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Special Issue: Linguistic diversity, equity and pedagogical innovation in higher education

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Editors's Notes:

This monograph will report on the results of a series of case studies conducted across several campuses of the City University of New York within a university-sponsored project entitled Futures Initiative (FI). The FI project advocates for greater equity and innovation in higher education through several actions, including research and student and teacher development initiatives. In this monograph, the authors of the contributions came together in an interdisciplinary doctoral seminar on educational language policy, which was chosen to take on an active role in the FI project. The seminar was led by Dr. Ofelia García and Dr. Carmina Makar. The issues raised in the seminar, coupled with the goals of the FI project, invited deeper awareness, criticality and increased agency in terms of linguistic diversity, language policies and equity as they were understood and experienced by different populations at the university. The participants in the seminar thus engaged in an innovative pedagogical process of becoming sociolinguistic ethnographers, thereby developing tools and agency to contribute to heightened awareness of salient issues within their local university context and to the potential transformation of language-related injustices through their research.

The invited author for this monograph is Dr. Camina Makar, who was one of the professors guiding the research discussed in the articles. In her contribution, Dr. Makar provides a contextual background to the FI project and discusses the role of multilingualism in higher education policy and pedagogy. She further provides an overview of the methodological approach taken in the different case studies included in the monograph and the relationship between the research conducted and the pedagogical development of the doctoral seminar. Finally, she reflects on some of the implications of this research for the City University of New York and beyond.

In the next article, Renata Archanjo and Demet Arpacik look at the various platforms that learners from diverse backgrounds created at a voluntarily held Kurdish language class (Kurmanji) in New York. Kurdish, with a long history of forced assimilation and extermination by the nation-states in which Kurds live, has found refuge mainly in exile. In this research study, the authors describe the dynamics within and beyond classroom to gain a deeper understanding of the complex ideologies, power-resistance dichotomy, and identities that learners redefine, reclaim and reconstruct. Findings reveal that participants used the class as a platform to challenge and resist established relations of power, which aim to exterminate Kurdish and to transform the educational space into a space of freedom.

In "The burden of 'nativeness': Four plurilingual student-teachers' stories," Maria Cioè-Peña, Emilee Moore and Luisa Martin Rojo present the narratives of four teacher candidates in which their experiences as multilingual learners and as students training to be bilingual teachers are explored. Cioè-Peña, Moore, and Martin Rojo dutifully discuss the conflict that arises when one's desire to perform like a native speaker becomes a need, ultimately defining one's understanding of what it means to be a successful bilingual teacher.

The fourth article in the special issue, written by Hannah Göppert and Andrea Springith, gives voice to the students, administrators, and staff of Medgar Evers College. The college, which was historically tied to Black Campus Movement, played a central role in Civil Rights Movement. The authors investigate the linguistic and cultural dynamics, which have occurred as a result of the increase in the diversification of the student body in colleges and universities. The authors indicate that with a commitment to serve its community, a legacy it inherited from the Civil Rights Movement, the college attempts to meet the needs of its increasingly diverse population. Their paper provides insight into the challenges at the intersection of linguistic and racial/ethnic diversification within CUNY's Medgar Evers College.

Next, Stephanie Love, discusses the linguistic ideologies of second-generation bilingual students in one Arabic for Native Speakers/Heritage Learners course. Love problematizes the notions of "heritage speaker" and "native speaker", which she describes as being constructs of a monoglot society. She argues that there is a link between the word "broken Arabic" used frequently by the interviewees and the concept of incomplete acquisition and attrition in SLA research. Calling our attention to the effect of normative ideology on heritage language classrooms in the United States, Love argues for the

implementation of an approach that emphasizes performativity and respects the diversity of learners.

The final article in this issue also explores issues of identity and how individuals evaluate their own linguistic practices. In “Ideology, access, and status: Spanish-English bilinguals in the foreign-language classroom,” Michael Rolland gives voice to heritage speakers enrolled in foreign language courses, a subset of students who have not garnered much attention within the linguistics research community. In his article, Rolland presents the values that these students hold about their own linguistic practices in relation to “the standard” as well as opportunities for change.

The series of articles is then followed by a review of Alexakos’ (2015) “Being a teacher | researcher: A primer on doing authentic inquiry research on teaching and learning,” reviewed by Nathaly González. As noted by the reviewer, the book serves as a primer for teachers and researchers to engage in inquiry research. That is, Alexakos’ book maintains that the dialectic relationship between the teacher and researcher (denoted by the “|” symbol) informs each role, thus facilitating the generation of new knowledge and practices to bridge what has been described as the theory-practice divide. In sum, the book’s detailed framework with concrete strategies serves the needs of both expert and non-expert audiences, providing a clear guide to design research in the classroom from the teacher | researcher perspective.

And finally, the special issue concludes an in-depth interview with Dr. Ofelia García, led by Benjamin Kinsella. In this interview, García and Kinsella discuss the development of language policy as an interdisciplinary field and how research has informed teaching practices in NYC and beyond. García articulates that globalization and the proliferation of technology has created dynamic language policies, which can no longer be described as simply ‘top-down’ or ‘bottom-up.’ Thus, García provides direction for future research on language policy, maintaining that we must consider not only the sustainability, but also the dynamisms of languages in interaction.

Together, this special issue is more than just a collection of case studies on language diversity in higher education. The research and pedagogical model on which it is framed provides an innovative social justice-oriented perspective on linguistic diversity and language policies in higher education, which questions neoliberal understandings of the purely instrumental value of language at universities.

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Alexakos, K. (2015). *Being a teacher | researcher: A primer on doing authentic inquiry research on teaching and learning*. The Netherlands: Rotterdam. Sense Publishers.

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We would especially like to acknowledge two very special professors that are deeply committed to linguistic diversity, equity and pedagogical innovation, Dr. Ofelia García and Dr. Carmina Makar, who drove this project and to whom we dedicate this monograph.

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Uncovering language policy in higher education: Reflections from the classroom

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Abstract

This paper analyzes salient issues that emerged over the course of a language policy action research course at the Graduate Center City University in New York. The course, embedded in the larger scope of the *Futures Initiatives*, allowed students to study different language communities across different campuses in New York. This piece describes these findings in light of language policy and higher education in super diverse contexts and argues for further exploration of language practices to inform the work of educators across different settings in higher education.

Keywords: language policy, multilingualism, language practices, higher education

Resumen

Este trabajo analiza a través de distintos lentes temáticos, la experiencia de trabajo en un curso de política lingüística en el Graduate Center en la Universidad de Nueva York. Dicho curso formó parte de la *Iniciativa para el Futuro*, y permitió a los estudiantes investigar comunidades lingüísticas en diferentes campus de educación superior en la ciudad de Nueva York. Este artículo describe sus hallazgos a la luz de los actuales estudios de política lingüística en educación superior, específicamente en contextos de gran diversidad, y promueve mayor estudio de políticas y prácticas lingüísticas para informar el trabajo de educadores en distintas disciplinas en la educación superior.

Palabras clave: política lingüística, multilingüismo, prácticas lingüísticas, educación universitaria

Resum

Aquest article analitza, a través de diferents aproximacions temàtiques, l'experiència de treball en una assignatura de política lingüística al Graduate Center de la Universitat de Nova York. Aquesta assignatura va formar part de la *Iniciativa per al Futur*, i va permetre als estudiants portar a terme recerques sobre comunitats lingüístiques en diferents campus d'educació superior a la ciutat de Nova York. Aquest article descriu les seves troballes a la llum dels actuals estudis de política lingüística en educació superior, específicament en contextos de gran diversitat. Es reclamen futures recerques sobre polítiques i pràctiques lingüístiques per informar la tasca docents en les diferents disciplines en l'educació superior.

Paraules clau: política lingüística, multilingüisme, pràctiques lingüístiques, educació universitària

Introduction

The body of work featured in this special issue is the result of a collective research endeavor that emerged in the context of a course held at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY). *Global Perspectives on Language and Education Policy*, co-taught by Prof. Ofelia Garcia and myself, engaged students in critically thinking about language policies in society and education and their connection to sociopolitical ideologies in different nation-states (García, 2015). In particular, language education policy examines the influence of colonial, regional and global languages, and explores how states manage and develop linguistic resources (Tollefson, 2013).

The course was part of *The Futures Initiative*¹, a hub housed at the Graduate Center whose mission is to better equip graduate students to develop engaged critical pedagogical practices and translate specialized research into teaching throughout the University. CUNY provides accessible education at 24 campuses across New York City, in an integrated system of senior and community colleges, graduate and professional schools, research centers, institutes and consortia. It's mission of access has served a deeply diverse community since it was founded as a Free Academy in 1847, and then established as a Ph.D.-granting institution in 1961, when it became the model for the modern public university (CUNY, 2016).

Today it continues to serve as a national model of quality and access. In this context, the Futures Initiative aims to establish dialogue among the different colleges in the system and prepare graduate students to better serve the needs of the diverse population of students, in particular the undergraduate population, which is the group doctoral students tend to work with as teachers. As part of their mission, the Futures Initiative launched a series of team taught courses that paired senior and junior scholars from across the board to come together and teach a course in their area of specialty with a social justice orientation.

As part of our membership in the Futures Initiative, one of the goals for the seminar on Global Language Policy was to develop an action research project that would explore different language practices throughout the different colleges in the CUNY system. The value of exploring

linguistic communities and practices quickly became apparent as stories began to emerge. The affiliation of our course to the Futures Initiative was a relevant factor in shaping our collective research agenda for the term and defining mechanisms of public engagement.

Point of Departure: Multilingual CUNY

As we dived into the literature on global language policy, we prompted students in the *Global Perspectives on Language and Education Policy* course to make connections to their local context, in particular, to the different colleges across the CUNY system. The group engaged in critical discussions around the multilingual characteristics of the student population and the way the literature situates multilingual practices. As our understanding of the phenomena evolved, we began to ‘case the joint’. We found a paucity of research around language policy and higher education. Multilingualism in higher education, particularly in the US context, has been explored predominantly through the lens of foreign languages versus English. The discursive appropriation of *foreign* perpetuates the notion that languages other than English are something that exist outside the realm of our students’ lives, that they are not organic to their history and their identities, that there is a division and an ongoing process of *othering*, and that these languages exist only within the cadre of English hegemony.

Vila and Bretxa (2014) noted this trend and assert that globalization and the commodification of knowledge are shaping the linguistic configuration of higher education, as they bring attention to medium-sized languages that have achieved the status of *lingua academica*. Their volume compares the trajectories of languages that have found a place higher education and others that have not. Their framework is a powerful lens to think through these issues and go beyond the dichotomy of English and foreign languages to understand the complex dynamisms of language policy and practices in superdiverse environments such as the CUNY system in New York City. The students in our course on language and education policy found the network of colleges a fertile laboratory to explore linguistic practices and situate different language communities at the intersection of local histories and identities.

Methodology

Over the course of the project, we grappled with the best way to grasp linguistic practices in a situated manner. Testing ethnographic techniques shed light on some of the nuances unique to

exploring language policy. How best to approach subjects and illuminate underlying policies and practices? One of the features explored was the use of oral history to outline and emphasize the intersections between language, personal history and identity. Students had a flexible repertoire of data collection techniques they used in alignment with their research questions. The process of “capturing language practices” and making them visible highlighted multiple ecosystems of linguistic ethnography, which were enriched by the diversity of the cases and contexts of each particular project. Students’ emerging awareness and methodological sensibility was a relevant pedagogical yield of the process.

Linguistic ethnography, as a longstanding tradition, has sought to develop an epistemological understanding of language and social life. Some scholars however, have noted the need to strengthen the methodological emphasis on language policy: “While theoretical conceptualizations of language policy have grown increasingly rich, empirical data that test these models are less common. Further, there is little methodological guidance for those who wish to do research on language policy interpretation and appropriation” (Johnson, 2009, p. 139). Ricento (2000) further emphasizes the need to connect micro level interaction with macro level policy, which these cases studies sought to do.

The discussions around method drove an important connection between the theoretical underpinnings explored in the classroom and the windows of analysis proposed for each case study. Methodological considerations illuminated the need to develop finer tools to envision, capture and analyze policy as it relates to multiple languages, and in particular, to capture the process of policy trickling down to language ideologies and language practice. A hybrid ethnographic approach with the use of oral history resulted in relevant pockets of linguistic intersection by winding in the interpretive approaches at the heart of the interdisciplinary nature of the class.

Pedagogical exploration

A valuable feature of the research process was the evolving connection to students’ meta pedagogical reflection. The theoretical framework and its resulting methodological approach emerged in the context of the seminar, which included 17 candidates from different disciplines, all in the humanities, working in fields connected to language studies. Four of the participants in the seminar were visiting scholars. This diverse configuration nourished the collective

interpretation of the theories and deeply shaped the work conducted. The dialogue that was established provided open guidelines for the development of the students' research questions and an outlet for students to share the progress of their data collection as their research evolved.

The pedagogical guidelines in the classroom mirrored ethnographically oriented practices and allowed the participants to carve out their methodological approach on the ground. The theories that undergirded our work throughout the course pointed to global practices and illuminated colonial legacies that shape language planning efforts today. The use of case studies provided geographical and topical considerations that enabled students to strengthen the connections they made in the field.

The use of oral history to identify language policy features gave agency to the research participants and located them at the center of the policy making process. As the articles in this volume show, participants are at the core of the sociolinguistic forces shaping language planning efforts in their communities, and as it happens in contemporary ethnographic tradition, participants developed a discursive awakening as they shared their experiences of inclusion or inclusion vis-à-vis multiple language practices.

Findings from the collection of studies point to the many challenges multilingual students face in their educational trajectory. Many of these concerns merit further questions and study, but they have provided researchers with substantial knowledge about their undergraduate population that will strongly inform their pedagogical practice. Sharing their language experiences empowers students to be more vocal about the spaces they need in order to authentically engage in language communities, position their languages, learn more about their histories, validate their multilingual identities and shape local educational policy to visibilize the many languages other than English that are spoken throughout the CUNY system. This visibility should not solely be at the curricular level, but also on the social front, including legitimizing mechanisms to counteract misconceptions around language and identity.

This special issue contributes insights on two fronts. First, it speaks to the literature on language policy and higher education by furthering our thinking around language interaction at institutions of higher education with multilingual populations. While language policy in the context of higher education institutions tends to focus on the role of English, these case studies highlight how multilingual societies host dynamic multilingual practices that go beyond foreign

language studies and are critical to our understanding of pedagogy, history and identity. These case studies also engage in methodological dialogue as we continue to think about the best ways to capture language in action through policy, ideology and practice.

Second, findings from this work make a substantial pedagogical contribution. How can they inform our practice as educators of multilingual populations in higher education? Furthermore, what we can learn from non-formal language education practices taking place in diverse pockets within our institutions of higher education? Drawing from my analysis of the works in this volume as well as my experience as co-instructor of the course, along with Ofelía García, I offer the following practical insights.

Insights from the field: harnessing multilingualism as an asset in the classroom

In the US, historical and political structures behind the embodiment of English Only discourses are compounded with theorizing that considers speakers of other languages as de facto disadvantaged. This view has been described in the literature as deficit theorizing or deficit paradigms (Carter & Goodwin, 1999). These internalized policies frame multilingual students as problems to be fixed. Salient findings from the collection of case studies highlight rich language practices and the potential for educators to develop pedagogies that draw on these languages as an asset.

As revealed in these studies findings, educators share an understanding that there is work yet to be done to better equip faculty to teach through the strengths of linguistically diverse populations. How to bring in students' background and language into the classroom? What kinds of strategies and creative processes can educators engage in? How to alleviate the stigma students feel by using their own languages? The following personal vignettes highlight students' malaise around perceived language attitudes:

"I am asked where I'm from, but I was born here..."

"I was once asked by a teacher if I spoke Egyptian..."

"People clump me together with Japanese, Korean or other..."

"In a class with focus on diverse learners, all the examples were for Spanish-speakers..."

"They focus too much on improving my English proficiency..."

“I speak four languages. I’ve never once been asked to talk about them or bring them in as a resource, and I’m training to be a teacher...”

In this context, I propose a three-pronged approach to celebrating language in the classroom: examination of our syllabus, our pedagogy and our assessment strategies. A syllabus is alive, it is also a piece of scholarship, and like language, it is performative, it portrays a stance, it can be inclusive or exclusive. *What languages have I used in the syllabus? Are my students represented, can they see themselves there? How can my syllabus harness the value of linguistically and culturally diverse students? What modifications might it need?*

In terms of pedagogy, students benefit from multiple entry-points to access content. We need a pedagogical repertoire that is in line with the learning dynamics of our linguistically diverse students. The key operation is making connections. *How is my pedagogical practice ensuring my students can access content? How am I drawing from their background and their linguistic knowledge? How do I get to know my students by drawing from their backgrounds and linguistic knowledge?*

And finally, assessment. In a context that places strong emphasis on students’ English proficiency, engaging students and educators in authentic assessment that targets content is often a challenge. *What languages can my students use in the context of an assessment? What am I assessing? How am I assessing?*

Moving Forward

The collection of studies in this volume represents dialectic possibility. They show the pedagogical potential of expanding dialogue across different divisions at the university and empowering researchers to have a say in local educational policy. The findings from this work have strong implications for institutional language policy and pedagogical practice. The studies share a common understanding of the value of multilingualism in our diverse societies and further illuminate the need to disseminate these findings to inform the work of educators and policy makers. Most importantly, these studies are paving the road to disrupt the traditional lens on language policy and higher education, for they reveal the theoretical and empirical nuances stemming from the process. Further questions around the methodological potential of these issues as well as expanding particular findings provide fertile ground for more research.

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¹ See <http://futures.gc.cuny.edu/> for more on their work.

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Kurdish Language Class in New York: A Platform for Social, Political and (Inter)personal Engagement

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Abstract

Every country that encompasses Kurdistan faces extermination efforts, meaning that the Kurdish language has found refuge mainly in exile and has been associated increasingly with the Kurdish identity and with the political struggle of the Kurdish people. The present study looks at a very special case; a voluntarily-initiated Kurdish language class that takes place in the middle of Manhattan, New York, at a prestigious public university. We conducted interviews with 3 students and the teacher of the class to understand the dynamics within and beyond the Kurdish language class, the interplay of their political ideologies, as well as the intricate process of identity negotiation through language practices. Results indicate that through the language class, people are exercising the right to a language, the right to a culture and the right of a people. Participants are challenging and resisting established relations of power and transforming the educational space into a space of freedom.

Keywords: Kurdish, diaspora, agency, language class, identity

Resumo

O Curdo é uma língua que tem sofrido tentativas de extermínio e nos vários países que englobam a região do Curdistão. Por estar fortemente associada à identidade desse povo e à luta política por reconhecimento, a língua Curda tem luta por se manter viva e tem encontrado refúgio e expressão predominantemente em exílio. O presente estudo apresenta como estudo de caso um curso gratuito de Curdo para iniciantes, ministrado no coração de Manhattan, Nova Iorque, nas locações de uma universidade pública americana. Na pesquisa foram entrevistados três alunos e o professor do referido curso de Curdo para compreender a dinâmica em jogo dentro e fora da sala de aula, as interfaces com as ideologias políticas além do processo de construção identitária e de agência dos participantes em suas práticas de linguagem. Os resultados indicam que na sala de aula, os sujeitos estão exercendo o direito à língua, o direito à cultura e o direito de um povo de construir sua identidade pelo viés da língua. Nesta dinâmica, configuram-se estratégias de resistência a relações de poder arraigadas bem como estratégias de transformação do espaço educacional em um espaço de liberdade.

Palavras chave: Língua Curda; diáspora; ensino de línguas; identidade, agência.

Kurtayî

Zimanê Kurdî disa jî ji xwe re cîh û zimênanîn li xerîbiye dîtiye. Ev xebat li vir, li dozekî gelek taybetî dinîhêre; dersên zimanê Kurdî ji aliyê dilxwesta de pêk tê li

zaningehêkî gelî yê bi nav û deng li navbera Manhattan, NY'ê. Me bi çar xwendekaran re û bi mamoste re hevpeyvîn çêkirin ji bo fêmkirina dînamîkên di nav û derve dersa zimanê Kurdî, hev têkilkirina îdeolojiya wan a polîtîk hem jî xebitinek tevlihevî dewana nasnameyî bi reya pratîkên zimanî. Bi reya hin buna dersa ziman mirov pratîkê mafên zimanekî, mafên çandekî û mafên netewîkî pêk tînin. Beşdarvan sazûna têkildariyê hêz li hember hev dîkin û li ber xwe didin û navbirî perwerdeyî bedilandin navbirî azadî.

Peyva kilîd: Kurdî, henderan, livbazî, dersa zimanê, aîdiyetî

Introduction

Kurdish is the 40th most spoken language in the world, among some 6000 to 7000 languages (Hassanpour, 2012). It has faced immense efforts of extermination and assimilation threats in every country in which Kurds reside (mainly Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria). Despite its large speaker population and territorial extension, the Kurdish language is highly dismissed in the international scholarship on language. Different dynamics play a role in this underrepresentation including, but not limited to, the oppressive policies of nation states in which Kurds live, the silencing of Kurdish activists, lack of a state or autonomous governance and the related lack of international recognition, de-legitimization efforts, linguistic heterogeneity of Kurdish varieties, the late transition of Kurdish into literature, and the division of Kurdish speakers into different geographic locations (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2012).

Despite unfavorable circumstances, Kurdish is striving to survive, and speakers are putting immense efforts into making it survive. The Kurdish language issue is important to analyze not only because it demonstrates a notable resistance against extermination efforts and monolingual nation state discourses, but also it is intertwined with the Kurdish liberation movement and has been a site of sociopolitical battle.

An informal and voluntarily-initiated Kurdish language class that takes place every Friday in the middle of Manhattan, New York City (NYC), at a prestigious public university, the Graduate Center of CUNY, offers rich material to analyze the role of Kurdish in its transnational context, and more specifically, the divergent meanings of Kurdish for different users. The language class includes learners from different social, linguistic, ethnic, political and ideological backgrounds. With our research, we aim to offer insights on the following research questions:

What makes a language such as Kurdish so essential to learners in diasporic contexts? What is its symbolic importance and relation with the Kurdish political movement from a distant reality? What different positionalities do speakers and learners from different backgrounds have in this class in relation to the language? What dynamics play within and beyond this classroom in addition to the stated purpose of learning the language itself?

By trying to answer these questions, this research is ultimately concerned with exploring two main issues. First, it aims to understand the capacity of languages such as Kurdish in areas that expand beyond language classrooms to invigorate various social and political platforms for their users. Second, this study attempts to understand how learners from different social, linguistic, ethnic, political and ideological backgrounds position themselves as pertaining to this minority language classroom. This paper also devotes special attention to the agency of language speakers and learners in language revitalization efforts in diaspora. Based on interviews with students and the teacher of the Graduate Centre of CUNY's voluntarily-initiated Kurdish language class, the study aims to discuss the complex interrelated issues around language, people's positionalities and identities, the interplay of their political ideologies and their sense of belonging. The diverse population of the Kurdish language class offers opportunities to understand the entangled relations of language, culture, politics, and the interconnectedness of these to identities and positionalities of learners.

Brief History of Kurdish Language Policy in Kurdistan¹ and Diaspora

Hassanpour (2012, p. 50) states that Kurdish is made up of at least four "geographic dialect" groups, namely: Kurmanji, Hawrami (Gorani), Sorani, and Zaza. As the author articulates, "this linguistic diversity was not perceived as a problem – in fact the coexistence of language varieties was a normal way of life – until the rise of Kurdish nationalism in the twentieth century. The dialects were not politically or socially hierarchized into, for instance, literary and spoken, standard and vernacular, official and non-official, urban and rural, or superior and inferior" (Hassanpour, 2012, p. 50). After the division of the land that was predominantly populated by Kurdish people into five different nation states in the early 1900s – Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Armenia – this linguistic diversity became increasingly complicated and the linguistic culture of Kurdish people went through a distinct transformative process in each of the countries, generally

by force and coercive measures, in addition to historical influences, naturalization into new national groups and modernization. Kurds in different countries used different alphabets ranging from Cyrillic to Arabic. Only the Sorani dialect received partial official recognition by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq. Some standardization efforts took place for some varieties, but not for all of them. Thus, Kurdish in Turkey became influenced by the Turkish language and Kurdish in Syria and Iraq was affected more by the Arabic language. Kurdish took on a literary form in some areas and remained oral in others. All these situations have contributed to the further diversification of the Kurdish language. Unity or agreement regarding the choice of one variety among others to become the standard Kurdish language is a very difficult task, and has strong political connotations, rather than simply linguistic ones (Hassanpour, 2012).

The issues relating to this diverse Kurdish linguistic landscape is also reflected in the narratives of our interviewees and is experienced as a real difficulty for teaching and learning the language in many aspects. Linguistic variety and the lack of a standard Kurdish and a common alphabet make it hard to reach all Kurdish people or to decide which variety to use, since they all have limited utility on a large geographical scale. This diversity also restricts the amount of resources available to learn each dialect, since time and energy in developing materials is divided between several main varieties. The heterogeneity of Kurdish leads to more problems than mere practical and instrumental ones. The definition of different varieties also poses a challenge for Kurds because, for the most part, language is the cornerstone of the Kurdish identity. Some linguists have claimed that some varieties of Kurdish are not Kurdish at all, but rather languages on their own, a claim very much raised and supported in State discourses in those countries where the different varieties of Kurdish are spoken. This situation has put issues of identity at the fore for some Kurdish speakers. Hassanpour, Sheyholislami and Skutnabb-Kangas (2012) have argued that some linguists have been taking a pure linguistic approach to Kurdish by claiming that each regional variety is a separate language, which disregards the social realities of Kurdish people who traditionally lived a nomadic life and developed numerous local varieties of Kurdish, while continuing to identify with speakers of other varieties.

