher educator of both languages, I am conscious of how Spanish and English have been used and continue to be used to dehumanize and colonize others. Similarly to Motha (2014), I struggle with the knowledge I possess about the languages I speak and teach, and with the actions I take as a language educator. That is, I clearly understand how the globalization of English and Spanish "reinforces colonial divisions of power and racial inequalities" and contributes to "the extension of less-commonly-spoken languages and their inherent epistemologies" (p. xxi). At the same time, I acknowledge that, because English and Spanish will continue to spread, teaching them remains important, life-changing work (Motha, 2014).

Thus, I do my best every day to teach my language teachers and language learners through a decolonized, responsible, conscious, and ethical lens. Through this process of decolonization, I realize and recognize that I, too, am a learner. Exploring "alternate understandings of master narratives of what counts as legitimate language and transforming dominant language" (Phyak, 2016, p. 30) ideologies and discourses results in necessary tensions that I must face in my ideological becoming. As a speaker and teacher of these languages, I continuously engage in self-dialogues about my identities, perspectives, and ideologies, recognizing the many ways in which (linguistic) colonization has been systematically enforced in our societies and classrooms (see Seward, 2019). My goal with decolonizing myself and my teaching is not to reject or deconstruct dominant ideologies, but to center myself, my concerns, and my worldview to make better sense of my perspectives through a socially just lens (Freire, 1970).

In the following section, I share two examples of how my teaching has evolved since I began my process of decolonization. I do not intend to imply that these practices are, by any means, exceptional or free from errors. I recognize that decolonization is an ongoing—an unfinished (Phyak, 2016)—process; therefore, my teaching will continue to evolve and change. However, I do hope language (teacher) educators will find these two examples helpful in their own practice as they reflect my authentic, practical attempts to approach education using a socially just lens.

Theory to Practice #1: English Writing Class in College

In 2019, I had the opportunity to teach an English writing class at the college level focusing on improving students' critical reading and writing skills while exploring a given academic theme of my choice. The curriculum for this class was very flexible; as long as we learned the different types of essays (e.g., expository, narrative, etc.), I had the flexibility of including any topic of my choice. I divided the 15-week course into three main modules—(1) Module 1: Arts; (2) Module 2: Language; and (3) Module 3: Culture—and introduced all the content taught in our class through a socially just lens. That is, although my students and I were learning to read and write in English, the examples and readings I added to my course gave my students the opportunity to learn about the history and use of the English language in the United States and about the people, cultures, and languages affected by colonialization and forced assimilation.

Throughout our assignments, I gave my students the opportunity to research, learn, and write about topics that were important to them. For example, in our expository essay assignment, I asked students to research a painting, song, or work of art of their choice and explicate its meaning through

a socially and racially just lens. Among the many excellent essays I received, one that I particularly remember was titled "90's Rap Contribution to the Community." In this essay, my student explored how rap music—and the lyrics and language in it—affected the African American community, which faced numerous problems at that time, such as drug addiction, unemployment, and racial profiling by the police. In this essay, my student also compared and contrasted today's rap music with the '90s, firmly stating that the language used in today's rap music degrades women, whereas 90s rap music (e.g., Missy Elliott and Queen Latifah) empowered them.

In addition to making space in our assignments for reflections about language use, I also created opportunities to engage my students in critical discussions while learning about the different Native Peoples, languages, and cultures of the United States. For example, in my introduction to the topics of *narratives* and *the narrative essay*, I shared an excerpt from Sellars's (2013) book about Indian residential schools in Canada. I then took that opportunity to share a little bit more of history about Indian residential schools in the United States and also about some of the Indigenous languages and cultures that suffered as a result. During that time, I had recently visited a museum in Washington DC that had an exposition about Native American cultures. I shared some of the pictures I took from my visit, shown in Figure 1, and encouraged my students to visit the museum. During our conversation, some of my students confessed they had not seen Native American languages written (or in print) before our conversation. Also, most of my students knew very little or nothing about the cruel history of Indian residential schools in the United States. I ended that class with recommendations for further readings about the effects and legacy of Indian residential schools in Canada and the United States, including one of my most favorite books, a bilingual illustrated story titled *Kimotinâniwiw itwêwina/Stolen Words* (Florence, 2019).

Figure 1. *The Lakota Winter Count (Pictographs)*

Theory to Practice #2: Language Teacher Preparation Programs

At the university level, my work has primarily focused on teaching in programs preparing ESOL and world language teachers, in addition to writing academic publications. In both teaching and writing, I have made it my purpose to make Indigenous and lesser-known populations of students visible. For example, in a recent Second Language Acquisition (SLA) course, we engaged in a discussion about the issues associated with assigning students an ethnicity and native tongue(s) based on their country of origin—a common practice in US schools. In our discussion, I shared my experiences teaching ELs who are from Indigenous or minoritized communities in their native countries, such as Uyghur from China, Afaan Oromo from Ethiopia, or Maya from Guatemala, and who speak a minority language as their first language (L1) and the country's dominant (or official) language as a second or additional language (L2).

In our discussions, I always remind my student-teachers that the languages they teach have a history and that it is their responsibility, as language educators, to learn it and pass accurate knowledge to their students. Further, I provide opportunities to reflect on how they, as speakers and teachers of those languages, may carry and reproduce unconscious biases dominant in the formal schooling culture. Certainly, hierarchical ideologies of monolingual, monocultural identity continue to prevail in formal schooling, often placing minoritized students, along with their funds of knowledge and linguistic repertoires, at the margins of inferiority and deficit (Coronel-Molina, 1999; Motha, 2006). This reality is not only replicated in US classrooms, but also in other nations of the Americas and the Caribbean islands where colonial languages and, by extension, their ideologies continue to reproduce feelings of linguistic shame and alienation in speakers of minority and/or Indigenous languages (Coronel-Molina, 1999).

To approach the topic of Indigenous People's invisibility (see Barillas Chón et al., 2021) and monolingual ideologies in formal schooling, I often include required readings in our courses that prompt us to engage in deep discussions (e.g., Civallero, 2020; Frydland, 2022; González Díaz, 2019; Kidwell & Pentón Herrera, 2019; Pentón Herrera, 2019c; Web del Maestro CMF, 2020). Also, we explore how they, as language teachers, can create opportunities in their schools and classrooms that contribute to the visibility of Indigenous communities and languages coexisting alongside the communities and languages they are teaching (for examples see Pentón Herrera, forthcoming). I know that this is only the beginning of what decolonizing language (teacher) education looks like for me as a language educator, but I am excited and hopeful of the possibilities in the future.

Let's Continue Our Dialogue: Final Thoughts

I would like to end this article with a short account of an event I experienced at an end-of-year holiday gathering with friends and extended family in 2020. At this gathering, most of the people were Cuban, but one of the attendees was Mexican—Carmencita (pseudonym)—and was married to a young gentleman born and raised in Cuba. In my conversation with Carmencita, I learned that she was born and raised in Mexico, and somehow, we ended up talking about different Indigenous Peoples and languages from Mexico. Suddenly, her husband joined our conversation and shared, "*yo creo que los indios son buenas personas, pero son muy cabezones; donde trabajamos en la construcción yo les enseño a hacer las cosas, pero ellos lo hacen como ellos quieren*" (I think that Indians are good people, but they are very stubborn; where we work in construction I show them how to do things, but they do it how they want).

This young gentleman, who I do not consider to be racist, used the word *indio*—referring to Mexican workers—without knowing that this word is a pejorative term used in most of Latin America to refer to Indigenous Peoples. The use of this term quickly prompted me to correct him in front of

everyone: "*la palabra indio es una ofensa para las personas indígenas*" (the word *indio* is offensive to Indigenous Peoples). The people listening were surprised at my response and the young gentleman did not understand what I was explaining. Carmencita, aware of the awkward situation, began talking about an unrelated topic to shift the focus of the conversation. Through this very short exchange, I confirmed, once again, that schools in Cuba do very little to educate individuals about the history of Indigenous Peoples in the Americas and the Caribbean islands, and about the correct vocabulary to use to refer to Indigenous Peoples. I also realized that the antiracist and anticolonial knowledge I have gained as a scholar and educator about Indigenous Peoples has also percolated into my personal life, shaping my identity and causing tensions. I do not consider this young gentleman to be racist, and yet, he is using, reinforcing, and perpetuating racist language against Indigenous Peoples—this fact surprised me and has prompted me to engage in further cogitations.

In this article, I have woven my personal and professional stories with available literature to advocate for the necessity of decolonizing language education. I do not pretend to imply that the history and information shared in this essay are exhaustive in any way. On the contrary, the brief overviews shared in this manuscript about colonialism, racism, and linguicism in the Americas and in the Caribbean islands are merely the tip of the iceberg. Keeping in mind that discrimination, racism, and dehumanization always start with language (Brown, 2017), I invite language teachers, language teacher educators, and those in the field of applied linguistics to continue this difficult but necessary dialogue with me in a different space and to continue decolonizing their pedagogy and the way they teach.

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Unpacking Language Weaponization in Spanish(es): Supporting Transnational Antiracist Relationality

Cristina Sánchez-Martín and Laura Gonzales

Abstract

One of the ways in which White supremacy remains largely unchallenged in the context of US Spanish-speaking communities is language (Lloréns & Dinzey-Flores, 2021). While many advocate for language access for Spanish-speaking communities in the US, few acknowledge the fact that there are multiple varieties of Spanish, and that in Spanish, language and race are also co-constructed (Flores & Rosa, 2015). As such, the adaptation and standardization of White Spanishes upholds White supremacy and erases Black and Indigenous languages of the Americas (Cusicanqui, 2012). In this article, we argue for a need to center Black Latinx and Indigenous experiences in discussions and definitions of Spanish and Spanish-speaking communities in the US. We put into conversation anticolonial and relational language work (Leonard, 2021) with transnational antiracist Black language education (Milu, 2021) to demonstrate how we can intentionally work to redress language weaponization in Spanish.

Keywords: language weaponization, White Spanishes, anti-Blackness, transnational Black language, relationality.

Introduction: The Positionalities of Spanish

It is now common practice, across fields and disciplines, for researchers to state and discuss their positionality when describing their orientation to research. Positionality statements in scholarly publications can help readers understand where a researcher is coming from, particularly when writing about students and communities. Positionality statements might help you, as a reader of this article, for example, know that this article is written by two Spanish-speaking researchers. Cristina, a White Hispanic from Spain, and Laura, a White Latina from Bolivia, write this piece as a way to highlight

Contact: Cristina Sánchez-Martín, University of Washington, and Laura Gonzales, University of Florida
Emails: csanch2@uw.edu and gonzalesl@ufl.edu

how White supremacy writ large and anti-Blackness, specifically, permeate language research in Spanish-speaking contexts.[1]

While positionality statements are useful tools to understand *who* is conducting research, it is also important to recognize *how* the research is being conducted, specifically by investigating the positionality of the language(s) used to mitigate communication in research and pedagogical contexts. As Clemons and Lawrence (2020) recently point out, "antiracist scholarship requires transparent research subjectivities and an acknowledgment of the traditional privileging of certain positionalities and methodologies" (p. 254). In US educational contexts, there is often a binary created between mainstream White English and 'other' languages, where the *other* categories can encompass anything from African American English to German, to name just a couple. Thus, in mainstream language conversations in the US, 'other' languages, including Spanish, are frequently relegated to the margins, particularly when these languages are used in reference to communities of color. Yet colonial languages, such as Spanish, have long histories of weaponization, being imposed upon Black and Indigenous communities through the ongoing project of colonization and White supremacy. Assuming the marginalization of Spanish, and the marginalization of all Spanish speakers, can thus perpetuate anti-Blackness and anti-Indigeneity by "bolstering and normalizing the needs, wants, norms, and bodies of White subjects in ways that subjugate racialized populations" (Leonard, 2021, p. 218).

Extensive bodies of work reference *Spanish-speaking communities* or *Spanish-speaking students*, highlighting how 'Spanish-speaking' can sometimes denote a marker of marginalization in US contexts. As Pentón Herrera (2019) has explained, "Spanish is widely spoken in the US, yet, it tends to be associated with immigration and poverty" (p. 469), which prevents it from acquiring the status that other languages, like (White) English, hold. Moreover, conversations centered on Spanish-speaking communities can assume homogeneity (Pentón Herrera, 2021a) and result in the erasure of other identity traits like race and/or ethnicity, creating deeper and more nuanced forms of discrimination. In classrooms, as Barillas Chón et al. (2021) explain, "Indigenous Latinx students whose primary language is Indigenous often interact with multiple codes of linguistic power" (p. 139), situating their Indigenous languages in places of less prestige or even erasure under the Spanish or "Latinx" umbrella.

While the prevalence of English-dominant ideologies in the US may mark other languages as minoritized, when referencing Spanish-speaking communities and students specifically, we argue that it is important to interrogate the role that Spanish positionality plays (or does not play) in marginalization. Indeed, as many scholars have noted, not all people from Spanish-speaking countries and contexts speak Spanish, as Spanish itself is a colonial language used to erase and oppress Indigenous languages—and people—in Latin America, the Philippines, multiple African countries, and more. For example, as Chira (2021) recently pointed out, "Spanish colonialism tends to be mapped onto South America and perhaps the Philippines. However, the last Spanish colony to claim independence from Spain in 1968 was a territory in West Africa—Equatorial Guinea—a nation-state where Spanish still serves as the official language" (para. 1).

[1] We are aware that our identities shift according to the conditions around us and, thus, are much more complex and should not be simplified to the White-Other dichotomy and logics of Whiteness (Motha, 2020). However, in this article, we highlight the effects of our White identities as these are positioned in relation to anti-Blackness and anti-Indigeneity in our language communities.

As Zapotec activist Abigail Castellanos García (2021) points out, in Latin America and other global contexts, the Spanish language is used to oppress and erase the presence of Indigenous communities who speak Indigenous languages. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic,

> [U]na de las obligaciones del Estado [mexicano] fue generar a través de sus instituciones mecanismos y estrategias para informar a la población sobre la contingencia que el país estaba enfrentando. Sin embargo, los pueblos indígenas recibían la información en español, insuficiente y culturalmente inadecuada, o bien, la información no llegó a diferentes comunidades, convirtiéndose en uno de los sectores más desprotegidos. (para. 5)
>
> [One of the duties of the [Mexican] State was to generate, through its own institutional mechanisms, strategies for informing the population about the risk that the country was facing. However, Indigenous communities received this information in Spanish, received insufficient or culturally inappropriate information, or the information did not reach Indigenous communities at all, making these communities among the most vulnerable.]

In the US educational context, a "focus on an English–Spanish dichotomy" contributes to reinforcing "(t)he limitations and linguistic racism" in schooling language education and programs (Barillas Chón et al., 2021, p. 139), since this binary erases Indigenous languages and identities.

Thus, while the Spanish language may be minoritized in some (though not all) contexts in the US, when theorizing language positionality, it is important to recognize the status, history, and positionality of a language worldwide, and to acknowledge how colonial languages cause violence and erasure for Black and Indigenous people across the globe. To understand and unpack language positionality, as Milu (forthcoming) points out, researchers should practice Indigenous methodologies, such as pluriversality and relationality (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018), in order to "better understand the relationship between language and coloniality in both local and global contexts" (Milu, forthcoming, p. 7).

It is also important to note that not all communities from Spanish-speaking countries living in the US speak Spanish, as long histories of violence prevented many second- and third-generation immigrants from speaking their home languages (including but not limited to Spanish) at work and school. Finally, the named language,[2] *Spanish*, like the named language *English*, has multiple variants, all of which are tied to race, class, nationality, and much more. Thus, in this article, written specifically for this special issue on language weaponization, we unpack labels like *Spanish* and *Spanish-speaking* to highlight how White supremacist ideologies permeate all language praxis, and how Spanish as a language is itself weaponized against Black and Indigenous communities from Spanish-speaking countries.

