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Positioning Radical Love through Narrative Inquiry to Foster Transformative Language Identities in the Multilingual Classroom

Multilingual students learning English are situated in systems of oppression that require a critical understanding of the role that language plays in discrimination. We describe how we create opportunities to develop and implement critical pedagogies that aim to challenge white mainstream English (Baker-Bell, 2020) as the default language in our multilingual classroom spaces and detail how our pedagogies can contribute to decentering "whiteness" in English Language Teaching (Motha, 2014). Through narrative inquiry, we demonstrate how teachers can develop antiracist pedagogies in ELT by actively listening to each other's experiences, forming hush-harbors (Kynard, 2010), and integrating radical love (hooks, 2001). Additionally, exposing students to counternarratives from marginalized writers diversifies and enriches their learning experience. These pedagogical practices create opportunities for students' growth by centering love, humanizing education, and deliberately creating a sense of belonging.

Keywords: linguistic justice, antiracist pedagogies, narrative inquiry, identity, transformation.

The Story of How and Why We Came to This Work

The seed for this project was planted in the summer of 2020, a point of inflection in our lives as teacher-scholars. In this article, we will be sharing our stories of how, during that time, we came together (RAsheda Young, PhD student in an applied linguistics and composition program where Cristina taught as faculty) as we grappled with structural racism and its relationship to our identities and those of our multilingual students. As other scholars have described recently, by that time, the Covid-19 pandemic had revealed more dramatically than ever the deep structural inequities permeating the U.S. society. For example, Latinx populations (many of which are Spanish speaking) were more exposed to the virus and required language interpretation services for medical assistance in contexts where English was the medium of communication, despite the fact that Spanish was the "predominant language spoken" in those spaces (Mulpur & Turner, 2021). In the context of a pandemic, English-only policies mattered and had serious consequences for some patients. As reported in an NPR article, "(p)atients who didn't speak much, if any, English had a 35% greater chance of death" (Bebinger, 2021). This is just an example of how monolingual policies are inherently inequitable and affect marginalized demographics' access to basic needs. As teacher-scholars, we must account for how language dynamics reveal deeper inequalities (e.g., on health, education, civic engagement, self-perceptions, etc.).

In this context of wider and international reckoning with systemic racism during the Covid-19 pandemic, our paths crossed as part of the graduate PhD program in applied linguistics and composition studies. We came together in the program, whose goals were to inquire about critical language

pedagogies for various demographics, from multilingual international students in the U.S. (so-called ESL students) to US-born linguistically diverse students. Specifically, we connected in two courses during the summer of 2020. The courses were about 1) multilingual literacies and 2) language, writing, and identity in transnational education, respectively. Both courses were conducted online, although the university was in a predominantly white rural part of the U.S. Northeast. While Cristina was physically located in this context, RAsheda was a few hours away in a more urban context. Our relationship developed as part of the courses but continued throughout the following year.

In what follows, we take turns to tell the story of how we joined forces and began developing antiracist pedagogies that span specific demographics and address the larger systemic structures of racism impacting students. We refer to each section of this article as a "story" to emphasize the many ways in which we can narrate the different dimensions of our work and situate ourselves in them. Therefore, the title of each section includes a specific "story". Moreover, it is our hope that, by intertwining our unique voices both as "we" and "I" separately in different parts of this project, we can showcase both the interdependence of knowledge construction while bringing attention to our uniquely lived experiences and intersectional identities. We define intersectionality as "a way of understanding and analyzing the complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences. The events and conditions of social and political life and the self can seldom be understood as shaped by one factor. They are generally shaped by many factors in diverse and mutually influencing ways" (Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 2). As Park explains, juxtaposing our personal narratives allows us to "connect our shared stories of isolation, (self-) marginalization, powerlessness, yet privilege and transformation" (2021, p. XII).

Cristina's Story

As part of the larger conversations about systemic racism that burst out due to the murder of George Floyd, for many *la gota que colma el vaso* or the catalyst for change, educational practices grounded in White English (Baker-Bell, 2020) and monolingualism (Dowling, 2021) became increasingly challenged in our contexts. Personally, questioning these ingrained beliefs became the core objectives of the intensive graduate courses I taught and where I met RAsheda.