Assimilation practices in each country where Kurds live followed similar logic and resembled each other in many ways, yet differed in their intensity, timing, and means. None of the countries where different varieties of Kurdish are spoken gave any official recognition to the Kurdish language until very late in recent history, with the exception of Iraq, albeit this

recognition had few practical implications (see below). In Syria, Kurdish people had no political recognition, whatsoever, under the Baath Party rule until 2011, when the Syrian civil war erupted. Soon after, the Kurds mobilized themselves in their enclaves, defended themselves and claimed political autonomy in northern Syria (informally called Rojava, meaning West Kurdistan). They soon launched education in Kurdish language amidst war and desperate conditions, thereby fulfilling a long held desire (Massoud, December 4, 2015). In Iran, After the Islamic Revolution, Kurdish and other spoken languages were allowed to be the medium of instruction according to the new Constitution, but were never really allowed in practice. Kurdish was allowed to be broadcast under state control and religious texts could be translated into Kurdish for the promotion of Shiite Islam (Kurds are mainly Sunni Muslims), thereby serving a pragmatic purpose of subtle assimilation rather than being a legitimate attempt to recognize Kurdish language rights and sustain Kurdish speakers' linguistic culture (Hassanpour, 1991). Since 2014, Kurdish is allowed to be used in Iran in educational institutions, though not as the medium of instruction as the Constitution originally suggested, but as a second language elective class starting from high school and college.

Iraq, as we have mentioned, represents a distinct case in its Kurdish language policy in that it afforded the language official recognition relatively early on. However, it still parallels other countries where Kurdish is spoken in terms of the assimilationist nature of its policies. Kurdish was designated as a local language in Iraq and as an official language in the Kurdistan region under the British mandate in 1931 (Hassanpour, Sheyholislami & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2012). After the formation of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq in 1992, Kurds were allowed to have mother tongue education in their region. Kurds were granted more rights over their language after the 2003 Iraq war, during which the Kurdistan region expanded, more rights were granted generally, and life conditions improved (Hassanpour, Sheyholislami & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2012).

Turkey perhaps can be described as the most oppressive among the other states in terms of the scope and severity of its assimilation policies. Turkey, similar to other states, has historically not given any official recognition to Kurdish, but is different from others in that it has forbidden any forms of expression, including publishing, broadcasting, educating, and speaking in Kurdish. The most recent constitution created in 1982, after a military coup, clearly established the abolition of prohibited languages and threatened users with legal action. Historical Kurdish

city names and landmark places were changed into Turkish names by the force of state policies (Skutnabb-Kangas & Bucak, 1995). People could not name their children in Kurdish or use Kurdish letters until very late in 2012 (Hassanpour, Sheyholislami & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2012).

The conditions in 2016 with regard to the Kurdish language across the various countries where it is spoken are minimally different from those in earlier decades; there is little to no change in the policies of States to assimilate Kurds into dominant languages and cultures. Small policy changes or slight flexibility within strict law enforcements do not go beyond the intention of balancing geopolitical sentiments and do not embrace the idea of the linguistic self-determination of Kurds. Thus, we can conclude that any current small changes are a continuation of assimilation policies with a more liberal-looking face, and they do not address Kurds' desires and their plight for representation, recognition, and self-determination.

Along with the ongoing battle of Kurds to obtain linguistic self-determination in Iran, Syria and Turkey, Kurds in the diaspora also carry out efforts supporting this endeavor. In fact, Kurds in exile have contributed much more to the literature on Kurdish than Kurds in Kurdistan; most of the Kurdish literature has been published outside of Kurdistan (Galip, 2014). This is the result of varied intersecting factors such as greater freedom of expression in exile, governmental support, a great number of Kurdish intellectuals who have been deported from their countries of origin, as well as the exposure of Kurdish intellectuals to new ideas in exile (Bruisnessen, 2000). Kurdish organizations in exile play a central role in bolstering efforts in Kurdistan and in the nation states that divide Kurdistan.

Kurdish in New York

The migration of Kurds to America is quite a recent phenomenon and both because of its small number and wide territorial dispersion around the United States, there have not been many studies conducted on this phenomenon. The number of Kurds in the U.S. is only an estimate, and no official census has ever been conducted, particularly because Kurds are classified in the national category of the nation states they are coming from (Kurds from Turkey, for instance, are registered as Turks). While the total population of Kurds is documented to be 15,361 according to the 2006-2010 American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), different sources give very different numbers. Larger Kurdish communities can be found in Nashville, Tennessee

(more than 11,000 people) (Arnold, 2015), and mainly came from Iraq in the 1970s because of Saddam's war on Kurds. There are also Kurds in San Diego (more than 10,000 people) and smaller numbers of Kurds in Georgia, Washington (DC), Minnesota, and the New England area (Abdulrahman, September, 2009).

New York City, where our research takes place, presents a distinct case both because of the small number of Kurds and because of the absence of available work on Kurdish literature and language. Be that as it may, it is surprising to find a flourishing Kurdish language class in NYC. This Kurdish language class in NYC is also special because the group is extremely diverse in terms of age, gender, faith, nationality, immigration status of participants (some are short-term exchange students, some came to learn English, some are established, and some are undocumented) and their positionality with regard to the Kurdish movement. The class takes place at a prestigious public university in the city, yet it is not part of university's official curriculum. It is quite symbolic that the class is allowed to be conducted as a voluntary activity at a university in NYC, while the right to Kurdish language education is denied in most of the Kurdish homeland and in the majority of its educational systems.

Methodology

The Kurdish Class

Kurdish people in New York and New Jersey usually know each other and meet each other at events, concerts, protests (which happen quite frequently, especially to condemn Turkey's treatment of Kurds or to demand that the U.S. help Kurds in Syria). It was during these gatherings that Kurdish people encouraged Thomas (pseudonym), an American PhD student in linguistics, who is married to a Kurdish woman and knows some Kurdish, to initiate a Kurdish language class. Thomas states that even though he is still in the process of learning Kurdish and is not as good as other Kurdish speakers in the class, he was asked to teach because of his linguistic knowledge and his knowledge of written Kurdish. With the encouragement of his students, Thomas went ahead and asked the director of Middle Eastern Studies at The Graduate Center of CUNY, where he is a student himself, to reserve a room for two hours a week.

The class started in October, 2014. Only three Kurdish people came to the first class and thanks to the help of social media and other social networks, by the time the research took place

(November, 2015), the class was hosting about 36 to 40 people. About half of the class were of Kurdish origin and the other half were from various different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, including two Turkish, one Arab, two Persian, ten American, and one Brazilian student (the number and the composition of the group is constantly changing because of its voluntary nature and temporary status in NYC of many of the participants). The class benefits from the use of social media to promote its activities. A very active Whatsapp© group offers a platform to discuss linguistic as well as political issues related to the Kurdish issue. The class holds Kurdish film screenings a few times a semester, which generally have political content. Many people, especially Kurds and Turks, have close ties beyond the class and meet each other in protests and other events. Classes are usually mixed with language activities and cultural/artistic presentations like videos, songs, and even dances. Because of the inherent diversity of Kurdish language, which not only gives form to different varieties but also borrows from other languages, like Arabic or Persian, and because people attending the class come from those different language backgrounds, the class takes the form of a babel of languages. Although adopting a standard variety, Kurmanji, as the main guiding language for the class, the teacher frequently informs and values contributions and clarifications from the students in other languages and Kurdish varieties they might know.

Our research started as part of a larger project (see other contributions to this monograph) carried out within the Futures Initiative at the Graduate Center of CUNY. Our project consisted in different qualitative studies aimed at learning more about different linguistic communities within CUNY by going beyond the statistical data provided on speakers of different languages within the CUNY system. One of the authors of this article, who is herself Kurdish and has some command of spoken Kurdish, had previously attended a semester of the Kurdish class and therefore had some additional insight. We benefited from two methods to collect the data: a classroom visit to get to know the participants and observe the classroom atmosphere, and open-ended interviews. Besides the teacher, three other informants were approached and agreed to take part in the study: a Kurdish woman, an American woman and a Turkish man, all between the ages of 25 and 30. The criteria for choosing participants were based on representing a diversity of personal backgrounds and aspirations within the class. The interviewees were selected from different backgrounds believing they would provide a wide range of experiences and ways of relating to the subject matter. We announced the project in the class and made direct contacts to

seek voluntary participation. All interviewees were asked to sign a consent form to take part in the study and their interviews were recorded upon their agreement. The protocol for the interviews with the students addressed five main points: their personal background; their relationship with the Kurdish language; their reasons for attending the class; their expectations about their attendance; and their impressions about Kurdish language policies. The protocol for the interview with the teacher covered the same themes, albeit from his perspective as the teacher. The interviews were conducted with each participant individually and each one took about an hour and a half, with both of the researchers being present. All the interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed by the researchers. Pseudonyms are given for each participant. The analyses followed a qualitative approach and the categories emerged from coding process by both researchers. As a discursive analysis, the interpretation of the participants' discourse is a dialogic confrontation between their points of view and the researchers', illuminated by the theoretical background of the study regarding the concepts of identity (Hall, 1996a, 1996b), agency (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004) and language and educational rights (May, 2012).

Introducing the Participants

Kurdish student Dilan is a 25 year-old female who suspended her university education in Turkey and came to the U.S. about two years ago for the purpose of learning English in the summer. Dilan is a speaker of Zaza, a variety of Kurdish, and she is also Alevi, a minority religious group in Turkey. She does not plan to go back to Turkey; she stated the reason to be the feeling of being a second-class citizen both in Turkey and the U.S., and since the living conditions in the U.S. are better than in Turkey, she stayed. Participating in Kurdish class, she stated, is the only moment during the week that is not open to any negotiation.

Ashley is a 29 year-old American female who works at New York University at the Center of Human Rights and Global Justice. She has always been interested in humanitarian causes and because of her interest in the Middle East, she has visited Syria, Palestine, Egypt and Turkey, spending the summer of 2015 in the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq, where she learned some Sorani, one of the Kurdish language varieties.

Deniz is a 27 year-old Turkish male student from Istanbul, Turkey. His political opinion of being leftist drew his interest in the "Kurdish liberation movement," as he describes it. He left Turkey at the age of 19 to study an undergraduate degree in Economics and Social History in

Vienna. Currently, he is undertaking his PhD in Economics at the New School, in New York. He is also interested in Kurdish music and has a deep desire to be able to communicate with his Kurdish friends in their home language.

Thomas, the teacher, is a 29 year-old male, born and raised in San Francisco, California in a monolingual family. He knows a total of 10 languages including Farsi and German. While in China, he met his future Kurdish wife, who was also studying Chinese there. His interest in learning Kurdish came only afterwards due to his desire to communicate with his wife's family. He is doing his PhD in linguistics at The Graduate Center, CUNY.

While we call non-Kurdish interviewees 'outsiders', we do not mean to suggest that they are aliens, who have no interaction with the Kurdish movement other than the language itself. In contrast, some strongly embrace or identify with the Kurdish culture, people, and the movement. We use this title simply to clarify that they do not identify themselves as Kurdish or were not raised in a Kurdish community.

Identities and positionalities reconstituted through Kurdish language class

The Kurdish language classroom serves as a ground for a wide interplay of identities, both individual and social. Following Hall (1996a, p. 4) we understand that "identities are never unified and in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions. They are subject to a radical historicization, and are constantly in the process of change and transformation". Moreover, identities are also subject to negotiation (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). Negotiation can be performed in various ways and language practices are one way to define, modify, support and challenge recurrent identities. Languages "might not only be markers of identity but also sites of resistance, empowerment, solidarity or discrimination" (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004, p.4).

The diversity of the interviewees, and of their personal, social, political and historical trajectories, projects onto the process of negotiation of their identities on the basis of language. For the Kurdish student Dilan, the Kurdish language class was a place for *reclaiming* the identity that she felt was being dispossessed by the Turkish government. She expresses her feeling of

vulnerability because of language policies in Turkey and her sense of empowerment through this language class;

You can listen to a song in that language...You have all these feelings about this language but you cannot write and read things about this language. I really feel like some part of me is missing. After I attending Kurdish class, I can defend my identity in a more professional way (2016, November 22).

Dilan also stated that if Turkey did not forbid her language and if things were not the way they are now, she might not even insist on learning literary Kurdish while she is still trying to learn English and working long hours to support herself in NYC. Despite her exhausting schedule, she feels a sense of completeness by attending Kurdish class. The more she is prevented from maintaining her mother tongue, the stronger her Kurdish identity becomes. One can see the attempt by Dilan to restore her agency through learning Kurdish better.

Deniz, our Turkish participant, recognizes the importance and interrelatedness of language and identity of a person, a group or a nation. Considering the way that his own country is using the prohibition of the language as a means to submit all Kurds to the homogenizing forces of the state, he is very well aware of the function of the Kurdish class in helping Kurdish people sustain their identity. As an outsider, his attendance in the class is an expression of his *acknowledgement* of the Kurds as an “ethnic identity” as someone from the oppressor group. Deniz expresses his attendance as a way to show his solidarity. He acknowledges Kurds’ long denied identity, and speaking as an outsider – not any outsider but as a Turk – he also expresses very clearly where he stands, “I don’t want to speak of Kurds as a Turk, like they have to do this, they have to do that” (2015, November 25). He redefines his position as a Turk in this historical and political context in relation to the political condition in his country and in relation to the *othered* group, Kurds. For Ashley, the American student, the Kurdish class is also a platform to reaffirm her identity as it pertains to the ideals of her home culture. She states:

I am so American in my understanding of freedom of expression..., you know, this is such a deep part of me... like when I think of the idea of prohibit ... like making a language... (2016, November 24).

Her “Americanness” together with her belief in the freedom of expression is reaffirmed as she attends a class to support her ideals.

Thus far, the data suggest that language-learning choices are very much tied to the process of construction and negotiation of identities, not understood as an essentialist cultural identity shared by a people through a common history or language, in a stable and continuous way (Hall, 1996a), but rather, in the sense of identities that are negotiated in a performative, transitional and contextual way (Pennycook, 2010) and that are linked to social actions, such as the decision to study Kurdish.

Interrelatedness of Kurdish Politics and Kurdish Language

The Kurdish language has historically been a battleground for different nationalist agendas of the countries that split Kurdistan up, and therefore the Kurdish language has been inseparable from politics. As has been discussed already, the underlying goals in many states' policies, with regard to Kurds, has been to exterminate the language and culture, and to assimilate Kurds into the mainstream language and culture. States' changes to their language policies have been decided after detailed calculation of their possible nationalist repercussions, and every reaction from the Kurdish side has also been embedded in freedom and liberation politics. Therefore, any cultural and linguistic move, on both sides – the state and Kurdish groups – has a political component to it. In addition, cultural and linguistic rights have been the principal demands of Kurdish political movements in all countries.

All our interviewees expressed some political and ideological reasons when asked about their reasons for attending Kurdish class, in addition to their interest in the language itself. While they saw their roles differently in this political endeavor, they were, nonetheless, articulate in stating that their presence in the class decidedly conveys a political stance, mainly in the form of opposition to the oppressive policies of the states that aim to exterminate Kurdish. Deniz, the Turkish student, is very explicit in his perception of this intricate relationship between language and politics:

I want to learn Kurdish, I want to be a part of Kurdish speaking community because this is not a neutral ground. Kurdish has been prohibited. I am standing up against this oppression and if language is one of the means of this oppression, then I am standing against that specific mean of oppression (2015, November 25).

Thomas, the American teacher, defines himself as a pragmatic person and states that partially he approaches knowing the Kurdish language for its instrumentality to form relations

with family members from his wife's side. However, he added that through time, his relationship with Kurdish has become more and more political, as his leftist ideas have also taken firmer form. Thomas pointed to the possibility of language being appropriated by State apparatus for political advantages. Therefore, he believes that every Kurd should stand by their language and try to learn it because in the Kurdish case, it is precisely the language that is being used as a means of social control. He is very knowledgeable about Turkey's policies with regard to Kurds and he states the following:

There is also a danger because the more abstract Kurdish identity becomes, then it becomes about blood and feelings, as AKP (Justice and Development Party in Turkey) has shown how that can be appropriated as a means to shut down the actual Kurdish national movement (2015, November 26)

Thomas refers to the AKP party's getting a majority of Kurdish votes in the 2002 elections when it appealed to Kurdish people and expressed acknowledgement of Kurdish identity, but yet, restricted any radical undertaking when it came to the Kurdish language.

Within Kurdish politics, interviewees paid extra attention to freedom and emancipation from oppressive regimes, both of which have been main motives of the Kurdish political movement. All interviewees perceived language as a crucial right and believed that any abuse of this right should be protested against, and their attendance in this class also served this purpose. Interviewees linked language right to the freedom of Kurdish people and pointed to both its symbolic as well as its instrumental importance. Deniz reasoned that language rights and emancipation were closely intertwined and if language was used as a means of oppression by the states, then people should treat it as a tool to fight against that oppression and stick to learning it. He stated, "...wherever you are helping Kurdish language survive is helping Kurdish people emancipate in some sense..." (2015, November 25). Interviewees were very well aware of the emancipatory power of language and their attendance was also a means to contribute to the efforts of freedom; freedom to practice linguistic and cultural rights.

Positionalities of Outsiders: From Support to Solidarity

Our four interviewees provided us with rich diversified material especially because they came from very different ethnolinguistic groups and they all have different, though in some ways convergent, positionalities in Kurdish language class. This special case enables us to see things

from different perspectives. While by no means do we want to claim that a person from a certain background is representative of his or her entire social group, we do want to draw attention to the different stances that people may take in relation to a language depending on their history with that language as well as their own political and social identity' and positionalities. As Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004, p. 20) point out, "agency and choice are critical in positioning". The American student, Ashley, adopted a supportive stance with regard to the issues related to Kurdish language and policies:

I wanted to work supporting people who were doing good during the crisis... I always wanted to be a conflict resolver and to support people who are solving conflict and to try in some way to diminish the violence in the world and so in particular with this region (2015, November 24).

Her support arises as a feature of what she has previously defined as her American identity, which holds freedom as paramount. Furthermore, identities are constructed within discourse and discourse is a product of historical, political, ideological and social constructions (Hall, 1996b). Nationalist discourses in the United States portray the ideal that Americans have a role to play in worldwide conflicts and that they can be influential in helping other countries to solve their problems. Ideologies are intertwined with those discursive practices. Deniz portrays a different stance about the Kurdish movement from Ashley. When asked if he thought his learning Kurdish would help Kurdish people, Deniz stated;

No I do not think so. Kurdish struggle is strong enough. Kurdish people do not need my help, let's not define it in terms of help but solidarity but it is not help and Kurdish people do not need my help in that sense (2012, November 25).

While Ashley defines her role as a supporter, Deniz underlines that he is just in solidarity with Kurdish people and the liberation movement.

A very striking difference between Ashley and Deniz was the ways they tried to influence the Kurdish movement. Ashley envisioned that she could help the movement by going to the Kurdistan Regional Government and helping Kurdish people themselves. She had also previously worked in an NGO in the KRG in the summer. Differently, Deniz tried to help by working in his own community. He tried to work with Turkish people, his own community, to explain to them the Kurdish movement and the historical and social realities of Kurdish resistance. Deniz states:

When I say I have a responsibility, I do not mean this is a historical responsibility on my shoulders, so on, but like I try to do my best in order to convince Turkish people. All my friends live in western Turkey and relatives mostly bought the official Turkish ideology with whom I have been discussing for years (2015, November 25).

Thomas provides a very distinct case in his positionality because while being an American, he is married to a Kurdish woman and has been immersed in Kurdish culture and language and holds strong ties with Turkey and envisions a life there. Even though we classified him as an outsider, he usually diverged from this category by using an insider language. When asked about Kurdish people, he often used the word “we” including himself to refer to Kurdish people. To explain the importance of his language class, Thomas expressed:

...the classes are limited politically, ideologically, intellectually, and linguistically by its location, but we need this, it is better than nothing. If this was not happening, all of us would be worse off (2015, November 26).

His patriotic identification with the Kurdish movement is seen in the following statement:

On the language side that's sort of my play is that I'm trying to bring people, who for various reasons, are distant and bringing them a little bit closer, push them back to where they need to be (2015, November 26).

He also illustrates this position by using a deterministic language:

Increasingly being Kurd outside of Kurdistan makes you part of the left and this is dangerous, I am leftist of course, but the thing is the Kurdish national question is politically important by itself and engagement with that has to be on the terms of Kurdistan (2015, November 26).

Despite their possible claim to American national identity, Thomas differs from Ashley because he doesn't view himself as a supporter, yet he is also different from Deniz, who despite having his own political and ideological perspective, refrains from suggesting anything explicit for Kurdish people or using deterministic language.

As mentioned previously, these differences in positionalities are not simply differences in personalities, but more so are differences in conditions, relationships, contexts, and interactions, social and political identities, realities and histories that these people bring with themselves to the Kurdish language class.

Concluding Remarks

Bonny Norton (2000) defined the term *investment* to characterize the reasons and temptations that learners might have to dedicate themselves to acquiring a language, any language other than their mother tongue. “If learners invest in a second language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital” (Norton, 2000, p.10). For all of the interviewees, the instrumental acquisition of the linguistic code is relevant as it will be the means to literacy and to a communicative social life with friends and/or within family. However, learning Kurdish is also an investment that feeds into cultural capital, which also creates a sense of collective identity.

In our aim to investigate the dynamics within and beyond the Kurdish language class, we shed light on the intricate process of identity negotiation through language-learning choices and practices. Agency and positionality are evoked by the participants’ adherence to the language class. Through Kurdish language, people are exercising linguistic rights, cultural rights and the right of a people. By coming along, people from different backgrounds, different political affiliations, and different ideological foundations, are challenging and resisting established relations of power.

Relying on Thomas’s (the Kurdish teacher’s) words:

to learn Kurdish as a non-Kurd, there is no pragmatic benefit, it is not gonna get you or you may even lose your job, you know what I mean.... (2015, November 26).

It may be true that knowledge of Kurdish is not going to get you a job. In fact, in some contexts, such as in Turkey, it might actually mean you lose a lot more than a job! But then, how can we respond to the question that Thomas himself leaves open: what reasons would someone have to learn Kurdish in NYC? As it concerns the group of students who participated in this study, the Kurdish language class is a platform for social, political and (inter)personal engagement. It has become an arena where identities are being negotiated through language learning choices and practices. It has become a space for freedom.

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The Burden of ‘Nativeness’: Four Plurilingual Student-Teachers’ Stories

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Abstract

Oral history interviews conducted with four student-teachers in Bilingual Education or TESOL studies are analyzed. Despite being deconstructed in sociolinguistics and related fields, the ‘native’ and ‘non-native’ dichotomy emerges not only as salient in participants’ self-perceptions of linguistic competence, but also in feelings of unpreparedness for full participation in the teaching profession. Alternative categories are explored, including ‘legitimate’, ‘resourceful’ or ‘bi/plurilingual’ speaker, which may act in juxtaposition to that of ‘native’, or offer emancipatory ways forward. In line with critical pedagogy, for such alternative categories to empower, reimagining how linguistic competence is constructed in the teaching profession - through the appropriation of tools to critically deconstruct ‘nativeness’ – must engage the entire educational community.

Keywords

Native/non-native, resourceful speakers, bi/plurilingual teachers, critical pedagogy, teacher education

Resumen

En este artículo se analizan las historias de vida de cuatro estudiantes participantes en programas de formación de profesorado de Educación Bilingüe o TESOL. A pesar de que la sociolingüística y otros campos afines han problematizado la dicotomía de hablante ‘nativo’/‘no-nativo’, estas categorías emergen como relevantes para los participantes en este estudio, en cuanto a las percepciones de su propia competencia y de su preparación para iniciarse en su profesión. Categorías alternativas como hablante ‘legítimo’, ‘experto’ o ‘bi/plurilingüe’ se exploran en el artículo, las cuales pueden simplemente rebatir la de hablante ‘nativo’ o posibilitar la emancipación de ella. Siguiendo los postulados de la pedagogía crítica, para que estas categorías resulten empoderadoras, en las tareas de reimaginar la competencia lingüística que se construye en el campo de la educación y de deconstruir la noción de ‘natividad’, deben involucrarse comunidades educativas enteras.

Palabras clave

Hablante ‘nativo/no-nativo’, hablante ‘experto’, docentes plurilingües, pedagogía crítica, formación de profesorado

Resum

En aquest article s'analitzen les històries de vida de quatre estudiants participants en programes de formació de professorat d'Educació Bilingüe o TESOL. Tot i que la sociolingüística i altres camps afins han problematitzat la dicotomia de parlant 'nadiu' / 'no-nadiu', aquestes categories emergeixen com a rellevants per als participants en aquest estudi, pel que fa a les percepcions de la seva pròpia competència i de la seva preparació per iniciar-se en la seva professió. Categories

alternatives com a parlant 'legítim', 'expert' o 'bi/plurilingüe' s'exploren en l'article, les quals poden servir simplement per rebatre la de parlant 'nadiu' o possibilitar l'emancipació d'ella. Seguint els postulats de la pedagogia crítica, perquè aquestes categories siguin empoderadores, les tasques de reimaginar la competència lingüística que es construeix en el camp de l'educació i de desconstruir la noció de 'nativitat' és una en la qual han d'involucrar-se comunitats educatives senceres.

Paraules clau

Parlant 'nadiu/no-nadiu', parlant 'expert', docents plurilingües, pedagogia crítica, formació de professorat

Introduction

This article examines the narratives that were co-constructed by interviewee and interviewer during four (linguistic) autobiographical interviews or oral histories. The interviews took place at City College, a senior college that is part of the CUNY system and located in Harlem. The interviewees are all student-teachers in Bilingual Education or Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) training programs at the college. Furthermore, they all share diasporic trajectories, live transnational lives and speak languages in addition to English. This research took place as part of the Futures Initiative¹ project based at the CUNY Graduate Centre and thus seeks equity and innovation in higher education. The implications of the student-teachers' subjectivities for teacher education at City College and for the education of language minoritized bilingual students more generally are explored. We ask guiding questions such as: How do the participants' bi/plurilingual repertoires, their self-perceptions of linguistic competence and their academic training tie in with their feelings of preparedness and their career goals? What educational needs do the students identify in relation to language and how are or may they be better catered for by the teacher training programs they follow? The research stems from the researchers' conviction that the linguistic and cultural diversity of a city such as New York - in which only 51 per cent of the population speaks English at home (United States Census Bureau, 2011) - is capital wasted if not invested in the construction of inclusive educational experiences allowing for diverse ways of being, knowing and doing.

The analyses suggest that despite having been problematized in sociolinguistics and related fields (see below), the 'native speaker' and 'non-native speaker' dichotomy emerges as salient for participants' self-perceptions of linguistic competence and also for their feelings of unpreparedness for full participation in the teaching profession. The still pervasive narratives of

standard language and of the ideal monolingual speaker are very real for the student-teachers we interviewed. The article also explores alternative categories, such as ‘legitimate’, ‘resourceful’ or ‘bi/plurilingual’ speaker, which, following the logic constructed in the student-teachers’ narratives, may act in negative juxtaposition to that of ‘native’, or offer emancipatory ways forward. In line with critical pedagogical approaches, we conclude that for such alternative categories to empower, reimagining how linguistic competence is constructed in the teaching profession - for example, through the appropriation of tools to critically deconstruct ‘nativeness’ - needs to engage the entire educational community, not just ‘bilingual’ or ‘resourceful’ speakers themselves.