Unpacking the Anti-Blackness and Colonial Roots of Spanish

Part of the work of highlighting how Spanish is used as a weapon against nonwhite communities requires an interrogation of the terms, words, and expressions that are often used without question in White Latinx contexts. Take, for example, the word, *quilombo*, a term that Laura often heard in her family to describe a *mess* or a *disaster*. Laura's father, for instance, would frequently say "todo está un

[2] We use the term *named language* to refer to abstract, reified, categorical, and discrete ways of defining the practice of (trans)languaging (García, 2019). The idea of named languages, as conveyed in the remainder of this article, is a colonial construct that obscures the power dynamics and relationships experienced by all individuals, but especially racialized individuals.

quilombo" (or "everything is a mess") when describing a stressful familial or government situation in his home country.

The word *quilombo* stems from the word *kilombo*, which in the Bantu language, Kimbundu, means *war camp*. The word was originally used in Brazil to describe communities of enslaved Africans who escaped and formed their own settlements, known as Quilombos or Carabali. It is important to note that Kimbundu is a language spoken in Angola, which was formerly colonized by the Portuguese. Thus, a word like 'kilombo' exhibits language relationality across the Black linguistic diaspora, and is just one example of how language is weaponized through White supremacy in colonized contexts.

Quilombos are still known in Brazil as communities made up of predominantly Afro-Brazilians. Yet, the word quilombo was used by White Brazilians and later White Latin Americans to first reference slums or brothels, and later, more colloquially, to reference anything in a state of mess or chaos. Indeed, according to the Real Academia Española, the staple for 'formal' Spanish definitions, a quilombo is defined as a "lugar apartado y de difícil acceso" (a place that is distant and hard to access), or to describe something as "barullo, gresca, desorden," (noisy, a quarrel, or a mess). This sharp distinction between a quilombo that references a safe-haven for Afro-Brazilians, and a quilombo used to reference chaos or a mess by White Brazilians and Latin-Americans is just one of many examples illustrating White supremacist ideologies in the Spanish language.

In a video from the account @ajplusespanol (https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=876841332957387), Campbell (2021) provides other examples of words in the Spanish language that have anti-Black roots, some of which include 'denigrar' (denigrate), 'negrear' (darken), 'oveja negra' (black sheep), 'mano negra' (black hand), and many more. These terms have anti-Black roots in Spanish and some of them are also used as expressions in English, thus extending the racist undertones across linguistic boundaries.

If quilombo, a space that signals freedom for African descendants, equals a mess for White colonizers, and if words that embrace anti-Blackness in English expand their racist impact in Spanish, is it appropriate to use the same labels of Spanish to reference the marginalization or supposed oppression of all Spanish-speaking communities in the US? That is the question we continue to unpack and interrogate in this article. In order to illustrate the need for more antiracist work in applications and theorizations of Spanish, we first provide an overview of emerging calls for antiracist praxis in English language and education. We then discuss our own methodological orientations to theorizing an antiracist approach to Spanish language research, before discussing how this work has been expanded by Black and Indigenous Spanish speakers and providing implications for how it could be further expanded.

Emerging Calls for Antiracist Language Research and Education

Language is one of the ways in which White supremacy remains largely unchallenged in the context of US ethnically and racially diverse Spanish-speaking communities. However, extensive research on Black English can help us theorize and amplify the need to interrogate White supremacy in Spanish-speaking contexts. For example, scholars, teachers, and activists have been calling for antiracist views and practices towards Black English for decades, including Baldwin's "If Black English Isn't a Language, Tell Me What Is" from 1979, and Smitherman's extensive work on African American Languages (1999). In the past few years, encouraged by conversations about systemic racism, anti-Blackness as a global phenomenon, and by the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, the role of Black language and literacy in education has been further centralized in conversations about social justice and equity in US educational contexts (Baker-Bell, 2020).

Baker-Bell (2020) proposes an Antiracist Black Language Education pedagogy to restore and bring justice to speakers of Black Englishes based on three main goals: "1) center blackness; 2) confront White linguistic and cultural hegemony; and 3) contest anti-blackness" (p. 32). At the same time, scholars of Black Language continue pushing forward conversations about language diversity, noting that there is rich diversity embedded within labels such as Black Language, particularly when noting the importance and presence of both Afro-Diasporic and African American speakers in US contexts (Milu, 2021). For example, Milu (2021) argues for a transnational Black language pedagogy that considers "teaching slavery, colonialism, and racism together to better reveal how they contributed to raciolinguistic ideologies, racialization practices, and racist sociolinguistic order in US and various Afro-Diasporic contexts" (p. 4236). Rather than labeling all communities and students under a single (linguistic) label, she illustrates that

> teaching these experiences together can bond and bind these disparate Black communities and perhaps lead to more effective and unified antiracist strategies that counter Eurocentric linguistic hegemony, white supremacy, racism, and violence toward all Black people in the US contexts and global contexts (p. 4237).

In short, if language scholars, writing instructors, and teachers in general want to continue working toward antiracist language pedagogies, it is important that we consider the multiplicity of experiences and histories embedded in our frameworks, labels, and pedagogies.

While there is renewed attention to the existence of multiple Englishes, and while language scholars continue describing the fluid and constantly shifting nature of language and languaging practices in general (García & Wei, 2014), we argue that less attention has been paid, particularly in rhetoric and composition studies, to how racism and anti-Blackness permeates non-English languages, including but not limited to Spanish. As Milu (2021) explains in her discussion of Black Language in African contexts, "the focus on English [in Black language research] fails to account for how other imperial languages of Europe, like Spanish, Portuguese, and French, have historically contributed to a racist and oppressive 'sociolinguistic order' globally" (p. 417).

Centering Blackness and Indigeneity in Spanish

Latinidad is a European and White-centered concept that consistently decentralizes and oppresses Blackness and Indigeneity (https://latinxstudiesassociation.org/). As Barillas Chón et al. (2021) explain, there are "complexities and important differences that are erased with the use of current pan-ethnic categories such as Latina/os" (p. 288). For this reason, it is important to interrogate the role of language in perpetuating anti-Blackness and anti-Indigeneity in the very same concept of Latinidad. While many organizations, researchers, and community members advocate for language access for Spanish-speaking communities in the US, few acknowledge the fact that there are multiple varieties of Spanish, and that in Spanish, language and race are also co-constructed (Flores & Rosa, 2015). As such, White Spanishes, which we define as prescriptivist abstract varieties stemming out of colonial Spanish associated with White upper social classes, uphold White supremacy and erase Black and Indigenous languages of the Americas (Cusicanqui, 2012). Moreover, as Indigenous linguistic anthropologist Leonard explains, Indigenous languages are brought to the table when "(I)ndigenous knowledges function as add-ons" in discourses of diversity (2021, p. 224) but at the core, the ways in which language is defined, valued, and analyzed epistemologically remains Euro-western.

Coronel-Molina's (1999) autoethnography provides a detailed account of the colonial effects of Spanish on his identity in Antaqutra, the Andean village where he grew up. For example, he explains that in his small town "both Quechua and Andean Spanish were spoken; but in the school, everything was taught only in Spanish, with no allowances made for the children like [him] who had never been

exposed to that language" (1999, p. 65). Furthermore, Blackness and Indigeneity intersect in some Spanish-speaking communities, such as the Yungas region of Bolivia, in which communities speak Afro-Bolivian Yungueño Spanish that draws from African Indigenous languages as well as Castilian Spanish.[3]

Other studies show the importance of maximizing opportunities of belonging in educational contexts where the English–Spanish binary dominates, by acknowledging and centering Indigenous students' backgrounds, identities, and languages. For example, Pentón Herrera's work on two Mayan students from Guatemala who were speakers of Mam and Q'eqchi' illustrates the potential of "creating spaces that acknowledge, celebrate, and make visible their Mayan languages, cultures, and traditions" in their learning (2021b, p. 13).

What these stories tell us is that, while Spanish speakers in general are marginalized in the US due to ideals of English monolingualism (García, 2019), their experiences must be approached from a raciolinguistic perspective to account for the various ways in which racial hierarchies, and thus racism, are constructed and sustained through language (Clemons, 2021; Flores & Rosa, 2015). García (2019) explains that the historical origins of named languages are rooted in colonialism. As she eloquently explains, the construction of both (Castilian) Spanish and English as homogeneous languages was part of the colonial enterprise of both kingdoms during the 16th century, "render(ing) without language" the "powerless Others, most often brown and black" populations (p. 155). She emphasizes that this legacy extends to today through the use of other language constructs like bilingualism and multilingualism, which inform our educational programs, including those for *foreign* or *heritage* students.

As mentioned earlier, the history, status, and value of Black English have been studied, raising awareness of forms of inequity experienced by Black people and affirming Black voices. Less is known about the interplay between these efforts and the realities of colonial Spanish and its sociomaterial conditions. At the same time, Black Latinas have been pointing out that White Latinxs sometimes identify as people of color in the US, but they/we uphold White supremacy. For example, Haywood (2017) describes the "endemic nature of anti-Black Latino racism" (p. 957), and the Black Latinas Know Collective (https://www.blacklatinasknow.org) explain that "Black Latina voices [are] a crucial source of knowledge to understand how race works within Latinidad" (Lloréns & Dinzey-Flores, 2021, para. 4). As Clemons (2021) demonstrates, it is not uncommon to see that alliance and/or knowledge of Spanish "language is enregistered as the boundary making element between Blackness and Latinidad" (p. 18). With this in mind, we recognize White Spanish as Spanish that sustains racism and colonialism, even when it is marginalized in relation to English. As scholars such as Anzaldúa (1987) continually point out, there is a complex history of marginalization and privilege embedded in Spanish-speaking communities. Furthermore, as Afro-Mexican poet Ariana Brown (2021a) points out, Afro-Latinx Spanish-speaking communities "need origins" of linguistic and racial histories that centralize, rather than erase, Blackness and the anti-Black racism perpetuated in Spanish-speaking contexts (p. 13).

The work of and about Black teachers of Spanish provides a useful portrayal of raciolinguistic ideologies around Spanishes. For example, Anya et al. (2019) investigated the relationship between Black teachers and students and Spanish language courses, demonstrating the following:

[3] In the Spanish-speaking world, the term Castilian Spanish is sometimes used to refer to the most formal and 'correct' form of the language.

- 80% of Spanish teachers from a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) quit their jobs at Historically Black Universities and Colleges (HBUC) due to "culture shock, distress, and also, lack of student preparation or institutional support" (p. 3).
- There is a lack of enrollment of Black students in Spanish courses, considering "negative classroom experiences due to poor instructional environments and a lack of ethno-racial affinity and integrativeness opportunities in the curricula" (p. 3).
- Spanish teachers from an HSI did not engage in conversations relevant to Black students' experiences with racism, which suggested that "black populations" were not seen "as important social and cultural agents in the study of Spanish" (p. 3).
- Black heritage learners of Spanish did not identify with or relate to Latina/o/x communities to which teachers from the HSI belonged.

The authors provide a list of useful recommendations for teacher educators and higher education administrators, such as emphasizing that the Latina/o/x communities in the US have a "black foundation" (p. 15), embracing Black names, using all "School English, Black English, Spanish, and Caribbean Englishes all in the same space" through translanguaging, and "understand(ing) the history of linguistic colonialism and how this has devastatingly impacted people's language and heritage," especially for Black students (p. 15). Despite the absolute relevance of these actions to addressing the inequitable conditions under which Black teachers and students engage with the Spanish language, the nature of the language itself is not called out. For example, what kinds of Spanishes are present in educational materials? When designing more "writing assignments about Afro-Latinx cultures" (p. 17), what kinds of Spanishes are invited and who do these Spanishes represent? Will these assignments and/or materials also address the "history of linguistic colonialism" in relation to colonial Spanish? While we do not necessarily provide answers to these questions in our article, our goal is to bring these questions to the forefront in discussions of Spanish and Latinidad in the US, particularly in our field of rhetoric and composition. In addition, our goal is to highlight and amplify the perspectives of Black and Indigenous Latinxs, who have long been arguing that labels such as *Spanish-speaking* and *Latinx communities* need to be dismantled to better address racism, anti-Blackness, and anti-Indigeneity.

Additionally, works in raciolinguistics add more layers of complexity when it comes to defining Blackness in relation to Latinidad. For example, in a recent study, Clemons (2021) found that

> while language often functions to create and uphold notions of Latinidad (often being mobilized as evidence that Dominicans are not Black but rather Spanish), DNA functions to confirm (or to disprove) Blackness. The lack of co-occurrence between DNA and co-naturalization of language and race suggests the stronghold of a mutual exclusivity between Blackness and Latinidad in these data. (p. 16)

Overall, Clemons's (2021) study shows that the co-naturalization of race and language (in other words, the co-construction of race and language as mutual processes) was not seen as a "valid tool for the construction of racial identity" (p. 16). Interestingly, in her study, "moments of anti-Blackness, conflict, and solidarity appeared in conjunction with the raciolinguistic ideologies" (p. 16), which speaks to the possibilities of framing raciolinguistics research as a potential opportunity to address anti-Blackness and promote solidarity among different Black subjectivities in relation to Spanish.

Positionality and Orientation: A Critical Transnational Agency Framework

Our methodological choices for this paper are guided by our commitment to learn from, credit, and highlight the importance of Black Latinx and Indigenous experiences in conversations about Spanish.

We do this as we also recognize the privilege that comes with our White identities as Spanish-speaking faculty in the US. In short, we do this work because we know we are privileged, and we care about building more inclusive and justice-driven conversations for and with our Spanish-speaking colleagues, students, and collaborators.

As Austin and Hsieh (2021) mention in their study about Black women's presence (or lack of) in ELA (English Language Arts) and WL (World Languages), "(b)y strengthening the practice of centering Black girlhood/womanhood in ELA classrooms and introducing it in WL classrooms, we seek to produce a more cohesive and representative literacy and language experience that highlights the contributions of Black women to language practices and literature nationally and globally" (pp. 237-238). Another example comes from Littletree et al. (2020), who argue that "the knowledge itself, including the means of its making, must be treated with respect, with a sense of responsibility toward the restoration of justice for Indigenous peoples" (p. 416).

Methodological choices for knowledge production must therefore account for these ways of centering Black and Indigenous practices and voices, while also recognizing our own limitations as speakers of White Spanishes. For example, critical race theory (CRT) work includes "a wide range of methods such as family history, biography, autoethnography, cuentos, testimonios, and counterstory" (Martinez, 2020, p. 3). Among the foundational tenets of these methods, grounded in CRT, is the "centrality of experiential knowledge and/or unique voices of color" (p. 9). Given our primary positionalities in this project, we ponder the question, "are all marginalized narratives counterstory?" (p. 17). Martinez resolves this question by saying that while there are "indeed many marginal/ized narratives, the measure remains whether the tellers and stories subscribe to CRT's tenets, particularly in their critique of a dominant ideology (e.g., liberalism, whiteness, color blindness) and their sustained focus on social justice as an objective" (p. 17).

In our article, we certainly advocate for linguistic justice in Black Latinx communities through transnational raciolinguistic approaches. However, we believe using narrative, counterstories, testimonios or other methods mentioned above would mean that we, with the privileged positionalities brought to this specific project, are appropriating this methodological tool for antioppression. Therefore, to provide methodological consistency with our main goal in this essay, we decide to be accountable and enact "critical transnational agency" (Thu & Motha, 2021, p. 15) informed by a raciolinguistics perspective (Flores & Rosa, 2015). We also embrace and seek to practice what Milu (2021) defines as a transnational Black pedagogy of solidarity, which seeks to counter anti-Black and anti-Indigenous discrimination of all kinds. This methodology allows us to ask the following questions put forth by Thu and Motha (2021):

1. What does it mean for us to intentionally and deliberately enact a critical transnational agenda as we seek to challenge racial, linguistic, and national categories and roles, and embrace a mindful antiracist equity-minded vision for our scholarship and pedagogy?
2. How might we support the development of critical transnational dispositions in relation to our institutional identities, both within ourselves as scholars/practitioners and also in our students?
3. How can we enact meaningful transgressions that make visible the frailty of normative logics of racial and national categories? (p. 15)

To disrupt dominant narratives around Spanish, especially when it is compared to English, we specifically:

1. bring attention and criticality to the complexity of language practices in Spanish, including those embedded in contexts dominated by English. For example, earlier in this article we addressed the complex, multilayered, and politically motivated meaning of quilombos and other Spanish terminology to understand the colonial and anti-Black history of Spanish;
2. provide examples of critical transnational and raciolinguistics agency enacted to address and transgress anti-Blackness in our transnational communities;
3. center the voices and experiences of Black Latinx and Indigenous scholars, listening and responding to them in critical ways to showcase how we must continue the work in our specific contexts and communities.