I came to the courses realizing that my intersectional identities as a white transnational multilingual junior faculty member in a predominantly white and monolingual space interacted with my teaching (Motha, Jain, & Tecle, 2012). My identities were and continue to be taken up differently by the students and other actors relevant to my teaching. Oftentimes my accent is perceived as a mark of non-whiteness, no matter that my country of origin (Spain) is not in the colonized Americas. Moreover, my identity as a "Spanish-speaking" woman does not reflect the fact that Spanish is rhetorically and linguistically colonial and sustains raciolinguistic ideologies that privilege white Spanishes (Sánchez-Martín & Gonzales, 2022). In my teaching about language difference in the English classroom, these complexities shape the ways in which inequities about and across languages are discussed and addressed. Doing this work requires that I position myself in relation to the identities of other individuals whose experiences continue to inform my language teaching. For example, the continuous interactions with RAsheda and her work, as part of the courses completed in the summer of 2020 (and beyond class time), reflect the kinds of critical conversations needed to advance pedagogies of antiracism grounded in collaboration among communities, such as international ethnically diverse multilinguals, Latinx (both Spanish-speaking and speakers of several Indigenous languages), and Black communities (among others).

RAsheda's Story

In June 2020, I began my career as a PhD student and finished my first year as a full-time first year composition lecturer for a major state university. I am a black woman with twenty-one years teaching

experience at all levels of the educational/academic sector. I bring to my classrooms a rich, though seemingly incongruous experience of being a black woman, a black mother, and a black professor. It appeared one of those things didn't belong within academia. I was growing enraged. The more aware I became of the vitriolic-like hatred towards blackness I became "in a [state of] rage almost all the time" (Baldwin, 1961).

I carried this awareness with me into Cristina's class. A part of our coursework was to define our teacher identity through an autoethnography. This was perfect! I explored how the sociopolitical climate affected my identities as a woman, mother, and professor. I read April Baker-Bell, Vershawn Ashanti Young, Django Paris Smith, Geneva Smitherman, and Suresh Canagarajah to name a few. I felt like I found my home. These scholars advocated for linguistic justice and against White Mainstream English (WME) as the only form of linguistic expression. Baker-Bell, too, noted the perfect usage of White Mainstream English when Eric Garner said "I can't breathe" (2020). And yet, he is dead. This tells us that speaking WME doesn't guarantee survival. It also tells us that our fight for linguistic justice did not just begin. Put differently, linguistic justice isn't just another catch phrase or trending buzzword popularized because of the Black Lives Matter movement. No, it is a fight that scholars have waged since the 1970s. Only now the fight of Smitherman and Baldwin is made visible on protest signs of new activists determined to use words that describe their reality.

On June 01, 2020, I piled into a red four door hatchback with my 19-year-old activist daughter and two of her friends for a protest rally to stand up for those who had been brutally murdered by police. My daughter made a sign: "Oh, okay! Cuz I thought an '*All Lives Matter' Ass Bitch Said Something.*" At the bottom of the sign, she placed a check mark next to "Black Lives Matter." Although I respected my daughter's militancy, I knew the trouble that sign could bring. She did not. "Do you think we can compromise?" I questioned. "Do you think you can write something on the back?" She did: "Been tired since 1619." It is now 2021 and black people are still tired of being filmed running and then being shot, filmed sitting in their cars and then being shot, filmed standing on the corner selling loosies then tragically dying from a police chokehold, or filmed gasping for breath then dying from a police officer's knee pressed upon neck. Do you now see the brutal treatment we have been talking about since 1619? Do you remember how pictures from lynchings reveal gleeful men looking directly into the lens of photographers, pointing their puny, dirty fingers at mutilated, charred, lifeless bodies that hung from trees? It bore no fruit, yet the "men" looked on with pride bearing fruit of hatred that still ooze, percolating on all of our laps. Much in the way these men looked into the camera without remorse in the 1920s, so too did former police officer Derek Chauvin as he pressed his knee into George Floyd's neck for more than eight minutes while he begged for his mother. These images do not leave my mind. They affect my identity as a black woman, mother, and professor. I carry them with me. Now in response to our current socio-political environment, I must engage in survival conversation with my daughter, with my son, and with me. I have to routinely remind myself to use coded language that is valued by various privileged language communities. I carry this coded language—fully ready to dislodge at police. Fully ready to dislodge as a black professor with her students. And fully ready to dislodge as a black woman with her colleagues. This omnipresent awareness influences how I teach. As such, whenever possible I create historically responsive assignments that honor their "identity, skills, intellect and criticality" (Muhammad, 2020 p. 58) where all of my students' collective identities are invited into sacred spaces.

Our Collective Goals

Despite the differences, our collective experiences tell us that, for multilingual students (sometimes referred to as English as a Second Language or ESL students), the effects of White English erase opportunities for engaging their identities in meaningful ways that are detrimental to their learning, while

promoting racialized ways of understanding language that always measure the wealth of linguistic experiences and knowledge as deficient against White English and monolingual norms (Flores, 2019). Therefore, challenging White English must be a collaborative effort through which marginalized linguistic individuals stand in solidarity and contribute, with their knowledge, to undo the epistemological racism prevalent in English Language Teaching (ELT) (Kubota, 2020). Put differently, when educators create authentic spaces for multilingual students to leverage their linguistic repertoire in the classroom, we demonstrate to our students that there is more than one way of thinking, writing, and being.