On ‘nativeness’, ‘non-nativeness’ and alternatives for teachers and students

Despite often being taken for granted in applied linguistics and in everyday social discourse, critical and socio-interactionist scholarship has deconstructed notions such as ‘native’ and ‘non-native’ speaker. The latter is usually synonymous with ‘learner’, “a static, unchanging identity, and there is no possibility of moving from the identity of learner to that of native speaker” (Amim, 2001, p. 95). The linguistic competence that Chomsky imagined when proposing the category of ‘ideal native speaker’ continues to reify monolingualism and monoculturalism, and the competences of monolingual speakers (Ricento, 2013). The monolingual and monocultural construction of society may further be traced back to projects of colonization and to the sociopolitical construction of modern nation states, as has been well documented (e.g. Makoni & Pennycook, 2007); ‘non-nativeness’ positions one outside of the nation (Amim, 2001, p. 93). Following Martín Rojo’s (in press) discussion on Foucault’s notion of power, the ideological construction of the monolingual ‘native’ speaker as a model to be followed has become so deeply normalized that it has become embodied in our ways of doing, knowing and being. Furthermore, for Martín Rojo (in press), this model of speakerhood is one of the most powerful disciplinary mechanisms individuals face, the effects of which can be attested to in the way they tame their linguistic ‘conduct’, and in how they perceive and value their communicative competences and skills.

The ‘native’ speaker was already equated with ‘mother tongue’ speaker in the early definition of the concept (Bloomfield, 1933, p. 43), being they who provide the best model for

foreigners, who only rarely may speak as well as ‘natives’. However, it is beyond the scope of this article to provide a full review of the scholarship. Pennycook (2012) offers a critical overview of available categories that is especially pertinent to the research presented in this article. He firstly raises the point that those categorized as ‘non-native’ speakers are not often content with their ‘non-nativeness’ (e.g. to be heard with an accent) and aim to ‘pass as natives’ through ‘native-like proficiency’; thus scholarly attempts to legitimize ‘non-nativeness’ through notions such as *lingua franca* are perhaps inadequate from the perspective of language users.

Pennycook also offers a thoughtful critique on research advocating for the desirability of ‘non-native’ over ‘native’ language teachers (see Moussu & Llurda, 2008, for a comprehensive review), as institutional and student expectations often push teachers into “being something that one is not, fooling others into believing that one actually is a native speaker” (Pennycook, 2012, p. 76). Furthermore, the resources necessary to do being a ‘native’ speaker are not equally distributed in our societies. As Heller (2013, p. 189) points out, “minimally, there are some people who get to define what counts for membership to this category, and others who have to play by those rules”. As our analysis shows, membership to the ‘native’ speaker category, and the appropriate deployment of forms recognizable as belonging to the standardized, valued, national ‘language’, are not inherently tied together, while other social and racial components shape speakers’ ascriptions to it. Pennycook raises a point also made by Leung, Harris and Rampton (1997) and Amim (2001), among others, that many ethnic minority teachers are immediately categorized as ‘non-native’ speakers of the majority language because of how they look, as ‘nativeness’, as a social construct, is arguably racialized and hereditary.

Furthermore, Pennycook (2012) argues, ‘native-likeness’ is not a realistic or desirable goal for every speaker. Being able to ‘perform like a local’ is another possibility, but it continues to be relative to others and contingent on their perspective; rarely does one actually ‘pass as a local’ despite having traces of locality in their idiolect, and access to local forms presupposes certain privilege. Following Lippi-Green (1997), in the US context, even if one can eliminate accent and sound ‘local’, racism, sexism, classism, etc. may continue to disempower and exclude some speakers from passing as ‘native’. Following this discussion, Pennycook (2012, p. 99) concludes that new understandings of the issues at stake could be offered by the category of

‘resourceful’ speaker, which involves “both having available language resources and being good at shifting between styles, discourses and genres”.

In this regard, Pennycook coincides with socio-interactionist scholarship on the competence of bi/plurilingual speakers (e.g. Moore & Nussbaum, in press). According to Lüdi and Py (2009), a useful step to understanding the complexity of competence would be to replace the notion all together. They suggest instead referring to the resources available to individuals in coordination with others and the social world for the achievement of different ends. This approach “presupposes the existence of a free and active subject who has amassed a repertoire of resources and who activates this repertoire according to his/her need, knowledge or whims, modifying or combining them where necessary” (Lüdi & Py 2009, p. 159). The notion of ‘resourceful speaker’ is also in line with García and her colleague’s work on translanguaging (e.g. García, 2009; García & Li Wei, 2014; Otheguy, García & Reid, 2015).

In Amim’s (2001) study with minority female immigrant English teachers in Canada, such resourcefulness went beyond their languaging, to include their mobilization of critical and empowering pedagogies in striving to decolonize classrooms in which they were constantly judged by their students as illegitimate models of nativeness. This connects with Pavlenko’s (2003) research in which she traces in student-teachers’ narratives their reimagination of educational communities as ones in which teachers can be ‘resourcefully bi/plurilingual’, as opposed to ‘native’ or ‘non-native’. Pavlenko (2003, p. 252) frames her work within critical pedagogy, and ultimately concludes that although approaches such as the one engaged in with her own students are potentially empowering, “inequitable hierarchies are an issue that should be addressed not only within the marginalized group, but also within the profession as a whole”. Failing to engage with the majority in explorations of how ideologies of nationalism, colonialism and racism might be embedded in the way notions of ‘nativeness’ are locally deployed is not only insufficient in dealing with inequalities, but can also reproduce them (Pennycook, 2001). Pennycook (2012) argues that critical teacher development should both help to reject the ‘native’ vs. ‘non-native’ teacher dichotomy, at the same time as moves should be made to re-appropriate terminology such as ‘non-native’ or ‘bilingual’ in non-discriminatory ways. We shall come back to the pedagogical consequences of our research in the conclusions. In the following section, the research and the participants who are the focus of this article are presented in more depth.

Introducing the research context

City College is one of the major teacher education institutions in New York City. It is a part of CUNY, located in a historically black and Latino neighborhood and educates teachers at both undergraduate and graduate level. Its total undergraduate enrollment in 2013 was 15,464 students. According to the Office of Institutional Research, the majority of the student body is composed of undergraduate students and is mostly (65%) non-white, with 31% of students identifying as Latino and 25% identifying as Asian. The students collectively report over 70 languages other than English. The most spoken of these languages are Spanish, Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese) and Bengali. Furthermore, 49% of students report speaking a language other than English at home (The City College of New York, 2013; Office of Institutional Research - The City College of New York, 2015).

The university educates teachers in general education, special education, bilingual education and TESOL. The bilingual education and TESOL program offers preparation to teach emergent bilinguals in English, and in the bilingual education program teachers are also prepared to teach in Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, and Haitian Creole. According to the website “The Programs in Bilingual Education and TESOL in the School of Education prepare teachers for service in a culturally and linguistically diverse society, with the goal of developing and supporting proficiency and literacy in students’ native languages and in additional (second) languages” (The City College of New York, n.d).

The qualifications to be a bilingual education or TESOL teacher in New York State are similar in that both require either a bachelors or graduate level qualification in education in addition to passing several State certification exams (in both content and areas of specialization). The degree also requires a number of courses specific to teaching speakers of English as a Second Language, and teaching bilingually (for those in Bilingual Education).

Conducting the oral history interviews

This research was mainly based on oral history interviews (Santamarina & Marinas, 1995; Taylor Shockley, 2013) prompting extended responses in which participants produced (linguistic) autobiographical narratives (Pavlenko, 2008). We understand oral histories as a social practice, and not a mere instrument for collecting information. Thus, our data are representations of

experiences, facts, attitudes, ideologies, etc., co-constructed between interviewer and interviewees, in which meaning is negotiated (Talmy, 2010). In this case, we were interested in the participants' accounts of how they learned and used their different languages and in their trajectories as students and teachers in relation to language. We also carried out observations in order to gain familiarity with the campus to support the interpretation of the interview data.

For this study we interviewed four current students in the TESOL or Bilingual Education program with varying levels of experience working in schools. The interviewees were referred by a local professor at the institution, who chose them because they spoke languages other than English and were considered reliable. They were recruited by email. Six students were originally contacted, with four agreeing to participate. All participants were interviewed by one of two members of the research team using a set of guiding questions (see appendix); however the interviews usually flowed smoothly and categories such as 'native' or 'non-native' speaker emerged in all cases before being used by the researchers. Three interviews were conducted face-to-face and one was conducted by telephone. They were audio recorded and later transcribed by a commercial company (rev.com) using a basic annotation system, anonymized and revised by the researchers. All participants signed informed consent.

The researchers then analyzed the interviews and constructed themes and categories (e.g. Talmy, 2010) in relation to linguistic and professional trajectories. The language ideologies emerging from the narratives – or the “representations, whether explicit or implicit, which construe the intersection of language and human beings in a social world” (Woolard, 1998, p.3) – were the primary focus of our analysis. Such ideologies are co-constructed by interviewer and interviewee, given that respondents' answers are oriented to, shaped by, and designed for the questions that occasion them. We were thus sensitive in conducting the interviews and the analyses to the ideological underpinnings of the questions and to the influence of our own positionalities on what we asked, the responses we received and the way we interpreted them. Both of the interviewers were of a similar age to the interviewees and were attending PhD courses taught by the same professor as the interviewees at the CUNY Graduate Center. They were also both bi/plurilingual (Emilee uses English, Spanish, and Catalan in her daily life and Maria uses English and Spanish) and raised in English-dominant countries (Emilee in a monolingual English-speaking environment in Australia and Maria in a bilingual Spanish-English

environment the USA).

After the initial individual analyses, salient excerpts were cross-checked for accurate interpretation and selected for inclusion in this article. Our analyses was also shared and contrasted with colleagues in an informal data session. Our interpretations were triangulated and articulated using themes from current literature.

Introducing the interviewees

All of the interviewees had experienced migration to some extent; two had immigrated to the United States as adults, one as a child, and the fourth was born in the US but spent significant time in the country of origin of her parents during her schooling. All four grew up in households in which a language other than English was spoken and were participating in bilingual or TESOL certification programs. The following is a brief introduction to our interviewees, using pseudonyms:

Sara. Sara was born in NYC of Dominican parents. She grew up and went to school mainly in NYC, although she also attended one year of elementary school and university in the Dominican Republic. At the time of the interview, she was taking a pre-service training program to be a bilingual teacher. In the interview she constructs herself as a balanced bilingual in both English and Spanish, and thus an ideal bilingual teacher model. She lives and works in Washington Heights and claims to use English only at school and Spanish in the rest of her life.

Sabia. Sabia was born in Bangladesh and raised there until 4th grade of elementary school. Her initial schooling was in Bangla, although she remembers it being irregular in terms of attendance. She also started learning to read and write Arabic in Bangladesh for religious purposes. She had limited contact with English in Bangladesh. On arriving in NYC, she attended an English medium program for 4th and 5th grade, but was then put into a Spanish-English bilingual program, where she learnt both English and Spanish. She continues to use Bangla, English and Arabic in her daily life, and Spanish only rarely. She has lived in Tremont in the Bronx since coming to NYC, which she says has a large Bangladeshi community, and she has mostly worked in schools in the Bronx. She constructs herself as not having a good foundation in any language at the same time as she sees herself as very able to negotiate in contexts of linguistic and cultural diversity.

Hector. Hector was born and raised in Colombia, and came to NYC in his early twenties after losing his parents. He has worked hard to make a life for himself and to support family in Colombia. He completed the same pre-service training program for bilingual teachers as Sara, but he has refused to take the English language test that would qualify him to teach, as he does not feel like his English is good enough yet. In order to improve his level, he was registered in a TESOL graduate program at the time of the interview. Despite lacking confidence that his English is good enough to be a teacher, he does construct himself as a competent educator and speaker of Spanish. Hector has lived in different parts of Brooklyn, including Prospect Park when he first arrived and Coney Island, where he was living at the time of the interview. He had also lived in Logroño in Spain as part of a university exchange program.

Jingya. Jingya was born and raised in China and came to NYC in her early twenties, having lived briefly in Oregon with her grandparents on her arrival to the USA. She is originally from Guangdong province and her home language is Cantonese. At school, she was immersed in Mandarin and she reads and writes simplified Chinese. She learned British English at school in China. At the time of the interview, she was taking a bilingual teaching qualification, having completed her general Education degree. She was doing her teaching placement in a school in Windsor Terrace in Brooklyn with a Chinese (Mandarin) bilingual program, teaching mainly in Chinese, and she envisions herself working in a similar environment in the future. She has lived in a Brooklyn neighborhood she describes as very Chinese since arriving to NYC.

Analysis: Four plurilingual student-teachers' stories

This section is organized around the most salient themes emerging from the interviews, which align closely to those introduced in our review of the literature, constructed following our initial analyses. Only a selection of excerpts representative of these themes is presented, although mention is made to their recurrence across the data corpus.

The 'native' speaker as monolingual. As has been mentioned above, the 'native' and 'non-native' speaker dichotomy emerges as salient for self-perceptions of linguistic competence in all cases. Furthermore, the 'native speaker' category was clearly constructed in our data as a synonym of the category of 'monolingual' and an antonym of the category 'bilingual'. This following extract from the interview with Jingya is a case in point.

Fragment 1

1. Emilee: Or in the schools, how would you define the native speaker?
2. Jingya: Yeah, now that I, I, I define which is their parents they
3. speak English and when this guy or this girl was, was born
4. and she or he speaks English and, um, he or she couldn't
5. speak other language other than English. I think that's the
6. native speakers like you have only ... Like monolingual.
7. Emilee: Okay.
8. Jingya: Yeah that's it.
9. Emilee: Okay.
10. Jingya: You have like one language.
11. Emilee: So you can't be bilingual and ...
12. Jingya: Because I have the background in different countries
13. so that's why it's bilingual.
14. Emilee: Okay.
15. Jingya: Mm-hmm (affirmative), so it's a different kind of thing.
16. Emilee: So you would count yourself as a bilingual speaker?
17. Jingya: Yes.

The extract begins with the interviewer bringing up the 'native' speaker. It should be noted that this is not a category introduced by the interviewer, but one that Jingya had herself introduced into the conversation previously. Following that, the interviewer prompted her to explain the category in the context of New York, in the context of Jingya's university studies and in the context of schools, thus leading to Fragment 1. Jingya makes it clear that nativeness in English is hereditary (i.e. your parents have to be English-speakers, lines 2-4), dependent on you having a background in a country where that language is dominant (line 12) and distinct from bi/plurilingualism (lines 4-17).

The ideal bilingual teacher as two monolinguals. Only one of our interviewees, Sara, considered herself a good model as a teacher. She saw herself as bilingual and a competent user of both English and Spanish. Unlike the other three interviewees, Sara was born and raised in New York. For the other three interviewees, bi/plurilingualism was constructed as problematic for being a good linguistic model as a teacher, and their self-positioning as non-natives in English was linked to feelings of unpreparedness for participation in the teaching profession. Hector, for example, had refused to sit for the language test that would allow him to be licensed as a bilingual teacher, despite being advised by his professors and school supervisors that he was indeed ready. The following fragment was prompted by a question from the interviewer about

whether being bilingual was an advantage for Hector's becoming a teacher. His response clearly demonstrates his concern that bilingual teachers are not adequate models for children.

Fragment 2:

1. Hector: And second, is most of bilingual teachers who are English
2. native speakers ...
3. Emilee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
4. Hector: ... speaks horribly Spanish.
5. Emilee: Okay.
6. Hector: They don't know how to pronounce, they don't know how to
7. spell, they don't know how to put accents. And most of the
8. bilingual teachers that I see in ... they are Spanish, uh,
9. native, native Spanish speakers ...
10. Emilee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
11. Hector: ... they have very poor English.
12. Emilee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
13. Hector: So those students are getting a good foundation in one
14. language ...
15. Emilee: Mmm.
16. Hector: ... and only one.
17. Emilee: Mmm.
18. Hector: For those who are teachers who are English speakers, they're
19. gonna get very good English.
20. Emilee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
21. Hector: They're gonna come out with horrible Spanish.
22. Emilee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
23. Hector: Horrible.
24. Emilee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
25. Hector: And the other way, the other way around. Those students who
26. are working with, uh, Spanish native speakers who are
27. teaching both languages in the classroom ...
28. Emilee: Uh-huh.
29. Hector: ... are getting a lot of disadvantage in English ...

For Hector, it would be unusual for a single teacher to serve as a model bilingual teacher (i.e. native English speakers speak 'horrible' Spanish, lines 1-17, and native Spanish speakers speak 'poor' English, lines 18-29), whereas the model bilingual is two monolinguals in one – an idealization which arguably does not exist (Grosjean, 2010). Languages in contact are seen from the perspective of deficit – that is, as 'horrible' or 'poor' – and the same occurs with bilingual speakers who are represented as speakers who 'don't know' or are 'in disadvantage', instead of being seen as those best prepared for their professional and personal development. Under these premises, Hector may never feel fully capable of being a teacher, thus delaying his entrance into

the teaching profession. This delay due to a feeling of unpreparedness – which Hector elsewhere explains is disputed by his professors and teaching supervisors – also deprives potential students who may have similar linguistic trajectories from adequate bi/plurilingual role models.

Not just a ‘native’ speaker, but sounding like a ‘local’. Something else that becomes clear in the interviews is that being considered a legitimate speaker is not just about nativeness, but about sounding like a local, an issue raised by Pennycook (2012). Thus, for Jingya, coming to New York meant training herself out of the British English she had learned at school in China, and into US English, in order to feel part of her new city. This is one of the first points she makes in the interview, and it is raised again by the interviewer in the following fragment.

Fragment 3:

1. Emilee: Uh huh, but it's interesting that you learn the English,
2. another British variety.
3. Jingya: Yeah but now I, I'm trying to like change a little bit but
4. I'm still half like British accent.
5. Emilee: Really?
6. Jingya: Yeah, yeah.
7. Emilee: You sound very American to me.
8. Jingya: No, no, no.
9. Emilee: You sound very ... No?
10. Jingya: Sometimes when I say something, there's a, wow, you still
11. not change your, your accent?

Thus in the interview, Jingya points to self-surveilling practices and to surveillance by others (Martín Rojo, in press) not only in terms of sounding ‘native’, but also in terms of sounding ‘local’; which she explains elsewhere is important to her for speaking with students and their parents. Despite having arrived in the United States several years ago, she claims she is still trying to change her accent in order to sound more American (e.g. line 3). Encouraged by the interviewer’s lack of alignment, Jingya reveals how surveillance takes place for her and the evaluative frame to which it is associated. The interviewer, who is not from the USA, firstly implicitly does not ratify Jingya’s evaluative stance of having a “half like British accent” (line 4) and then overtly takes a stance (Du Bois, 2007) claiming “You sound very American to me” (line 7). In lines 10-11 she claims her accent is not only monitored by herself, but also by others; she asks/is asked: “wow, you still not change your, your accent?”. As we shall see in the following

section of this analysis, such linguistic surveillance is linked to a continual project of formal and informal language learning (Martín Rojo, in press).

The interview with Sara makes it clear that ‘nativeness’ in a given language does not always correlate with being ‘local’ and thus a ‘legitimate’ speaker. Not performing like a ‘local’ has very real consequences, even for ‘natives’. Prior to the following fragment, Sara, the only one of our four interviews to consider themselves competent enough in her two languages to be a good linguistic model as a teacher, had been explaining how at school in New York her competence in both English and Spanish had favored both her academic and her social performance. However, when she went to the Dominican Republic to study in high school, her variety of Spanish became a problem for her.

Fragment 4

1. Maria: So then, how did, how did language play into that dynamic?
2. Sara: Well, what happens is if you're En, if your Spanish isn't
3. perfect, if you fumble your words, um, it, you are exposing
4. yourself as a Dominican York because nobody in their right
5. mind in those days ... This is in '87. So in those days you
6. wouldn't, you wouldn't tell people that you're a Dominican
7. York. People would ask me. I would say, No, I'm not. I'm
8. just not allowed to go out. That's why you've never seen
9. me.
10. And I was lucky because I had been there in 5th grade so I
11. had friends from before. And they would lie for me and say
12. that yes, I grew up in Dominican Republic and I had never
13. been to New York. Fascinating, but the Spanish then has to
14. be perfect because if you speak with an accent, if you, um,
15. can't do any code switching, you can't do the Spanglish.
16. The Spanish really has to be on point or else they're going
17. to notice that you're not from there. The colloquial
18. language, especially, has to be perfect. And that's where I
19. would trip up, because they would say things and I didn't
20. feel what that meant because it wasn't, you know, it was
21. kind of Spanish lingo. It was a lingo between the teenagers
22. that I didn't understand.

For Sara locality was not achieved through proficiency of the standard language but rather through the use and understanding of colloquial Spanish (lines 17-18). However, this was not sufficient as she still required the legitimization granted to her by other ‘locals’ (lines 10 -13). Sara’s experiences completely counter Jingya’s assertions that sounding like a ‘local’ results in

increased legitimacy. This brings to light the idea that being a ‘local’, and/or attaining ‘local’ status, is much more complex and nuanced than the employment of ‘proper’ syntax and pronunciation. Ultimately, Sara’s experiences indicate that without in some way acknowledging your foreignness - either to the place or to the colloquialism - local status is unattainable. Sara continues in the interview to explain that her ability to function in different varieties of Spanish is an advantage for her as a teacher, as she is able to relate to her students’ parents with a repertoire that is familiar to them.

Training oneself to meet the model. In the following excerpt we return to Hector’s interview and notice the ways in which a teacher candidate’s lack of confidence in their linguistic abilities can send them on a ‘wild goose chase’, and, in Hector’s case, exclude him from the competition for social and linguistic resources, restricting his own opportunities of social mobility and success.

Fragment 5

1. Hector: And when I was graduating last year ...
2. Emilee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
3. Hector: We had to, we had to teach- I told my boss, I am not gonna
4. be teaching next year. Why? Cause when I was doing my
5. bachelor's degree, I had to wait almost one year to get into
6. two English grammar courses that I wanted to take because I
7. didn't know the language. I did that. And I'm very happy
8. because I was able to improve a lot.
9. Emilee: Okay.
10. Hector: Then, I was trying to get into other English courses that I
11. believe are very important for me, in order to be proficient
12. in the language ...

By engaging in the same kind of self-surveillance that Jingya used, Hector made the decision that he was not ready to begin his teaching career (lines 3-4) – not until he took a few more English grammar courses (lines 5-8). The ‘native’ speaker model can only be met through linguistic training and given that the focus on grammar and standard language (lines 5-7) was prevalent throughout the interviews, both of these components would be the object of formal linguistic instruction (Martín Rojo, in preparation). All of the participants placed a great deal of value on knowing all of the grammatical rules of a language before being able to consider themselves proficient speakers (lines 10-12). This emphasis on grammar is related to a view of competence as purely grammatical, and objectively measurable (by tests, for example), independently of the

prestige of the languages, uses and speakers involved. This refers to what Valdés (2001) calls the ‘instructional dilemma’, which centers teaching practices on grammar despite negative results. Furthermore, these conceptions reinforce the position of language ‘knower’ (those who have the knowledge of grammar) over speaker (those who know how to use the language). The importance of ‘knowing’ languages over speaking them has been used in institutions in the USA to keep heritage students – who might not know grammar – out of courses that precisely would give them the opportunities to acquire new features and structures of their languages.

It is important to note that although all of the participants were able to identify features and characteristics of teachers who failed to meet the model, none of the participants named a single person whom they considered to be a good, native speaker (note that we didn’t ask them to name either). Rather the models they had constructed were greatly dependent on ideas of perfection and standardization, rather than on lived experiences.

An alternative discourse: Being resourcefully bi/plurilingual. Among the students we have studied, only Sabia constructed different linguistic ideologies and values. Born in Bangladesh and schooled there and in New York, she has (at least) four languages in her repertoire: Bangla, Arabic, English and Spanish. The fact she was schooled in a Spanish-English dual program when she arrived, made her not only bi/plurilingual but also allowed her to experience languages as detached from territories and nationalities.

1. Emilee: And when you say that you mix languages, I suppose that the
2. school you also see kids do that a lot.
3. Sabia: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
4. Emilee: And, the curriculum, for example, would tell you that you
5. shouldn't be doing that. You know what I mean? The kids have
6. to learn to separate their languages. Would you agree with
7. that?
8. Sabia: I don't ... It's not harmful. It's, for me, I find it's
9. helpful. But I could, if I need to speak in one language,
10. then I am able to do that. Because I'm speaking to you right
11. now and I didn't use any language, in my language. I could
12. do that. But, so, like, for me, if you teach that to your
13. kid that they can use both language and they have, you know,
14. they're open to many language as possible, they would know
15. when to use a language, when to not use a language, when to
16. mix another language to help them better understand the
17. curriculum or anything.
18. Emilee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

19. Sabia: Or just to be friends with someone.

In contrast with the other interviewees, she admits to mixing languages, which she considers a legitimate social practice, a pedagogical resource for teaching languages and other school subjects, and a relational strategy in and beyond the classroom. To some extent, she refuses to discipline herself and her students by adopting a monolingual pattern in separate languages, and further refutes the idea that her bi/plurilingualism might be related to incompetence in speaking just one or another language. Rather, she constructs her ability to draw on different resources in her repertoire in terms of competence, what she *can* do: “I could, if I need to speak in one language, then I am able to do that. Because I’m speaking to you right now and I didn’t use any language, in my language. I could do that” (lines 9-12). Thus, as she carefully states, mixing languages is not the result of a deficit but part of the repertoire that makes her a ‘resourceful’ speaker.

Discussion

The four interviewees have brought attention to issues around linguistic nativeness as they impact students, teachers and teacher candidates. While as researchers and educators our own position is that discourses such as those produced by Sabia are the most promising, the research has demonstrated that beliefs around nativeness and some students’ lack of confidence in their own linguistic abilities are deeply ingrained. In this section we would like to explore possible ways for City College to support these students in their current trajectories while shifting the discourse for future students.