In the sections that follow, we enact critical transnational agency (Thu & Motha, 2021) as we share two major themes that emerged from our reading and theorization of the antiracist possibilities in Spanish: Beyond Mestiza Consciousness and Supporting the Reclamation of Historical and Relational Language Inquiry. While we did not conduct a formal coding or analysis of the texts and examples that we introduce in these themes, we share these examples as opportunities to continue expanding conversations about White supremacy in Spanish-speaking contexts, which have potential implications for both research and pedagogical practices in the US and beyond.

Theme 1: Beyond Mestiza Consciousness

The work of queer Chicana scholar Gloria Anzaldúa is often centralized in conversations about Spanish variants. Indeed, in *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987), Anzaldúa poignantly describes her Chicanx identity and its connections to language, pointing to mestiza consciousness as her growing awareness of being "ni de aquí/ni de allá" (neither from here, nor from there). Drawing on research about Chicanx Spanish, Anzaldúa, and many scholars who cite her groundbreaking work, recognize that Castilian Spanish, though often denominated as the most formal and 'correct' form of the language, is just one variant, and that Spanish-speaking communities, including Mexican Americans, embrace variants of Spanish that greatly deviate from the Castilian roots. While many scholars point to Anzaldúa and her conception of mestiza consciousness as an important theorization of Chicanx identity and marginalization, Black Latinx and Indigenous scholars and writers also critique Anzaldúa specifically and mestizaje writ large for its foregrounding of whiteness.

In her critique of mestizaje, Ríos (2016) explains "the uptake of mestizaje in Rhetoric and Composition Studies has led to a recurring set of problematics that have been a source of tension between American Indians and Chicanxs as well as Mexican indígenas who have migrated to the United States" (p. 109). These problematics include the reification of racial dynamics that privilege whiteness by using mestizaje to "civilize the Indian within," denoting humanity only through the Indians' mixing with "the national subject, which is decidedly not the Indian subject" (p. 110). According to Ríos (2016), "for there to be a 'mixed' culture, subject, and knowledge, there must be a 'pure' culture, subject, knowledge with which to mix. Additionally, in mestizaje the Indigenous portion of the mixture is fixed in time and space, whereas the hybrid or mixed subject gains futurity and teleological status" (p. 118).

Thus, mestizaje, by signaling a "mixture" between Indigenous and Spanish White blood/language/culture erases the continued presence of Indigenous people across the Americas, and also provides an avenue for White Mexicans to ignore or hide their race behind the 'mestizo' label. By claiming mestizaje, White Mexican/Latinx people establish a claim to oppression by noting their Indigenous heritage, while also deflecting from the very real and constant racism that Indigenous communities continually experience. For example, by claiming mestizaje, White Latinxs can also reify

the prevalence of White Spanishes, ignoring the racial dynamics embedded in the Spanish language by continuing to privilege Castilian derivatives that position White Spanishes as 'correct' or 'superior' to racialized Spanishes. Variants of Spanish that have African roots, such as Caribbean Spanishes, are erased under the 'mestizo' label, whereby all Spanishes become a 'mixture' of different variants.

The rejection of mestizaje was identified and continues to be amplified by Black Latinx authors and researchers. As Clemons demonstrates, mestizaje is "weaponized against African Americans in a way that does not allow for mixedness to be applicable to African Americans. Mestizaje is thus called into the construction of Latinidad in a way that reinforces the mutual exclusivity between Blackness and Latinidad" (2021, p. 10). Her study also points to the fact that English–Spanish "bilingualism is a mark of mestizaje" (p. 13), and thus, of colonial logics of whiteness, which once again indicates the need to further interrogate raciolinguistic ideologies.

This critique of mestizaje is extensively taken up by Afro-Mexican poet Ariana Brown. In her spoken word poem "For the Black Kids in my 8th Grade Spanish Class" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0gx5oKuxQLQ), Brown (2021b) explains how she, as a Black Mexican student, found comfort in her Black, non-Mexican peers during Spanish class. While her identity as a Mexican or a Latina may have signaled her connections to White, Spanish-speaking students in her class, as Brown explains, with her Black peers, in the "island in the middle of the room" is the only space where she "could unveil my whole self without shame." In this poem, and in her collection *We Are Owed*, Brown (2021a) illustrates that race, and Blackness specifically, should be centralized in conversations about Spanish specifically and Latinidad more broadly. Relying on generalized labels, such as Latinx or even Spanish, erases the embodied experiences of Black Spanish speakers whose language is always-already assumed to be unprofessional. In the poem "There Are Güeros & Then There Is Me," Brown (2021a) provides insights into her experiences attending a school in Texas with a predominantly White/mestizo Mexican population:

> The first day of first grade,
> Three pencils & a set
> Of hands I found in my hair.
> I'm sure something was whispered
> In Spanish, language
> In which there is no word
> To describe me with grace.
> Let's play a game, called
> My school so Mexican,
> the entire third grade was required
> To sign & dance a Selena medley for our parents.
> My school so Mexican,
> we sold Hot Cheetos
> With nacho cheese at fundraisers.
> My school so Mexican,
> Principal took my mama to the office,
> Told her my hair was "outlandish."
> My school so Mexican,
> I'm the only one
> Who look like me.

In this poem, Brown (2021a) signals several cultural practices and icons that will resonate with Mexican communities, including Hot Cheetos and Selena. While these cultural aspects may seem to connect Mexican students, they do not erase her Blackness and her peers' and teachers' anti-Blackness. In

school contexts, such as those described by Brown (2021a), language and culture are used as a weapon to both highlight and erase difference, positioning Afro-Latinx students such as Brown as "too Black" for the White/mestizo Mexican students. The presence of a common language, i.e., Spanish, or common cultural markers, does not erase White supremacy, both in and out of school.

Theme 2: Supporting the Reclamation of Historical and Relational Language Inquiry

Part of our work supports the idea of "connecting and uniting all Black communities in resisting White linguistic hegemony and ideologies that harm all Black students" (Milu, 2021, p. 436) and Indigenous communities, especially when they experience the weaponization of their experiences through White Spanish. Like Laura, Cristina oftentimes notices the linguistic racism that is embedded in Spanish expressions such as "trabajar como un negro" (literally to "work like a Black man" to denote exploitative working conditions) o "hacer el indio" (literally "to act like an Indigenous person" with racist connotations to imply 'being silly or stupid') or in commentary about language practices seen as racialized nonstandard Spanishes.

In questioning the roots of linguistic practices and the impact of colonization and the Transatlantic Slave Trade that enabled racist and colonial realities to be encoded through these expressions, Cristina reflected on Smitherman's affirmation about how "the lack of knowledge about (our) history" has shaped ideologies of whiteness in English. As a response, Baker-Bell (2020) takes on the task of "teach(ing) Black kids about the history of their native language" (p. 65). Immediate questions followed as Cristina read about this approach for linguistic justice: Do we learn and teach about the history of how anti-Blackness becomes encoded and is sustained in Spanish? Who and where? How can we promote transnational Black language pedagogy (Milu, 2021) without accessing that information?

The task of unlearning the dominant narratives around Spanish colonization and a concept of Latinidad that still emphasize mestizaje (which thus reinforce systemic racism) seemed overwhelming considering disciplinary divides and the vast and varied geographical, sociocultural, and historical contexts of Spanish colonization (Jones & Martinez, 2011). Almost by accident, Cristina encountered the autobiography of "Juan Francisco Manzano," an enslaved Cuban who was born in 1797 in Havana in an enslaved 'house' family, who taught himself to write before his freedom was bought.

As Mullen and Manzano (2014) explain, this "(a)utobiography is not only the earliest antislavery narrative, but also […] the only such to be written by a person of African ancestry" (Kindle location 151). Manzano's autobiography, in which he "distances himself from Blacks as a function of anti-Black racism among his potential readers" (Kindle location 201), offers details about the roles and intersections of racism, social identities, language, and writing in the colony. Manzano's narrative includes multiple references to his use of language, poems, painting, songs, and tales and, on several occasions, he speaks about "la viveza de mi genio lo parlero de mis labios llamados pico de oro" (literally translated as "the liveliness of my genius and the verbal abilities of my lips that are called golden beak"). For example, his linguistically unsanitized account goes as follows:

> por carecer de escritura ablaba solo asiendo gestos y afeciones según la naturaleza de la composición decían qe. era tal el flujo de hablar qe. tenia qe. pr. hablar hablaba con la mesa con el cuadro con la pared & yo a nadien desia lo qe. traia conmigo y solo cuando me podía juntar con los ninos les desia muchos versos y le cantaba cuentos de encantamientos qe.. yo componia de memorias en el resto del dia con su cantarsito[.] (2014, p. 17).

Manzano's autobiography continues, describing the abuse he experienced when he was found reciting and even performing these poems, songs, and "cuentos de encantamiento." According to Pettway (2020) these "literacy" moments in Manzano's story allude to "African-inspired principles of regarding the spirit world" (p. 23) and cosmology, demonstrating that "Africans relied upon whatever fragments of Yoruba, Bakongo, and other belief structures were available to them to navigate the dangers of the Cuban social world" (p. 30) and the colonial Spanish regime.

Literacy and language, therefore, function as a strategic tool for anticolonial and antislavery resistance. Besides his autobiography, Manzano also became popular for his antislavery poetry, and was ultimately recognized as a key foundational literary figure in Afro-Cuban literature. He composed some of his poems by following the 'canonical models' found in the houses where he lived—mostly poetry with Spanish patriotic undertones like Arriaza, who is mentioned by Manzano (2014) in his autobiography (p. 33). However, Pettway (2020) explains that "Manzano mastered Spanish aesthetic forms so that he might manipulate their meaning and advocate in the interest of African-descended freedom" (p. 275), which indicates that Manzano, alongside other Afro-Cuban writers, were not "mere imitators but aesthetic and political innovators," especially in their articulation of "African-inspired spiritualities" in their literary work during the Spanish colonial regime (p. 43). Along these lines, scholars have discussed the contradictions of Manzano's experiences as someone who learned writing (in a traditional sense) from the very same people who kept him enslaved, yet scholars see an "involuntary parody of a canonical model" visible in how Manzano "borrows from black vernacular to achieve freedom from the master grammar of urban, peninsular Spanish" (Mullen & Manzano, 2014, Location 396).

In this sense, the complex language in Manzano's autobiography reminds us of work by Black language scholars such as Smitherman (1999) and Milu (2021), who have pointed out that Black English in itself can be considered a decolonial language, since it encompasses African Indigenous languages while also dismantling the colonial roots of standardized White English. Likewise, Manzano's self-described experiences speak to the importance of acknowledging and centering the resilience of language practice against colonial and racist powers.

It is out of the scope of this project to do a literary analysis of Manzano's *Autobiografía*; instead, by discussing it here, we hope to point out the (lack of) presence of the many voices who, like his and many others after him, must be recovered and discussed as we rehistoricize, unlearn, and relearn the relationship between Spanish(es), English(es), and systemic racism against Black and Indigenous peoples.

Toward Transnational Antiracist Relationality in Spanishes

In a recent essay called "A Mi Orden: A Meditation on Dichos," Afro-Latinx poet Elizabeth Acevedo (2021) reflects on the many gendered expressions that accompanied the roles and expectations she was assigned to during her upbringing. In her essay, she claims "(w)e need repurposed or entirely new language with which to raise. With which to rise" (p. 235). This "new language" that Acevedo (2021) calls for involves noticing and critically calling out the ways in which White Spanish weaponizes through expressions like "qué quilombo," ideologies of mestizaje and language alliance, and the lack of widespread and accessible historical knowledge and conversations about colonialism and its effects from a perspective that centers Black and Indigenous stories.

To get there, besides approaching Spanish from a raciolinguistics perspective (Flores & Rosa, 2015) in the different transnational contexts where it exists, including in the US, we support efforts for bringing the voices of Afro/Black Latinx and Indigenous peoples into conversations about

transnational Black language education (Milu, 2021), and advocate for and utilize anticolonial forms of knowledge production. These are guided by epistemologies of Radical Indigenism (Garroutte, 2005; Leonard, 2021).

For Garroutte (2005) of the Cherokee Nation, Radical Indigenism is grounded in "philosophies of knowledge that can be understood as rationalities—articulable, coherent logics for ordering and knowing the world" (p. 170). This approach builds on experiential knowledge, specifically of elders, different forms of storytelling, and returning those knowledges to community practices. Moreover, describing the Nishnaabeg practices, Simpson (2017) reminds us that Indigenous knowledge "is generated and regenerated continually through embodied practice and within each family, community, and generation of people. […] It is woven within kinetics, spiritual presence, and emotion" (p. 151).

Another fundamental and well-known principle of Indigenous meaning is the idea of relationality, as knowledge "emerg(es) through and [is] dependent on a multitude of relationships that include humans with other humans; humans with lands, spirits, and non-human relatives; lands with spirits; and so on" (Leonard, 2021, p. 121). Guided by these approaches, we can intentionally center the connections between language, race, embodiment, and Land, which are erased through White Spanishes. How do all the aspects and practices mentioned above come together? In what follows, we illustrate our critical transnational agency (Thu & Motha, 2021) while responding to the calls for transnational Black language education (Milu, 2021) and antiracist work in relation to colonial and White Spanish, and following the principles of Indigenous practices of relationality.

Expanding the Definitions of Quilombo

We began this article pointing out the racist realities that shaped the trajectory of the word 'quilombo' across colonized communities and territories. When Laura shared her father's expression 'qué quilombo' and all she had learned about the origins and trajectory of its meaning, she followed up and searched how this expression had been taken up in other contexts, realizing that the widespread meaning of quilombo was its reference to chaos or a mess. However, in her search she came across a place, Cafetal Quilombo, a Mexican restaurant in Seattle, WA, land of the Coast Salish peoples, touching the shared waters of all tribes and bands within the Suquamish, Tulalip, and Muckleshoot nations. Intuitively, Cristina followed the first lesson of relational knowledge and "land as pedagogies" (Simpson, 2017), which postulates that "(i)f you want to learn about something, you need to take your body onto the land and do it" and the fact that "learning changes when the relational context changes" (p. 167).

It was a sunny Saturday morning when Cristina walked into an even brighter space, Cafetal Quilombo, with mixed emotions, ranging from a sense of cautious curiosity, some feelings of culpability and privilege (due to her White Spanish heritage and presence in the colonized Americas), and responsibility. A warm welcome immediately followed, opening up opportunities for the question Cristina had in the back of her mind. So, after ordering the famous house tamales and delicious café de olla, Cristina asked the owner of the restaurant about the name "Cafetal Quilombo." Perhaps being used to getting the same question, the owner pointed at the wall, and specifically at a frame by the entrance to the restaurant. Figure 1 below shows the reclamation of the original meaning of quilombo, before it became appropriated and impugned through racism. The text in the image reads as follows:

> "What is a quilombo? Historically, a quilombo was a refuge in Brazil for escaped coffee slaves who later offered shelter and safety to other people marginalized by colonization. Being a safe welcoming space, the owners decided to name their coffee shop after this haven. Cafetal Quilombo Cafe is a community space welcoming to everyone, it's a place to take a moment to relax, be present and enjoy some delicious coffee."

Figure 1. *What is a quilombo?*

This image symbolizes the ways in which communities engage with the Land, the spaces that can be built around them through relational meaning-making and (re)telling stories through language and literacy practices that challenge anti-Blackness. While at first sight it might seem that there are no direct relationships between the nations and Lands of the Coast Salish and other Indigenous Peoples in the Seattle area, other Indigenous communities, and Afro-Latinx communities, the note in Cafetal Quilombo reminds us of the possibilities of "international relations, relationships that are based on consent, reciprocity, respect, and empathy" (Simpson, 2017, 61).