Therefore, our goals for this project are (1) to describe the ways in which we create opportunities to develop and implement critical pedagogies (hooks, 2001) that aim to challenge white mainstream English (Baker-Bell, 2020) as the default language in our multilingual classroom spaces and (2) detail how our pedagogies can contribute to decentering "whiteness" in English Language Teaching (ELT) (Motha, 2014).

The Story of Who Inspired Us

In what follows, we provide an overview of the work done by teacher-scholars that has influenced our own praxis throughout the years. The term "antiracist pedagogies" has gained momentum in ELT during the past few years, encouraged by the work of applied linguists and linguistic anthropologists (e.g., Flores and Rosa, 2015; Flores, 2019; Kubota, 2020) and encouraged by the Black Lives Matter movement.

We define antiracist pedagogies in the context of ELT as allowing students to name the world for themselves through the utilization of their full language repertoires and identities for meaning-making, in line with a translanguaging approach (Canagarajah, 2011). Moreover, antiracist pedagogies necessarily involve adopting a critical stance that addresses systemic language discrimination as overlapping with other sociopolitical issues that consistently affect racialized individuals (Flores, 2019). As Flores has demonstrated, translanguaging (both as theory of language and practice beyond single named-languages and modalities) addresses the monolingual bias that has functioned as the basis for formal language education and more specifically, ELT of bilingual students. Specifically, language learning of multilingual students is approached from a deficit perspective. These ideologies of multilingual students "lacking" or being "deficient" when measured against abstract monolingual views of English are, at the same time, informed by raciolinguistic views. As Flores explains, linguistic features that might seem "unmarked" for white people are still seen as deficient when these are associated with racialized communities or individuals (2019, p. 53). Therefore, in undoing monolingualism, this orientation to language contributes to challenging whiteness, since "English-language monolingualism eliminates and it dispossesses; it works in tandem with other white supremacist logics in order to produce and perpetuate settler power" (Dowling, 2021, p. 440).

However, trans-approaches by themselves have not furthered an antiracist agenda, and in fact, might have inadvertently worked to obscure the labor of scholars addressing linguistic racism in viewing language as fluid and thus, potentially flattening racialized linguistic identities (Gilyard, 2016). From a raciolinguistics perspective we can also address the fact that these systemic issues affect various linguistically marginalized individuals, like "long-term English learners, heritage language learners, and Standard English learners" who "can be understood to inhabit a shared position as raciolinguistic Others vis-à-vis the white listening subject" (Flores & Rosa, 2015, p. 151). Our pedagogical examples below illustrate that a translanguaging space in and of itself does not directly address larger inequities, so it must come accompanied by criticality around raciolinguistic ideologies. For us, this resonates with a Critical Language Awareness (CLA) approach, which as Smitherman explains,

> seeks to develop in students a critical consciousness about language, power, and society. It seeks to heighten their awareness of the stakes involved in language attitude and policies of correctness and strives to impart knowledge about their own language, its social and linguistic rules, its history and cultural connection. Instead of just accepting language as a gate-keeping check on race and ethnicity, instead of capitulating to "that's just the way things are. (2017, p.10)

Smitherman's ideas become meaningful in our classrooms in that language isn't understood as an entity separated from other social agents and situations, on the contrary, classroom conversations revolve around seeing the embeddedness of language in all facets of students' lives, such as accessing social services like health and education.

Following this line of thought, the work of Paulo Freire has aimed to develop the types of pedagogies that Smitherman proposes, as well. In particular, Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* reminds us that students gain critical consciousness by naming the world for themselves and by generating themes that matter most in their world. By moving away from privileging the knowledge of teachers to centering the knowledge of students, we become "teacher-student with students-teacher. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is themselves taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow" (2004, p. 80).

Collaborating with students is an act of resistance. It disrupts the notion of servant-served relationships (hooks, 1994). Or in reverse, prioritizing hierarchies that place teachers over students reinforces power and egoic relationships. Students' voices are squelched to write for an audience that systematically privileges whiteness as the form of correct and/or standard expression.

More recently, a larger number of scholars in TESOL and applied linguistics have been specifically calling for more robust efforts to challenge whiteness in ELT. In discussing anti-blackness in Asian American and Asian American communities, Thu and Motha explain that "(t)he desire to be a socially acceptable, 'good' and economically successful immigrant who can 'make it' in 'America' aligns well with the neoliberal values and capitalist order of social relations that often make it convenient to not examine that harmful dominant narratives of anti-Blackness and anti-Indigeneity that one often comes across" (2021, p. 18).