In a time of high accountability - with teachers under enormous pressure from authorities for attaining performance indicators - it is often said that we must not overlook the emotional and psychological impacts that means of accountability (often high stakes testing) have on students. The same could be said about teacher candidates, who are also at their core, students who must also face high stakes tests. The social-emotional impact of teacher certification exams must be taken into account when a student like Hector decides to postpone his entry into the field, at least partly because he questions his English proficiency even after being told by peers and educators alike that he is ready to transition into the classroom. The truth of the matter is that teaching has become an increasingly high stress profession, particularly for those who work with linguistically

and ethnically diverse youths, who are also regularly evaluated on their mastery of the English language. Given that English language arts is one of the two most heavily assessed content areas, it is no wonder that teacher candidates are concerned with sounding native in order to be the ideal teacher model.

The native speaker model and its effects on bi/plurilingual speakers is an issue that should be of concern to CUNY, particularly as it impacts the bi/plurilingual teacher candidates that are educated there. Although teacher education tends to concern itself with the history of education, policy and teaching and learning methods, perhaps they should also explicitly and critically take up the concept of teacher models. It is evident from the interviews that the students within the TESOL and Bilingual Education programs at City College would benefit greatly from presentations of alternative models of speakers. These models could be presented in a myriad of ways: by highlighting the linguistic diversity of the faculty, by pairing students with linguistically diverse classroom teachers for observations and student teaching, and lastly by providing a space in which linguistically diverse teacher candidates can discuss their concerns around the ideal teacher model and also present the benefits of having linguistically diverse teachers in the classroom.

From a critical pedagogy stance, it is imperative that teacher candidates like Sara, Jinya, Hector and Sabia, *together with their monolingual peers*, learn to question models of nativeness not only to benefit themselves but also in order to benefit their students and the teaching profession. Teachers with diverse linguistic backgrounds are needed in the classroom because they model possibility for students who are also part of a language minority and diversity for those who are not. Teachers with diverse linguistic backgrounds also have the capacity to nurture the profession by offering a counter-narrative to the discourse that implies that nativeness and locality are more valuable than being able to present and live one's truth.

Institutions should develop a culture that values, supports and maintains the linguistic diversity across its graduates. More specifically, for bilingual and multilingual education teacher education programs to be true to their missions of valuing, supporting and maintaining linguistic diversity, they must first start with their own students.

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Appendix

Interview prompt

Personal trajectory

We'd firstly just like to know a bit about you.

What do you do right now? (study, work,...)

Where do you live (and work, if not a student at City College or if they have employment as well)?

So, were you born in NY?

If not, what brought you here? Who did you come with?

Where else have you lived / worked?

Where do you feel like you are from?

Are you in contact with people in other places? How do you maintain that contact?

Linguistic trajectory

Could you tell us what languages you know? (e.g. written Chinese - simplified, traditional?)

How / where did you learn / start using those languages?

Do you still use your different languages (when, where, with whom)?

Can you remember what languages were present in your surroundings growing up (family, neighborhood, friends)?

Can you remember what languages were present at your schools? What was their status? What was your experience as a student - do you remember it being bilingual or monolingual?

Did your language practices differ from the standards expected in school?

Do you think that your experience of your languages is similar / different to the experiences of your students / future students?

Teacher trajectory

What made you want to be a bilingual teacher?

What did you expect of your teacher education, especially in terms of the languages that you would be exposed to?

So, have these expectations been met? What languages are / were present in your education here (in your courses, amongst your peers, etc.)?

Are / were all languages valued equally in your program? Why/not? Are you ok with this?

What about the requirements for joining bilingual teacher education programs or other programs in language teaching? Have these requirements been an obstacle / opportunity for you?

And when you go / went on school placements, what type of linguistic diversity do / did you see at the schools, in your classrooms, in the neighborhoods you are going to?

Does / did your teacher education prepare you for the linguistic diversity you are experiencing?

What differences or similarities are you observing now as a teacher in terms of your own experiences of languages in elementary or secondary school?

Native/non-native subjectivities

Who would you define as a native speaker of x, a bilingual speaker, a good speaker, ...?
Has anybody ever questioned your competence? What happened? How did you react?
Has knowing more than one language ever been an obstacle or an advantage for you?

In terms of the future

How do you imagine the future in terms of language in society in general? Will linguistic diversity be more or less valued?
And in schools?
What do you think your role will be in this as a teacher?
Do you think you will be / have been prepared as a teacher for the future that you imagine?

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From Marginality to Mattering: Linguistic Practices, Pedagogies and Diversities at a Community-Serving Senior College

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Abstract

The cultural diversification of colleges and universities which initially targeted the needs of a specific minoritized group raises questions concerning the inclusion of every individual and the maintenance of the advances which have been made for the original population. This paper provides insight into the challenges and merits at the intersection of linguistic and racial/ethnic diversification within CUNY's Medgar Evers College. Historically tied to the Black Campus Movement, the college is committed to being an agent of social transformation for the surrounding community. Aiming to understand the perspectives on language and diversity of the key stakeholders at the college, a number of semi-structured interviews were conducted. In terms of linguistic diversity, we found that there is tension between the adherence to the belief in an idealized 'Standard English', and the acknowledgement and support of linguistic variation. Regarding the college's racial and ethnic climate, a perception of exclusion among non-black students of color became evident. Existing concepts as well as promising attitudes and practices among participants indicate some ways that could encourage all students to move from the margins to the center. We suggest that educators, administrators and staff at Medgar Evers should encourage dialogue and cooperation between linguistically and ethnically diverse students, both in and outside the classroom. At the same time the safe and empowering space for black students should remain intact. We also claim that further theorization of the diversification of predominantly non-white institutions is needed.

Key words: Historically black colleges and universities, campus diversification, linguistic ideologies, racial/ethnic climate, inclusion

Zusammenfassung

Die kulturelle Diversifizierung von Colleges und Universitäten, die auf spezifischen die Bedürfnisse von Minderheiten ausgerichtet sind, wirft Fragen nach der Inklusion jedes/jeder Einzelnen bei gleichzeitiger Bewahrung der Errungenschaften der ursprünglich adressierten Gruppe auf. Dieser Artikel gibt einen Einblick in die Herausforderungen an der Schnittstelle sprachlicher und „ethnischer“ Diversifizierung am Medgar Evers College der City University of New York. Das College steht historisch dem *Black Campus Movement* nahe und versteht sich als Motor sozialer Gerechtigkeit in der umliegenden Nachbarschaft. Durch eine Reihe von Interviews mit den Hauptakteuren des Colleges gewannen

wir einen Eindruck vom Umgang mit Diversität. Hinsichtlich sprachlicher Diversifizierung besteht eine Spannung zwischen dem Festhalten an einem idealisierten „Standardenglisch“ einerseits, und andererseits der Anerkennung von sprachlicher Vielfalt. Außerdem zeigte sich, dass einige Studierende of Color sich von der Mehrheit der Schwarzen Studierenden ausgeschlossen fühlten. Bestehende Konzepte sowie vielversprechende Einstellungen und Praktiken unserer Befragten lassen Wege erkennen, wie alle Studierenden inkludiert werden können. Wir empfehlen, dass Pädagog*innen und (Verwaltungs-)mitarbeiter*innen innerhalb und außerhalb des Unterrichts Dialog zwischen sprachlich und „ethnisch“ diversen Studierenden anregen sollten. Zugleich sollte jedoch der geschützte und empowernde Raum für Schwarze Studierende beibehalten werden. Weitere Konzeptualisierung der Diversifizierung von mehrheitlich Nicht-Weißen Institutionen ist erwünscht.

Schlüsselwörter: Diversifizierung von Universitäten, sprachliche Ideologien, „ethnische“ Beziehungen, Inklusion

Resumen

La diversificación cultural de universidades dirigidas en sus orígenes a las necesidades de una minoría provoca preguntas acerca de la inclusión de cada individuo mientras que se mantengan los avances logrados para la población original. Este artículo investiga la intersección de la diversificación lingüística y racial en Medgar Evers College de la Universidad de la Ciudad de Nueva York (CUNY). Históricamente conectado al *Black Campus Movement*, la institución está comprometida con ser un agente de la transformación social en la comunidad de Brooklyn. Para comprender las diferentes perspectivas sobre lengua y diversidad, entrevistamos a algunos representantes de los principales grupos de la universidad. Acerca de la diversificación lingüística se mostró una tensión entre la convicción de que existe un inglés normativo o ‘ideal’ y el reconocimiento de la variación lingüística. Con respecto al clima racial y étnico, se manifestó una percepción de exclusión entre estudiantes de color que no se identificaban como negros. Conceptos existentes así como las buenas actitudes y prácticas entre los participantes prometen caminos que podrían apoyar a todos. Sugerimos que educadores, administradores y empleados en Medgar Evers deben fomentar el diálogo entre estudiantes diversos, tanto en las aulas como fuera de ellas. Al mismo tiempo, se debe mantener el espacio seguro y la atmósfera de empoderamiento creado para los estudiantes negros. También recomendamos más conceptualización teórica sobre la diversificación de instituciones no-predominantemente blancos.

Palabras claves: Diversificación de la educación universitaria, ideología lingüística, clima racial, inclusión

“In our lives we all fluctuate from mattering to—marginality to mattering. ... So everybody feels marginal at different times in your life. ... So the positions that I’ve been in, my whole thing is understanding. How I move my students, or how do I move individuals who feel marginal to mattering? ... That has been my life’s work. ... Because every human being, I don’t care who you are, what you do, needs to feel like they matter.”

- Gladys Palma de Schrynemakers

Introduction

As part of an ongoing oral history project through the CUNY Futures Initiative, the authors of this article set out to conduct a series of interviews regarding the linguistic experiences of students, professors, and staff at Medgar Evers College¹ in Brooklyn, New York. Through this research opportunity, we hope to give our participants a space to voice their interests and experiences and encourage them, as well as our readers, to think critically about how diversity is being managed at Medgar Evers and in educational institutions in general in order to work towards more inclusive pedagogies.

Throughout the oral history interviews conducted, however, students, professors, and staff shared more than their linguistic experiences. They also shared stories regarding race, ethnicity, identity, marginalization, change, tension, and solidarity. Founded at the end of the Civil Rights era and in the spirit of the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU), Medgar Evers has an historic commitment to serve populations previously excluded from higher education and to cultivate the cultural and academic development of its students and communities (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998; Medgar Evers College, n.d.b). Although the institution’s historical legacy of “educate to liberate” permeates throughout the school, broader developments often embedded in the political economy pose challenges to its strong sense of “Medgar Identity” based on African American and Afro-Caribbean experience and history.

Immigration, community (re)organizing, campus infrastructural developments as well as the standardization of education - noticeable in increasing unification across CUNY campuses - have attracted more non-black students of color² to Medgar Evers, who often also come from underrepresented and disadvantaged backgrounds. Confronted with the restructuring of student enrollments and the voiced concerns of those who have been a part of the school for quite some

time, though not completely integrated (i.e. Latin@ students), the school has had to address the experiences, language use, needs, and attitudes of a wide range of English speakers and speakers of languages other than English. Based on the interviews we collected we found that there are certain discrepancies between the college's commitment to social transformation and reality. Especially among students who do not identify as black, one common notion seems to be a sense of exclusion from the college community. Therefore, one of Medgar Evers' biggest challenges is to operationalize and bridge the gap between its emancipatory goals and everyday practices. The main question we attempted to address after conducting the interviews was: How can the institution employ pedagogies that support and value every student, irrespective of his or her race, ethnicity or language, while maintaining its legacy of the Civil Rights Movement and focus on Afrocentrism (Ippolito, 2007; Hurtado et al., 1998)?

While this article focuses on the case of Medgar Evers College, many institutions with similar historical legacies and demographics are facing the same challenges (Oguntoyinbo, 2015). Our exploratory study therefore also aims to generate questions for further research and to contribute to a broader conversation about the interconnections between differences and inequalities in higher education, including those that relate to gender, class, ethnicity, language, and the diversity of identities and positionings in the classroom (Ippolito, 2007, p. 752).

The first section of this paper will provide some background on the school, its demography and its history. Although this section mainly draws from information the college has published, it will also include quotes from our interviews to provide insights and illustrations of the school that the official data does not offer. It will then introduce the research methodology and interviewees and give a brief introduction to the theoretical concepts that informed our research. The second part of the paper will address the linguistic practices and pedagogies revolving around language at the college. It will focus on the coexistence and the (de)valuation of the different varieties on campus and in the classroom, the need to teach and learn 'Standard English' while still viewing students' linguistic repertoires as resources, as well as the challenges this poses for educators. The last section of the paper will take into consideration Medgar Evers' racial and ethnic diversification.

Medgar Evers and Crown Heights

Medgar Evers College is a four-year senior college located in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, a predominantly black neighborhood and home to a large Caribbean community. The college was founded in 1969 in response to demands from the central Brooklyn residents and community-based organizations' desire for a local public college that would emphasize a strong commitment to the neighborhood (Medgar Evers College, n.d.a). The college's "sense of commitment and service to the community" is directly attributed to the multi-faceted roles representatives of the local community have played in its establishment, growth, and development. Named after the martyred civil rights leader Medgar Wiley Evers (1925-1963), the college hopes students and faculty will continue to be motivated by his contribution to "the cause of human freedom and dignity" (Medgar Evers College, 2013). It is Medgar Evers' aspiration to serve its predominantly black community and "educate to liberate." This mission must be positioned in the context of the Black Campus Movement and Black Studies Movement, two of the many movements that together comprised the Black Power Movement during the Civil Rights era. The nationwide struggle for Black Studies sought to introduce the Black Studies discipline into K-12 schooling and higher education (Rogers, 2012, p. 21-22). The objective of the Black Campus Movement was to create "Black Universities", educational institutions governed by blacks that educate black students about their experience from their perspective and give them tools to advance themselves and their communities (Rogers, 2012, p.22). Today, with over 87% of its student population self-identifying as "black"³ (CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Advancement, 2015), the legacy of the Black Campus Movement is visible in many aspects of Medgar Evers's mission, past and present. Some of the college's present goals are described as follows:

to serve the Central Brooklyn community which is comprised of students with diverse educational, socio-economic, political, cultural and national backgrounds; to improve students' understanding of self, past, and present societies...by providing its students with a liberal education which communicates the knowledge of tradition...and the beauty and profundity of their cultural heritage; and to prepare students to be energizers of change or change agents in the community. (Medgar Evers College, n.d.b)

This mission translates into the curricula as well as into the college's identity. Our interviewee, Martina, for instance emphasized: "At Medgar, the openness to speak out even if people disagree with you, that's something I really appreciate and I think it comes from the social protest and the civil rights experience deeply rooted in the institution, you know this right to express your opinion."

As it is Medgar Evers' pronounced aim to serve an "underserved" community, it maintains an open admission policy, which only requires students to possess a high school diploma or General Educational Development (GED) equivalent. In 2014, more than 90% of all applications were accepted and two thirds of the students received financial aid (Bailey, n.d.). The students we interviewed mentioned the support they received during the application process and the financial aid consulting available.

Thanks to its commitment to social mobility, it can be said that Medgar Evers offers quality education to groups who historically had, and continue to have, more difficulty accessing higher education. It is especially remarkable that it challenges the normalization of whiteness in American educational institutions (Banks & McGee Banks, 2012) by placing the African American experience at the center.

Despite the understanding of Medgar Evers as a black institution, it is not entirely segregated. According to CUNY's enrollment statistics there are currently just over 12% of students at Medgar Evers who do not identify as black. The largest ethnic group among them are Hispanic students (7.6%); the percentage of white students remains very small (1.9%) (CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Advancement, 2015). The staff members who have been at the college for a longer period of time have observed a slow racial diversification. John and Gabriela, two more of our interviewees, agreed that the faculty is undergoing a comparable process and highlight the increasing number of Asians and Latin@s among the faculty.

The growing heterogeneity of Medgar Evers is driven by changes within the school, but is also linked to economic and demographic changes in the wider community, which are connected to broader political and economic developments. On the level of the institution itself, Medgar Evers' new president is mentioned to be giving the college a new direction. According to staff

members, the college's reputation has changed and attracted students from China, India, Russia, Latin America, and elsewhere. They described the construction of Medgar Evers' new science building and new library as initiators of change, which improved the college's physical attractiveness. In addition, Crown Heights, the neighborhood where Medgar Evers is located, and the entire borough have changed demographically due to immigration and gentrification in the last decades (Furman Center, 2015). Our interviewees who witnessed these developments over a longer period of time did not parallel the changes of the neighborhood to those in the college. But respondents agree with broader studies on the changing face of Brooklyn, which have found that the area is perceived safer and hence become more accessible (City of New York, 2016). Another factor that drives change at Medgar Evers is the increasing standardization of higher education. In the context of the broader CUNY system, the unification that is occurring through the "Pathways Initiative" may be a response to effects of neoliberalism on institutions, particularly the increasing application of entrepreneurial business strategies onto public universities (Holborow, 2015).

As will be shown throughout the article, the linguistic, racial and ethnic diversification of Medgar Evers can negatively affect the campus climate and the sense of belonging of students who see themselves in a minoritized position within the college community when not met with teaching strategies that encourage student voice and enhance students' critical understanding as global learners (Ippolito, 2007, p. 752).

While Medgar Evers has never been a college solely attended by black students, changing demographics and standardization in education are likely to continue and further diversify the student population of a college that is situated in a borough that is home to people of many different ethno-linguistic groups. Therefore, it is important to engage in a critical conversation about the challenges that the original focus of the college poses to the maintenance of a truly inclusive and empowering educational space for all students. This article aims to contribute to this discussion.

Methods

As part of the CUNY Futures Initiative project, one of the main goals of our project was to collect qualitative data on CUNY campus linguistic experiences in order to supplement the quantitative data available regarding the different languages spoken on each campus. As an extension to this, our project aimed to facilitate, and report on, an indirect dialogue between students, faculty, and administrators at Medgar Evers to inform pedagogical development (Ippolito, 2007, p. 752). The approach here has been to conduct an exploratory case study of individuals' unique linguistic ideologies and experiences at the college through linguistic biographies and oral histories of those who have witnessed developments in the college and surrounding neighborhood. Interviewees were chosen through a combination of snowball sampling and convenience sampling. We strived to gain broader insights by selecting interviewees in different positions at the college - students, administrators, staff, and professors - as well as persons from different linguistic and ethnic positionalities. Although we aim to highlight diverse voices from across the campus, it does not lie within the spectrum of this study to make representative claims about the school population.

This study centered on eleven interviewees: one administrator, two staff members, three professors, and five students. For all participants, except the administrator who explicitly stated her desire to be named, we have assigned them pseudonyms. The administrator, Gladys Palma de Schrynemakers, is Medgar Evers' new Vice President and Associate Provost. Our three staff members, Jian, Mihir, and John, two professors, Gabriela, and Martina, and five students, Kalisa, Adilene, Sanya, Salmah, and Adah, all come from a multiplicity of backgrounds with diverse linguistic repertoires. We captured their perspectives in semi-structured interviews that took place in staff offices and the college's cafeteria and lasted between 20 minutes to one hour. Two of the interviews were focus-group conversations that each included two students. In addition to our interviews, we also utilized online testimonials of Medgar Evers' Latin@ students from the website of the Association of Latino American Studies (ALAS)⁴. Responses from all of our participants and sources offered rich insight into school policy, practice, and interactions, and highlighted different linguistic, racial/ethnic, and pedagogical ideologies, social relations, and

cultures. We are aware of and have reflected on the structural concerns with the interviews, namely the place, time, setting, presence of interviewers and recorders, purpose of the interview, set of specific questions, as well as our own linguistic conventions, cultural assumptions, and identities that impact our ontological positionings, questions, and responses (Ippolito, 2007, p. 752). We are aware that our presence might have constrained some narrators' comfort, and that the setting and context of the interviews might have hindered some from saying more, or contrarily may have pressured some into saying what they felt they "should" or "must" say (Shopes, 2002). Although several of our questions focused on linguistic experiences, each interview was shaped by other factors inextricably linked to linguistic issues, such as race and ethnicity. Specifically, we asked questions regarding biographical information, relationship to the college, linguistic and educational background, and community and school outlook. It is our goal to inform pedagogical practices, address both questions and solutions regarding the maintenance of an inclusive working and learning environment that merit the attention of Medgar Evers and the wider CUNY community, and help higher education "achieve its responsibility for advancing social progress" (Hurtado, 2007).

Before the research results are presented in more detail, we will briefly touch on key concepts that have informed our analysis.

Theoretical Backdrop

For assessing the linguistic landscape of Medgar Evers, we have gained much from the concept of language ideology. According to Blommaert, it "stands for socially and culturally embedded metalinguistic conceptualizations of language and its forms of usage" (2006, p. 241). It is particularly useful because it permits relating communicative practices and beliefs in the college to "considerations of power and social inequality" and broader "macrosocial constraints on language behavior" (Woolard, 1998, p. 27). In addition, the notion of "translanguaging" aids in our analysis of the various language practices and ideologies we observed at Medgar Evers. Originally conceived of in Welsh by Cen Williams, and further advanced by Ofelia Garcia and Li Wei (2014), translanguaging postulates that "bilinguals have one linguistic repertoire from which they select features strategically to communicate effectively and takes as its starting point the

language practices of bilingual people as the norm, and not the language of monolinguals” (Celic and Seltzer, 2011, p. 1).

In terms of the college’s racial/ethnic climate, our analysis is informed by the notion that “perceptual differences of college experience” matter because they can strongly affect an individual’s attachment to the institution and academic success (Hurtado et al., 1998). Hence, we consider it important to give a voice to the experiences of underrepresented students and to take their concerns seriously. We will analyze the perception of the racial climate at Medgar Evers by non-black students of color with the help of Smedley, Myers, and Harrell’s (1993) concept of “minority stress status”, which maintains that underrepresented groups experience psychological stress that negatively affects their academic achievements. In addition, we draw from Sylvia Hurtado’s extensive scholarship on racial/ethnic diversification in higher education (1998, 2007). Hurtado and colleagues emphasize the range of advantages of campus diversity and suggest that institutionally facilitated inter-group communication and interaction contributes to a positive campus climate, hence minimizing feelings of marginalization (1998, p. 294).

These frameworks can inform and help Medgar Evers and other CUNY campuses work towards a more inclusive education. Yet, taking into consideration that conceptualizations of campus diversification usually concentrate on predominately white institutions and being aware of our own positionalities as an external all-white team of researchers, we do not aim to suggest that these concepts should be directly transferred to Medgar Evers, but we want to point to elements within them, which can encourage dialogue and development of educational policies at the college. More importantly, we seek to highlight already existing positive practices at Medgar Evers - actions of individuals and groups which deserve more attention and could become examples for further valuation of the college’s racial/ethnic diversity.

The Linguistic Landscape at Medgar Evers

Of the eleven participants interviewed, ten stated that they were multilingual. This attests to the remarkable linguistic diversity at Medgar Evers. Below is a table containing the linguistic repertoires and school positions of each interviewee.

Table 1: Interviewee Linguistic Repertoires and School Positions

Interviewee (Pseudonym)	Position at ME	Language(s) Spoken
Gladys	Administrator	Spanish (Cuba), English
Jian	Staff	Cantonese, Mandarin, English
Mihir	Staff	Bengali, Hindi, Urdu, English
John	Staff	English, Jamaican Patois (formal)
Gabriela	Professor	Spanish (Colombia), English
Martina	Professor	Spanish (Spain), French (unspecified), German, English
Kalisa	Student	Jamaican Patois (community dialect), English
Adilene	Student	English, Turkish
Sanya	Student	English, Syrian Arabic
Salma	Student	English
Adah	Student	English, Spanish (Colombian), Egyptian Arabic

Due to the complex and controversial status of many languages, surveys and other quantitative studies often overlook important details. Additionally, a survey that only recognizes standardized languages would ignore as much as half of these languages. Yet participants readily discussed similarities, differences, and conflicts across related varieties. Furthermore, many of these languages were not encountered through direct questioning, but were revealed as participants shared their stories.

A recurring theme across the interviews was the changing linguistic landscape at Medgar Evers. Although linguistic diversity is widely viewed as an asset, it does not come without problems. Gabriela and some of her colleagues have struggled to find a balance between accepting and promoting language diversity and preparing students for the world outside of college. The professors' struggles can be explained within the framework of language ideology. Blommaert argues that language use is ideologically stratified and regimented (2006). The distinction and hierarchical positioning of different languages or language varieties is embedded in broader power structures in society (Blommaert, 2006). A particularly powerful construct is the notion of a 'standard' as the variety that is most highly valued. Standard Language Ideology

is "a bias toward an abstract, idealized homogeneous language, which is imposed and maintained by dominant institutions and which has as its model the written language, but which is drawn primarily from the spoken language of the upper middle class." (Lippi-Green, 1997, p. 64). In contrast to this abstract ideal, linguists agree that variation is intrinsic to all spoken language (Tollefson, 2000).

The professors we interviewed do not necessarily recognize Standard English as the 'best' variety. But cognizant of society's dominant language ideology, they are facing a conflict – if they do not insist that students learn Standard English this may impact their career after graduation. This reflects Tollefson's argument that language ideology can determine who has access to resources (2000). Both Gabriela and Martina noted that students who are aspiring to be ESL teachers are expected to be excellent Standard English users. In addition, Gabriela repeatedly expressed her internal conflict between wanting to affirm her students' language varieties, but at the same time believing that emergent English and non-standardized English speakers need to achieve proficiency in Standard American English.

Gabriela is not alone in her conflicting ideologies and she believes that many of her colleagues are not even aware of their biases against students who do not conform to the standard. Instead, practices are exacerbating "linguistic micro-aggressions" (Charity Hudley & Mallinson, 2013) against minoritized populations. Such acts are not only perpetrated by educators onto students, but also by students onto others. Salma, a student, reflected on her experience with professors: "Professors with heavy accents I hate. You get Chinese, African accents from staff...One professor's Chinese accent is so heavy. You ask him 'What?' and he's so rude." Salma's pejorative perception of non-standard and non-native English appears to reproduce the dominant language ideology in the U.S. and its educational institutions. In order to challenge hegemonic conceptions of language quality, value, status or function (Blommaert, 2006) professors should be both teaching and showing tolerance for language variation early and often. In this way, students who encounter differences will not see barriers to comprehension but opportunities for expanding student-teacher dialogue.