For these relationships to exist, "one does not have to physically travel to be engaged in (this type of) internationalism" (p. 59). Instead, we argue, building these types of relationships among marginalized communities requires much more than applying a generalized label, like "Latinx" or "Hispanic," to disparate groups of people. Relationality through this orientation means working intentionally to interrogate the history of the languages we speak, and finding ways to work toward redressing the global phenomenon that is anti-Blackness as part of a global linguistic justice movement. As Baker-Bell et al. (2020) explain in "This Ain't Another Statement! This is a DEMAND for Black Linguistic Justice":

> [W]e cannot claim that Black Lives Matter in our field if Black Language does not matter! We cannot say Black Lives Matter if decades of research on Black Language has not led to widespread systemic change in curricula, pedagogical practices, disciplinary discourses, research, language policies, professional organizations, programs, and institutions within and beyond academia! We cannot say that

> Black Lives Matter if Black Language is not at the forefront of our work as language educators and researchers! (para. 5).

These efforts to centralize Black language, and Black lives, extend beyond national borders, beyond the English language, and into contexts typically defined as 'multilingual' more broadly and 'Spanish-speaking' specifically. We can illustrate the type of work we can start to address these complexities through the retelling of 'quilombo' as "a community space welcoming to everyone, it's a place to take a moment to relax, be present and enjoy" (Figure 1), which also symbolizes what Simpson (2017) calls "a place-based constellation" of resistance. This place-based constellation is collectively developed in solidarity with "Black and brown individuals" (p. 228) "within grounded normativity that refuse[s] to center whiteness" (p. 371), and when built that way, "real white allies [including white Hispanics and Latinas, we argue] show up in solidarity anyway" (p. 371).

Conclusion

In this article, we interrogate the weaponization of the Spanish language, seeking to highlight and learn from how Black and Indigenous speakers of Spanishes theorize, embody, and share their experiences with anti-Blackness and anti-Indigeneity in Spanish-speaking contexts[4]. We recognize that this work is preliminary and limited, both due to our limited space for in-depth analysis and to our positionalities as White Hispanic and Latina faculty. However, what we aimed to do in this piece was to contribute to ongoing conversations about the violence and erasure that is perpetuated when White Spanishes are positioned as a marginalized subject in English-dominant contexts within the US. As academic fields in the US continue theorizing models for enacting linguistic justice, we hope to continue expanding conversations in solidarity with Afro and Indigenous Latinx communities, who have long been advocating for the need to interrogate the positioning of Latinidad writ large in academic conversations. As other White Latinx researchers continue engaging in their work, we also urge them (i.e., us) to consider how we are describing our positionalities not just in relation to White American speakers of standardized White English, but also in relation to Afro and Indigenous Latinx communities. Recognizing researcher and language positionality is important, and it is also important to acknowledge how our positionalities shift, and how whiteness (and White supremacy) prevails, across national and linguistic borders.

In the spirit of developing networks—constellations, in Simpson's (2017) words—of solidarity and collaborative antiracist work that spans single named-languages, we end this article with some questions for reflection. We hope to continue asking these questions of ourselves while also welcoming other researchers who benefit from White privilege to engage in further conversation.

1. How can your positionalities and identities help unpack the different layers of oppression within and across (Spanish) language communities in different geographical and sociocultural spaces?
2. Do(es) your language(s) manifest racialized ideologies and/or anti-Blackness and anti-Indigeneity? How do you call out language weaponization?
3. In doing that work, how do you make visible and center Black Latinx and/or transnational Black experiences and those of Indigenous peoples?

[4] We want to express our gratitude to Esther Milu, Suhanthie Motha, the editors of the special issue (Luis Javier Pentón Herrera and Kisha Bryan), and the reviewers for their valuable comments.

4. What does de/anti-colonial transnational Black language education look like in your context? What are the histories of racial and linguistic ideologies and realities that need to be at the forefront?
5. How does this work help to destabilize and undo systems of oppression and continue to open up spaces and opportunities for more equitable social structures and relations?

We recognize that engaging in this work is complicated and even ambitious, but as more calls for antiracist and equitable practices are made in our institutions and communities, we must take an active and deliberate stance to continue redefining the social structures we are part of. This article is a reminder to ourselves and others, especially those in positions of privilege, to "show up" (Simpson, 2017, p. 371) and be critically agentive to challenge the "faulty logics of White supremacy and discourses of Whiteness" (Thu & Motha, 2021) across and within language communities.

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(Re)constructing Gay, a Classroom, and a Journey to Rhetorical Listening

Gabriel T. Acevedo Velázquez

Abstract

This article explores Ratcliffe's (2005) theory of rhetorical listening and the means of utilizing it to interpret and facilitate conversations around gay identities, especially between teachers and students in the classroom. Conversations around sexual identities in classrooms have changed the way in which teachers and students communicate, as well as the way conversations are approached to the point of becoming nonexistent. By these conversations becoming nonexistent, gay identities become isolated in the classroom, therefore silencing what could become rhetorical opportunities for growth. I utilize rhetorical listening as a pedagogical strategy against the weaponization of the word *gay*. Using Ratcliffe's (2005) original theory of listening pedagogically as a foundation, I build on listening's potential to address controversial or highly charged rhetoric around issues of identity, in this case, utilizing the word *gay* in the classroom. I elaborate on the theory of rhetorical listening and its implications—raising awareness of identification and constructing conversations that can be applied in listening to identity rhetoric in pedagogical settings. Finally, this paper suggests using rhetorical listening pedagogy in classrooms and illustrates a series of arbitrations that show rhetorical listening as a tool for application in discussing issues of queer identity in the classroom.

Keywords: rhetorical listening, gay identities, pedagogical arbitrations, teacher identity

Introduction

Teachers' identities are produced by their beliefs: a combination of interactions within society and lived experiences (Gee, 2000; Korthagen, 2004; Sutherland et al., 2010). Others find teacher identity as an "organizing element in teachers' professional lives" (Beauchamp & Thomas, p. 175, 2009), which makes meaning on how teachers see themselves concerning those around them. Such identity creates a discursive space in which roles are negotiated in teaching. Teacher identity then becomes the analytical lens through which we examine teaching and learning and the impact on the negotiation of multiple identities to create a single professional identity (e.g., Pearce & Morrison, 2011; Sachs, 2005). We can look at factors and motivations, like rhetoric, that guide how identity is navigated by the teacher and the realization of how these aspects are created in the classroom. The idea and images of

Contact: Gabriel T. Acevedo Velásquez
Email: Gabriel.acevedo@asu.edu

what a teacher should be are always present and correlate with what teachers find essential in their professional settings versus their contexts.

In this article, I utilize rhetorical listening as a pedagogical strategy against the weaponization of the word *gay*. Using Ratcliffe's (2005) original theory of listening pedagogically as a foundation, I build on listening's potential to address controversial or highly charged rhetoric around issues of identity, in this case, utilizing the word *gay* in the classroom. By also thinking about aspects of teacher identity, I seek to contextualize, within the classroom, experiences of utilizing the word *gay*. By using my own experience of coming out in the classroom, I allow myself to offer a pathway that emerges from the discursive power of rhetorical listening, with particular attention to analytical aspects of thinking about rhetoric as nonweapons. Toward the end of the essay, I return to my experience of coming out as gay in the classroom to consider how rhetorical listening offers a more productive approach to coming out, utilizing the word *gay* in the classroom as a common practice, and presenting pedagogical arbitrations that enhance an environment of listening in the classroom.

As Soon as the Word *Gay* Came Out, their Faces Transformed, and the Entire Class Changed

While teaching at a prestigious university in Puerto Rico, I taught a freshman Queer Literature course; this course was one of the most diverse, rowdy, and exciting courses I ever taught. The first half of the semester passed with no issues; all 31 of us would gather twice a week to discuss readings and assignments from the course. I remember the classroom having twelve tables with three chairs each and a desk in the front of the class. Each time we walked, the students and I arranged the tables and chairs to let us see each other more clearly and engage differently. I had taken this course and specifically designed it to read Queer Literature. Occasionally, these readings sparked collegial discussion and even some heated opinions that were all handled with respect.

March rolled around and a production of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, in which I participated as Dr. Frank N. Furter, opened in a theater nearby. I invited students to go to the production if they wanted to, so they could do an opinion piece of any aspects of it for extra credit in our class. To my surprise, many of the students went, as they found it to be a nice escape from the hassle of midterms. Most of them were unfamiliar with the movie and therefore did not know about the sexual and queer aspects of the main character, which I was portraying. The day after the show, as I walked into the room, no one talked, barely anyone looked at me, and I noticed some of the students were fidgeting and anxious. The class was dead silent—a thick, heavy silence. I could tell we were minutes away from some exciting conversations.

I began by asking what they thought about the previous night's show, and right away, one of the students responded, "It was fun and cool, but I had no idea we would see you in drag and kissing boys and girls on stage." A conversation began around the image students had created of me as a teacher and how such notions were challenged. A reasoned discussion began around the ideas of queerness, masculinity, and teaching. As I heard students talk, I was making up my mind on explicitly telling them about my sexual identity as a gay man. While moderating a snippet of their conversations, I outright said, "I am a gay teacher; does that change anything for you?"

The air filled with a stultifying silence for what seemed like hours. From that thick silence, we went on to a mix of opinions on queerness, teaching, masculinities, and, to my surprise, a conversation on how to use or not use the word *gay* in the classroom or when talking about a person. As the semester continued, silence spread throughout the beginning of each class, and after a while, conversations around gayness kept occurring. I offer the above reflection as an entry point into a

conversation about gayness, teaching, rhetoric, and listening. More specifically, I seek to contrast my experience with the thick silence in my class with the generative silence that attends rhetorical listening—one that, I argue, can help educators facilitate more inclusive classrooms for addressing and teaching *gay* rhetoric.

Rhetorical Listening and Strategies

In *Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, Whiteness* (2005), Ratcliffe defines rhetorical listening "as a code of cross-cultural conduct" (p. 24), which can be helpful for any critical pedagogy. However, it is an essential strategy for navigating forms of embodied difference that are too often the object of debate. For gay teachers and students, the practice of rhetorical listening can structure classrooms in such a way that their experiences of gayness are drawn upon. This allows conversations around such identities to happen without fear of them being refashioned into intellectual rhetoric and that such wording will not be used against them within the classroom.

As I argue, rhetorical listening contributes to a gay rhetorical pedagogy, which acknowledges the power differentials between queer and heterosexual teachers and students, holds space for the gender difference, centers the voices and perspectives of gay people, and neutralizes thoughts on the word *gay* in the classroom. Moreover, this approach is grounded in intersectionality, situating gayness as an embodied difference complicated by others, such as race, class, disability, culture, and religion. Rhetorical listening, in this way, opens up gay rhetoric and pedagogy to more than teaching to or about queer people; it allows a transformational listening component that teaches through queerness and rhetoric. Hence, rhetorical listening foregrounds the lived experiences and perspectives of gay identities to engage in a coalitional manner which puts forward a more inclusive educational experience for all.

Rhetorical listening is so much more than the act of hearing. Ratcliffe states that it is a "stance of openness that a person may choose to assume to any person, text, or culture" (p. 17), which means that while standard listening positions listeners in the role of audience members, rhetorical listening reframes listeners as rhetors. Thus, rhetorical listening is less about competition, domination, or persuasion than about the way in which equality and values become part of self-determination for each individual. As such, it empowers rhetors to employ listening as a way to intervene and interpret certain communications in conscious ways. Through this purview, listening becomes the process of receiving information from someone else and synthesizing that information to formulate a response and sustain a conversation based on the language and rhetoric between parties.

Ratcliffe explains that this model of rhetorical engagement is beneficial for "negotiating troubled identifications" (p. 17) or those relationships that lack shared values, beliefs, or perspectives, whereas the way in which we interpret reading and rhetoric is facilitated through what we agree with or are challenged by, both of which demand a degree of sameness between the reader and the text. Rhetorical listening, then, encourages us to attend to what is outside of the normal and how that relates to the way we see ourselves and to the culture cultivated around us. In other words, listening rhetorically promotes engagement with what confuses us, what exists beyond our knowledge or imagination, and what may be perceived as chaos. The openness entailed by rhetorical listening is an intentional rhetorical consideration of difference.

As a pedagogical strategy, one can imagine how such consideration of difference might help teachers and students bridge rhetorical conversations; Ratcliffe emphasizes that listening pedagogically leads us "to recognize resistance, analyze it, and, when necessary, resist it" (p. 133). Rather than organizing conversations around a debate-style environment in which students engage to be right or

wrong, where students compete to be the smartest by critiquing one another's point of view, rhetorical listening sets the bar at understanding and respect. Importantly, understanding in this context does not erase difference, but centers it. To understand through listening is to engage with difference and remain aware of the moment and presence. In Ratcliffe's words,

> Rhetorical listeners might best invert the term understanding and define it as consciously standing under discourses surrounding us and others while acknowledging all out particular—and very fluid—standpoints. Standing under discourses means letting discourses wash over, though, and around us and then letting them lie there to inform our politics and ethics. (p. 28)

Listening pedagogically moves beyond the notion of 'we can all learn something from one another' and insists that what we learn exists in confrontation and tension with what we already know. Inside the classroom, rhetorical listening grounds learning in cognitive dissonance, urging the uncomfortable and necessary growth that ultimately enables change.

Listening pedagogically allows process and potential to be situated alongside Fawaz's (2016) effective curation, which "centralizes the value of intentionally eliciting uncomfortable affective responses from students in the classroom in order to develop new strategies for returning, rerouting, or altogether altering students' perceptions of the world" (p. 760). Such a pedagogical stance does not shy away from making students uncomfortable with challenging language and discussion; instead, listening pedagogically embraces such discomfort as an essential part of learning. Fawaz embraces a pedagogical stance that engages with students to motivate class discussion and force students into the position of questioning individual stances in language use.

Pedagogically, rhetorical listening comes into play when such effective practices and responses grow more vital than what students and teachers are accustomed to experiencing in the traditional classroom. While our initial instincts may be to shut down uncomfortable conversations that may become emotionally charged, rhetorical listening asks us to interrogate our feelings and thoughts and find ways to articulate them in manners that help conversations emerge and flow between rhetors and listeners. It also adheres to a "logic of accountability" (Ratcliffe, 2005, p. 15), allowing rhetors to situate classroom conversations within the historical and cultural background among people. In other words, it demands that some people listen more than others, depending on each individual's conversation and stance. Instead of assuming that every person is on an equal playing field with language, "accountability means recognizing the complex interweaving of gender, race, and other cultural categories within a culture and critiquing these so as to determine the most expedient, productive praxes for the many, the few, and the one" (Ratcliffe, 2005, p. 98). Therefore, rhetorical listening is not a one-size-fits-all model but rather a one-size-fits-one model. It becomes an individual posture or a "stance of openness" (Ratcliffe, 2005, p. 98) that holds each rhetor and listener accountable for their conversations and language use.

Rhetorical listening requires an ongoing engagement of self-reflection and practice. The idea behind Ratcliffe's (2005) logic of accountability is that "all of us are, at present, culturally implicated in effects of the past" (p. 32). Hence, acknowledging privilege is not enough, but rather, we need to be aware of how our behaviors, ideas, and rhetoric are constantly evolving in ways that enhance the power we have in the classroom. Rhetorical listening empowers students and teachers to speak with authority, draw on their life experiences, and push back against dominant discourses, even those practiced by teachers. Classrooms that listen rhetorically are actively decentering themselves and showing how to participate in conversations equitably.

Queer Teaching Identity

For queer teachers and students, rhetorical listening is of the utmost importance, given how pedagogy is still grounded in heteronormative notions which deny queer people a primary seat at the table. In queer teaching identity scholarship, it is vital to explore and understand the process of how queer teachers make sense of their sexual and professional identities because such intersections may affect the way they make decisions inside of the classroom, specifically in rhetorically manipulated conversations. Similarly to how some of my students positioned the word *gay* and its meaning in reasserting normativity in the classroom, so do queer educators because of the personal and professional ramifications they might deal with. For some educators, teaching should not correlate with your sexual identity; however, authenticity is an integral component of one's identity (Gowran, 2004), and for many, sexual identity is an integral component of one's overall identity. While this mindset is well intentioned, it reduces identities and conversations to afterthoughts in queer people's lives.