We continue to advocate for additional practices that draw from the work of other teacher-scholars in adjacent fields, such as literacy education, in order to create long-term and sustainable practices that speak to the language realities of non-dominant groups, amplifying the work already done in ELT. In doing so, we can transform what counts as language learning, perhaps by shifting the focus away from detached epistemologies of language to more embodied ones that are truly centered on social dynamics. Baker-Bell's linguistic justice pedagogies models what critical antiracist education can look like across communities, by addressing the language myths and ideologies that have shaped language attitudes and policies in the U.S., learning about the concrete linguistic and rhetorical means of Black English, and critically questioning language policies (2020). This approach for centering Black-language can and must be reconciled with transnational approaches to language education, for example, as Milu (2021) suggests in solidarity with Baker-Bell's calls, to reflect the needs and experiences of Black students from outside the U.S., many of which are multilingual and might not fully identify with US-based Black English.

Finally, for us, antiracist teaching involves teaching as a way of promoting transparency, love, and honesty. These pedagogies build on the work of bell hooks. In *all about love* (2001) bell hooks defines love

as the foundation for all interactions: “Love is as love does, and it is our responsibility to give [our students] love. When we love [students] we acknowledge by our every action that they are not property, that they have rights--that we respect and uphold their rights” (p. 30). Through love both the teacher and student establish a mutual commitment to transparency and acceptance. The dynamics becomes, as Freire says, “a horizontal relationship of which mutual trust between the dialoguers is the logical consequence” (2001, p.91). Next, we explain how collaborative narrative inquiry allows us to articulate this work and jointly develop our antiracist pedagogies.

The Story of This Article

In *Narrating their Lives,* Lia Kamhi-Stein provides an account of how a pre-service teacher from El Salvador saw her teacher narrative as “helping her to implement a ‘pedagogy of empowerment’ (to use Amin’s 2004 term, p. 72) - that is, pedagogical practices that disrupt the notion that one needs to be white and a native speaker of English in order to teach the language” (2013, p. 1). Building on this realization, we decided that collaborative narrative inquiry allowed us to showcase how our pedagogies of antiracism emerge in relation to our experiences in ways that could capture our on-going conversations as well as our individual language identities and trajectories. Working in collaboration opened up space for collective and sustained transformation (Park, 2020).

Overall, narrative inquiry that puts the stories of English language teachers into conversation promotes teachers’ reflexivity and can contribute to developing critical awareness of the conditions under which they live (Sánchez-Martín, 2021a), fostering opportunities for critical agency (Thu & Motha, 2021).

Context of the Study

This project began in June of 2020, while RAsheda was participating in Cristina’s graduate seminars on multilingual literacies and transnational writing, language, and identity at a public university in the Northeast of the U.S. These courses lasted a month, during which RAsheda and Cristina met virtually twice a week for class and outside of class time (virtually too) to further discuss the readings and assignments. When the courses ended, RAsheda and Cristina continued to be in touch via email, Zoom, and occasional phone calls, where we would discuss various aspects of academic lives, such as our service commitments, and our pedagogical ideas, successes, failures, and negotiations. All our interactions have taken place online.

Data Collection

The data compiled for this project reflects our exchanges and mutual learning from June of 2020 to October of 2021. It includes 1) Our individual autoethnographies of teaching identities (Yazan, 2019). Cristina’s chapter was written for an edited collection (Sánchez-Martín, 2020) and it was included as a sample autoethnography for one of the courses RAsheda took. RAsheda’s autoethnography was written as part of her coursework; 2) Notes taken during four meetings (ranging from 60 to 90 minutes each), during which we discussed our positionalities and identities as teacher-scholars in academia and our pedagogical approaches; and 3) Other materials such as our pedagogical materials or academic work, like the script of two talks about antiracism in multilingual settings that Cristina did, or course papers and faculty presentations done by RAsheda.

Data Analysis

For the analysis, each of us read each other’s work independently, commented on it, and shared feedback on Google Docs. In doing that, we were identifying the key aspects that were central to our pedagogical practices. Next, we discussed these core ideas in our meetings and brought to them our personal

reflections. In other words, the questions and comments shared with each other guided the theme selection that we discuss below.