In a country where university education is a major factor in upward mobility, colleges serve as gatekeepers, preventing access to knowledge and class advancement for those who do not assimilate to ethno-linguistic norms. In one statement written on the Medgar Evers Association of Latin American Studies (ALAS n.d.a) webpage, a student named Stephanie wrote: “Because of my Latino accent, and because most of the time I make grammatical errors when I speak, one of the professors... treated me as if having an accent and making errors is unacceptable....”. Stephanie’s experience highlights the challenges expressed by Gabriela. In many classes at Medgar Evers, students’ knowledge and quality of work are judged not based on how they work, but on how they speak.

It is disingenuous to expect students to respect the linguistic diversity of their peers when this diversity is not tolerated in the classroom. If failure to attain a particular linguistic standard prevents students from participating in discussions, or from reaching crucial benchmarks, such as passing classes or obtaining a degree, people are inevitably going to associate minoritized languages and non-standardized Englishes with failure and lack of education. This kind of banking model of education, as Freire calls it (1970/2000), in which students are treated as containers in which to deposit knowledge, rather than participants in knowledge production, puts students in a position where they must decide between denying a part of their identity and denying their right to an education. Flores and Rosa (2015) argue that when a minoritized speaker speaks, their language is often racialized regardless of how accurately it reflects the language standardized by white middle-class speakers. This reflects Gladys’s sentiments about the minoritization of her English as a student: “...in high school a nun said to me, ‘really? English is your second language? You speak so well!’...Does it scar you? Absolutely. Does it tear at you? Absolutely.” Such racialization of language reinforces hegemonic power structures by making it difficult for minoritized individuals to escape both personal and educational evaluation of their ethno-linguistic backgrounds. Whether through the outright denial of a person’s language or small, yet hostile micro-aggressions, acts against a person’s language are acts which censor a person’s right to free speech.

Dominant language ideologies clearly impacted teaching at Medgar Evers and the attitudes towards linguistic diversity of our research participants. But we also observed individuals who resisted those ideologies - professors who employed empowering pedagogic strategies and attempts to increase the college's valuation of linguistic variation by its decision-makers.

During an interview with Kalisa, a friend mentioned that Jamaican Patois, which they both spoke, was broken English. Kalisa responded: "My language is not broken. It's Patois. If you say it's broken, that means there's something wrong with it, and there's nothing wrong with it." Her favorite professor, Mr. Smith, assigned an article about the complexity of World Englishes, encouraging her to assert the validity of Jamaican Patois. Kalisa feels like her experience at Medgar Evers has been positive, in part because of the respect her teachers have shown students. Professors such as Martina are aware that multilingualism is an asset. On classroom diversity, Martina reported: "You cannot avoid it...I have these students from Nigeria and they help each other, and you cannot prevent people from using their own languages." Educators such as Mr. Smith and Martina clearly see no problem with teaching from a heteroglossic perspective, that is, by "embracing the multifaceted and multilayered plurality which [...] is inherent in living language" (Busch, 2014, p. 24, see also Bakhtin, 1981). They both discuss the importance of translanguaging and incorporate it by encouraging multilingualism during classes. Critical pedagogues at other institutions have engaged in similar linguistic practices. bell hooks, for example, regularly uses her African American English in the classroom, and she encourages her students to speak in their other languages (1994, pp. 172-175). She argues that hearing words in other languages gives students an opportunity to reflect on ambiguity and to hear language without owning or possessing speech through interpretation.

At Medgar Evers, positive attitudes toward language extend all the way up to the administrative level. Gladys affirms that multilingualism provides people a more complex perspective of cultures. Although new to the institution, she grew up in Brooklyn and has worked in education for over two decades. She plans to change educators' perspectives about emergent English learners: "Being an English learner doesn't mean that they're poor writers. It means that

their structure is different. So then instead of saying, ‘...you don’t know how to write English,’ maybe creating projects that understands and supports language learners.” Having taught and researched bilingual education, she views language learning and writing development as two related, but distinct processes. Gladys views the frequent confusion of the two as an opportunity for teachers to learn and for the university to reframe its position.

Bridging the gap between the racial/ethnic diversification of Medgar Evers and its black identity

The small but considerable number of non-black students at Medgar Evers primarily belong to groups that have also historically been underrepresented in higher education and are thus in a minority position both in U.S. society and in the college. Non-black students of color and their advocates among the staff both implicitly and explicitly addressed the racial climate on campus. In doing so, some revealed a feeling of not belonging to the community, and a notion of lacking estimation for their cultural heritage as well as their political struggles. Given the frequency and the content of this theme coming up, as well as the intersections between racial and linguistic diversity, we chose to take the challenges of racial and ethnic diversification at Medgar Evers into account in our analysis, although it was not initially part of our research agenda. Based on the material we collected and testimonies written by members of the college’s Association of Latin American Students (ALAS), this section will give voice to the narratives of non-black students of color. Drawing from research on diversity in institutions of secondary education, we then discuss the need to value ethnic diversity in order to give every student adequate support. We suggest that this aspiration should not be understood as a threat to the college’s identity or in contradiction with its importance as a space that puts the black experience and black history into the center. We also claim that the diversification of predominantly non-white institutions is a challenge that needs more scholarly attention.

Our attention was first drawn to this issue in noting that both of the non-black students we interviewed mentioned a certain discomfort with their college experience. Sanya, who is in her last year at Medgar Evers, stated that she had very little positive associations with the college and that her overall experience was bad. Adah remembered how she asked herself throughout the first

year: “Is this school really for me?” She also mentioned that she usually goes “right back home” after class, without participating in clubs or socializing with other students. While both of them refrained from explaining in more detail why this was, possibly because both interviews were done in racially mixed group settings, one interviewee⁵ addressed the issue much more directly. According to them, Latin@ students at Medgar Evers “feel isolated because the college as a whole is afrocentric So that's not their experience.” They also recall how some students who wanted to speak about their experience “were actually silenced, shut down, within the classroom.” Two interviewees independently pointed us to the ALAS, which maintains an online archive of 26 testimonies written by members who expressed their feelings and experiences at Medgar Evers. Recurring themes include alienation and underrepresentation of the ‘Latin@ experience’ in college. Mabel, for instance, described her initial year in a similar fashion to our interviewee Adah: “I was the only Hispanic person in all of my classes for my first year in college. I felt as if I didn’t belong.” In some cases the testimonies even express that they felt discriminated against by professors or perceived a devaluation of their own experiences with racism in the U.S. The effects of the notion of feeling singled out were explained by Smedley, Myers and Harrells, who coined the concept of “minority stress status” (1993). It suggests that underrepresented populations may suffer increased psychological distress, which results in poorer academic performance. Hurtado et al. (1998) add that the heightened visibility of minorities can cause an exaggeration of group differences. This is an important consideration as the minority students’ perception of being isolated from the ‘black majority’ emphasizes racial difference and thereby overlooks the enormous heterogeneity within the racial categories (i.e. the variety of geographic, ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic and linguistic backgrounds of the black students) and individual biographies. Observing these problems and the lack of action taken has brought one of our interviewees to believe that Medgar Evers holds on to its ideals “more in terms of theory and history than actual practice (Interview Martina, November 23, 2015).

The difficulties that Latin@ and other minority students at Medgar Evers perceive indicate that there might be a contradiction in the aim of providing the “institutional normative structures that support the advancement of African American people” (Hurtado et al., 1998), and

the accommodation of ethnically diverse students with different backgrounds. On the one hand, little needs to be said about the educational benefits of diversity. Extensive research has shown that “all students benefit from substantial encounters with diversity” (Hurtado, 2007). Although she praises campus diversity in much of her work, Hurtado and her colleagues agree that Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) “must be maintained” due to “the positive social, psychological, and intellectual outcomes for students who attend them” (1998, p. 286). This apparent contradiction may be due to the fact that publications on campus racial climate and student diversification for obvious reasons usually concentrate on predominantly white colleges.

There is lack of a concept that harmonizes the idea of an educational space that is targeted at the needs of a specific group with the integration and valuation of students of other marginalized groups with different experiences of oppression. The challenge for Medgar Evers is thus to transform racial and ethnic diversity into an opportunity for the whole college community. We can not and do not aim to prescribe a recipe on how to solve this problem, firstly because of the fact that it is under-researched and secondly because of our own positionalities as an external all-white team of researchers. Yet considering that one of our respondents said that she felt her own action at the college was not heard enough, it is important that we raise awareness for this issue. While the accounts of students who feel excluded serve as important examples of the special challenges Medgar Evers faces as a diverse predominantly black institution, we also find a number of positive and possibly seminal practices at the college.

Promising practices

One suggestion produced by research on campus diversification is the combination of “continued support for strong ethnic identities and affiliations as well as institutional encouragement for multiracial contacts” (Hurtado et al.1998, p. 294; Duster, 1993). Chang (1996, as cited in Hurtado et al.,1998, p. 294) notes that “socializing across race and discussing racial/ethnic issues have a positive effect on students’ retention, overall satisfaction with college, intellectual self-concept and social self-concept”. Transferring this proposal to the context of Medgar Evers, it suggests that positive inter-group dialogue could allow students to learn about the distinct histories of different racialized groups, but also create awareness for commonalities in the struggles of

oppressed groups. Hurtado points out that teachers and administrators have a responsibility in actively encouraging such dialogue through activities in and outside the classroom. She argues that they can thereby help students to “move ... from their provincial worldviews” (Hurtado, 2007, p. 189) and to take different perspectives. Well-facilitated interaction could hence create a sense of solidarity and belonging among diverse students, without devaluing the experiences of anyone. According to Chang (1996), educators can create opportunities for inter-racial communication through student-centered approaches. This methodology meets the core of Medgar Evers’ philosophy and is also visible in practice. While students reported that they felt supported individually by some professors, Martina confirmed that faculty really put students in the center: “I think we here at Medgar, we work much more closer to them than in other CUNY colleges. ... Here you really get to know the students.”

Besides the encouragement of dialogue between peers, it should also be seen as a task for all staff to maintain a college environment that is positively encouraging and appreciative of everyone, or as Hurtado et al. put it: “When students feel that they are valued and that faculty and administrators are devoted to their development, they are less likely to report racial/ethnic tension on campus” (1998, p. 287). In order to achieve this they advise campus leaders to make sure that the “perspectives of all members of the campus community are considered” (Hurtado et al., 1998, p. 292). For that reason the racial and ethnic diversity among the faculty at Medgar Evers, which according to John and Gabriela reflects the student population, is an important resource. Yet, remembering that students, administrators and faculty can perceive campus climates differently depending on their status and positionality, it seems important that professors are aware of their own biases. Gladys agrees with this argument and makes a point for the need of self-reflection: “It’s very easy to say, you know, ‘I’m--I’m accepting of diversity.’ ... it’s very easy when you are a minority, um, to be comfortable in your minority niche. ... And then really being true to, if I say ... I am for diverse students becoming educated. What do I have to do in myself to make that happen?”

While there can not be a simple or static answer to this important question, we observed several practices at Medgar Evers that evidence appreciation and valuation of diversity. John is a

staff member who told us several anecdotes of his voluntary efforts to create a welcoming space and friendly relations with underrepresented student groups. He demonstrated a strong interest in students' linguistic varieties as well as their cultural heritage. But there have also been more institutionalized efforts to create spaces for ethnic identities of minorities. Scholarship on college diversity recognizes the important role of "ethnic student organizations and other student support services" (Hurtado et al., 1998, p. 292). One example is the previously mentioned Association of Latin American Studies. It was founded at Medgar Evers in 2008 with the aim to create a space for Latin@ students as a minority to share their cultural heritage, discuss social issues and have their voices heard (ALAS n.d.a). The student testimonies the association has published express gratitude to the club for offering them a space to identify as Latin@s, to learn about their cultural and linguistic heritage, as well as the history of Latin@s in the U.S., their marginalization and struggles, and not least to exchange with peers and make friends.

While critics might argue that ethnic student associations intensify notions of racial/ethnic difference and are thus more likely to increase racial separation on campus, students in several testimonies express appreciation for the college and suggest that joining the club has helped them to feel less disconnected to the campus community. Students also mentioned that ALAS has strengthened them personally and professionally: "By participating in this club, I learned more about myself, and, as a teacher, understand Latinos in the classroom and become more aware of being a culturally responsive teacher in helping them and all of my students achieve academic success." (Stephanie, in ALAS, n.d.b). Moreover, in accordance with the previously mentioned suggestion that acknowledging the experiences of nonblack minorities could strengthen ties between groups, some students express the wish for an adoption of curricula in order to include more cultural diversity.

The overall picture drawn by all of the testimonies strongly affirms the notion that "'same-race' peers and environments" (Hurtado, 2007, p.188) can be benefits for students in diverse institutions. Currently, ALAS is not as active as it used to be because the faculty member who was its main advisor had to withdraw her engagement from the club and there was no other professor willing to take on this responsibility. This indicates that the guidance, which the

institutional facilitation of racially diverse groups requires, needs to be adequately recognized and honored. Ideally professors should be rewarded for the support they provide, for example by a reduction of hours to teach. This does not only apply to ALAS, but it could also encourage other members of racial or ethnic minorities within the college community to organize spaces that can be empowering for its members.

There is no easy answer to the challenge of maintaining Medgar Evers' identity and its important function for black students while being a racially and ethnically diverse institution. But it seems promising to encourage valuation and awareness for different minority experiences both within classes and through ethnic student associations. These practices should by no means be seen as a challenge to the centrality of teaching about black history and present injustices, but as an addition. Faculty and administrators should help students to not only value differences, but also see commonalities through cross-racial dialogue and cooperation. This way it could be a space where coalitions are built for the fight for greater social justice in broader society where white supremacy prevails. As common action can facilitate binding experiences, this could also advance a sense of recognition and belonging among students. Acting and educating towards such goals reflects the original pedagogical mission of Medgar Evers, of which the professors and administrators are well aware. We are optimistic that the previously sketched gap is not all too difficult to bridge because it seems as though the scholarship on campus diversification as well as Medgar Evers' pedagogical mission have 'proceeded on parallel tracks'; both approaches aim to advance student awareness of social problems through dialogue, reflection, social critique and commitment to change (Hurtado, 2007, p. 187). Moreover, the college's own history and mission, along with its diverse faculty and its students seem to be the ideal requisites to put these goals into practice.

Conclusion

Although the initial aim of this project was to examine the linguistic diversity of Medgar Evers and how the changing cultural landscape of Brooklyn, New York was influencing it, our participants revealed an interconnected web of ethno-linguistic interactions between the key stakeholders at Medgar Evers: students, staff, faculty, and administration. These interactions

underscore the challenges all parties face: As the school continues to attract more minoritized ethnic populations, administrators and faculty face a choice between leaving students behind and reaffirming their commitment to social transformation.

Some participants view the breadth of linguistic practices discussed and employed throughout these oral histories as a challenge. The need to use an idealized “standard” or “correct” English was a recurring theme across the interviews. Minoritized individuals who use language varieties that are considered unofficial, dialects or slang - in contrast to white, middle class, monolingual standards - still face racialization of their language. In order to live up to the college’s goals, educators should challenge hegemonic language ideologies by establishing translanguaging pedagogies, which acknowledge and support the existence of variation.

At Medgar Evers, the population of minoritized students who do not identify as black has increased, yet participants from underrepresented ethno-linguistic backgrounds continue to feel like outsiders. Thus far, scholars have paid little attention to the specific challenges of the diversification of predominantly non-white institutions and further research in this direction is necessary. Yet, it seems recommendable that Medgar Evers should *not* abandon its connection to the Civil Rights and Black Campus movements. Instead, a dynamic approach that values the complexity of diverse ethno-linguistic backgrounds could bring students and educators from different cultural groups together in empathy through dialogical action (Freire, 1970/2000, Celic and Seltzer, 2011, p. 4). This should include tangible steps taken both in and out of the classroom, while the efforts of educators who provide extracurricular support for students should be adequately recognized. Accordingly the strengths and resources of the college could be used to create an environment that includes every student and educates them to become critical participants who are aware of the past and prevailing injustices different groups have experienced.

Fortunately for Medgar Evers, there are members of faculty and administration who already employ critical pedagogies. From exploring language variation in classes to creating safe spaces for students from different backgrounds, the strategies employed by participants are rich and varied. The institution faces a challenging, but bright future, so long as it continues to show

solidarity with all stakeholders, to gather input from students and community members, and to strive to move people “from marginality to mattering.” A university such as Medgar Evers, in which all levels of stakeholders express enthusiasm for an oral history project and earnestness about both its challenges and assets, is in a ripe position to transform its challenges into new opportunities.

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Notes

1. Referred to as “Medgar Evers” throughout the rest of the paper, except when specifically mentioning the man.
2. In the United States, any person with any known African black ancestry is considered *black*. This definition reflects the long experience with slavery and later with the caste-like Jim Crow system of segregation. However, because that category has a definite status position in society it has become a self-conscious social group with an ethnic identity (Davis, 2001). *People of color* is a term that describes a person with ancestry from the racial or ethnic groups in the United States that historically were or currently are targeted by racism, including people with African, Native American, Asian, or Latino ancestry. The term draws attention to the fundamental role of racialization in the United States (Zack, 1995). Tuman argues that the term *people of color* unites disparate racial and ethnic groups into a larger collective in solidarity with one another (2003). The expression *non-black students of color* thus refers to all students who are experiencing racialization in the US but who are not considered black.
3. We utilize quotes here to maintain that there is a diversity of black identities – Afro-Caribbean, African American, etc.
4. Since the testimonials are published with the authors’ full names online, they are not made anonymous.
5. They preferred to remain completely anonymous.

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“Broken Arabic” and Ideologies of Completeness: Contextualizing the Category of Native and Heritage Speaker in the University Arabic Classroom

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Abstract

Through weekly participant observations and eleven semi-structured interviews conducted with second-generation bilingual students in the *Arabic for Native Speakers/Heritage Learners* course at one of City University of New York's (CUNY) senior colleges, I investigate the interdiscursive connections between the students' notion of “broken Arabic” and the concept of “incomplete acquisition and/or attrition” (Montrul, 2013) from SLA research on heritage speakers. This paper moves away from the concept of proficiency towards performativity in order to recognize and support diverse repertoires in motion.

Keywords: heritage language, Arabic sociolinguistics, incomplete acquisition, linguistic anthropology

ملخص: لقد أنجزت دراسة حول طلبية من مزدوجي اللغة من أصل عربي الذين تابعوا فصلا في اللغة العربية في جامعة مدينة نيويورك، إذ تابعتهم أسبوعيا عن قرب وأنجزت ١١ مقابلة نصف مركبة. درست العلاقة بين مفهوم “العربية المركبة” ومصطلح “التحصيل الناقص أو التآكل” (مونترول، ٢٠١٣) كما أشارت إلى ذلك الأبحاث المتعلقة بتعلم لغة ثانية SLA حول هذا الموضوع. تسعى هذه الدراسة الى توضيف أدوات “التداخل اللغوي” Translanguaging من أجل الانتقال من مصطلح “البراعة” Proficiency إلى “الاستعراضية” Performativity اعترافا ودعما لتجارب مختلفة قيد الإنجاز.

المصطلحات الرئيسية: الميراث اللغوي، علم اجتماع اللغة في الحقل العربي، التداخل اللغوي، التحصيل الناقص، الأنثروبولوجيا اللغوية

Résumé

A travers des observations participantes hebdomadaires et onze entretiens semi-structurés avec des élèves bilingues de deuxième génération du cours d'arabe pour locuteurs natives/patrimoine des apprenants à City University of New York, (CUNY), j'enquête sur les connexions interdiscursives entre la notion de “l'arabe cassé” et le concept “d'acquisition et / ou d'usure incomplète” (Montrul, 2013) à partir des études de la SLA (Acquisition de la deuxième langue) sur le patrimoine des locuteurs. Cet article se déplace de la notion de compétence vers la performativité afin de reconnaître et de soutenir divers répertoires en mouvement.

Mots-clés: patrimoine linguistique, sociolinguistique arabe, acquisition incomplète, anthropologie linguistique.

Introduction

In November of 2015, newspapers around the United States reported that two passengers of Southwest Airlines, Maher Khalil and Anas Ayyad, were pulled aside during the boarding process at Chicago's Midway Airport.¹ The reason given to these two men—a Philadelphia pizza shop owner and his friend—was that another passenger had overheard them speaking Arabic and became concerned. A similar case was reported in April of 2016 when Khairuldeen Makhzoomi, a student of the University of California, Berkeley and an Iraqi refugee, was pulled off of his flight and questioned by the FBI for speaking with his uncle on the phone in Arabic.² The mere speaking of the Arabic language in the context of the post-9/11 United States—coupled, no doubt, with the racialized bodies of these men—had apparently been the cause of alarm. Arabic, much like many other immigrant languages in the US, has become an icon and emblem of supposedly intractable cultural differences and of the suspicion and fear of linguistic, cultural and religious diversity: that is, “the other within”.

It was with these stories in mind that I began to analyze my data from the weekly participant observations and eleven semi-structured interviews I conducted with students in the *Arabic for Native Speakers/Heritage Learners* course at one of City University of New York's (CUNY) senior colleges. I asked myself: Considering this context of growing xenophobia, Islamophobia and prejudice based on race, religion and linguistic practices, how do second-generation students see their relationship to the Arabic language? Under these politicized conditions, in what ways do they consider their Arabic backgrounds to be a valuable resource inside and outside the classroom? From my participant-observation and interview data, I observed that many of the students expressed an uncertainty towards their Arabic speaking competencies, often referring to their practices as “wrong,” “inappropriate,” “slang” and speaking “broken Arabic”. What struck me as significant was the ways in which these students' narratives, in fact, corresponded in some key ways with the emerging body of research on heritage speakers, which often characterizes second-generation language practices in terms of their “interrupted” and “incomplete acquisition” (Montrul, 2013; Schachter, 1990; Bolonyai, 2007; Valdés, 2005) of their first language. How can we conceptualize the similarities between the discourses of “brokenness” emerging from the students' narratives and those of “incomplete acquisition” proposed by SLA researchers? How does knowledge production on heritage learners in the

academy both reflect and (re)produce ideological claims about “proper” language and its moral and ethical implications in US society? In this sense, the very concept of “incomplete acquisition” found in SLA literature and “broken language” (be it, “broken Arabic,” “broken Spanish,” or “broken English”) in the everyday parlance of my interlocutors confirms the pervasiveness of the normative ideology of monolingualism and its impact on heritage language classrooms in the United States.

In this essay, I aim to situate Arabic heritage students’ apparent insecurities and anxieties around the “appropriateness” of their language practices in the university classroom within the larger interdiscursive frame in which language policies and academic knowledge production often unwittingly help support “the erasure of other languages by denying their speakers social capital and resources” (Mendoza-Denton & Osborne, 2010, p. 115). These ideologies are connected through the semiotic process of iconization or rhematization (Gal, 2005), in which “linguistic features that index social groups or activities appear to be iconic representations of them, as if a linguistic feature somehow depicted a social group’s inherent nature or essence” (Irvine & Gal, 2000, p. 37). In this sense, the “broken” or “incomplete” language practices of second-generation bilinguals are seen as iconic representations of their supposedly problematic deviation from the monoglot standard (Silverstein, 1996), as the example of Maher Khalil, Anas Ayyad and Khairuldeen Makhzoomi at the beginning of this essay demonstrated. As Otheguy (2013) has argued, by classifying them as “heritage” instead of “native” speakers, SLA researchers have been able to brand second generation bilingual speakers as deficient in ways that they would be weary of doing for linguistic practices classified under the label “native” speaker. Yet, on the other hand, other researchers have noted that the notion of “native language” presupposes its existence, that is, that each of us has *a* native, mother or first language in the singular (Pennycook, 2012). Similarly, as Mendoza-Denton and Osborne (2010, p. 114) have argued, “the very project of defining ‘bilingual’ as a category ultimately serves to normalize the monoglot standard, and historically this has helped bolster the status of nation-states as bounded and fully controlled entities”. It is in these complex socio-linguistic, political and ideological terrains in which I would like to contextualize my study.

Much of the literature on second-generation students in heritage classrooms has focused on how to define these students, that is, who and what *is* a heritage speaker? Similarly, research

on heritage Arabic speakers in the US has largely focused on the linguistic characteristics of second-generation students, who, in turn, are distinguished by how they differ from the native speaker norm (Albirini, Benmamoun, & Saadah 2011; Albirini & Chakrani 2016). In contrast, I take an anthropological approach that asks the questions: what work does the category of “native” or “heritage” speaker *do*? For whom and with what consequences does this category do its work? These questions significantly differ from the common aim to come up with a universal definition and category of these learners based on certain perceived linguistic characteristics and proficiency. It instead requires researchers to focus on the pragmatic functions of language, that is, it forces us to recognize that language is always embedded in social systems and contexts in which speakers negotiate their position.

In the following sections, I first describe the driving questions and methodology behind this study. Next, I investigate in more detail the interdiscursive connections between the students’ notion of “broken Arabic” and the SLA concept of “incomplete acquisition and/or attrition” (Montrul, 2013). Interdiscursivity refers to how any given utterance is always connected to and reflective of past and future discourses that circulate in wider social, political and historical contexts (Bakhtin, 1981; Bauman, 2005). In this essay, I call for a theory and pedagogy of contingency, which takes into account the many different contexts in which students use their language resources. This approach moves away from an overarching concept of proficiency toward a concept of performance in order to teach second-generation speakers in ways that recognize and support their diverse and creative repertoires.

Research Design and Methodology

This paper draws upon the initial findings from an ongoing research project at the City University of New York (CUNY) on heritage Arabic teaching and learning. The title of the course that I observed was *Arabic for Native Speakers/Heritage Learners*, which defined native/heritage speakers in its course materials as “students who grew up in an Arabic speaking household” (in the diaspora, not in the Arabic speaking world). While some of the students placed in the class had had some instruction in Arabic literacy (for example, in Saturday Islamic schools), all the students had a functional understanding of oral Arabic and were considered beginners in standard Arabic literacy as assessed by the program’s professors. One of the most immediate problems for

this Arabic course has been the dearth of resources for heritage learners. In fact, Arabic pedagogical materials to-date have not factored in activities in which heritage students can draw upon their rich linguistic resources and backgrounds in vernacular Arabic varieties in order to scaffold their learning of reading and writing in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA).