In exploring the experiences of gay educators, there is heavy emphasis on the navigation of identities inside of pedagogical settings, teachers' experiences with rhetoric, and the relationship between teachers and students once they are *out* in the classroom. Kissen (1993) described gay teachers as living in a "glass closet." She identified three themes regarding teachers:

> The first involve[s] the teachers' self-definition as gay men, their self-concept as teachers, and the intersection of those two identities. The second primary [sic] focus[es on] the damaging effect of homophobia on their daily lives in and out of the classroom. [The] final theme [is] the need to develop strategies to avoid being fired and to nurture themselves in the face of tremendous pressure and stress. (p. 5)

Kissen (1993) noted that teachers who partially or wholly disclosed their sexual orientation "described self-revelation as dangerous and scary, the few who had taken these risks said that the rewards of self-actualization far outweighed the stresses" (p. 7). After examining gay teachers' experiences, Kissen found significant relief in terms of experiences within the classrooms and curricula due to being partially or entirely 'out' in their respective classrooms and pedagogical settings.

Gay teachers continually modify the way they act and their classroom rhetoric to allow them to enact identities considered heterosexual or normative. Such measures are of utmost importance in classroom language, because certain practices that go against heteronormative views of teaching (e.g., teachers discussing their sexual orientation and notions that teachers are inherently thought of as heterosexual, which is very common among male teachers because of the expectations of masculinity in the classroom) may be detrimental to the perception of teachers and students (Jackson, 2007; King, 2004). These heteronormative rhetorical standards become a representation of what teacher identity should be, how a teacher should act, and what language is acceptable to use in the classroom. Teachers have to pay attention to the way they utilize language inside of the classroom. This linguistic monitoring is even harder for gay teachers as they have to simultaneously balance the (heteronormative) social expectations with their professional identities in teaching, as well as the language they use and teach within the classroom (Jackson, 2007). For gay teachers, there is an extra layer of scrutiny about their interactions and contact with students.

Pedagogical Arbitrations

I began this essay with a summary of how coming out and using the word *gay* was received by my students in a Queer Literature course I was teaching. From this experience, I would like to offer a reflection on this event to incorporate what I see as positive arbitrations that could engage the

classroom into utilizing language, in this case, the word *gay*, and simmering down notions of how to use specific rhetoric in the classroom. I offer three arbitrations that could have made a difference based on how the course was planned, set, offered to students, and how conversations around the professor's coming out and usage of the word *gay* in the classroom occurred. My intention with these arbitrations is to model practical applications for rhetorical listening in the classroom. The following demonstrates that rhetorical listening is accessible, practical, and valuable to all educators, regardless of grade level, teaching, subject, and personal identities.

Arbitration 1: Pedagogical Preparation

As the teacher, a rhetorical listening strategy would have been helpful, not only walking into the possibilities of conversations for that day in class, but at the moment I began to craft my course around queer literature. Rhetorical listening could have helped students and me with preconceived notions and biases of what gay identities are and how they would affect conversations in the classroom. Having an active listening strategy assumes that privilege is blinding and that in occupying positions of power, there is often an oversight to leveraging the connection between power and our ethical stances. As the professor, I did not need to be aware of the implications of coming out to the classroom, but rather, I needed to acknowledge that holding such a position of power in the classroom and coming out would rattle students' ideas of how a teacher should be perceived. Had that acknowledgment been made, rhetorical listening would have guided pedagogical preparation in the class.

Listening rhetorically during pedagogical preparation involves less audible conversations than the intentional openness towards written materials. By listening reparatively,[1] rhetors can position themselves in a "realistic and necessary surprised experience" (Sedgwick, 1993, p. 146). This allows educators to acknowledge that one does not know everything and that rhetorical listening actively seeks new knowledge. As the teacher, my class and students would have benefited from a more in-depth early offset of readings that tied in possible personal identities in the class (e.g., "How to Bring Your Kids Up Gay" by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, or "'Quare' Studies, or (Almost) Everything I Know About Queer Studies I Learned from My Grandmother" by E. Patrick Johnson). By focusing more on the queerness of people, history, culture, theory, etc., some missteps that occurred in that event could have been handled better or avoided altogether.

As part of pedagogically preparing, rhetorical listening allows reflection on one's own power and privilege, especially as the educator. It also allows us to examine how we position ourselves in the conversations to be had in the classroom. It allows me to think about how I am affected by and perhaps benefiting from established power norms. Who is affected by these? And how do I bridge those differences in the classroom?

Arbitration 2: First Day Introductions

During the first day of class, it is customary to go around and introduce yourself and encourage students to do the same to create a comfortable classroom environment (i.e., icebreakers). In my many years of teaching, these introductions have customarily happened quickly without much substance behind them. Students, specifically, are not trying to remember everyone's name, and even when I am teaching, I can only remember a couple of names before they start to blur out of my mind, especially the first few days of class. These introductions are usually sprinkled with fun facts like favorite movies

[1] In this piece, *listening reparatively* refers to the notions behind listening attentively to rhetoric in ways that allow rhetors to engage in conversations of reparative natures. This allows the production of ideas, knowledge, and power for a deeper understanding of what rhetoric might suggest.

or students' fields of study, but everyone quickly forgets these tidbits. Pedagogical introductions are thought of as legitimate stated purposes but do not often achieve them. Reflecting on the first day of this specific course, it was no different. Like always, I went around the room asking students to introduce themselves, saving myself for last. Within fifteen minutes, we had finished, and it was time to move to the course introduction.

A rhetorical listening approach would have allowed me to handle such introductions very differently. Ratcliffe notes that rhetorical listening begins with "listening for (un)conscious presences, absences, and unknowns" (p. 29). Given that such introductions are to make the unknown known, it would befit educators to take them more seriously as an opportunity to engage in meaningful listening practices with their students. This is specifically important for queer students, who are frequently afraid to present themselves as 'out' in any given context. By asking more engaging questions or setting an example of a more meaningful introduction by the teacher, you can set an established commitment to self-definition rather than creating a power-knowledge division established by your role as the educator.

Rhetorical listening additionally encourages educators to be mindful of names, pronouns, and identities. For instance, by creating an environment of pronoun usage in the classroom, you can allow students to feel more comfortable about their identities and express them to the people around them. While pronoun usage has become more prominent in the last few years, mistakes can occur; taking simple precautions and accountability for such mistakes is a way that honors the notion of accountability set forth by rhetorical listening. Furthermore, as the educator, you should know that students do not assume any given identities from you or the teacher. When I decided to focus my course on Queer Literature, I should have been prepared, right from the beginning, to establish an environment of secureness by coming out that first day. I am not in the closet as an educator, but I assumed that my identity would not come into play or not be a point of conversation for my freshman students, especially in the conservative environment of Puerto Rico. As established before, rhetorical listening is not a one-off, but an act of sincerity that creates a classroom of engagement.

Arbitration 3: 'Gay' Strife in the Classroom

During our in-class discussion about seeing me (their teacher) in a drag performance and knowing that their teacher is gay, many opinions came to light from students. Especially the notion of 'should teachers be out?' and what 'gay' entails in a classroom. A few students in the class echoed these wonderings. I responded with the following: "Let's talk about that. How are gay teachers supposed to act? Moreover, does knowing that your teacher is gay affect your perceptions of them or the class?" After asking those questions, I started looking around the room and saw some confused faces, some 'what is going on?' reactions, and straight-up silence from most of the class. There was almost a minute of no one saying anything, so I decided to move the conversation around what I had just asked. I began engaging with the students and pushing to have a conversation on the fact that their teacher had just come out to them.

The question remains on how teachers can aid conversations about queer rhetoric and the attitude towards those conversations. Many of the conversations that happened in the classroom came from my students' perceptions about me (the teacher) being challenged. Thus, it is vital to explore and understand how gay teachers make sense of their sexual and professional identities, because such intersections may affect how they make decisions inside the classroom. In talking about the identities of gay teachers, there is a strong emphasis on the navigation of identities inside of pedagogical settings, teachers' experiences with curricula, and the relationship between teachers and students once they are 'out' in the classroom. The latter was the most crucial topic of conversation in the class. Although

students were not asking me to forego my identity or stop bringing it in the future, they were mentioning that they did not know how to associate *gay* with me as the figure in front of them. The conversations could only be surmised, as most students, albeit not all, wanted to be sure what it meant for them to have a gay teacher and how that would affect the class, if at all.

Had rhetorical listening been part of the class, I would have been able to source the frustrations and challenges early on. It would have allowed for in-depth discussions at the start of the term around ideas of identity and the meaning behind the rhetoric we use to present them—in this case, *gay*—which would have helped the intellectual and emotional struggles students were having about their teacher's sexual identity. While the intellectual and the emotional struggles often intrude on each other, I separate them to assert that what students needed at that moment was not reasoned debate, but rather, effective engagement. My students were expressing their views and wanted to be listened to and debate their ideas. It is important for students to know that their teachers see them as real people with real and honest identities. They need to be assured that no matter what is being discussed, their opinions are valid. This is all the more important for queer students, whose identities, and by extension, their value are vulnerable.

As a tool to address gay strife in the classroom, rhetorical listening insists that no argument or tension can be resolved without a mutual respect between teachers and students. If teachers want to cultivate a mindset that students are willing to trust, they must be unwavering in their commitment to students' worth and agency. Rhetorical listening allows for the redistribution of authority and empowers students to express and challenge ideologies. Teachers must be willing to listen as it garners students' respect and confidence. Rhetorical listening addresses strife by acknowledging that not every tension is a call for debate, so when it comes to gay identities, rhetorical listening is a nonissue.

Final Thoughts

I began this essay by reflecting on the silence and conflict that using the word *gay* as my pedagogical identity meant for my class—the defining moment for a course on Queer Literature and teacher–student relations. I have engaged with an alternative way of identity discussion and acceptance throughout this piece, brought on by rhetorical listening, one that can be productive, engaging, and empowering. As a pedagogical technique, rhetorical listening allows teachers and students to hold themselves accountable for the power dynamics presented in the classroom. A lot of the time, such accountability includes willing silence and reflection on others' perspectives.

Rhetorical listening allows me, as an educator, to ethically and intentionally teach students, queer and heterosexual, and prepare materials related to queer rhetoric in the classroom. As a gay teacher, I see myself occupying a space of pedagogical neutrality—while still acknowledging my position of power in the classroom—that allows students to posit their ideas and thoughts about gayness in the class. To listen rhetorically is to allow a sense of transformation in the classroom for both students and teachers. More specifically, utilizing rhetorical listening in the classroom allows me to recognize how such a space is used for decentering established notions and ideas about gayness. As part of that decentering process, rhetorical listening allows my classroom and research to emphasize rhetoric, and queer rhetoric at that, in a way that shows how notions of class, gender, and sexuality become contentious in the classroom, hence allowing such a space to be used for decentering purposes.

Rhetorical listening utilizes an intersectional approach to teaching or approaching gay rhetoric that recognizes a spectrum of notions and opinions from teachers and students. In this regard, rhetorical listening allows us to navigate, identify, and build coalitions around shared experiences. In

that sense, rhetorical listening is a tool that allows the exploration of differences, shared experiences, and community building that occurs in the classroom. By listening rhetorically, I embark on a process, not only for myself but for those around me, in a way that nonconforming identities, experiences, and rhetoric/language become transformational.

I would like to end this article by acknowledging a subtle, repetitive theme that warrants further exploration—rhetorical silence—specifically in the context of queer and gay pedagogies. Silence has always been a resource for people to communicate without rhetoric, and, increasingly, it has become an instrument for registering protest and making a point. Given the prevalence of silence throughout my experience with utilizing the word *gay* in the classroom, I posit a fundamental question for future research: *What is the significance of identifying and engaging with rhetorical silence as a means to combat the weaponization of 'gay' in the classroom?* There is value in identifying rhetorical silence as a means of interaction and significance in a context, combativeness, and weaponization of language in pedagogical settings.

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Weaponizing and De-weaponizing Antiracist Discourse: Some Things for Language Educators to Consider

Peter I. De Costa, Lee Her, and Vashti Lee

Abstract

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and Trump's branding of the virus as the "China" or "Wuhan" virus, anti-Asian sentiment has swept through the United States, resulting in developments involving antiracist discourse. Our commentary draws upon these events and other recent incidents in the United States to demonstrate the power that words have when weaponized for particular ideologies or groups. Adopting McConnell-Ginet's (2020) notions of semantic authority and semantic mastery, the commentary further delves into how racist discourse, when successfully weaponized through social media and political groups, creates tensions for teachers and administrators in the language classroom. Next, we highlight two examples of anti-Asian racism to show not only the psychological but also the physical harm that comes from weaponized language. Our commentary concludes with a call for students to be more critically aware of prevalent discourse through antiracist pedagogical resources (Anya, 2021; Baker-Bell, 2020; Flores & Rosa, 2019) in language and literacy education, and the role professional organizations have in supporting antiracist ideologies through their own form of countermeasures via statements of support.

Keywords: anti-Asian racism, language weaponization, organizational guidelines

Introduction

But words matter and we must be cognizant of the impact our words have.

The above statement was made by the ABC News president, Kim Godwin, on February 1, 2022, shortly after the news station suspended African American host of *The View*, Whoopi Goldberg, for two weeks (Darcy, 2022). The day before, Goldberg had insisted that the Holocaust was "not about race," but rather "man's inhumanity to man." The backlash following Goldberg's controversial comment came swift and thick, prompting her to backpedal the next day, where in her written apology on Twitter, she quoted Johnathan Greenblatt from the Anti-Defamation League and said that the Holocaust "was about the Nazi's systematic annihilation of the Jewish people—who they deemed to

Contact: Peter I. De Costa, Lee Her, or Vashti Lee, all of Michigan State University
Emails: pdecosta@msu.edu, herlee1@msu.edu, leevasht@msu.edu

be an inferior race," contritely adding on an episode of *The View* the following day that "now, words matter and mine are no exception."

We start this commentary with a conspicuous example of how language can be weaponized to diminish the grievous crime of humanity against Jewish people who were persecuted in the Second World War and for centuries preceding it. Goldberg's comment takes on added weight because it came from a woman who herself belongs to a race that has historically and systematically been minoritized and punished. Crucially, the above example is also a firm reminder that a racist stance negates the enduring hardships encountered by Jewish people. At the same time, the Goldberg debacle illustrates how racism can take on multiple dimensions and cuts across all racial groups. And while we will certainly discuss anti-Black racism—possibly the most prominent and entrenched form of racism in US society—in this commentary, we would also like to establish from the outset that our primary focus on racism will be anti-Asian racism. As educational linguists who are committed to social justice, we would like to spotlight such a form of racism in addition to other related forms of racism experienced by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities. Author 1 (Peter De Costa) is originally from Singapore and is of mixed Portuguese-Chinese heritage. As a veteran language teacher educator who has worked with preservice teachers in Singapore and the US, he has an enduring commitment to social justice issues (e.g., De Costa, 2018; Peña-Pincheira & De Costa, 2021) and has investigated race-based politics of identity recognition (e.g., De Costa et al., 2021; Gordon et al., 2021). Author 2 (Lee Her) is originally from Thailand and is of Hmong heritage. As a novice language teacher educator and researcher, she is committed to exploring and learning more about the lived experiences of language-minoritized peoples and communities in the United States. Author 3 (Vashti Lee) is from Hong Kong and is of Chinese heritage. As a former teacher of English as a Second Language (ESL), Mandarin, and Cantonese to a variety of student populations, and now a novice researcher based in the US, she is particularly invested in developing a greater understanding of the stories of language-minoritized peoples, especially regarding issues involving the intersections of language, race, and identity. Despite our different life histories, our antiracist stance stems from the fact that each of us is Asian and has experienced racism firsthand in this country.