The Story of Our Pedagogies

Overall, our pedagogies revolve around creating an environment for transformation and emancipation (Freire, 2004), for students to move away from deficit views of language grounded in raciolinguistic ideologies (Flores, 2019). In what follows, we showcase our discussion of specific sub-themes that provide further insights into how we construct our pedagogies with attention to our lived experiences as, respectively, a black teacher and scholar and as a multilingual and white Spanish woman in U.S. higher education. The themes we discuss below are contextualized in multilingual learning settings, where we work with multilingual international students traditionally labeled as ESL. We conceptualize these classrooms as transnational, since coming together means establishing spaces beyond the boundaries of single nation-states, languages, and racial categorizations (Thu & Motha, 2021). Therefore, even though RAsheda is teaching in the same nation-state she was born in, her students' experiences across countries in the transnational space of the classroom also position her as inhabiting that same space and, thus, her identity is also constructed from a transnational intersectional perspective.[1]

Our work revealed that our understanding and practices of antiracist pedagogies in multilingual classrooms is centered on three main themes: (1) Revealing our complex identities and vulnerabilities in the classroom; (2) Revealing others' stories of Englishes and their processes of racialization through language; and (3) Creating spaces of belonging for students to do identity-based work across languages through narrative writing.

Theme #1: Revealing Ourselves in the Classroom

One of the core aspects of our pedagogies is to not shy away from our intersectional identities in the classroom, inviting what has been called "identity-as-pedagogy" (Motha, Jain, & Tecle, 2012). The complex, multilayered, and at times contradictory identities we described in the introduction become part of our pedagogical endeavors in the ways described by Thu and Motha:

> [In] incorporating transnational intersectionality into the context of our professional identities as scholars, teachers, and practitioners, it is up to us to figure out how we might want to productively disrupt institutionalized boundaries and roles in the ways that we conduct research, reconceptualize what counts as scholarship and revise our epistemologies building on our collective experience of transnational intersectionality. (2021, p. 19)

While bringing in our identities to the classroom is inevitable, we take on the task to be critically agentive in the ways in which our identities and lived experiences push against the limitations of inherited discourses and conditions in our learning spaces. In fact, in both of our autoethnographies, we embrace this idea. RAsheda expressed it as follows: "It is now 2020 and I am a black woman, mother, professor. I think about how all of these identities affect my teaching practice" (Autoethnography). Throughout our conversations, RAsheda shared with Cristina a multimodal project she composed for another course in her PhD program. The project is entitled *We Lit: A Quest into Understanding the Silencing of Black Joy Literacy* and it tells the story of RAsheda's reckoning with all her identities, specifically about how being a

[1] Transnational intersectionality helps us to understand how intersectional identities and traits mean different things depending on the context. For example, our students' experiences tell us that the racial categories and classifications in the U.S. are not applicable to the places they come from, showcasing how these dynamics change in different parts of the world.

mother and an aunt to Black children reveal ways of recovering essential racist aspects of literacy education.

In the acknowledgements page, she states: "*For my children, nephew and eighth grade students. Thank you for being my best teacher. Y'all are so lit. May the ancestors be pleased*." When teaching eighth grade ELA (English Language Arts) for a charter school in a poor neighborhood, RAsheda realized that those students, who were rich in love, were her best teachers. She recounts that they told her exactly how they needed to learn, saying things like: "Ms. Young, you talk too much. Tell us exactly what you need us to do. Don't be askin' us no questions when you teachin' that part. Let us go figure it out. We need time to talk Ms. Young. And we like those cute power points, not them ugly ones. Then, right, once you finish teaching us, we like when you ask us simple questions. Not a whole bunch. And oh, yeah, we need routine and consistency. We don't always know what we're getting when we come to class" (Meeting notes).

RAsheda goes on to explain that this exchange reinforces the dialogic relationship of trust that Freire emphasizes as the foundation of relationship building. In other words, her students trusted their relationship enough with her to be transparent about their learning experiences.

Much like the work of Freire, author Shefali Tsabary (2014) of *The Conscious Parent: Transforming Ourselves, Empowering Our Children* suggests teaching is most effective by centering the needs of students; We realize the "problem" is never within them. It is always located within us (2014, p.5). For RAsheda, this exercise of looking at herself "grounds [her] teaching practice" (Meeting notes). We acknowledge the importance of listening to our students and making adjustments to our teaching practice as needed. We acknowledge responsive teaching creates more deliberate/relevant learning experiences for our students that emanate a deep love and trust in their inherent genius. We recognize this as a radical act of love. We further understand the double-edged sword of women in academia who are more likely to be seen as motherly figures with gendered problematic expectations reflecting biases. RAsheda uses this approach not as a way of reinforcing gender roles, but to practice self-reflexive teaching (Park, 2020).