In collaboration with the professor of this course, I engaged in weekly participant observations in the fall and winter of 2015. As an advanced Arabic student (but a non-heritage learner) and a teaching fellow of anthropology at a different CUNY senior college, I explained to the students that I was observing the classroom with the aim of helping produce new materials for heritage students in collaboration with the course's professor. My ethnographic work included participant-observing classroom activities and engaging in conversations in Arabic with the students about their linguistic experiences inside and outside the classroom. Despite the fact that I was clearly a language learner myself, the students would often ask me clarifying questions about the classroom activities and Arabic grammar and lexicon. While some students in the classroom would confidently answer my questions in Arabic, other students would only respond in English or with very short answers in Arabic. I observed the same situation in interactions between the professor and the students. From these ethnographic observations, an important classroom dynamic became apparent. Many students would often claim that they couldn't speak or understand Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), appearing not to see how their home linguistic backgrounds in their variety of vernacular Arabic could translate into useful knowledge in the classroom. The result was that the students continued throughout the semester to speak mostly in English with one another in the classroom.

With these two ethnographic observations in mind, I conducted 11 semi-structured linguistic oral history interviews with the students on a volunteer basis, each interview running between 20 and 30 minutes. The interviews were conducted on campus, in English and outside of classroom hours. During the interviews, we discussed the students' relationship to the Arabic language, their home language practices, trips to visit relatives in their parents' countries of origin and their impressions of the course. The purpose of the interviews was to get a sense of what Arabic means to the students, why they decided to take the course, and what were some of their psychosocial concerns about speaking Arabic at school and in their lives. The analysis of this paper is based on three important themes that emerged from the interviews. First, most of the

students interviewed discussed the different contexts in which they speak Arabic (at home, in the classroom, with friends, in the community, etc.), alluding to how their perceptions of how they speak differ in each context. Second, many students discussed their Arabic speaking using negative evaluating terms, such as “broken,” “improper” and “bad”. Finally, the students described what they saw as significant differences between the standard register of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and their home varieties.

The students I interviewed are members of families from a variety of geographical backgrounds and part of the second-generation (either born in the US or coming by the age of 1). Of the 11 students I interviewed, five are of Egyptian origin (Hamid, Zahia, Samia, Ahmed and Amel), three of Lebanese origin (Fatima, Irene and Sarah), one of Moroccan origin (Rabah), one of Tunisian/Iraqi origin (Safia), one of Yemeni origin (Mahmoud), and one of Sudanese origin (Karem). All names are pseudonyms and some identifying information has been changed to protect the privacy of the participants.

The native speaker vs. the heritage speaker: What’s in a category?

Safia, a 25-year old student in the *Arabic for Native Speakers/Heritage Learners* course, characterized second-generation language practices as such:

I feel like there is a certain level that everyone in this area who grew up with Arabic parents tends to speak...that same level of *brokenness*, where you start a sentence in English and end it in Arabic, or vice versa.

This characterization of *brokenness* raises an important question: Who is a native speaker and what is a native language?

Safia’s father fled Iraq decades ago, and while working as a sailor on ships throughout the Mediterranean, he met and married Safia’s mother, a Tunisian woman. They came to the US in the 1980s, where Safia was born. Safia grew up in and still lives in a city in New Jersey where there is a large Egyptian population. Because of this, Safia linguistically identifies with the Egyptian vernacular, not her father’s Iraqi or mother’s Tunisian. In fact, she told me, since her father left Iraq as a refugee, he lost contact with his family, and therefore Safia is unsure if she has any Iraqi features in her repertoire since she has never spoken to another Iraqi other than her father in Arabic. Because of the community in which they live, her parents speak with their friends mostly in the Egyptian vernacular and between each other in Egyptian and Iraqi, but

never in her mother's Tunisian. Despite having spent many summers in Tunisia with her mother's family, Safia denies that she is able to speak the Tunisian vernacular at all. With her parents, Safia reported that they speak mostly in Arabic with some "broken English". Safia emphasized that growing up in a very urban area with many Hispanic and Arabic kids, her mother didn't want her to be placed in ESL so when she was younger, her mother spoke to her in English. While she considers Arabic to be her first language, by Kindergarten, she reported that she spoke English fluently, and her Arabic went to the wayside. She describes her family language practice as such:

With my parents, I speak mostly Arabic. Dialect-wise...it is very broken. It's not like Tunisian-style at all. The only thing is that where we live (in New Jersey), the Arabs that live there...it is a very heavy Egyptian population, and when I was younger, I went to normal public schools but...(my parents) sent me on Saturdays to learn Arabic at a mosque; it was with a whole bunch of Egyptians so I picked up on that dialect more, not 100%, like I don't say the "ga", but it's a mix...When I am at home, (I speak) mostly in Arabic with broken English in-between.

Reflecting the dominance of the Egyptian vernacular throughout the Arabic-speaking world, Safia's case is an interesting example of the ways that Arabic language practices in the diaspora are shaped by features of sociolinguistics, patterns of migration, and hierarchies of language that emerge locally, regionally, and globally.

When thinking about students such as Safia and her complex, variegated repertoire, I question: What would SLA researchers consider to be her native language? Roughly half of the students I interviewed claimed that their Arabic vernacular varieties were their first language, while the other half claimed English to be their first language. Others claimed that both English and their Arabic colloquial variety were their first language. In any case, it is clear from Safia's experience that, in contexts of multilingualism, children often have a composite repertoire from a very early age.

In the emerging field of heritage language research and pedagogy, many scholars have cited Valdés' (2005, p. 412) definition of these students as "raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken", which conforms with the definition provided by the *Arabic for Native Speakers/Heritage Learners* course of this study. A large portion of the literature on heritage students aims to grapple with, in one way or another, the dilemma of whether or not to define these learners as native speakers. Certainly, in sociolinguistics, the notion of native speaker has been extensively critiqued over the last decades, with some scholars questioning the analytical

purchase of the category (Cook, 1999; Firth & Wagner, 1997; Pennycook, 2012). Nevertheless, the notion of native speaker is still widely used in SLA research and language pedagogy.

In this context, the category of “native” is a powerful social fact that is resisted, debated, contested and adopted by speakers in order to make certain social, political and ideological claims. My interviews and classroom observations suggest that students and professors strategically draw upon the label of nativeness at certain moments; while at other times, they reject the label. Rabah, for example, sustained that his native tongue was English even though Moroccan Arabic was the primary language spoken at home during his childhood. During class, he would often refuse to respond to the professor in Arabic, although the professor would often speak to him in Moroccan Arabic. Irene also expressed that while she can understand the Lebanese dialect relatively well, she conflated “Arabic” with MSA, stating that she “can’t speak Arabic very well for the most part”. Zahia reported to me in an interview that:

...ever since I was younger, I had no real first language, I learned both (Arabic and English) hand in hand at school.

Though Zahia reported being very confident in her Arabic speaking competence, she nevertheless didn’t claim Arabic as her first language. What these statements allude to is a significant ambivalence on the part of many students towards their status as “native speakers” of Arabic in the context of this university heritage language program.

Montrul (2013, p. 154), a leading scholar in the field of heritage language pedagogy, has argued that, while a native speaker is difficult to define, “when we see or hear a native speaker we intuitively recognize them as such”. Comparing second-generation speakers to what she sees as the “complete and successful outcome of acquisition of a first (or native) language in a (predominantly) monolingual environment” (p. 154), Montrul concludes that because many second-generation speakers’ practices fail to reach these intuitive “native” standards due to the processes of “incomplete acquisition and/or attrition” (p. 153), these speakers should be understood as *heritage* speakers, even when “it is possible to retain native-like ability in some specific areas” (p. 153), such as phonology. In this context, the goal of heritage classrooms should be to aid students in “(reaching) the highest levels of linguistic achievement in their heritage language” (p. 154).

There are at least three problems with Montrul’s definition. First, as Dąbrowska (2012) has argued, researchers are starting to question the validity of the notion that all speakers of a

language share one mental grammar. Dąbrowska found that the common notion that first language speakers eventually converge on one single mental grammar, the acquisition of which is complete by the age of 5, fails to account for the reality of variation in speakers' repertoires. She writes, "Assertions about convergence in L1 acquisition are rarely justified, presumably because they are regarded as self-evident: we can understand one another, so we must have the same grammar. But this is clearly a non sequitur: sharing the same grammar is not essential for successful communication" (Dąbrowska, 2012, p. 4). Second, the supposedly intuitive recognition of a native speaker is never solely based on an objective judgment of another's language practices. To be fair, Montrul (2013) does recognize that the notion of a native speaker is largely a myth though she continues to use the concept. But, she does appear to fail to note that other non-linguistic aspects of a speaker's identity often shape and condition the ways that language practices are perceived by listeners. A speaker's perceived race, name, clothing, immigration status, nationality, etc. can influence the ways that the listener's "intuition" works (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Hill, 1998). Finally, Montrul's definition also assumes that there is such a thing as an ultimate or target attainment, that is, a moment when language acquisition can be understood as complete.

As Pennycook (2012) has argued, the question of nativeness is rooted in a deceptively simple question: what does it mean to know a language? In order to answer this question, one must recognize that the notion of linguistic competence is never neutral and that the concept of linguistic proficiency cannot be separated from the socio-political notion of the "legitimate speaker" (Bourdieu, 1977). While many scholars strongly critique the usefulness of the term "native speaker," the discursive power of the concept cannot be ignored. Most importantly for this paper, Pennycook (2012) draws attention to the particular contexts in which someone can pass for a native speaker—a status that one attains but is not necessarily born with—which shows that the category itself is mobile, shifting and performative.

Ideologies of Incompleteness and "Brokenness"

One particular vexing question for the *Arabic for Native Speakers/Heritage Learners* course has been how to conceptualize the students' backgrounds in vernacular, regional Arabic ('*ammiyya*) with the course's goals of reading and writing in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA or

fuṣḥā). Most of the students I interviewed displayed significant uncertainty regarding the relationship between MSA and their vernacular varieties. In fact, many students reported to me that they speak their vernacular varieties with confident fluency in some contexts (for example, with their parents or in individual meetings with the professor), but display a lack of confidence when they are expected to speak in MSA in the classroom. One student, Mahmoud, whose parents are both from Yemen, shared with me that before this class, he “didn’t know *fuṣḥā* existed honestly”. He currently works in an Arabic-speaking doctor’s office in Brooklyn, which has exposed him to many different vernacular varieties. Yet he believes that his own language practices are very different from the MSA that he is studying in the classroom. Similarly, Sarah, a student from a Lebanese family, said:

I always knew there was *fuṣḥā* but I never really looked into it. And obviously my parents don’t speak to me in *fuṣḥā*. (In this class), we are expected to learn in *fuṣḥā* because we need to be uniform, or otherwise everyone would be writing in *muṣri* (the Egyptian dialect) or something like that.

Amel, a student born in Egypt who came to the US at the age of one, said that she sometimes practices *fuṣḥā* at home with her family, but always as a joke. She said that one time her little brother protested when she spoke in MSA at home, saying “That’s not Arabic, you’re not learning Arabic.” Zahia, another student of Egyptian origin, showed the affective and interpersonal weight of this second-generation repertoire. She said:

When I am mad at (my sister), I start speaking to her in Arabic because it sounds madder. I flip flop with her, I can have half a sentence in Arabic and half in English; with my dad it’s the same thing. Half English, half Arabic. In a sentence, I can have 4 words in Arabic, and 3 in English, it’s a mixture.

Other students also noted that is it common with their family and friends to easily access and engage with the different varieties and registers within their repertoire at any given moment. Considering the great diversity and complexity that constitutes the students’ repertoires, what are the implications of comparing second-generation speakers in the diaspora with speakers educated and socialized in the Arabic-speaking world?

In fact, many SLA researchers of heritage language learning have done precisely that (Cook, 1999); by comparing second-generation students to monolingual “native” speakers, this research has adopted the analytical framework referred to as “incomplete acquisition and/or attrition”, characterized by the processes of language interference, arrested, flawed or disrupted

acquisition and the “the erosion, decay, contraction, or obsolescence of a language” (Valdés, 2005, p. 417). Researchers have argued that this incomplete acquisition is brought about by the language shifts that arise from schooling in the dominant societal language. Otheguy (2013) has strongly criticized the notion of “incomplete acquisition” in terms of the linguistic-psychological flaws in its research, arguing that the term should not be used at all. He argues that what these researchers have called incomplete acquisition is instead the product of “normal intergenerational language change accelerated by conditions of language contact” (Otheguy, 2013, p. 1). In fact, socially disfavored varieties of language are often characterized as deviant and deficient. Cabo and Rothman (2012) have also argued that comparing bilinguals to monolinguals is unjustified and that characterizing bilingual practices as incomplete misses the point that they are simply different. Cabo and Rothman (2012, p. 452) write:

The term incomplete is not only imprecise, it is misleading. Since incompleteness is often interpreted as a deficiency, the term is not appropriate when comparative differences can be traced back to contact-induced changes in first generation immigrant input providers to subsequent generations of (heritage speakers).

Yet the comparing of multilingual speakers with monolinguals is precisely what many studies on heritage learners have done. Regarding the term “heritage speaker,” Otheguy (2013, p. 12) writes:

The ill-defined term contributes to the unfounded initial legitimacy of the incomplete acquisition hypothesis, for it serves to naturalize the position that heritage speakers, whatever they are, are not native speakers. This removal of second-generation bilinguals from the groups of native speakers makes it possible for linguists to overcome what would otherwise be a reluctance to view anyone’s native language in deficit terms. In addition, the terms makes it acceptable to dispense with the common assumption among linguists that, when confronted with unfamiliar items in speakers who have used a language from earliest infancy, what we are witnessing is dialectal differences among natives rather than incompleteness.

This insight has at least two notable implications. First, it calls for a macro-contextualization of the knowledge production in the academy. Second, it emphasizes the ideological work of the notion of “native speaker”. In the case of heritage language research, removing the term “native” from the definition of heritage speakers allows researchers to make claims about the inadequateness, deviance, and erroneousness of heritage language, as those who have not acquired the legitimate status of native speaker (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Firth & Wagner, 2007).

Here, I argue that the supposed deviance of second-generation language practices as described in SLA literature is interdiscursively connected to the students’ representations of a

part of their repertoire as “broken Arabic”. The students I interviewed often expressed shifting views of their language practices within the same discourse—at times reporting that they speak well, and at other times, claiming they could hardly speak at all. The parallel cases of Irene and Sarah demonstrate the ways that students draw on divergent narratives regarding their linguistic backgrounds within the same utterance in order to make certain social and academic claims. Irene’s parents emigrated from Lebanon after they were married and shortly before Irene and her five brothers and sisters were born. She told me that at home she doesn’t speak much Arabic though her parents speak exclusively in Arabic with each other. Irene reported that she doesn’t recall speaking Arabic as a child, but she said:

I can understand it, not formal (*fuṣḥā*) at all, but speaking for the most part (I can understand).

Yet Irene saw her proficiency in Lebanese Arabic quite differently from the MSA studied in class, giving herself a relatively high self-reported proficiency score (8 out of 10) in her colloquial variety. Sarah, also of Lebanese origin, described the emotional push-and-pull embodied in her relationship to Arabic. Sarah considered Arabic her first language, which is the language she speaks with her grandmother, who she said raised her and who still lives with her. Yet Sarah reports that she speaks mostly in English with her mother, father and four sisters. Like Irene, Sarah considered the Lebanese vernacular she speaks at home to be very different from *fuṣḥā*.

Both Sarah and Irene in their interviews made it a point to explain to me that they do not think they belong in the *Arabic for Native Speakers/Heritage Learners* course. Both students demonstrated resistance to the use of the category of native speaker in describing their relationship to Arabic. Regarding enrolling in this class, Sarah reported that the professor:

...told me to take the heritage speaking one. But I wish I didn’t. I feel like more than half the class already knows how to write it and speak it, so I feel like I’m at a disadvantage because I actually don’t know how to write it, and I think the class is much more advanced than I am.

Sarah reported that her mother agrees with her. Sarah said:

My mom said, ‘this is not at your level, this is way too advanced, how are you going to do well?’ I was like, I really don’t know I am just going to try my hardest.

What is interesting about Sarah's narrative is that while she distanced herself from the native speaker category, at other times she referred to her abilities in positive terms. She said:

I know how to speak it well, and in the hospital I translate for people, but I don't know how to write it.

What I want to emphasize here is that students often draw upon the category of native speaker at different moments in order to make specific social claims. The concept of native speaker does particular social and linguistic work, which is always contingent on context. Speakers may in a specific context, such as in the heritage classroom, consider themselves to have "broken" language practices, while in other contexts, such as the home, consider themselves fully competent and fluent. A speaker's perceived performance also depends on the audience.

Conclusion

Public debates around the social function of bi-/multilingualism draw heavily upon "folk" discourses that say more about the social and political hierarchies, ideologies and economies that structure social relations than the nature of language itself. As Silverstein (1996, p. 301) poignantly writes, "Monoglot Standard is a *cultural emblem* in our society, it is not a linguistic problem as such that we are dealing with". Language researchers and policymakers are far from immune to this "folk" understanding, at times with serious consequences for second-generation students (Cook, 1999). The circulation of "folk" discourses around the incompleteness of certain language practices (and iconically representing certain types of "incomplete" citizens) have been reinforced and constituted through academic knowledge production. The result can be language pedagogies that unwittingly reproduce the social dynamics of exclusion and inclusion through the categories of "native," "heritage," and "broken" language. Shedding light on the cultural, political and economic (in contrast to linguistic) implications of these debates over bi-/multilingualism is central to an analysis of how conscious and unconscious linguistic choices work to position speakers within and resist power structures while leaving space for speakers' agency (Gal, 1987).

In conclusion, there is an expression in Algerian Arabic—لسانك ميزانك—which roughly translates to: your language is your balance. For language researchers and social scientists who are tasked with the production of knowledge, we should take this warning to heart. The words we use matter. Yet, this is true perhaps less due to the capacity of words to describe a preexisting

reality than for the ability of words to bring a concept into existence and transform it into a social fact. The notion of “incomplete acquisition” that has become popular in the emerging field of heritage language research should be understood as embedded in larger sociolinguistic and racioideological discourses that (implicitly) represent second-generation bilinguals as deficient, incomplete citizens. Their perceived dual allegiance to the United States and their countries of origin come to be iconically represented in the fears and suspicion aroused by their allegiance to two languages. As the cases of Maher Khalil, Anas Ayyad and Khairuldeen Makhzoomi at the beginning of the paper suggested, the language ideologies that construe the United States in terms of one language = one nation = one religion = one race continue to have a devastating impact on the lives of multilingual speakers today.

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Notes

¹ See <http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/nov/21/southwest-airlines-muslim-middle-eastern-passengers>

² See <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/apr/19/why-speaking-arabic-america-feels-like-crime>

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Ideology, Access, and Status: Spanish-English Bilinguals in the Foreign-Language Classroom

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Abstract

Spanish language teaching in US higher education is today generally divided between ‘foreign language’ courses for novice learners and ‘heritage language’ courses for Hispanic/Latinx students with some knowledge of the language. However, ‘heritage’ students are a linguistically diverse group, and are also often enrolled at institutions where heritage courses are not offered. Little research to date has studied ‘heritage’ speakers enrolled in ‘foreign’ language courses. For this study I conducted semi-structured interviews to explore the affective and ideological characteristics of bilingual students enrolled in elementary Spanish courses. As the literature suggests, I find that these students have a generally low opinion of their own performance in Spanish and a strong bias in favor of the standard language. Finally, in hopes of combating these notions and bridging the divide between heritage and novice learners, I contemplate ways in which students of diverse backgrounds can be included in the same language classroom.

Keywords: Spanish, heritage language, language ideology, appropriateness, racialization

Resumen

La enseñanza del castellano en los EE. UU. se divide generalmente entre cursos de ‘lengua extranjera’ para aprendices sin conocimientos previos del idioma y cursos ‘de herencia’ para estudiantes de origen latino/hispano que ya traen algunos conocimientos del español. Hasta la fecha, pocos estudios han examinado la cuestión de los hablantes ‘de herencia’ inscritos en cursos de tipo ‘lengua extranjera.’ Para el presente estudio, llevé a cabo entrevistas semiestructuradas para explorar las características afectivas e ideológicas de cuatro estudiantes bilingües inscritos en cursos elementales de español como lengua extranjera. Conforme con lo que sugiere la literatura, encuentro que estos estudiantes tienen una opinión pobre de sus propias habilidades en castellano y una fuerte preferencia por la variedad estándar. Finalmente, con la esperanza de combatir estas ideas y tender un puente entre los hablantes bilingües y los aprendices de lengua extranjera, contemplo cómo se puedan incluir estudiantes de trayectorias diversas en la misma aula.

Palabras clave: español, lengua de herencia, ideologías lingüísticas, idoneidad, racialización

Résumé

L'enseignement de la langue espagnole dans l'enseignement supérieur aux États-Unis de nos jours est généralement divisé sur les cours de la langue étrangère pour les débutants et les cours de la 'langue d'héritage' pour les étudiants Hispaniques/Latinx avec un peu de connaissance de la langue. Cependant, les étudiants 'héritages' sont un groupe linguistiquement divers et ils sont souvent inscrits dans les universités où les cours de la 'langue héritage' ne sont pas proposés. Peu de recherche jusqu'à ce jour a étudié les étudiants 'héritages' inscrits dans les cours de 'langues étrangères'. Pour cette étude j'ai dirigé des entretiens demi-structurés à explorer les caractéristiques affectifs et idéologiques des étudiants bilingues inscrits dans les cours d'espagnol novice. Comme suggère la littérature, je trouve que ces étudiants ont généralement une piètre opinion de leurs performances en espagnol et une préférence pour l'espagnol standard. Finalement, dans l'espoir de combattre ces notions et réduire l'écart entre les étudiants héritages et les étudiants débutants, je réfléchis sur les moyens par lesquels les étudiants de milieux divers peuvent être inclus dans la même salle de classe.

Mots clés: l'espagnol, langues d'héritage, idéologie de la langue, justesse, racialisation

Introduction

In this article I consider questions of language-learning motivation, access to language education, language ideologies and attitudes, and pedagogical approaches as concerns bilingual/heritage¹ speakers enrolled in Spanish as a 'foreign' or 'second' language classes. This study is based on the qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews with four New York Latinx students of varying ages, national backgrounds, and proficiencies in Spanish, enrolled in an elementary Spanish course at Brooklyn College, a large public university in New York City. This article illuminates some important issues for language educators to consider, including how to encourage positive understandings of bilingual varieties of Spanish and how to combat ideologies that hierarchize named languages and varieties and demean bilingual students' native varieties as inadequate. The final consideration is how to approach teaching when Spanish-English bilinguals and novice learners are placed together in the same classes.

Context

This study grew out of a PhD course in Global Language Policies in Education at the Graduate Center (GC) of the City University of New York (CUNY). The course was selected to participate in the Futures Initiative (FI), a GC-based program that reaches throughout CUNY and advocates greater equity and innovation in higher education. The Academic Year 2015-2016 theme is

Diversity, Access, and Equity Across the Curriculum. In this spirit, the present study examines questions of access to language education and pedagogical approaches in the teaching of Spanish to students of diverse linguistic backgrounds, particularly contemplating the distinction between students with previous exposure to Spanish and novice learners. Interviews were completed with four bilingual students enrolled in two elementary Spanish courses taught by the author at Brooklyn College, CUNY.

The bilingual student

The profile of the bilingual student for the purposes of this study is a college student born in the US to parents or grandparents who immigrated from a primarily Spanish-speaking country or territory and who has to some degree been exposed to Spanish at home or in the community. While second- and third-generation students (especially the former) often have some command of Spanish linguistic features, research indicates that, having been educated primarily in English, they tend to feel that their Spanish is incomplete or imperfect, especially their formal Spanish (Cummins, 2005; Leeman, 2012; Potowski, 2002; Valdés, González, García, & Márquez, 2003). They also have to contend with widespread linguistic ideologies that devalue their ways of using language, from their English (often working-class urban varieties or ethnolects perceived to be ‘contaminated’ by the ethnic language) to their Spanish (often non-standard rural or working-class urban varieties from their countries of origin) and, especially, their translanguaging practices (Flores & Rosa, 2015; García, 2009; Leeman, 2005, 2012). They also often have to deal with affective barriers to acquisition of the standard variety. In the following paragraphs I will consider the linguistic and language ideological characteristics of these students.

The bilingual student: Linguistic characteristics

Linguistically, as in other regards, bilingual students are far from a homogeneous group; their proficiency in Spanish ranges widely along a “continuum of bilingualism” (Silva-Corvalán, 2004, quoted in Lynch, 2008), from quite limited (similar to or indistinguishable from students not of Latinx origin), to those with good spoken proficiency in everyday language but limited abilities to read and write the standard language, to those who control educated registers of both the spoken and written language (Kondo-Brown, 2005; Lynch, 2008). Those students with strong command of written and formal varieties of the language are the minority, however; having been

schooled mostly in English, these students have often had little instruction in Spanish and struggle with reading, writing, and formal speech. These issues are often exacerbated by the socioeconomic difficulties they face as members of a minority group, including racial and linguistic discrimination (García & Mason, 2009).

The bilingual student: Ideologies of language

The literature shows that bilingual students who have been educated mostly in English tend to believe that their Spanish is ‘broken’ or ‘improper’ (Leeman, 2012). They also live in environments where their home varieties are stigmatized, either as a result of their national origin or the socioeconomic status of their families. They tend to believe that middle-class, monolingual Spanish spoken in Latin America or Spain is better or more ‘pure’ than their own varieties.

This can lead to affective barriers to the smooth expansion of their linguistic repertoires. Being told by even the most tactful, well-intentioned professor that the way they speak is not ‘correct,’ or even just ‘inappropriate’ for certain situations, can demoralize even the most motivated student. Being told that what they speak is not ‘real’ Spanish, in the case of calques and other features of contact, can threaten a speaker’s identity as a Spanish speaker or member of her national origin community. This sense of disaffection can be exacerbated when students who have no previous knowledge of Spanish seem to have an easier time learning standard Spanish, given that they do not have to change any ‘bad’ habits.

Spanish language teaching in US tertiary education

Spanish language courses in US tertiary education, like most courses in languages other than English (LOTEs), have traditionally been tailored to students born and raised in the United States in non-Spanish-speaking homes (Lacorte, 2013) and focused on standard form(s) of the language. These courses tend to be structured around the acquisition of progressively more complex sets of grammatical forms, which have been standardized to reflect not actual usage, but the forms deemed most ‘correct,’ generally based on the language of a particular social group at a particular time and place, within which variation and diversity have been minimized to the extent possible. The history of language standardization and the ideologies surrounding it have been amply theorized elsewhere (e.g., Bourdieu, Thompson, & Raymond, 2003; Milroy & Milroy, 2012).