Delegitimating Victimhood: Mobilizing Semantic Mastery and Semantic Authority

As exemplified in the episode described earlier, by removing race from the Holocaust equation and relating the massacre of six million Jews in the Second World War to simply "man's inhumanity to man," Goldberg overlooked—whether it was her original intention or not—how Jews have, over long stretches of history, been victims of systemic racism.[1] Her blithe remark calls to mind overt attempts to dilute the anti-Black racism that constitutes another significant cause in our time: Black Lives Matter (BLM). Opponents to BLM have suggested countermovements such as All Lives Matter or Blue Lives Matter.[2] While the latter dictum is drawn along professional lines, the former dictum—All Lives Matter—elicits disturbing comparison to Goldberg's pronouncement that the Holocaust was essentially about generic inhumanity. In both instances, race and racism are erased, and the racialized victims are placed on par with other victims. In her recent book, *Words Matter: Meaning and Power*, the sociolinguist Sally McConnell-Ginet (2020) invokes the notion of *semantic mastery* and explains that:

[1] Admittedly, the racial identification of Jews has undergone significant shifts over time. On the one hand, most Jews were always considered White in the US, as they were permitted to become naturalized citizens. On the other hand, they have also often been classified as not quite White, or racially "other." In other words, they have been constructed as being ambiguously White (https://jwa.org/teach/livingthelegacy/american-jews-race-identity-and-civil-rights-movement).

[2] Blue Lives refers to fallen police professionals who have fallen prey to fatalities.

> [i]n principle, semantic mastery could potentially always be at issue, arising simply from tugs-of-war between similarly placed individuals with divergent interests. Although we do see localized disagreements, struggles for semantic mastery are typically more global, sometimes within a community of practice and often between communities. (p. 216)

What we find with respect to the Black Lives Matter/All Lives Matter divide is that divergent interests between two communities conspicuously do exist. Lest we run the risk of oversimplifying things, one can broadly classify the two movements as stemming from opposing communities, namely those that are against anti-Black racism and those who align themselves with a race-blind stance. Such a stance has emerged and intensified in response to an energized BLM movement over the last few years. In the wake of George Floyd's death on May 25, 2020 at the hands of a White police officer, Derek Chauvin, one could further argue that All Lives Matter calls at the very least were tone-deaf but more significantly seemed to lose their salience and truth. The hypocrisy of overlooking race in what was clearly a racially-oriented murder in George Floyd's case is aptly captured in Bryan and Gerald's (2020) astute observation:

> Black protesters are often referred to as rioters. Even when protests organized by Black and Brown people are peaceful, they are often labeled as riots. The term riot evokes *feelings of fear and an anticipation of destruction*. Similarly, there is hardly an instance when a group of White men are labeled thugs. Instead of being described as thuggish, they are often described as rowdy and mischievous. (para. 5; emphasis added)

At this juncture, we would like to highlight the affective approach adopted by those against the BLM movement; they choose to trade on people's "fear and anticipation of destruction." Also jarring is the contrast between protestors of color (who are "often referred to as rioters") and White thugs, who are constructed as being only "rowdy and mischievous."

Also of particular relevance is how McConnell-Ginet (2020) links her notion of *semantic mastery* (discussed earlier) with *semantic authority*, which she describes as entailing:

> [s]tructured relations and institutions within a community of language users, social practices of authorizing (or de-authorizing) various linguistic practices, what words mean and which words to use. Some semantic authority is institutionalized, some is less formally claimed, and there are often contests. (p. 216)

Returning to the aforementioned communities that have propelled the Black Lives Matter and All Lives Matter movements, the latter community appears to sanction viewing protestors of color as rioters. The question to ask, then, and drawing on McConnell-Ginet's observation immediately above, is how is such semantic authority institutionalized and others less formally claimed?

Mundane Discourse, Social Media, and Organized Grassroots Networks

As we write this commentary, we do so from a distinct place in time and space; the three of us, who are based in Michigan, have been grappling with a new bill introduced to the Michigan Legislature. This bill, if approved, would decidedly curtail Michigan classroom discussions of how race and racism have shaped US history. In addition, under the proposed legislation, K–12 school districts would lose 5% of their funding if educators teach critical race theory (CRT), which has been deemed 'anti-American.' Momentum to outlaw CRT, a framework developed in the 1970s by legal scholars such as Derrick Bell, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and Richard Delgado which argues racism is systemic and institutional (Ladson-Billings, 2013), has grown over the past year in reaction to the Black Lives Matter movement that has swept the globe. As of mid-May 2021, legislation purporting to prohibit CRT in schools had passed in Idaho, Iowa, Oklahoma, and Tennessee (Flaherty, 2021; Sawchuck, 2021), thus

strongly suggesting that several states view antiracist education as a clear and present danger. This evolving political development became a flashpoint in the Virginia gubernatorial election in November 2021 as the GOP candidate, Glenn Youngkin, invoked CRT instruction in schools as a rallying election cry among conservatives. Crucially, Youngkin succeeded masterfully, and was subsequently swept into state office. Furthermore, this continuing attempt to sanction what is deemed acceptable literature has gained momentum in recent months, as increasingly more school districts—aided by conservative groups on social media—have sought to ban books about race, gender, and sexuality. Such books include George M. Johnson's *All Boys Aren't Blue*, Jonathan Evison's *Lawn Boy*, Maia Kobabe's *Gender Queer*, and Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (Harris & Alter, 2022).

One might ask why the Far Right in the US has been so effective in marshaling support to advance their conservative agenda. As noted, they have succeeded in part by establishing themselves through a sophisticated set of ideological apparatuses. Central to this propaganda machinery has been the skillful use of mundane discourse, an idea that dovetails with the notions of semantic mastery and semantic authority discussed earlier. In her 2019 article "The Weaponization of Language: Discourses of Rising Right-Wing Authoritarianism," the sociologist Celine-Marie Pascale emphasizes that "mundane discourse might be best understood as the linguistic delivery device through which weaponized language enters the mainstream" (p. 908), adding that, "mundane discourse's weaponized language normalizes hate and hate groups through purportedly ordinary language" (p. 909). In other words, the discourse is not highfalutin in nature; rather, it speaks to the essence of things and avoids flowery oratory. More often than not, such language weaponization takes on an everyday, catchy dimension, along the lines of pithy slogans like *All Lives Matter*, *Build the Wall* (with Mexico), and *Lock Her* (Hillary Clinton) *Up*.

As observed by Pascale (2019), far-right political groups have successfully weaponized language—and correspondingly, semantic mastery and semantic authority, in our opinion—to sow hatred, suspicion, and discord. The court of Twitter, often the site and source of much misinformation, then becomes the platform through which ideas and ideologies are reinforced and prejudices solidified. A case in point is the COVID-19 pandemic, which has been framed by the Far Right as the *Wuhan* or *China virus*. Words matter. And when they are circulated in social media, their ability to demean, demoralize, and confuse (Pascale, 2019) assumes a whole new level of potency as they are able to (re)shape public perception. Notably, a crucial part of this public perception is the perception of teachers and students in our classrooms, because language cuts across the curriculum, and schools are a microcosm of society. And we, teachers, find ourselves in a precarious situation where politics in society intrudes upon school politics. One example is the tug-of-war we described earlier, with respect to what type of literature our students should be exposed to. Librarians also become implicated in this war, as do parents, and the two groups may find themselves at opposite tugging ends.

But let us be clear. Language weaponization is always a deliberate and politically motivated enterprise. Within the higher education landscape, the political minefield is further complicated by organizational structures that aim to undermine freedom of speech. One example of such a grassroots organization is Campus Reform, though it bills itself as a project of the Leadership Institute, which is a training ground for conservatives that "strives to produce a new generation of public policy leaders unwavering in their commitment to free enterprise, limited government, strong national defense, and traditional values" (https://leadershipinstitute.org/). Specifically, Campus Reform, which we briefly address in the next section, seeks to "expose liberal bias and abuse on the nation's college campuses," through their team of professional journalists who purportedly work "alongside student activists and

student journalists to report on the conduct and misconduct of campus administrators, faculty, and students" (https://campusreform.org/).

Two examples of Anti-Asian Racism: Language Weaponization in Action

We have broadly sketched how language weaponization is aided and abetted through a complex machinery of curated social media and well-organized political groups. At this juncture, we turn to two examples. The first is a personal example from Author 1 (Peter) to illustrate the depth and impact of such weaponization. In 2020, and as part of a special journal issue on linguistic racism that was published in the *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism,* Peter argued that linguistic racism occurs when minoritized individuals are Othered through various means, such as by highlighting how their accent might diverge from the accent of members of the dominant (often White) social group (see De Costa, 2020). Peter also went on to show in his article the damaging effects of linguistic racism; to exemplify this phenomenon, he described how Asians (in particular overseas Chinese) in several countries had been verbally, physically, and emotionally harmed by having been associated with COVID-19, and hence framed as spreaders of the 'China' or 'Wuhan' virus.

Thus, the virus had taken on a racialized dimension as it had become associated with Asians, and in particular, Chinese people. In her critical discourse analysis of Twitter posts and comments following a spike in Asian-American hate crimes (more on that shortly) following President Trump's reference to the coronavirus as the China virus, the sociolinguist Carmen Lee (2021) asserted that COVID-19 affords us "a way to understand how the idea of hate speech is discursively constructed" (p. 62). In January 2021, Peter found himself the target of online aggression (for a fuller picture of the context, see De Costa, 2021). This online aggression arose because his university had featured his aforementioned 2020 article in their university newspaper (https://msutoday.msu.edu/news/2021/linguistic-racism). Coincidentally, that university story dropped on January 6, 2021, the same day that the US Capitol was stormed and attacked by angry mobs from the Far Right. Shortly after his university's press release, Peter realized that he was being trolled online—instigated in part by Campus Reform hostile attacks—and being subjected to hateful Tweets such as, "Stinking Chinese set off a panic to overthrow the USA," and Facebook comments such as, "How about communist virus. It caused the mail in ballots that fraudulently turned the [2020 US] election to a communist victory. That is all this virus [is] about. Mail in ballots to coup the president [Trump]." Undeniably, the language in these posts was highly charged as their comments took aim at the Chinese government and, by extension, seemingly all Chinese people.

But it is equally important to situate this anti-Chinese (in particular) and anti-Asian (in general) racist sentiment within a larger ongoing anti-Asian backlash that has occurred over an extended period of time in US history. This pushback has been described as the 'Yellow Peril' (e.g., Reyes & Lo, 2008; Tchen & Yeats, 2014). Sadly, to counter this perceived peril (i.e., Asians are plotting to take over the US), an increasing number of attacks has been mounted against Asians. Specific to COVID-19, Yang et al. (2021), who analyzed 84 news media articles published between December 31, 2019 and June 30, 2020 on COVID-related anti-Asian incidents, reported a dramatic rise in race-based stress and trauma experienced by Asian individuals. But such harm has not only been psychological in nature.

In our second example, we turn to a series of violent attacks on Asians in the US, which culminated in the shooting deaths of six women of Asian descent in Atlanta on March 16, 2021 (Fausset & Vigdor, 2021). Despite this horrendous tragedy, the deadly rampage of the White gunman, Robert Aaron Long, was minimized and described as being a 'really bad day' by a sheriff's spokesperson. This description was inarguably loaded, and one needs to understand the weaponizing strength of the spokesperson's semantic choices. In attributing the killer's mass murders to 'a bad day,'

and through selecting these simple words, the spokesperson ended up trivializing the deaths of the female victims. We are also reminded of how White perpetrators appear to be viewed more favorably. Recall how White protestors are framed as being mischievous and rowdy while Black protestors are viewed as rioters. Equally interesting was how in many of the news stories the Asian victims remained anonymous (their names were only disclosed much later after their deaths). In other words, while we recognize that words matter, their absence—in this case, the initial anonymity of the victims—can also have profound dehumanizing effects. As we know, it is hard to attach much sympathy to nameless victims.

Countering Anti-Asian Racism: What Can We Do in Language and Literacy Education?

At first blush, you might wonder in what ways is analyzing language in the media relevant to language and literacy development. Given the abundance of misinformation that exists in the media and society, students need to become more critically aware of the shape and complexion of racism in society, and how that might extend into classrooms. In particular, students need to be aware that they are not being misled by claims that cannot be supported by facts.

Writing about language and the military, the linguistic anthropologist Janet McIntosh (2021) highlights how national discourse is often deployed to justify military maneuvers by stoking affective anxiety. To illustrate her point, she examined how the George W. Bush administration often projected terrifying futures while suppressing alternative views, thus sanctioning their preemptive military posture in Iraq. By the same token, we argue that it is vitally important that students be able to unpack weaponized language and the ideologies (and possibly inherent biases) embedded within such language that circulate within school and society. At the same time, they also need to be critically aware that discourses do not emerge out of thin air. Rather, they need to learn that discourses have histories and need to be situated. For example, students ought to be educated about the historicity of Blackness and anti-Blackness, how these social phenomena emerged over time and space, and how coloniality has played a vitally important role in sustaining social inequities that exist today (Davis & Smalls, 2021; Motha, 2020). In his recent book, *Antiracist Discourse: Theory and History of a Macromovement,* the linguist Teun A. van Dijk (2021) exhorts us to view antiracism as a historical and global social (macro)movement consisting of more specific and local social movements in many countries and at different moments of history. In keeping with this observation, students need to be alerted to how antiracist movements are expedited in the rest of the world so that they can compare and contrast similar social justice efforts.

To our benefit, we have made encouraging progress in language and literacy education. Within second language learning classrooms, for example, by advancing the notion of *raciolinguistics* and centering race in second language acquisition (SLA), sociolinguists Nelson Flores and Jonathan Rosa (2019) have urged us to not view racialized linguistic minorities in deficit terms. Instead, they have called for a problematization of the listening subject (generally White and monolingual individuals), who often constructs second language learners in a negative, deficient light. Flores and Rosa (2019) argue that it is ideological biases of listening subjects that need to be questioned. Within World Languages classrooms, Anya (2021) has called for more inclusive classrooms that recognize endemic racism and reject race neutrality and color evasiveness. In a similar vein, literacy scholar April Baker-Bell (2020) has suggested that one way to dismantle anti-Black linguistic racism in English language arts classrooms is to interrogate the notion of academic language, which, she argues, does not fully recognize the rich linguistic repertoires of Black students. In sum, language and literacy education is not short of constructive recommendations on how to design antiracist pedagogies.

To date, and as noted, there is no paucity of antiracist pedagogical resources. The three exemplar publications—Anya (2021), Baker-Bell (2020), and Flores and Rosa (2019)—will, in turn, provide you with additional helpful resources that we encourage you to look up. But as we wrap up this commentary, we would like to pivot in a slightly different direction while not losing sight of the anti-Asian racism theme that has permeated much of this piece. Returning to McConnell-Ginet (2020), we focus on organizational guidelines, which she characterizes as being "emblematic of the values and interests of [an] organization: they reify the values of an organization by establishing not what is or what will be but what is expected" (p. 231).

Indeed, organizational guidelines do warrant analysis, and they should represent the values and interests of the organization. With specific reference to organizations countering anti-Blackness, Bryan and Gerald (2020) are less sanguine, however. Following their analysis of position statements from organizations and evaluating how effective these statements were at dismantling White supremacy by centering anti-Blackness, they surmised that "professional organizations with language scholars were unable to adequately 'find the right words'" (para. 5). Ideally, they posit that such statements should "be a combination of both linguistic specificity about anti-Blackness and an action-based institutional commitment, be it past, present, or future, to dismantling oppressive systems that exist and impact their memberships" (para. 11). We are in complete agreement with Bryan and Gerald in this regard. However, as educational linguists who affiliate closely with and are members of the American Association for Applied Linguistics (AAAL), we are delighted with how quickly AAAL put out a statement against anti-Asian and anti-AAPI (Asian American and Pacific Islander) violence (https://www.aaal.org/statement-against-anti-asian-and-anti-aapi-violence) on May 17, 2021; that is, not long after the spate of anti-Asian hate crimes that we described earlier took place. We reproduce the core of the statement below to underline the main ideas (e.g., the historicity and specificity of antiracism, antiracism as a macromovement, the symbolic and physical violence associated with antiracism, the significance of embracing an antiracist stance) we have addressed in this commentary.