In fact, RAsheda talks about the conflicting ways in which her identity is taken up and constructed in academic spaces, including the classroom. Scholarship has demonstrated that academic culture has worked to not legitimize racialized individuals, specifically Black women (hooks, 1994; Kendall, 2021). RAsheda is aware of this when she states:

> At the forefront of my mind though I think "how can I get students to see the subject (identity politics) and not the person (professor, blackness) who is teaching them this material?" Sadly even this wrestling diminishes my identity and reinforces white supremacy. (Autoethnography)

RAsheda's experience resonates with tropes about Black women that Black feminist scholars have pointed out, specifically about how they are not afforded the same opportunity to be brilliant, fearless, and confident without escaping the "confrontational," "hard to work with," "angry black woman" stereotype (Kendall, 2021). Our identity, RAsheda claims, is still tied to colonial images: servants, sexual fetishes, or academic imposters. Even though RAsheda has been "chastised for questioning perceived racist, monolinguistic, hegemonic practices" (Meeting notes), she is reminded that these experiences are inherited and exist through a white supremacist system. This system affects RAsheda as a black woman, black mother, and black professor. Kendall writes of it too. It hasn't left us. In fact, as we write this article, Kyle Rittenhouse was just acquitted of killing two men and wounding another while Julius Johnson an innocent black man sits on death row for nineteen years for a murder he didn't commit. He was nearly executed though granted clemency two hours before his scheduled execution. How could we not carry

this trauma into the minutiae of our identities? It takes radical imagination to believe we feel safe in a system that stamped us from the beginning.

Because of this identity awareness, it is possible for teachers like us to transcend some of these limitations with agency to transform the ideologies and beliefs that shape our classrooms (Thu & Motha, 2021). By enacting that agency in the classroom, we can model critical engagement about language and identity with students. For example, one of the strategies that RAsheda employs in her teaching to multilingual students is speaking about her own language practices and accent grounded in Black literacies (Baker-Bell, 2020) and how these have been seen as deficient from a "white listener" and "gaze perspective" (Flores & Rosa, 2015). By sharing this with her multilingual students, she is hoping to take pressure off students' self-imposed expectations (that are oftentimes based on similar discourses of deficit and whiteness).

The feeling of inadequacy is also something that Cristina experienced, specifically in relation to being constructed as a non-native speaker by colleagues and students. In her autoethnography, Cristina explains that despite the prevalence of English in her daily life and education, territorialized views of language identity like the nativeness paradigm, influence how her identity is constructed in academic spaces: "I was tacitly assigned a "non-native" English teacher identity, especially in an English-studies program and writing classes where the majority of the students were white monolingual" (Autoethnography).

The nativeness paradigm is built on the assumption that there are native speakers (imagined as white) and non-native speakers who must develop language proficiency according to white native ideals. This narrative continues to dominate across the world and results in white saviorism (Lee & Jenks, 2020) and thus, a lot of international students hold internal colonialism and racism. In fact, multilingual students are also subject to this ideology, and this became part of a classroom conversation about language myths about English. For the activity, students were asked to read some statements about language and decide if they were true or false, which aimed to demystify language. One of the statements said: "native speakers of English are the best teachers of the language." It didn't take more than 5 seconds for all students to say "yes, that is true." Immediately after, they realized they were speaking to a presumed "non-native" speaker of English and some of them apologized and took back their responses. That moment and the questions that came with it gave Cristina space to share her own vulnerabilities in the classroom, which turned into more opportunities for students to connect with her and one another, and hopefully uncover some of the complexities and inequalities around language identities.

Overall, these raciolinguistic ideologies position both of us as deficient in a space where abstract, detached, and prescriptivist monolingual views of English have been used as the fabric for ELT. As mentioned earlier, we use critical agency (Thu & Motha, 2021) through our transnational intersection identities to challenge the very same infrastructure of English learning courses with multilingual students. For example, the ways in which these aspects pertaining to our identities become relevant to the multilingual classroom are both related to specific activities we develop, the types of readings and materials we use in the classroom, and our overall pedagogical orientations.

Theme #2: Revealing Stories of Englishes and Complex Racialized Identities

Selecting Relevant Readings

Besides offering these personal examples of language experiences, our pedagogies also center the voices of other linguistically marginalized individuals who claimed their space as speakers of various Englishes.