Here, I am mainly concerned with the erasure of linguistic diversity and the obviation of bi/multilingual practices.

Teaching a standard language involves, by definition, the erasure, or at least minimization, of sociolinguistic variation, and often even of much geographical variation. Thus, phonology, lexicon, or syntax that diverge from the idealized standard are omitted from foreign language texts entirely. The main exceptions in Spanish, called a ‘pluricentric’ language by the institutions² that regulate its use, are tolerance of some geographical lexical variation and a few broad dialectal differences in pronunciation, pronoun use, and verb conjugations deemed acceptable variations within the standard.

Spanish has also traditionally been understood not as a language present in the community where US learners live, but as an abstract, idealized set of grammatical forms, used by idealized homogeneous foreign populations. Bi/multilingual practices receive even less attention in Spanish-language textbooks than does sociolinguistic variation. Textbooks still tend to present Spanish speakers as monolinguals living in monolingual societies; languages other than Spanish within majority Spanish-speaking societies are generally ignored, as is the presence of tens of millions of Spanish speakers in the United States. US bilingualism beyond the second generation and multilingual practices such as translanguaging are rarely mentioned, and certainly not portrayed to foreign-language learners as legitimate ways of using language or recommended as strategies to use in language acquisition.

Finally, since the advent of communicative methods, recourse to English (or other languages students already speak well), any sort of comparative linguistic methodology, and explicit grammar instruction have generally been discouraged in language teaching. The mainstream mantra has been that acquisition can only take place in the L2, that grammatical explanations or explicit teaching of metalinguistic information have no effect on outcomes, and that any recourse to the L1 represents a failure of the language teacher to communicate the concepts using the L2. This is the result of a maximalist understanding of the input and monitor hypotheses (Krashen, 1982, 1985), which posit that acquisition only takes place when the learner makes sense of comprehensible input in the L2. While in reality these concepts are more complicated than this, and there are competing theories, many language teachers continue to believe that in-class use of any language besides the one being taught and even explicit grammatical instruction are not valid strategies in teaching languages. This is despite more recent

research that indicates learner's other languages can be useful and effective tools to scaffold the learning of new languages (McMillan & Rivers, 2011; Turnbull & Dailey-O'Cain, 2009).

Spanish at Brooklyn College

The following section aims to provide a brief overview of the institutional conditions for Spanish language teaching and learning at Brooklyn College (BC), the site of the present study. BC is a senior college within the City University of New York system, located in a diverse area of Brooklyn, a borough of New York City. The undergraduate population in Fall 2015 was 14,207. BC is somewhat whiter and less Latinx than the rest of the CUNY system (40.9% white vs. 26.4% for the system as a whole; 14.2% Latinx vs. 29.1% for all of CUNY) (CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, 2015).

At BC, Spanish is taught by the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures. The elementary language program is three semesters long. There are 'Heritage' Spanish language courses listed in the catalog, although, as will be detailed below, these courses have not been offered for some time. The lack of heritage courses is an important element of this article, and deserves some contextualization.

Across the CUNY system, language class enrollments were adversely impacted by the implementation of a hotly debated system-wide revamping of the core curriculum (an initiative known as Pathways), implemented at BC in Fall 2013. Among many other changes, Pathways relaxed language requirements and reduced LOTEs to one option among many within a 'flexible core'. Drops in language enrollments were especially steep beyond the first semester. Between Fall 2012 and Fall 2015, offerings of Spanish I dropped from six to five sections; Spanish II dropped from six to two; and Spanish III from seven to three, with enrollments often hovering around ten students per section in this, the final language course in the cycle.

Heritage Spanish courses are listed as offered by the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, but have not been taught in at least the last three academic years, as far back as the College maintains schedules of classes on its website. This is presumably due to resource constraints and a choice to focus on the traditional core mission of university language departments, teaching learners who do not speak the language at home or in the community. Without heritage courses, in the anecdotal experience of the author, bilingual students enroll in Spanish I at a rate of approximately 20-25% of all enrollees.

Research Questions

These circumstances create a dilemma for the department and individual instructors: how are instructors best to serve these students? Course descriptions, written with the assumption that heritage courses would be offered, state that heritage students are barred from enrolling in basic Spanish language courses. Should instructors enforce this rule even though heritage courses are not in fact offered? Should bilingual students be obliged to take courses in other languages or more advanced Spanish language or literature classes, even if they are insecure in the fundamentals of their Spanish? If they remain in elementary classes, how should instructors serve their unique affective and linguistic needs within the framework of a course that is (at best) not designed with them in mind and (at worst) actively marginalizes their experiences and the linguistic repertoires they bring to the table? How can instructors structure their courses when they have such a diversity of linguistic abilities in the same classroom?

I will focus my analysis in this study on three main research questions:

1. What are students' affective relationships to the linguistic codes they use? Specifically, what linguistic ideologies do Spanish-English bilingual students have about Spanish, especially the non-standard, bi/multilingual varieties they speak?
2. What motivations do these students claim for taking elementary Spanish-language classes?
3. How can language instructors improve their approach to language education and classroom practices to better serve students from a diversity of language backgrounds in the same pedagogical space?

Bilingual Students in This Study

For the present study I interviewed four bilingual students enrolled in Spanish 1010 (a first-semester Spanish course) at Brooklyn College. Interviews were conducted in English and recorded using a digital voice recorder. They ranged from 25 minutes to almost an hour. I was the instructor of both sections from which participants were selected, a reality which will be addressed in the analysis.

The four students featured here are a diverse group, including different national origins, socioeconomic classes, skin tones, genders, and ages. A major factor in common for all was the fact that they spoke English well enough as young children to test out of bilingual programs (at the latest, by the second grade) and went through nearly the entire educational system in English,

with minimal instruction in Spanish. All four participants could thus be described as English-dominant with varying levels of exposure to Spanish. While this may have spared them some of the negative consequences of being pigeonholed as long-term ELLs (García, 2009), it also resulted in a lack of instruction in Spanish or exposure to formal, academic varieties of the language.

Before discussing the results that emerged from the interviews, I will provide some details about each participant. Names have been replaced with pseudonyms to protect participants' privacy.

Claudia

'Claudia,' 19, is a sophomore (second-year BC student). Both her parents immigrated to New York as young adults, her mother from Colombia and her father from the Dominican Republic (DR). Her parents split when she was around six; today, she lives with her mother, grandmother, and other maternal relatives. She reports speaking mostly Spanish at home, especially with her grandmother, whose English is limited. She feels she mostly speaks Spanish with a Colombian accent, but reports switching to a Dominican accent when she is with her Dominican family or friends. Claudia recalls learning the basics of reading and writing Spanish in a bilingual first grade class, but as she then switched to a monolingual English class, she did not have any further instruction in Spanish until high school, when she took two years of basic Spanish 'foreign language' courses.

Karolina

'Karolina,' 18, is currently a freshman (first-year student) at BC, considering majoring in bilingual education. Her mother, still a monolingual Spanish speaker, immigrated from the Dominican Republic as an adult, while her bilingual father, also Dominican, came with his family as a baby. She speaks mostly English with her father and Spanish with her mother. She was in bilingual education in pre-K but did not take Spanish again until high school, when she took one year of regular Spanish and one year of a heritage course. She also works as a bilingual aide at a school for children with autism.

Luis

‘Luis,’ 18, is a freshman at BC and plans to eventually transfer elsewhere to study civil engineering. He was born in New York City to Dominican parents and raised in Brooklyn. He reports speaking a mix of English and Spanish at home, today using more English than Spanish. Despite speaking mostly English, he speaks some Spanish every day, with his parents, his extended family, including cousins around his age, or friends. He had not received any instruction in Spanish before this class, although he took some Italian in middle school and three years of Latin in high school.

James

‘James,’ 30, is currently enrolled full-time at Brooklyn College majoring in Education, with the goal of becoming a physical education teacher and basketball coach. He is the grandson of Puerto Rican migrants. Until the age of six, he lived with both parents and his maternal grandparents. He learned Spanish and English simultaneously, as his grandparents spoke mostly Spanish, although he reports always feeling more fluent in English, as his mother spoke mostly English with him. Around the time he started school (in English), his grandmother died, his grandfather moved away, and his parents split up, at which point he stopped speaking Spanish regularly and transitioned to being essentially monolingual in English, losing most of his expressive abilities in Spanish. While he never studied the language before taking my course, James picked up colloquial Spanish in the workplace over the last ten years, where he deals mostly with Spanish-speaking clients. Today he can hold a conversation in Spanish, but mostly resembles an L2 speaker, especially in terms of his grammatical accuracy.

Analysis & Discussion

RQ 1: Students’ language ideologies regarding Spanish

It was clear from the interviews that students’ beliefs about different varieties of Spanish were a major factor influencing their approach to the course. This includes varieties identified with the students’ national origins and the ways in which their Spanish reflects their bilingualism in English.

All students understood their Spanish to be deficient in some way. They reflected several ideologies previously identified in the literature. One of the most prominent is a bias in favor of

the standard language (Lippi-Green, 1997) and the belief that the standard is internally consistent and superior to both non-standard monolingual varieties and contact varieties. They also believe that speaking the standard will make it easier to communicate with speakers from diverse backgrounds.

Students regularly expressed a belief in the incompleteness or inferiority of bilingual Spanish. Claudia, for example, feels that monolingual Spanish speakers in Latin America view US Spanish as different from their varieties in a way that delegitimizes it. At the same time, Claudia feels that Spanish speakers in the US are more dynamic, ‘modern’ and flexible, making use of the language in more creative ways:

Claudia: Over there, whenever we go and say something that’s not really familiar to them, they look at us like ... “Why are you guys pronouncing it that way? It’s not that way, it’s the other way that you say it.” I feel like in Colombia that was my experience ... I feel like they stick to what they were taught when they were little. Here, we mix it up. We use different terms to describe stuff. When we go over there ... They’re not really familiar with it.

Michael: Did it seem like the way that you were speaking was not legitimate to them or they just weren’t familiar with it?

Claudia: I think both. They didn’t think it was legitimate and they didn’t really understand what we were talking about.

Luis recounted a similar experience in which contact varieties of Spanish, influenced by English, were rejected or not understood by his family in the DR. This points to tensions introduced by the sociolinguistic situation in the Spanish-speaking world, which has its own internal hierarchization and monolingual bias. Interesting similarities exist between this and the situation in the Arabic-speaking world (see Love, this volume), despite the fact that virtually all varieties of Spanish are mutually intelligible, unlike the differences between Arabic vernaculars.

Indeed, all three Dominican participants pointed to the hierarchization of varieties of Spanish. While the issue was couched in terms of ‘appropriateness’ and framed as cultural rather than linguistic, the Dominican participants expressed strong beliefs that certain varieties are appropriate for certain situations, and they consistently characterized Dominican Spanish as not ‘proper’ or ‘correct’ and therefore not appropriate for all situations. Claudia, who is of mixed

Dominican and Colombian heritage, reports switching between her ‘accents’ depending on her interlocutor and the situation. She related that she would only use her Dominican voice with other Dominicans she knew intimately, not with higher-status people:

Claudia: I feel like speaking in my Dominican accent would be appropriate to speak with my Dominican family or even my Dominican friends. I feel like that’s okay, but speaking to a president or even a professor, I don’t feel like it sounds correctly. That was just the way I was raised. You have to speak this way. You can’t speak like that.

Luis reported trying to change his Spanish based on things he’s learned in class, even with his family. He has also tried to correct others, in the hope that his new, more ‘appropriate’ Spanish will spread through social pressure:

Luis: I definitely want to get into the habit of just learning how to speak in that manner all the time, because not only will I be able to enhance how fluent I’m speaking the language, but also being able to help my family and whoever else ... I think that by them saying, “Okay, that sounds a little more appropriate,” maybe they should start using that as well. It just, I feel like it would make it easier to communicate with people no matter what background they have.

These statements point to a belief that participants’ ways of speaking are inferior to the standard. Contradicting the notion that students might reject the standard as inauthentic or threatening (Helmer, 2013), James dismisses the importance of local authenticity and embraces the pan-Hispanic ideology of unity in diversity (del Valle, 2009):

James: I think Spanish is Spanish, and if you know how to speak it, and enunciate the word properly, and learn how the subject, pronoun, verb, and the placement of these grammatical components, I think that it shouldn’t matter. I just think that Spanish should just be Spanish. I understand that everybody has different words for different things, but I think that’s all interchangeable. I’m fine with learning it from the textbook.

On the whole, we see that these bilingual students have a high opinion of standard or academic Spanish, even though it’s not the variety they most control, to such an extent that they are ready to abandon the ways they have grown up speaking in order to acquire the status that the ‘textbook standard’ version of the language seems to afford. This should not be surprising, given

the rest of the sociolinguistic literature, especially since the students participating in this study are upwardly mobile and academically inclined. Nonetheless, as instructors, with the knowledge of the deleterious effects of such ideologies in society as a whole, should we simply facilitate their acquisition of the standard, their stated goal, without challenging them to think critically about the ideas that they already have about local and non-standard varieties of Spanish?

RQ2: Reasons for taking Spanish I

The ideologies expressed above clearly had an effect on students' decision to take a basic Spanish course, and are reflected in their responses to questions about the topic. I believe the institutional context (detailed in the section "Spanish at Brooklyn College" above) also provides a good deal of explanation. However, the interviews gave a more detailed picture of students' own rationale (or rationalizations) for taking Spanish. In discussing their reasons for taking a basic Spanish course, student participants cited their restricted linguistic repertoires in Spanish, their insecurity with the formal aspects of language or understanding grammar, their lack of practice with reading and writing, and generally, a perceived need to improve their Spanish.

Luis feels that his Spanish is imperfect or incomplete and needs reinforcement through formal study. He points to grammar explanation as a positive element of the course, in that it gives him more confidence that he is speaking in a way that he believes will be respected by others.

Luis: I myself don't understand all the grammar that goes into [Spanish]. I may say something that I may feel like it's correct until my family they might make jokes because it doesn't come out exactly how it's supposed to. That's why I'm getting into the learning of it now. [...] It's actually why I chose the class so that I can be introduced more to the language, make sure that I'm speaking properly. I want to be able to hold down a conversation with someone in Spanish and not trip over my words or have to think about something.

Identity questions also figure into some participants' explanations for taking the course. James, despite showing the least consistency in his linguistic performance, places much importance on speaking the language well as a sign of identity:

James: I'm taking this class because I'm aware that I'm American. I was born and raised here, but I also still want to hold on to some of my heritage, so I can pass it on to my children. The fact is grandparents they're starting to die away. For me that is very important for me to learn how to speak the language and also to speak it correctly. I've also come in contact with individuals who speak the language who find it offensive if you don't speak the language properly. So, for me it's very important to speak the language, and speak it properly, and more importantly, to learn more about the heritage, what you come from and your bloodlines.

Some bilingual students are probably taking Spanish because they think it will afford them a high grade and a boost to their Grade Point Average (GPA) without much effort. Given the lack of heritage Spanish courses, I can hardly fault them for making this choice. As could be predicted from the context of the interviews, none of the students expressly told me (their instructor) that "getting an easy 'A'" was their primary motivation for taking the course, although one came close. And indeed, while I do not discount this as one factor, I don't see it as the primary motivating feature. Students provided well-articulated and nuanced rationales for taking Spanish I:

Karolina: I chose [the course] because I knew since I already know the language it wouldn't be hard learning a new language. And also just to perfect the way I speak. Just because the way I speak Spanish is more of the way I grew up versus learning the proper way of saying things. Here I learn to perfect the dialect I guess.

Karolina continued her explanation of taking Spanish I by identifying what she felt were the shortcomings of her heritage Spanish course in high school:

Karolina: [In heritage courses in high school] you're [just] reading books and writing papers. It's not necessarily, 'Oh, you have to write—this makes sense this way.' It was more if I did a mistake on my paper that's how I was corrected, versus getting a breakdown of how to speak it.

Interestingly, the heritage course she took in high school did not provide the level of explicit feedback and grammar breakdown that Karolina would have liked or needed to feel secure. The metalinguistic information common in Spanish courses aimed at first-time learners was thus seen

by this participant, as well as others, not as a detriment or a waste of time, but as valuable content that she was missing in her linguistic education.

Another common theme was acquiring a Spanish that was more akin to that spoken in Hispanophone-majority countries, or at least the standard variety of the language detailed in the textbook, which was believed to be both more ‘appropriate’ and more ‘universal’ than their local varieties. When indicating what they hoped to get out of the course, participants expressed a desire to learn ‘universal,’ ‘correct’ or ‘proper’ Spanish. This idealized variety was contrasted with non-standard monolingual varieties spoken by certain groups (variously identified as the uneducated, all Dominicans, Dominicans from the *campos*, people from the ‘street,’ etc.), as well as with ways of speaking influenced by contact with English (use of terms like ‘yarda’ for ‘backyard,’ instead of ‘patio’).

Luis: [We]’re so used to just speaking the slang that we do or just saying things how we feel comfortable. It’s not the same thing as when you actually go out into the world, you meet people from different countries, or speaking as I would say proper Spanish. If I were to go to Spain now I would be able to communicate, getting more into the course; I would be able to have a conversation with someone from Spain without getting confused or confusing them. [...] I feel like overall now learning Spanish over here I’m getting a more universal way of speaking Spanish so when I go somewhere else it would, I feel, be much easier to communicate.

I also asked participants if they thought that the material presented in Spanish I was too easy or basic. I have to assume that answers were influenced by the fact that I, the interviewer, was also the participants’ instructor. Nonetheless, I believe their answers to point to genuine reasons for taking Spanish I:

Claudia: I don’t feel like it’s ever basic... even today with the ‘los’ and ‘las’³ I feel like I always forget how to work on the grammar part of Spanish.

Overall, students felt they were learning new content even within a course not intended for bilinguals or native/heritage speakers. Some of this may be rationalization, but a key element of this appears to be the metalinguistic knowledge that the type of course offers. It is clear that formal instruction and metalinguistic understanding are not required to acquire a language, be it

the dominant community language or a minority language. However, for a language such as Spanish, spoken over a wide geographical territory, with a centuries-old and highly developed written tradition, wide sociolinguistic and geographical variation, and highly differentiated oral and written, formal and informal registers, formal study is generally necessary to acquire a repertoire deemed acceptable for professional purposes. The students in this study are keenly aware of their lack of formal study of the language, as well as the ways the Spanishes they acquired at home or in the community are different from prestige varieties. They are anxious to learn more; just what they expect to learn and how that process is understood is another question, perhaps the most important one we face as instructors.

RQ3: Effectively instructing bilinguals and L2 learners in the same classroom

Many foreign language instructors assume that bilingual students do not belong in their classrooms, at least if they have mastered the language beyond the level being taught. They often require such students to take another course, be it a heritage course or a higher-level Spanish class. However, based on the findings of this project, especially when heritage classes are not an option, I am hesitant to take such an approach. I believe that our goal should be to reach the optimal learning outcomes for all students, both heritage and traditional L2 learners, and I believe it is possible to do so within an inclusive language classroom when conditions require it.

In reality, the ideal setting for most of these students would likely be a heritage course appropriate for their linguistic performance, where the type of language instruction would be targeted at building on their existing skills and where their ideological and affective needs could also be addressed head-on in a supportive space. However, in a climate wherein ‘austerity’ limits course offerings to the bare essentials, and those essentials have been determined to be courses that serve novice learners, how can instructors construct the best approach that will meet the stated goals of their courses and the needs of the majority of students (teaching Spanish to L2 learners) while also meeting the needs of their bilingual students?

In light of the above findings, I propose that instructors should find new ways to engage with a broad spectrum of abilities and experiences within the same classroom. We should be designing activities that meet several goals:

1. *Embrace the fact that Spanish is a daily reality and a second language in the United States, not a foreign one.* The past few decades have seen the spread of Spanish and Spanish-

speakers beyond their traditional geographical strongholds in the border states and major urban centers to places of high visibility throughout the 50 States. In New York this is not new, but the perception is still often that Spanish is not a local reality, but a language spoken either in foreign countries or by immigrants. Highlighting the role that Spanish-based linguistic repertoires play in the lives of Americans of the second and third generation, as well as the opportunities, both social and economic, that Spanish can open up, can increase motivation among heritage speakers and FL learners alike. We also need to start accepting US Spanish as a legitimate variety, taking note of the variation unique to the US on the same terms we do for varieties spoken in Spanish-majority countries (Otheguy, 2008; Otheguy & Stern, 2011).

2. Embrace, not discourage, translanguaging and multilingual practices in the classroom.

The reality of Spanish use, both in the United States and in Spanish-majority countries, is no longer a monolingual one, if indeed it ever was. Continuing to insist on a monolingual model in the classroom not only results in an othering of the target language and its speakers; it also fails to reflect the ways in which bilingual speakers experience language. Furthermore, it fails to take advantage of some of the most important language-learning tools that monolinguals and bilinguals alike possess, namely, the ability to build connections between codes and construct their own semantic networks and theories of grammaticality based upon their existing knowledge.

Following Cummins (2005), I support making use of multilingual connections and cross-linguistic comparisons in the foreign-language classroom (including scaffolding content knowledge with English discussion). This would involve regularly requesting input from bilingual students on usage and vocabulary, recognizing them as linguistic authorities and turning them into local-language experts in the classroom, in addition to their role as students expanding their own repertoires to include (properly contextualized) standard features. Allowing students to use English and employ metalinguistic knowledge and cross-linguistic comparison does not imply a return to grammar-translation methods of foreign-language teaching and learning; rather, it involves facilitating acquisition through the construction of knowledge and skills by students, using tools that they already have at their disposal, namely, the diversity of linguistic experiences present in the classroom and their multilingual environment. Tasks would call direct attention to oral translanguaging practices and multilingual texts, emphasizing the usefulness of the full spectrum of multilingual competencies.

This approach would require instructors to rethink the expected outcomes of language courses. Instead of imagining that we will be producing a parallel monolingual or ‘native-like’ Spanish speaker within novice Spanish learners, or teaching the bilingual to speak exactly like a monolingual, we would have to expect that we would be producing multilingual, multicompetent speakers with repertoires that reflect their experiences and needs. All successful students in this model would gain new abilities in the language as well as an understanding of how it works, a goal they all apparently share; they would likewise develop the ability to recognize different ways of using their languages, and understand the consequences of making value judgments about language use, a goal that goes hand in hand with the next point.

3. *Promote critical language awareness. Question ‘appropriateness’ as the goal for heritage language education. Challenge the structures and ideologies that designate non-hegemonic forms of language as deficient.* My students provide ample evidence that bilinguals come to the classroom with negative understandings of bi/multilingual and other non-conforming ways of using language. In the heritage language education field, the (in)appropriateness of US bilingual varieties of Spanish for certain contexts is often the rationale for teaching students new registers or eliminating ‘non-standard’ features from their language. Several recent articles (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Showstack, 2010) have questioned the appropriateness of ‘appropriateness’ as the basis of heritage language education.

For these authors, just defining some forms of language as *appropriate* for certain contexts and others as less than does not serve speakers who use and will continue to use these forms. Instead, it reinforces the ideologies, structures and practices that mark bi/multilingual speakers and their language as ‘inappropriate’ in the first place. Flores and Rosa (2015) point out that Spanish speakers in the US are a racialized minority, and the real problem with raciolinguistic discrimination lies not in the way racialized speakers use language, but in the ways their interlocutors interpret their languaging (p. 152). Indeed, even when they speak in ways that are not different from their white peers in any quantifiable way, Latinos and other minorities are frequently perceived as having an ‘accent’ (p. 152). The problem is not with the ‘speaking subject’ but the ‘listening subject’ (p. 152) who hears an accent where none is present, racializing the speaker. Teaching *appropriateness* is useless from this perspective, as even when speakers use the most ‘appropriate’ forms, they will continue to be perceived as deficient based upon their identities as racialized minorities: Latinxs, blacks, Dominicans, bilinguals, etc. Without a “critical

heteroglossic perspective” (p. 154) that acknowledges and challenges the linguistic ideologies of the listening subject, no manner of ‘appropriate’ languaging on the part of the speaking subject will be enough to grant them the linguistic legitimacy they seek. Showstack (2010) provides a framework, used by both heritage and second-language learners, in which real-world projects based in the local community can invite students to engage critically with the variety of language around them and the value judgments about language and speaking subjects that manifest in commonly held linguistic ideologies.

4. *Utilize the variety of linguistic abilities and strengths students bring to the classroom through constructivist group projects or pair work.* This final step is perhaps the most challenging from a pedagogical perspective, especially in elementary courses where students are pressed for time, perhaps not deeply invested, and often still reaching to grasp basic linguistic concepts and a working vocabulary. This could involve a project similar to that outlined in Showstack (2010), in which bilinguals and novice learners participated in a community-based project exploring the place of Spanish in the local community, perhaps simplified to focus on the kinds of linguistic features L2 students are still acquiring, but which are also relevant to bilingual students. In the past, I have offered extra credit options that encouraged students to engage with multilingual texts (signs, labels, etc.) and identify differences in tone or content for English and Spanish speakers. Another option I have offered required students to record themselves having a real-world conversation in Spanish, then analyze the linguistic features both parties used and reflect on the effectiveness of the interaction as a communicative event. Either of these activities, as well as many others, could be developed to include additional elements of critical language awareness and adapted for pairs or small groups combining bilingual and L2 learners.

Conclusions

I hope to have outlined some of the issues instructors in my position grapple with on a daily basis and provided food for thought for instructors in a similar position and other interested observers. Much of the work on heritage language education focuses on the development of biliteracy in bilingual speakers (Hornberger, 2005; Hornberger & Link, 2012). While I agree that this is an important goal, and indeed improving writing is an objective that participants identified as one of their own goals in taking Spanish, it is becoming clear that teaching students to read complex texts and to write the standard variety is not enough, and will do little to combat the negative

ideas that students themselves and others in the community have about their ways of languaging. Nor is it enough to teach students that certain registers or varieties of the language are ‘appropriate’ for certain situations while others are not. When speakers find it difficult to change their linguistic practices, or their efforts —however effective— are not recognized, the end result is encouraging abandonment of the language, or at least formal study of it, which may have knock-on effects in students’ educational and working lives. We must find ways to encourage students to think critically about language variation and multilingualism, from its origins to its effects on speakers. These lessons are equally valid and urgent for both Spanish-English bilinguals and their novice learner classmates.