> **i. The clearly stated purpose and rationale**
> The American Association for Applied Linguistics (AAAL) strongly denounces the growth in violence against members of Asian and Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities across the United States, as well as in other countries. Asians and Asian Americans are now more likely to encounter race-based verbal or physical attacks, and one in every four Asian Americans is experiencing fear of race-based threats or violence in the US (Pew Research Center, 2020). Simultaneously, AAPI communities continue to struggle for visibility and audibility, as the vast majority (72%) of Asian Americans feel little support from others in society (ibid). Our fight against anti-AAPI discrimination should be a part of larger efforts to dismantle the undercurrents of racism and xenophobia that fuel symbolic and physical violence.
>
> **ii. The issue's importance to the field as a whole**
> AAAL is a professional organization built upon the goal of bettering the lives of individuals and conditions in society through an improved understanding of language-related issues. We, as applied linguists, affirm diversity and promote equity and justice through our individual and collective work. AAAL has previously voiced its support for Asian and AAPI scholars; in 2020 it endorsed the U.S. House Resolution 908 to condemn all forms of anti-Asian sentiment as related to COVID-19. However, anti-Asian sentiment has since continued to grow. The languages, knowledge, and experiences of Asian and AAPI communities have greatly

contributed to the field of applied linguistics. AAAL must speak out against anti-Asian and anti-AAPI racism.

iii. The issue's importance to the general public

Asian and AAPI communities are no strangers to anti-Asian sentiment; they have endured discriminatory events such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the Japanese internment during WWII. The dehumanizing rhetoric prevalent in recent years has reignited the historically rooted anti-Asian sentiment (Lyman, 2000; McIntosh & Mendoza-Denton, 2020). As an organization that understands the power of speech and language, AAAL reaffirms its strong opposition to all forms of racial and gender-based discrimination, xenophobia, and violence.

iv. Where relevant, a brief summary of related representative research findings

Statistics show a deeply concerning trend of anti-AAPI violence in the U.S. The advocacy group Stop AAPI Hate (2021) received reports of 3,292 incidents that occurred in 2020, and 503 incidents that occurred in 2021 as of February 28, 2021. Incident reports come from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Women report hate incidents 2.3 times more than men; and Chinese are the largest ethnic group (42.2%) that report experiencing hate, followed by Koreans (14.8%), Vietnamese (8.5%), and Filipinos (7.9%). The number of hate incidents reported represent only a fraction of the number of hate incidents that actually occur, and yet it shows the extent to which anti-Asian violence has grown across the U.S. over the past year. We should note as well that, although this statement focuses on recent U.S-centered violence, such incidents are not limited to the U.S.

In closing, rather than analyze the above organizational statement for you, we invite you to think about the values and interests that a professional organization like AAAL upholds. Next, we urge you to engage in reflection and think about ways to translate the values and interests embodied in AAAL (or any professional organization to which you might belong) into your professional practice. Just as racism is a systemic problem, the solution to countering it and the language weaponization that often accompanies racism needs to be systemic and systematic in approach. The counterpoint to language weaponization should not have to be an escalation through a war of words and/or more physical and symbolic violence. We think a better solution is antiracist education that would take the form of critical language awareness development and solidarity-building among individuals and organizations. Working in concert with each other, we are confident that we will be better positioned to engage the disturbingly fraught times that have beset us.

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The Weaponization of Mandarin Chinese

Xu Bian

Abstract

This article investigates the weaponization of Mandarin Chinese by analyzing four components of weaponized language: propaganda, disinformation, censorship, and mundane discourse deployed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The weaponization of Mandarin Chinese particularly targets religious people, including Christians, Falun Gong practitioners, and believers of sects unsanctioned by CCP, minorities, and prodemocracy activists. The weaponization of the Chinese language demonstrates that the CCP authorities possess the power to manipulate language so that it shapes public discourse and affects public perception, opinion, and behavior.

Keywords: weaponization of Mandarin Chinese, propaganda, disinformation, censorship, mundane discourse

Authoritarian and Totalitarian Countries' Weaponization of Language

Weaponizing language is one of the discursive strategies used by authoritarian[1] and totalitarian[2] governments to consolidate power within their nations, often by demonizing or dehumanizing their own citizens. Weaponized language is more than slurs and euphemisms for violence; it shapes public discourse and affects public perception, opinion, and behavior (Pascale, 2019). Further, weaponized language is a systematic, affective manipulation that amplifies resentments, deepens social divisions, and destroys the integrity of public information spaces. Through the weaponization of language, authoritarian and totalitarian movements establish their own authority as unaccountable and render the violence they enact ordinary.

The People's Republic of China, under the rule of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), is described either as an authoritarian or a totalitarian country. Human Rights Watch (2021), an international nongovernmental organization committed to uncovering human rights abuses, describes

Contact: Xu Bian, Seattle Pacific University
Email: bianx@spu.edu

[1] I use *authoritarian government* to describe a political system that concentrates power in the hands of a leader or a small elite that is not constitutionally responsible to the body of the people. It prefers the blind submission of its citizens to authority.
[2] I use *totalitarian government* to describe a centralized government that does not tolerate parties of differing opinion and that exercises dictatorial control over many aspects of life.

Communist China as a one-party authoritarian state that systemically curbs fundamental rights. The US Department of State (n.d.) says that "the People's Republic of China (PRC) is an authoritarian state in which the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is the paramount authority" (para. 1). Following Friedrich and Brzezinski's (1965) six traits of a totalitarian state, which includes (1) an official ideology, (2) a single political party typically led by one man, (3) secret police, (4) party control of mass communications, (5) party control of the military, and (6) a centrally directed economy, Edwards (2020) conducted a thorough analysis and concluded that China is already totalitarian in five of the six traits and an authoritarian structure regarding the centrally controlled economy.

Thus, it is necessary to delve into how the CCP weaponizes one of its most valuable resources, Mandarin Chinese, to maintain its status and power in the global community and to tighten its control over ideology and people. In this article, the analysis of the CCP's weaponization of Mandarin Chinese focuses on propaganda, censorship, disinformation, and mundane discourse, which are imposed on religious people, ethnic minorities, and prodemocracy activists.

Weaponizing Mandarin Chinese in the People's Republic of China

The weaponization of Mandarin Chinese is not new in mainland China, and it has targeted various groups of people since the PRC was founded in 1949. In the Maoist era (1949–1976), particularly during the Cultural Revolution, intellectuals, members of Black Five Categories,[3] and ethnic minorities suffered weaponization of Mandarin Chinese, and many of them became victims of the discursive strategy. For example, the language of political movement was always dictated from above to manipulate thought. Mao and the Party created a hereditary system, particularly two dichotomous classes. The revolutionary class was red, with Mao himself identifying as the reddest object; by contrast, the forces of 'darkness' were associated with the color black. Mao placed his closest aides in charge of the *Red Flag*, *People's Daily*, and *Guangming Daily*, the Beijing Party newspapers, as well as the New China News Agency so that he and his aids could manipulate political discourse in the country as a whole. The official press led the way, calling class enemies "devils," "demons," "vampires," "apparitions and specters," "monsters," and "Yama"—the King of the Dead. The language used to condemn class enemies dehumanized potential victims, fostered hatred toward them, and encouraged violent attacks on them.

Since Xi Jinping and the CCP took power in 2013, the weaponization of Mandarin Chinese has been heavily mobilized by the government in order to centralize his authority and back policies that tighten control of civil society. The use of Mandarin Chinese as a weapon has allowed the government to justify attacks on religious people, ethnic minorities, and prodemocracy activists in the country during Xi's era. Presently, the CCP weaponizes Mandarin Chinese in four ways: censorship, propaganda, disinformation, and mundane discourse. In the sections below, I explore these four ways in which the CCP weaponizes Mandarin Chinese in the nation by delving deeper into the topics of religion, ethnic minorities, and prodemocracy activists. Religious groups, especially Christians and Falun Gong practitioners, ethnic minorities in Xinjiang, Tibet, as well as other regions, and pro-democracy activists are usually deemed as threats to the CCP rule, so they are victims of Mandarin Chinese weaponization.

[3] During the period of the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) in the People's Republic of China, Mao Zedong identified groups that he considered enemies of the Revolution. The phrase *Five Black Categories* referred to the following five political entities: Landlords, Rich farmers (peasants), Counter-revolutionaries, Bad-influencers ["bad elements"], and Rightists.

Censorship

Censorship prohibits language that threatens hegemonic power. In the information age, media censorship may be the hallmark of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes around the globe. The media environments in China are among the world's most restrictive because the CCP relies on censorship to control information in the news, online, and on social media. In addition to the Chinese government blocking certain Western websites deemed potentially dangerous (e.g., BBC, the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, the Epoch Times, Radio Free Asia, etc.), specific material considered a threat to political stability is banned, including controversial search terms, photos, and videos. The government is particularly keen on blocking reports of issues that could incite social unrest, like official corruption, the economy, health, and environmental scandals, certain religious groups, and ethnic strife within China.

Religion

Authorities in China have removed online Bible apps from app stores in the country, as well as taken down prominent Christian chat accounts. Bibles are not readily available, and their sale is largely restricted to sellers associated with the Patriotic churches. Xi Jinping has continued to tighten his grip on Christians, with many in the Party regarding Christianity as inherently subversive and bound up with 'Western' values, especially around the dignity of the individual. "Clearly, the Chinese Communist Party sees the growth of Christianity in China as a threat to its wealth and power" (*The Tablet*, 2021, para. 8).

The Chinese government has published new censored versions of classic texts for Chinese children to read in schools in 2019. In these new textbooks, which include the works of Daniel Defoe, Hans Christian Andersen, and Anton Chekhov, religious language, such as *Bible*, *God*, and *Christ*, has been removed. For example, Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* originally mentioned the Bible as well as some prayer books. The original text reads: "also, I found three very good Bibles, […] some Portuguese books also; and among them two or three Popish prayer-books, and several other books all which I carefully secured" (Defoe, 2014, p. 35). The new version of the text published by the Chinese government simply refers to the religious works as *Portuguese books*. Similarly, in Hans Christian Andersen's "The Little Match Girl," a passage that originally read, "when a star falls, a soul was going up to God" (1846, p. 2) was altered to say *when a star falls, a person is leaving*. Various references to religion in Anton Chekhov's short story "Vanka" (1886) have also either been removed or changed.

In addition to censoring religious texts that teach ideology opposing Communism and Socialism, the Chinese government has also censored religious groups and leaders whose activities threaten the CCP regime. One of the most prominent religious movements censored by the CCP is the Falun Gong. The Chinese government's repression of Falun Gong officially started in July 1999. The movement's skyrocketing popularity and its Buddhist-like precepts of truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance are regarded as an existential threat to the CCP's doctrines of atheism, class struggle, and violent revolution. Although the CCP leadership initially respected, praised, and awarded Falun Gong's movement, it then blocked internet access to websites mentioning Falun Gong and declared it a heretical organization that threatened social stability. Censorship has become one of the strategies used by the Chinese government to crack down on Falun Gong. The inability to report on the movement drew the media's great concern between 1999 and 2001. All Falun Gong-related websites have been blocked since the CCP launched the internet censorship project in 2000, including the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)'s website at one point because it hosts the MIT Falun Gong club (http://web.mit.edu/falundafa/www/home.html).

Ethnic Minorities

Mainland China is home to 56 ethnic groups, and 55 of them are minorities. Xinjiang and Tibet are the provinces where over 40 ethnic groups dwell. Like ethnic Tibetans who constitute the majority of the population in Tibet, Uyghurs, a Turkic-speaking ethnic group, outnumber other ethnic groups in Xinjiang (China Internet Information Center, n.d.). The CCP authorities' rule over Xinjiang and Tibet depends on military strength. Social issues, including discrimination against ethnic minorities and forceful implementation of government policies, result in protests and separatist activities, which are on a minor scale and have lacked organization and weapons. Although they have not threatened Beijing's hold on the two regions, the CCP censors news coverage about protests. In addition, the Chinese government blocks any news stories questioning what the CCP has done in the regions where ethnic minorities are the majority. To make things more complicated, accurate information on the ongoing atrocities is nearly impossible to access on the Chinese internet.

Some of the topics that the CCP has censored throughout the years about Xinjiang include the 2013 Tiananmen Square Attack, concentration camps, and forced labor. In 2013, a terrorist suicide attack in which the East Turkistan Movement claimed responsibility happened in Beijing. Coverage in the Chinese State media largely downplayed the incident, with only brief reports. The CCP authorities' oppression of Turkic Muslims has reached unprecedented levels in recent years. It is estimated that a million people have been arbitrarily detained in 300-400 facilities, including 'political education' camps, pretrial detention centers, and prisons. Detainees and prisoners are subjected to torture and other ill treatment, cultural and political indoctrination, and forced labor. The US, Canada, and the Netherlands have determined that China's conduct constitutes genocide (Human Rights Watch, 2021). Undoubtedly, no news stories regarding concentration camps and forced labor in Xinjiang are allowed to show up on the internet in China.

In a similar manner, the CCP tightly controls the flow of information inside and outside of Tibetan areas, so anyone seeking to report on Tibet faces severe restrictions and repression by the government. Social media censorship is one of the controls used by Chinese authorities to keep information from reaching Tibetan regions. News stories about protests and political struggles in Tibet are particularly banned by authorities. One form of protest that Tibetans have used as a statement of opposition to the Chinese government crackdown is self-immolations. These protests have enormously escalated since 2009, but the mainland Chinese State media barely covered self-immolation cases, and Chinese authorities did not permit any independent media to attend the trial of the protesters (Crete-Nishihata & Tsui, 2021). "The Chinese people have no opportunity to know our issue," said the 14th Dalai Lama, the Buddhist monk who Beijing has branded as a dangerous separatist for demanding Tibetan self-determination (Reuters, 2010).

Censorship occurs in Inner Mongolia as well. The Chinese government has imposed a systemic crackdown in Inner Mongolia, shutting off the only Mongolian-language social media platform in China, Bainu (http://bainu.com/). Other content relating to the government's policy to erase Mongolian-language education, mainly on the Chinese social media app WeChat (https://www.wechat.com/), has been heavily censored, with over 28 WeChat users being summoned by the authorities because of their posts. Moreover, over 450 WeChat users have received warnings, either in person or by telephone, threatening them with punishment if they continue to question the Chinese policy online (South Mongolian Human Rights Information Center, 2020).

Prodemocracy Activists

China, under the CCP's rule, is an authoritarian regime that does not tolerate any criticism, so advocates of democracy have been targeted by the Chinese government. These prodemocracy activists

include some prominent figures such as Lu Xiaobo, Ai Weiwei, Wang Dan, Wei Jingsheng, Joshua Wong, and many more who remain unknown. These prodemocracy activists have pushed the boundaries of Chinese society, criticizing the policies of the government. The CCP authorities have censored these individuals, their names, their online posts chastising the government, and any other published materials, like books, authored by them. Books by young activist Joshua Wong (Wong & Ng, 2020) or prodemocracy politician Tanya Chan (Chan, 2014) became unavailable in China after the Chinese national security law censoring them was passed. The national security law includes the removal from libraries of published content by prodemocracy figures and the editing of textbooks.

In the same vein, the CCP has always censored prodemocracy events. An example of such events is the Tiananmen Square Protests (also known as the Tiananmen Square Massacre), which were student-led demonstrations held in Tiananmen Square, Beijing, in 1989. During these protests, moderates, such as Zhao Ziyang (the Party General Secretary), advocated negotiating with protesters and concessions. However, moderates were overruled by hardliners led by Chinese premier Li Peng and supported by paramount elder stateman Deng Xiaopeng who insisted on forcibly suppressing protests. By the beginning of June, tanks and heavily armed troops advanced toward Tiananmen Square, opening fire on or crushing those who tried to block their way. Once the soldiers reached the square, a number of the few thousand remaining demonstrators there chose to leave rather than face a continuation of the confrontation. By morning the area had been cleared of protesters.

The CCP has considered the Tiananmen Square Protests and similar prodemocracy events a threat to the political stability of the nation and has passed laws banning future acts. In June 2013, the censorship around the Tiananmen anniversary reached new heights, with Chinese social media blocking even vague, tertiary references to the incident. CCP authorities even imposed censorship on prodemocracy activists based in the US, demanding that Zoom Video Communications Inc. (https://zoom.us/) deactivate these activists' Zoom accounts because they hosted events via Zoom to commemorate Tiananmen Square protests.