For example, RAsheda created an activity around James Baldwin's (1997) "If Black English Isn't a Language then Tell Me What Is?" and Gloria Anzaldua's (1987) "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" and explains that

> even though most of the students' L1 was different from mine own, we built a community around language. We situated it as a tool. Further, it was through our collective examination of language that we observed how it can be used to uphold racist, singular and/or binary structures. (Meeting notes)

Through "co-intentional education [teachers and students] are both subjects, not only in the task of unveiling that reality, and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge" (Freire, 2004, p.69). Put differently, by placing both student and teacher on the same horizontal plane, we privilege, repurpose and centralize/equalize the subject matter and student-teacher. In addition, a goal of this writing assignment was to increase students' awareness about the ways in which language is only and should only be used as a tool within specific contexts. Therefore, the assignment capitalizes on the interconnectedness of our political climate by introducing readings that centered language as a tool. Most importantly, RAsheda selected the readings because they:

- could be socially appropriate and applicable to their lived experiences;
- presented alternative perspectives that showcased the fullness of marginalized people;
- provided opportunities for students to leverage their culture, language, and linguistic repertoire (Canagarajah, 2011) in an academic setting; and
- disrupted normative culture.

James Baldwin's "If Black English Isn't a Language then Tell Me What Is?" and Gloria Anzaldua's (2017) "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" fulfilled the aforementioned. Through a series of scaffolded activities, students observed James Baldwin making the point that, of course, Black English is a language, for it was born out of necessity to shape Black people's identity, culture and political landscape. At the same time, Anzaldua asserts that she is her language for it is her skin. She extends the idea that language and identity are not separated, for separating the skin from the body leads to death; same as separating one's language from an identity. She says neither can be separated for if it is surely it is the other who commits the crime or the other commits a crime or "linguistic terrorism" (1987). Ultimately, students were to use examples from Anzaldua and Baldwin to discuss the ways in which language is used as an expression of one's identity in a short essay. Additionally, they were to discuss the implications of connecting one's language to Baldwin's and Anzaldua's.

Addressing Translingual and Racialized Englishes

However, as the instructor, RAsheda explains that, to achieve this, students first need to understand who they are, which requires them to unpack their identity, which oftentimes students have difficulty developing in our experience. Besides connecting their identities to their favorite music, clothes, or the zip code where they grew up, students inquire about their identities by thinking about the aspects of their identities that are more or less visible to others to form critical frameworks to interrogate texts. In response, students wrote multimodal narratives, included pictures, music, or drew images when these communicated more than just words.

This assignment aligns with research that suggests that translingual pedagogies can foster an inclusive learning environment for all learners, despite prevalent restrictive language and discriminatory practices. Moreover, translingualism recognizes that students live three-dimensionally, ever becoming, ever reseeing, and ever re-purposing social contexts that shape their linguistic lives. It is within this

framework that students have full access to merge across modes to make meaning in a language that creates authentic learning experiences (Canagarajah, 2011).

Along the same lines, Cristina collected readings and materials about language difference across communities to showcase the Englishes that people around the world experience, specifically in relation to other languages and normative identities. Students in her multilingual class, read and discuss them, which included a wide variety of genres, like:

1. Shailja Patel's poem about her father, who although being a speaker of five languages still feels inferior to "white men" who "shrink him down" with their "English" (2010, p. 52);
2. The narrative "Mother Tongue" by Amy Tan, who speaks about the effects that English-only approaches had on her mother;
3. The TED talk "The Danger of a Single Story" by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie to understand the relationship between language and cultural representation;
4. A short documentary about Arabizi to learn about how languages influence one another and change over time to suit the needs and identities of Arabic speakers;
5. Jamila Lyiscott's TED Talk "Three ways to speak English" to expose students to U.S. and international Black Englishes; and
6. A literacy interview from the *Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives* (DALN) with a student from Senegal, whose English language practices intersected with French, Wolof, and Arabic and how these languages impacted his religious identities.

These materials aimed to provide "counterstories" centering language minorities and people of color and speaking about language complexities and how identities are mediated by people's ideologies of deficit that have embodied effects. These materials support Guerrettaz and Zhaler's claim that "counternarratives can de-silence race, chipping away at the invisibility and power of master narratives, and construct different social realities" (in Guerrettaz & Zhaler, 2017, p. 197). Specifically, students learn to see English, not just as a system of logocentric rules, but also as an enterprise of empire (Motha, 2014) that influences social relations and dynamics.

Defining Englishes in Students' Own Terms

Once students have demystified language and seen its political, ideological, and embodied dimensions, just like in RAsheda's activity, students are better equipped to compose their own stories about their language identities and practices. In Cristina's activity, students worked in groups to compose a "listicle" describing "10 things to know about English." Drawing from the materials read and watched along with their own linguistic experiences, students wrote about:

- how social groups use specific Englishes across the world;
- what being multilingual is like and how a multilingual identity can spark creativity and help people;
- what it is like to learn English while being multilingual, a process that yields both failure and success;
- Black English as one of the languages in the U.S.; and
- how our experiences are shaped by our language practice (among others).