Despite the institutional hurdles to completely rethinking curricula, the core of the recommendations above could be implemented individually by instructors without redefining major goals or designing new courses. They could be applied anywhere the language is taught, whether heritage courses are offered or not, although they would probably be most useful where heritage courses are not an option. While the challenges of such an undertaking are great, the potential rewards are greater, in the satisfaction and excitement of piloting new techniques and leading a more dynamic and engaging classroom. Increasing critical language awareness and helping all students to understand the value of multilingualism are certainly goals worth fighting for.

Notes

1. For the purposes of this paper, the term ‘bilingual’ will be preferred over ‘native speaker’ and ‘heritage speaker’ (or learner), except when ‘heritage’ is the term used in official documentations or by participants. I avoid the concept of the ‘native speaker’ as a linguistically untenable construct, which is particularly difficult to operationalize in bi/multilingual contexts. I try to avoid ‘heritage’ when possible as it can delegitimize these speakers by reinforcing a monolingual bias. For a more complete critique of the concepts of native and heritage speakers, see Love (this volume).
2. Primarily the *Real Academia Española de la Lengua* and other national academies, the *Asociación de Academias de la Lengua Española*, along with the *Instituto Cervantes*, *Fundéu BBVA* and other institutions dedicated to the promotion of the Spanish language; see del Valle (2009).
3. The grammatical feature in focus that day was direct object pronouns.

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BOOK REVIEW

Being a Teacher | Researcher. A Primer on Doing Authentic Inquiry Research on Teaching and Learning, by Konstantinos Alexakos (2015). Sense Publishers, 122 pages, Paperback \$54.00, Hardcover \$99.00, eBook (no price available), ISBN 978-9-46300-293-6 (Paperback), ISBN: 978-9-46300-294-3, eBook: 978-9-46300-295-0.

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The book, *Being a Teacher | Researcher. A Primer on Doing Authentic Inquiry Research on Teaching and Learning*, by Konstantinos Alexakos, claims to be a primer for doing authentic inquiry research on teaching and learning. It is short in length, especially in comparison with research methodology handbooks, at only about 100 pages in length. The vocabulary employed is accessible and, frequently, when specific terminology is employed, description is offered. However, it needs to be said that this is not an easy text to get through. It is content loaded and some chapters may require more than one reading to really understand the ideas being raised. Readers with no training in academic research might find it very complex. The primer seems to be written for Master's or PhD level students doing, or starting to do, research. Therefore, it is possibly not the perfect starting read for teachers who wish to be introduced to background theory on adopting a teacher | researcher role. That being so, it has to be said, that the more practical part of the book, the last six chapters, are a great aid for teachers who need guidance to become teacher | researchers, as they are based on specific examples and step by step descriptions. The book would be a great choice for Master's or PhD level students who feel lost developing a teacher | researcher role, whether that be in their own or someone else's classroom.

The book is structured around twelve chapters and, as stated by the author, divided into four sections. The first five chapters are dedicated to the theory behind authentic inquiry research methodology. The following four, chapters six to nine, are more concerned with practical issues and examples. The third section, chapters ten and eleven, are dedicated to real experiences of the author. The last section is one chapter, chapter twelve, that sums up the book and includes the final remarks of the author. Apart from the twelve chapters, there is a section with appendices, bibliographical references, and an index of major notions.

In the first five chapters, the theory outlined is somehow difficult to grasp for beginning researchers, as the organization of the concepts is not very straightforward. All the concepts are very well explained in detail, but a general overview of the relationship between the concepts, and within educational research, seems to be lacking. Therefore, while more advanced master's or PhD students might not find the chapters less difficult to understand, a teacher with no notion of research theory and methodology would find it quite difficult to access.

The second part of the book is, nonetheless, written to reach non-expert readers. All the practical aspects are very well detailed and steps are offered as to guide the reader in real-life applications of the methodology. Teachers can get a clear picture of the role of a teacher | researcher, as well as a step-by-step proposal of how to implement authentic inquiry research in a real classroom.

The third section includes real teacher | researcher experiences of the author and are very detailed. However, the research examples are all set in secondary education settings and no relation is made to lower levels, such as primary education. Therefore, some readers may find that a representation of the specific context of other educational levels' is missing – maybe not only in the experiences, but also throughout the book more generally.

The fourth section of the book is dedicated to the final remarks. As for the appendix, all the documents included are very relevant for doing authentic inquiry research in education and serve the reader very well. Such documents are indispensable during the research process and therefore are as a key contribution of the book. The index of main concepts is always handy as it helps the reader to locate concepts in different chapters of the book.

Going into the content of the chapters in more depth, the first chapter is dedicated to the introduction. Alexakos offers a brief explanation of his work and the reasons behind it, as well as a description of the book and its sections. The author offers a very passionate view of the relevance of authentic inquiry research and the role of teacher | researchers. Alexakos discusses the issue of objectivity and subjectivity behind being teachers as researchers and states: "Biases and interests in research, as in science, can either impede understanding or lead to innovative thought and revolutionary backgrounds" (2015, p. 4) The chapter also includes a justification for authentic inquiry methodology, a brief outline of the axiology and epistemology behind the methodology and some recommendation on how to use the book.

The second chapter is dedicated to sociocultural theory, within which authentic inquiry is grounded. In the chapter a fair description of the theory is given and it serves as

justification for choosing authentic inquiry as the research methodology and for the joint role of teacher | researcher. Some complex concepts, such as dialectics, ontology and heteroglossia, do arise in the chapter, but a description is given of them. As I have stated previously, some readers may find it necessary to read this chapter more than once.

The third chapter is a very brief and well-selected summary of the evolution of research around teachers. It guides the reader to understand the objectivity behind the apparent subjectivity of teachers as researchers of their own practices. It also highlights the importance of research done by teachers for teachers and not for academics by academics who do not step into the classroom. Authentic inquiry research and the role of teacher | researcher is presented as a need and as a source of “practices based on emergent theory” (2015, p. 29)

The fourth chapter defines briefly but clearly some of the core concepts of a research framework, as well as some methods of data compilation that can be used during authentic inquiry research. The chapter is a jewel if the reader is acquainted with the basics of research frameworks. More inexpert readers may find this chapter very confusing and decide to read it more than once or to leave it behind. The chapter lacks a clearer map of the relationship of all the concepts mentioned to research and to the decisions that a teacher | researcher has to make for the design of their teaching and research practice.

The fifth chapter, which is the last chapter dedicated to theory, outlines the authentic inquiry research framework. The chapter offers a table to compare conventional research and authentic inquiry research. Some new concepts appear, such as heuristics, and thus can leave readers in a position of not knowing where to place these new concepts in relation to the previous concepts mentioned. However it offers great insight into research inquiry issues such as when is a good time to finalize the research. The last figure is a great summary of the main points taken into consideration when using authentic inquiry research, and can be used as a checklist by expert and non-expert readers.

Chapter six is dedicated to tensions, ethics and conflicts. It is the first chapter in the practical section. This chapter is very explicit and would be of great help for both expert and in-expert readers. Expert readers will find common issues outlined that arise during research and non-expert readers will find a very tangible description of the tensions, ethics, conflicts and vulnerabilities that can, and often do, arise when carrying out a study. For this reason, it is a very useful chapter for non-expert readers as well as experts.

The seventh chapter is dedicated to Institutional Review Boards (IRB) and the dissemination of research. It is a chapter that proves to be of help for teachers that conduct

formal research in their classroom and decide to disseminate their findings in the education community. It is a chapter, however, that focuses very much on the IRB process in the author's own context. Those teacher | researchers conducting formal research, but that have a different IRB-type process, could find this chapter useful but somehow shallow. The appendix dedicated to consent forms is of great aid in any case.

Chapter eight shows the basics of a research framework outline. It goes briefly into sections of the research framework such as: participants selection, methods and data resources, research questions, inquiry and findings, generalizability, informed writings, and interventions. This chapter is a very handy outline of the research planning process.

Chapter nine is exclusively dedicated to the final stages of a research project – the writing up and the presentation stages. It is a very complete guide for formal research, although, possibly does not cover everything that PhD students or similar need to know and be able to do. The table provided is of great aid in the writing of a formal paper. The checklist and presentation guides are very handy as well. The additional suggestions are little jewels that should be followed by every researcher.

Chapter ten, the first chapter in the third section, is dedicated to the beginnings of the writer as a teacher | researcher. It is an anecdotal chapter that provides an insight into the beginnings of a teacher | researcher. Non-expert readers may find this chapter not only easy to read but also inspiring.

Chapter eleven is a description of a real experience of a more experienced Alexakos. The chapter describes a more complex situation and proves to be a great insight into tensions and conflicts that can arise during research, even for experienced researchers. The description also aids the reader to picture the complexity of the role of a teacher | researcher and of research in the classroom. It gives authentic inquiry research a quality that appears difficult to find in other types of research. The teacher | researcher is portrayed as a sensitive character that is not only focusing on theories but on learners' and teachers' growth.

The last chapter, the one dedicated to the final remarks, is a very short chapter written in a personal style. Alexakos outlines, using his own voice, the importance and relevance of authentic inquiry research and of teachers adopting the role of researchers. Alexakos advocates for the transformation authentic inquiry research can trigger not only for the practices of the teacher that researches his or her own practice, but also for the person behind the researcher.

To sum up, *Being a Teacher | Researcher. A Primer on Doing Authentic Inquiry Research on Teaching and Learning*, by Konstantinos Alexakos is a book that is very short in length but complete and often complex. The book will be best appreciated by expert readers who will be able to digest all the implications behind setting up a research framework. However, non-expert reader can find, especially in the practical chapters, a very clear guide into designing research in the classroom through the role of teacher | researcher.

This review is objective in the specific context of a PhD candidate that has used this framework as the basis of research done in her own pre-school classroom, through her role as teacher | researcher, in Catalonia, Spain. Thus, from personal experience, the teacher | researcher behind this review definitely recommends this book as a primer for authentic inquiry research to other readers interested in teacher | researcher roles.

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Interview

An Interview with Dr. Ofelia García on the Past, Present and Future of Language Policy

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Dr. Ofelia García is Professor in the Ph.D. programs of Urban Education and of Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian Literatures and Languages at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. She has been Professor of Bilingual Education at Columbia University's Teachers College, Dean of the School of Education at the Brooklyn Campus of Long Island University, and Professor of Education at The City College of New York. Among her best-known books are *Bilingual Education in the 21st Century: A Global Perspective*; *Translanguaging*; *Language, Bilingualism and Education* (with Li Wei); *Educating Emergent Bilinguals* (with J. Kleifgen), *Handbook of Language and Ethnic Identity* (with J. Fishman), *Negotiating Language Policies in Schools: Educators as Policymakers* (with K. Menken), *Imagining Multilingual Schools* (with T. Skutnabb-Kangas and M. Torres-Guzmán), and *A Reader in Bilingual Education* (with C. Baker). She is the General Editor of the *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* and the co-editor of *Language Policy* (with H. Kelly-Holmes). For the past four years, García has been co-principal investigator of CUNY-NYSIEB (www.cuny-nysieb.org). García's extensive publication record on bilingualism and the education of bilinguals is grounded in her life experience living in New York City after leaving Cuba at the age of 11, teaching language minority students bilingually, educating bilingual and ESL teachers, and working with doctoral students researching these topics.

The interview published in this Special Issue was conducted in the May 2016, following the author's participation in a graduate seminar entitled *Global Perspectives on Language and Education Policy* taught by Dr. Ofelia García and Dr. Carmina Makar. In this interview, several issues relating to the past, present and future of the language policy were discussed.

Interview

Interviewer: Could you define language policy?

Ofelia García: Language policy has been defined in many different ways and this is the way that I would interpret it. I think that mostly when people talk about language policy, they talk about the top down position of what governments and agents, who are really authority figures, say

about how language should be used in different domains. I think since Spolsky and probably since Fishman, we have been very aware of the fact that the practices, the beliefs, and the attitudes about language are also part of language policy. That is, language policy is not made from the top down, but rather impacted by the practices of people and definitely impacted by the ideologies that people have about language. So the idea that language policy can be made and implemented is absolutely not true, except in very authoritative societies. I think that is how it started. Language planning and language policy were certainly systems of control of people, but what we know about language policy is that it could either work to restrict linguistic opportunities, but also to expand linguistic opportunity.

So what really has to be acknowledged about language policy is that it also works from the bottom up like Nancy Hornberger has described it, how Kate Menken and I have talked about it, and how Johnson has shown. Agents shape language policy. Furthermore, it is not just what is imposed, but as people implement language policy, they are also making language policy. Language policy, I think, is a lot more dynamic than it was in the original conception where it was just top down corpus planning, status planning, and acquisition planning. It is a lot more dynamic because the agents are more equally distributed. Sometimes the policy that speakers make is more powerful than the one that has been created and just imposed down.

Interviewer: Have you seen the field of language policy evolve?

Ofelia García: It has evolved since I started studying about language policy. I started studying with Joshua Fishman and during the beginnings of language policy. Even the naming of it was different because we used to call it language planning. The idea was that language could be planned. The whole idea of Fishman was to not leave your language alone. You can plan this, you can plan the corpus of the language, you can plan the status of the language, and you can plan how people acquire the language. And I think, again, that this has unraveled, because the world has gotten more complex. What language policy did was it offered us a description of how things were done. But in doing so, in offering the description, it didn't give us enough criticality to think of how these policies were restricting the way in which people used languages.

I think certainly from the work of Tollefson, who was the one who really introduced the idea of critical language policy, the field has completely evolved. I think both Nancy Hornberger and also Tom Ricento have talked about classical language policy versus critical language policy. And I think that is has gone in a completely different direction, one that incorporates agents, people, speakers, outside of government agencies, and gives authority to people. That is, it is more equally distributed. I also think it has to do with the ways in which we are experiencing globalization, a neo-liberal economy, and technology. I think of this all the time because it is impossible to control language in a world that is technologically enriched like ours. For example, recently I spent all day looking at classrooms in which languages were being taught that had a policy about how the language should be taught. However, the students all had laptops. You could not control the language input because the students were constantly looking at websites that were in English and constantly looking at Google Translate. So language policy cannot be controlled in the same way that it was when the field started after, of course, the independence of all the Asian and African countries. When we had to deal with this, we asked “what are we going to do with all these language problems?” That is the way in which language diversity was looked upon. Whereas today we do not look at it in the same way. We just think of it as affordances that we all have. I think the field has evolved because we all know that language is controlled by people and not by governments or whatever. It cannot be controlled because it's a lot more dynamic than that.

Interviewer: What do you think is the current direction of language policy? Are there any needed areas of research within this field?

Ofelia García: I think what we must recognize is that language policy today, again, has to change because of technology. Families are reconstituted because so many of our traditional social factors have in many ways become much more dynamic. I think society is changing. In terms of what research is needed, family language policy is an important area of need. The whole idea has always been, with language policy, that languages had to be separated. Certainly in family language policy the idea is that language had to be maintained and it had to be maintained because one person had to speak one language while the other person had to speak the other language. This was the same thing in language education policy, for example. What we know

now and we understand deeply is that multilingualism is a lot more complex than that. Certainly our familiarity with the African multilingualism especially, and the Asian multilingualism, has made us question some of those assumptions. There are children growing up in South Africa right now that have six languages when they are born that go to school. I am not talking about maybe Johannesburg, but in other townships. They go to schools in these townships and the teachers are not teaching through one language, but maybe in first grade the teacher is a Xhosa speaker and that is what she speaks, and the second grade is in another language medium. There is this range of language practices that are recognized, which were not allowed before in the classroom.

I think that we need more work on this type of more dynamic language policy. How is it that languages interact, but yet reserve spaces and sustain themselves? I recently heard wonderful definitions about sustainability at a dual language school. One of the children said, "You do not just sustain things when you choose to not take something away, but when you also give back. Therefore, it lasts a long time." I thought a lot about language sustainability that way. How do you make sure that you continue to sustain this language, but not in isolation, because we can no longer be in isolation? How do you sustain it in the constant interaction that we have with the other languages? I think there is a lot of work to be done in this dynamic language policy, both empirical and descriptive. I do not think that we have enough descriptions about this dynamic language policy that exists in many African countries, for example. I just came from the *American Association of Applied Linguistics*. There was no presence of African scholars and very few from Asian countries. But at any rate, we do not have descriptions of what goes on that are dynamic in nature. Sometimes, again, it has to do with our own intellectual coloniality. Many of these African sociolinguists come to the West to train and then they pick up all our cosmology about what languages should be, etcetera. They go back to their African countries and repeat the same thing so that they become even more myopic than some of us.

There are a lot of exceptions, of course, and I think that is happening more and more. Certainly there are sociolinguists who are wonderful in this stuff, but I think that it is slow in coming. So descriptions are also needed. For example, in the post-colonial context, many have adopted a dynamic lens. Angel Lin from Hong Kong, for example. When she first started thinking about

this, and when she first started dialoguing with me, she said, “This is what we've done in Hong Kong forever, but we had never described it because it was not supposed to be done this way.” It was supposed to be done in English only or in Chinese only. But if the books are in English, they are discussed in the classroom in Chinese because the students don't have enough English, right? But this practice wasn't accepted and therefore not described. Language policies in families, in societies, in schools, are a lot more dynamic than they are described. It's out there; it's just we haven't described it. No one has described it yet. It's starting to come, it's emerging, but it's slow. I think both descriptions, qualitative descriptions would be welcomed, and of course empirical work is also important. I think that especially in the context of today where empirical quantitative research is valued, I think that mixed methodology has to occur. Both qualitative and quantitative, all of this would be important.

Interviewer: So how does language policy relate to language issues in higher education?

Ofelia García: Well, I think that there are issues at all levels of education and perhaps even more in higher education. Because at least in elementary education and secondary education, when education is required in the United States, Kindergarten through 12th grade, we may not agree with the language policy that the schools confront us with, but it is there in some way. The teachers may subvert them; the teachers may change them, transform them in some way; but at least we are always working with a policy. So it would be, “this is the policy, this is the reality, and how do we bring these two things together?” Sometimes the language policy is constraining, and we cannot do what it is really, really needed, but somehow both of these things are in tandem.

I think that what happens with higher education is that we have not even begun to think about language issues or language policy in higher education except to say, for example, “well, in order to get into, for example, content courses, you have to have adequate English.” How this is done depends very much on the university. Every higher education institution that I know of does this differently. In some cases they keep students out until they pass exams. In other cases they let them in and they do more content language-integrated instruction. There is a need for clarity as to what should be happening. I think also you have to recognize that there is a difference between

language policy in higher education for immigrant students, and for international students. With international students, for English, we are a lot more tolerant of their English performances; whereas with immigrant students, we are a lot less tolerant of it. This is obvious if you compare a small community college to one of the big private universities that have a lot of international students. Somehow there is a lot of support for the international students. A lot of professors are willing to not care that they have appropriate grammar. Whereas with the immigrant students, if English is not standard English, as it is understood, they cannot advance. Also, you have to think, how does one learn language? One learns language and one performs in language when one has the opportunity to use it and when one has the affordances. So the more we restrict those opportunities, the less students are going to be able to develop English. I am always troubled by these divisions that we make between the international students who we are very willing to be tolerant with because they are paying our tuitions and keeping our universities alive, and the lack of tolerance that we have towards students who have come here, live here, and sometimes are born here. We think that they have to have the standard, “appropriate” English before they can acquire content, which is ridiculous because the more content we have, the more language we have. The more we know, the more we expand our language repertoire and language performances.

As far as languages other than English are concerned, I think that there are less and less language policies in higher education that support the learning of a language other than English. We know that most universities do not require a language other than English. When they do, they require one year. We know that 80% of students of languages other than English in universities in the United States only take first and second level courses. They generally do not go beyond that. So there is a complete absence of policy even though the language practices of students at the university, in colleges, in higher education, are quite multilingual. We have all this diversity of languages and we have this richness of language resources. However, in no way do we recognize it. We certainly have many more speakers of languages other than English in the United States than we have language learners and language classes.

As a matter of fact, in this article that I did with Terry Wiley, we included a study of six languages and four states (Wiley & García, 2016). It was interesting. French and German were the only languages where there were more students than speakers in the states. We included California, Texas, New York, and Florida. Those were the four states. Only in French and German there were more students than speakers. Except in Florida, of course, where there were more speakers of French than students of French. Of course that had to do with the Haitian community. It makes you think, well, what is going on here?

Interviewer: And what variety of French, you know?

Ofelia García: Yes, that is right. The idea of, “it is not valued at all if you are a racialized minority.” That is very important to understand. With the other languages, even with Spanish, there were certainly more Spanish speakers than Spanish language students. And now that I think about this, this is not at the university level, but at high school. This is just high school. There is just no interest in languages other than English, even though there are tremendous resources. I would think that there should be more policy that encourages the multilingualism that we already have so that it is not lost or wasted in any kind of way. In the last 20 years, we have had no federal involvement in policy to teach languages other than English except when it has been for security defense purposes. The Critical Languages Act gave some support. But otherwise, the Foreign Language Assistance Programs for foreign languages have been cut back tremendously.

Interviewer: So in what ways could institutions in New York City adapt to linguistic diversity?

Ofelia García: It would not be hard. There is so much linguistic diversity here that the idea that they have to adapt, it is sort of the wrong idea. The idea is that they have to value it and acknowledge it, and then use it in some way. I am struck by the number of languages that are spoken by children in this city, which could be used for us to become more language aware and more culturally aware. This would provide a better understanding of cosmologies and how different people make meaning out of things. It is so valuable for children to understand the different scripts, its different directionality, and that there are different ways or looking at the world. There are different ways of narrating the news, there are different viewpoints about

everything like wars and the things that surround us. I think this is a wonderful richness that could be really acknowledged in schools.

So how does one work with it? How does one work with linguistic diversity? I think you have to be a little bit humble about what you know, and understand that you do not know it all. When you are in contact with linguistic heterogeneity, you are always a learner because you cannot know what other people know about their language practice and their cultural practices. You are always put in the position of the learner. That is, you have to be a co-learner. You cannot have the attitude and the stance of, for instance, “well, I know about this group, or that group, or whatever, and therefore I know it all.” I think this is very important. Furthermore, the world changes so fast. I always say, well, even if you adapted to linguistic diversity in the sense of, for example, by the time you finished learning Spanish, another group is going to become important and you have to really understand what is going on. Within the Spanish community there is the Spanish speaking community, there are now many speakers of indigenous languages, Mixteco, Quechua, etcetera. You have to be able to recognize that diversity and also value it; understand that it may not be something that you are teaching in your school, but it is valuable and important for that family. So you adapt by understanding that it exists and that it is here. Whether you acknowledge it or not in schools or in society, it is around us. You can either dismiss it all together, or you can embrace it and use it as a learning tool because we have a lot to learn from this linguistic diversity.

Interviewer: Could you describe translanguaging and how research on this topic could inform teaching in higher education?

Ofelia García: Translanguaging is nothing more than thinking about the fact that bilinguals have one mental linguistic system. This linguistic system has consequence for practices, that is language practices, which are diverse from monolingual practices. The premise is that there is one language system and that therefore this has as a consequence, practices which are fluid. Of course, in society and especially in schools, you have to recognize which of the features you have to suppress and which of the features you have to activate. I think one important thing about translanguaging, because people misunderstand it, is to remember that we are talking about the

internal repertoires of the bilingual speaker, of himself or herself. Societally, we have divided these practices into different, named languages. Those languages have real and material consequences and they have always had them, and they will continue to have them. The important point is to think that if you have a translanguaging stance, you begin from a different place because you begin by thinking, “all right, what this student has is one language system from which he or she is constantly activating and suppressing features. What he or she has is more extensive than someone who just has features that are associated with one language.” So in a way, we are saying that repertoires have been expanded, but that in school you have to restrict it somehow, which is fine. It is the way that the world operates. Some languages are more powerful than others. I think that in a lot of ways translanguaging disrupts these linguistic hierarchies, because it acknowledges the fact that people inside of their language system have one thing, not two. But, it also acknowledges the fact that society values these languages differently. I think the idea is that you start with one language repertoire, which is very complex and very extended. In schools you have to restrict it. I think that it is a totally different take than when you think that these children come in and they lack things. Because I think what translanguaging lets us see is that “it is the school that actually lacks things because we restrict language.” I think that is an important conceptualization for teachers to have.

In higher education, I think it is the same as in schools. I think that we all have to learn to suppress some of our features and to activate others according to the social situation in which we are immersed. Again, I just think we have to acknowledge the fact that what we do in school and in higher education, for example if the class is in English only, restricts what a bilingual student is capable of. I think that is a huge contribution conceptually because it makes you think of school as constricting and that bilingual students are much more expansive. I think that is important in terms of valuing the language practices that people have from home.

Interviewer: Of course. Because it is ideology, too.

Ofelia García: Right. And I do think that one of the issues with either English only classrooms or bilingual classrooms that do English only and Spanish only, or Chinese only, or whatever it is they are going to do only — the issue is that that they do not acknowledge the fact that language

practices and bilingual communities are a lot more flexible and a lot more fluid. What you are saying when you do not acknowledge these language practices is telling these students that what they speak at home is not valuable and that it is not correct. But the languaging of bilingual students is naturally going to contain features that sometimes are associated with the other language. It is natural. But, if you understand it as, “well, okay, this child has still not understood how to suppress this feature, and to substitute it for this other feature and to activate this other feature” instead of saying, “oh, this guy does not have anything,” I think that that makes a huge difference in the way that you approach teaching.

Now, higher education has to, like all schools, work on this. Unfortunately in the United States especially, we have this English only ideology. I just had a student (Sarah Hesson) who finished her dissertation and she talked about, which I liked a lot, the English dominant spaces and Spanish dominant spaces, instead of English only spaces and Spanish only spaces. I think that is the way to go. To realize that when you are in an English dominant space, you are going to have students who have language practices that are very different and who are constantly translanguaging in order to make sense of that English language dominant space. But again, this is not solely an English only space, because what the students are doing is they are bringing the resources to make meaning of those resources with features often from the other language.

Recently I saw students who were doing lessons in, let’s say, French. The process that the students went through was one in which they were constantly reading the web and reading in multiple languages. They even used Google Translate. Compare this to saying, “sorry, but here you cannot make meaning in other languages, except in English only.” That does not make any sense. This is especially true with adults. The college students are adults who are people that have learned something, know something, and have something to contribute. So you cannot just say, “now forget everything you learned because now we are going to start from reading these very basic texts.” This is just not what you should do.

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