Propaganda

Propaganda has played a critical role since the CCP was founded in China in 1921. The CCP deployed propaganda to win popular support, particularly the support of the Chinese people under Guomindang rule before 1949. From 1949 to 1978, the CCP propaganda system became a vital tool for the Party to direct the communist revolution. Since the Tiananmen Square Massacre in 1989, the CCP has continued strengthening its hold on power by propagating the Party's ideology using Western technologies such as the internet, technological surveillance, etc. The CCP divides propaganda into two categories, internal and external, as well as four types: political, economic, cultural, and social (Brady & Junto, 2009). The purpose of the CCP propaganda is to deliver the Party's political message to party members, the Chinese people, and "the enemy," often portrayed as those who do not agree with communist ideologies. The propaganda agenda has emphasized patriotism, collectivism, socialism, and scientific consciousness in the post-1989 era.

Religion

Religious and spiritual groups pose a political threat to the CCP, so the Party launched a political campaign named *Scientific Consciousness* against Falun Gong in 1999 due to its rapid growth. In this political campaign, the CCP defines Falun Gong as an antihumanity, antisociety, and antiscience evil cult (Cook, 2017). Television and radio broadcasts flooded the airwaves with testimonials by bereaved relatives of Falun Gong victims who railed against the 'evil cult' that had led their loved ones astray. Sobbing denunciations of Master Li Hongzhi, the founder of Falun Gong, blamed the movement's

supreme leader for the tragedies of insanity, suicide, starvation, and even murder that had befallen parents, children, and spouses.

The CCP authorities have deployed two kinds of propaganda tactics regarding Christianity. On the one hand, the CCP spreads the view that Christianity is a Western religion introduced to China rather than an Indigenous religion, so Christianity is often depicted as a tool utilized by Western countries to fool the Chinese and overthrow the rule of the Chinese government. The repression of Christian churches and Christians is framed in terms of developing Chinese religions instead of the Western religion. On the other hand, CCP authorities claim that Christianity loves the CCP. In July 2021, an exhibition titled "One Heart, One Virtue, One Path: Chinese Christianity Loves the Party, the Country, and Socialism Theme Exhibition" claimed that "the advanced members of the Christian community have always been of one mind and one direction with the Party, leaving a beautiful footprint and bearing wonderful witness" (Zhang, 2021, para. 5).

Ethnic Minorities

The CCP has carried out propaganda with a two-fold purpose regarding Xinjiang and Uyghurs. One purpose is to showcase the prosperous and peaceful life in Xinjiang, and the other is to justify atrocities Chinese authorities have done throughout Xinjiang and to minorities by smearing Uyghurs as terrorists. The Chinese government has engaged in a propaganda campaign to defend its actions in Xinjiang. In April 2021, the Chinese government released propaganda videos titled *Xinjiang is a Wonderful Land*, and produced a musical titled *The Wings of Songs* in order to portray Xinjiang as harmonious and peaceful. Kao et al. (2021) downloaded more than 5,000 videos posted on these websites, including Pomegranate Cloud, Twitter, and YouTube, between January 23 (the date of the first campaign video following the US State Department's January 19 declaration of genocide in Xinjiang) and May 31. These researchers catalogued more than 3,000 unique campaign videos out of the more than 5,000 collected by running a sample of its frames through the Google Cloud Vision image labeler. These campaign videos highlight the message that the people in Xinjiang live a good and happy life under the CCP's rule.

The CCP's propaganda demonizes Xinjiang minorities, especially Uyghurs, who stand up to the CCP. While depicting Uyghur resistance as terror and of those fleeing Chinese oppression as inherently dangerous, the CCP continues to exploit the language of the war on terror and Islamophobia to label modest dressing, long beards, protests, or even trivial offenses as evidence of Islamic extremism and terrorism. By rebranding the war on separatism as part of a global war on terror and portraying spontaneous, unorganized clashes between Uyghur civilians and Chinese security forces as acts of organized terrorism, the CCP successfully aligned its ethnic repression with the West's war on terrorism in the name of freedom (Yehan, 2021). The blatant distortion of reality is used to justify atrocities made by the CCP in Xinjiang.

The CCP launches the propaganda campaign in order to laud their own work in Tibet and counter Tibetan monks' threat to its rule. The Chinese government released a white paper portraying the annexation as a 'peaceful liberation' in 2021 (Xinhua Net, 2021). The white paper claimed that Tibet has seen an "enormous transformation" and blamed "Western anti-China forces" (p. 35) for stirring unrest there, the state-run China Global Television Network reported. The International Campaign for Tibet, a Washington, DC-based nonprofit, and other activist groups rejected the white paper as simply more propaganda in the CCP's long campaign to erase Tibet's rich past while exploiting its natural resources and strategic location (Indo-Pacific Defense Forum, 2021).

Since Xi Jinping came to power, the CCP has mobilized more rigorous propaganda campaigns to 'sinicize' Tibetan Buddhism. The campaigns include tightening control over monastic affairs,

monitoring activities of the monks and nuns, and increasing mandatory indoctrination training sessions in monasteries and nunneries across Tibet (Lhamo, 2021). The efforts are undertaken by China in order to remake Tibetan culture into mainstream Chinese culture.

Prodemocracy Activists

The 1989 Tiananmen Square Protests were a turning point in China's overall political system as well as its approach to propaganda and thought work. Deng Xiaoming (paramount elder statesman) said that the weak propaganda work from the Chinese government until that point resulted in the Protest. As such, new leadership was required to rebuild the CCP's propaganda system to secure its regime and rule. In post-Tiananmen China, authorities shifted to cultural-cum-nationalist propaganda, which is a strategy with which the CCP controls information scattered in the public sphere and has proven to shape public opinions. Propaganda departments identify local sites to serve as 'educational bases' where instruction in the history of China and the indispensable role of the CCP in unifying and modernizing the nation could be effectively conducted. Propaganda stresses that the CCP is the chief custodian of the Chinese civilization, credited with perpetuating an allegedly uninterrupted party tradition of protecting ancient cultural relics as national treasures.

While justifying their right to rule, the CCP applies specific words and phrases, including "brainwashed by the West," "separatism," "subversion of state power," among others, to dissidents and prodemocracy activists. The propaganda sows division and incites hostility toward prodemocracy activists in the country. Protesters in Hong Kong, for example, are labeled as cockroaches and locusts in order to provoke disgust and potentially imply that such vermin deserve extermination. At the same time, the CCP's propaganda attacks Western democracy as divisive and confrontational in an attempt to boost Chinese confidence in socialism with Chinese characteristics. CPP's propaganda submerges the interests of ordinary people beneath those of corporations and governments, and effectively uses the language of ideals to obscure otherwise objectionable ends (Stanley, 2018).

Disinformation

Disinformation is a subset of propaganda. It is false information spread systematically through media and public announcements to intentionally confuse or mislead the public. The consistency of the system that generates facts persuades the public more than facts do (Arendt, 1967). Under the CCP's rule, religion, ethnic minorities, and prodemocracy activists have proved a fertile ground for fake news. CCP authorities try to justify the repression of these and other groups they do not approve of.

Religion

In mainland China, the CCP has used social media to denounce a few religions as 'pseudoreligions' or 'cults.' Falun Gong and the Church of Almighty God (CAG), for example, have been victims of CCP's disinformation and are listed as 'cults,' which has served as justification for the government to persecute their practitioners.

Introvigne (2018) expounded six cases where the CCP manipulated disinformation against the Church of Almighty God. The cases include the McDonald's murder, the story of Guo Bin, predicting the end of the world in 2012, the CAG monetary compensation for religious conversions, Evangelical Christian leader kidnapped by the CAG, and the international campaign of 2017. In the first two cases, the CCP was trying to give false attribution of the crimes to the CAG; in the third story, the Chinese sources tried to prove that the CAG had announced the end of the world in 2012; the derogatory information in the fourth case was spread because of a post-McDonald's laundry list of accusations against the CAG published by the official newspaper of the Chinese regime, the *People's Daily* (People's Daily, 2014); in the fifth case, the CCP realized that the incidents were of interest to Western scholars

after the news traveled from Chinese Evangelicals to Evangelicals abroad, so the CCP added them to its laundry list of anti-CAG propaganda items; in the sixth case, the Chinese government media claimed that only 18 members of the CAG had been arrested while nearly 600 CAG members were arrested in Zhejiang Province. The disinformation fabricated by the CCP aims at discrediting the Church of Almighty God.

Christians and Christian churches unsanctioned by the CCP authorities have been persecuted by the Chinese government, and persecution has escalated in recent years. Chinese media reports the charges that the CCP authorities make up for Christians who stand up to the government. Some of the most common accusations fabricated by the Chinese government to inculpate Christians and Christian churches include subversion of state power, illegal operation of a business, and organizing an evil cult. Pastor Wang Yi, along with other leaders and lay believers of the Early Rain Covenant Church located in Chengdu, Sichuan, have been imprisoned and/or interrogated on such charges. Although Christianity is one of the five religions recognized by the Chinese government (along with Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, and Catholicism), the CCP smears some churches and Christians in an attempt to curb its development in China.

Ethnic Minorities

Chinese authorities in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) are believed to have held up to 1.8 million Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in a vast network of internment camps since early 2017. A proliferation of credible evidence, including media reporting, independent research, testimonies, and open-source data, has revealed abuses including forced labor, mass detention, surveillance, sterilization, cultural erasure, and alleged genocide in China's Xinjiang region (Finley, 2021). Zhao Lijiang, a Chinese government spokesperson, tweeted that "the Uyghur population in Xinjiang has been growing steadily in recent years." China in 2019 changed tactics and began describing the facilities as residential training centers that provide vocational training for Uyghurs, discourage radicalization, and help protect the country from terrorism.

The CCP creates and sows rumors, disinformation, suspicion, and hatred around individuals who advocate for Uyghurs with the goal of discrediting them and, by extension, their claims. A victim of this practice is Halmurat Harri Uyghur, a 33-year-old doctor currently living in Finland who began his online activism in a bid to find his parents. In response to Halmurat Harri Uyghur's activism, the CCP launched a massive disinformation campaign against him, claiming he was not even Uyghur but Jewish, and flooding his social media messages with vitriol and abuse. Eventually, Halmurat Harri Uyghur gave up public activism, deleted his Facebook account, and went back to his medical studies.

Prodemocracy Activists

In response to widespread prodemocracy demonstrations in Hong Kong, the Chinese government crafted an online disinformation campaign calling the protesters cockroaches, and casting them as members of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), according to disclosures made by Twitter and Facebook. An August 11, 2019 post from China Daily alleged that one of the protesters fired a US-manufactured grenade launcher (Dotson, 2019). The falsified content intended to support PRC state media narratives that Hong Kong protesters are violent terrorists and that the US is fueling the unrest from behind the scenes. Chinese state-run media agencies like China Daily, Xinhua News, and China Global Television Network (CGTN) discredited the protesters or painted them as disruptive.

Mundane Discourses

Mundane discourse can be perceived as the linguistic channel through which weaponized language enters the mainstream (Pascale, 2019). Weaponized language, including metaphors and linguistic

frames, seeps into everyday discourse and gradually becomes a part of society's worldview. Hate, discrimination, bias, bigotry, and xenophobia are normalized through purportedly ordinary language.

Religion

Christianity originated in Israel and was introduced to China in the 7th century, but it has long been regarded as a Western religion among Chinese folks. Christians and Catholics were assaulted and even murdered during the Boxer Rebellion from 1899 through 1901 because of the association with Western countries. The phrase "worship foreign things and fawn on foreign powers" (崇洋媚外 chong yang mei wai) is often applied to Chinese Christians and Catholics. This phrase is used to describe people who look up to foreign cultures and things but despise their own cultural heritage. The Chinese government's policy of sinicizing Christianity over recent years strengthens the impression that Christianity is a foreign religion. In addition, Christianity is described by the government as the weapon mobilized by Western countries to invade China and fool the Chinese people.

After the People's Republic of China was established in 1949, atheist education/indoctrination has changed people's perception of religions. The mainstream idea that religion and science are opposites justifies the belief that the illiterate and weak are religious. Education, ideology, and policy—all of which are dominated by the CCP—restrict mundane discourse about Christianity to its downside, and people have few options of the vocabulary to use when talking about Christianity. Christianity, to the majority of the Chinese, is less valuable than and inferior to Indigenous religions such as Daoism and folk religions.

Ethnic Minorities

In a study, Yi (2007) interviewed Chinese governmental officials, academic commentators, mainstream teachers, and students and found that minority cultures and subjects are rendered by the cultural mainstream as inferior and less valuable to the modernization of China. The high-frequency words emerging in the mainstream discourse at the individual, academic, and government levels include *primitive*, *backward*, *uncivilized*, *inferior*, and *less valuable* (Yi, 2007). In China, minority cultures are often treated as a means of entertainment and equated with beautiful dancing, colorful dresses, or mysterious legends. They are largely a kind of decoration in mainstream daily life. Some stereotypes about minorities continue to prevail due to CCP's influence. For instance, Muslims are often depicted as profiteers, short-sighted, and untrustworthy. On the other hand, Tibetans are depicted and thought of as an uncultivated ethnic group who tends to lack self-discipline, and resort to violent or disruptive behavior. A lack of cultivation and discipline also presumably results in their limited intellectual merit, which is why the CCP has promoted an alienating discourse where Tibetans are depicted as unable to fit in within the increasingly modernized Chinese society.

Prodemocracy Activists

Nationalism has been on the rise in modern-day China, encouraged by the CCP and put to effective use by President Xi Jinping. China's nationalism today is shaped by its pride in its history as well as its century of humiliation at the hands of the West and Japan. China's nationalism is associated with anti-West sentiment. Prodemocracy activists advocate for the democratic model, which is heavily used in Western countries. Therefore, there is division and even hostility between Chinese nationalists/pro-Beijing people and prodemocracy activists within the nation.

Pro-Beijing rhetoric applies labels of "跪美(gui mei; kneel to the US), 反中(fan Zhong; anti-China), 舔美(tian mei; lick the US), and 辱骂祖国(ru ma zu guo; insult the motherland)" to pro-

democracy activists. One of the official accounts affiliated with the *Global Times* published an article titled "The Death of a Person Who Kneels to the US" in December 2020, claiming that hundreds of tweets directed toward Ding Jianqiang (a prodemocracy activist) included the phrases/keywords "anti-China" and "lick the US" (VOA, 2020). One of the articles by Xinhua News Agency in December 2020 made the phrase "kneel to the US" go viral (Xinhua Net, 2020). Liao Yiwu, a Chinese author, reporter, musician, poet, and critic of China's Communist regime, was compared to a "shepherd dog" raised by the Western countries and was called an evil public intellectual and traitor in that article (Baidu, 2019).

Other beliefs about prodemocracy activists prevalent among the Chinese government is that leaders of prodemocracy events are supported by the Western anti-China forces; that they are the tools used by the US Central Intelligence Agency to fight against China; and that they should not regard themselves as angels of justice (BBC News, 2011). The public discourses reveal Chinese folks' lack of empathy and bias against prodemocracy activists, which is both the outcome of the CCP's use of weaponized language and the avenue where language weaponization is strengthened.

Final Thoughts

Reviewing the CCP's strategies for the weaponizing of the Mandarin Chinese language within and outside the nation provides evidence supporting the thought that "the weaponization of language is a systematic process which is essential to constituting and consolidating authoritarian power" (Pascale, 2019, p. 901). In recent years, language weaponization has escalated in the PRC since Xi Jinping came to power. CCP authorities manipulate information by direct censorship, propaganda, and disinformation but also by interfering in mundane discourses. Religious practitioners, ethnic minorities, and prodemocracy activists are the victims of weaponized Mandarin Chinese because they stand up to some of the CCP's policies and conducts. The weaponization of Mandarin Chinese amplifies resentments, deepens social divisions, and destroys the integrity of public information spaces in China. More importantly, the weaponization of Mandarin Chinese demonstrates how authoritarian and totalitarian governments can use—and have used—language to assert control and spread fear and inequity in society.

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