This activity allowed students to think about English in broader and critical ways, beyond merely focusing on abstract language ideals. In addition, by working together and drawing from their collective experiences and identities, students had to negotiate their own language choices as they composed the

listicle. Overall, these pedagogical examples demonstrate that, with a critical awareness of our (transnational) intersectional identities paired with (counter)stories of other English language users usually marginalized, we challenge dominant epistemologies that have been intrinsic to the field of TESOL; therefore, subtly undoing the fabric of the sociomaterial conditions that mediate our work - one step at a time.

Theme #3: Creating Spaces for Transformation

In our pedagogies, we notice that when students see that English is more than just a system of textual and alphabetic forms, and has an impact on identities and social dynamics, they let the pressure off themselves in trying to mimic abstract and normative English and start seizing it to make meaning grounded in their world and experiences. This shift in perspectives is gradual and comes out of a mix of factors, such as hearing from themselves and their complex language identities and engaging with materials and readings that showcase other people they can relate to. One of the key aspects of these stories, we discussed earlier, is the possibility of translanguaging (Flores, 2019; Canagarajah, 2011).

Genres Enabling of Language Difference

As mentioned earlier, for us, the types of assignments and projects we select for students to complete can invite opportunities for identity-based work. Traditional papers or essays, for Cristina, are typically associated with language prescriptivism and, thus, students are more predisposed to not challenge dominant language ideologies when asked to compose these texts (Sánchez-Martín, 2021b). This suggestion goes in line with Duran's (2019) suggestion for

> TESOL practitioners (...) to broaden the definition of language and literacy theoretically and pedagogically (Warriner et al., 2019). That is, incorporating students' native languages and multiple modes of instruction that include oral storytelling, print and non-print materials, drawings, digital texts, films, graphics, and storyboards along with teaching English and content areas can be employed to activate students' existing knowledge, foster students' meaning-making processes, and create inclusive educational environments. (pp. 823–824)

Taking on this idea, Cristina asks her multilingual students to compose genres such as memes, blog posts, news articles, storyboards, infographics, Twitter threads, or narratives (textual and multimodal). These types of genres allow for more language-experimentation and more opportunities for students to showcase their complex identities. Besides these genres, Cristina's students document their learning and decision-making in more traditional papers (usually reflections or informal proposals), shifting from a focus on the final product to language experimentation and critical awareness. In general, non-traditional genres allow students to engage all forms of language, beyond normative and uncritical standard language views. In other words, these genres allow us to "take advantages of language diversity in the classroom and current advances in technology to encourage educational equity" (Duran, 2019, p. 824).

Hush-Harbors

Another commonality in our pedagogies to create spaces for transformation is the importance of building relationships of trust and a sense of safety and belonging in our classes, informed by a pedagogy of love (hooks, 2001). Honesty, hooks, asserts, "is the heartbeat of love" (2001, p. 53). In other words, honesty is what drives love; it propels us, students and teachers alike, to name the world according to our critical consciousness. It is through this honest naming that both students and teachers disrupt hegemony and monolingual norms. In short, "(l)iving [honestly] means we think critically about ourselves and the world

we live in" (hook, 2001, p. 55). This also connects with provided spaces for students to leverage their language identities and knowledge. By doing so, we give them the ability to generate meaningful themes and to see themselves as they truly are, fully actualized human beings who can integrate all that they know to create new meaning. Further, we reinforce that they belong to a community of practice (Wenger, 2011) regardless of their first language. For us, this can only be achieved through an edict of love, honesty, and transparency.

Drawing on Kynard (2010), RAsheda explains that her teaching privileges creating hush-harbors Maslow (2019) teaches us that before students can actualize themselves as writers, first teachers must create a safe space where students feel safe and that they belong to a community. Specifically, in keeping with Maslow (2019), Kynard discusses hush-harbors as safe spaces for students to escape the "white gaze and its hegemonic centers" (2010, p. 34). Hush-harbors are "sites of resistance that function as 'hidey' spaces for multiple literacies that were officially banned via institutional and state structure" (p. 33). These spaces create authentic, safe moments where students can merge their out-of-school literacy with in-school literacy (p. 35). Further, hush-harbors allow educators to rethink the ways in which students define academic literacy, "Where literacy once was something connected solely to school, reading and writing, academic discussions of literacy today are specifically connected to discourses, identities, practices, and ideologies, making the work that hush-harbors do logical (2010, p. 35). Put differently, hush-harbors afford teachers the opportunity to shift the focus from forms of correctness that are most often aligned with white mainstream values to discussions that contextualize language in free/safe spaces. By contextualizing language, educators show students the varied influences on language identity. Incorporating hush-harbors into classrooms reinforces the situational purpose of language while simultaneously fostering a safe space for multilingual students.

Fostering Community Belonging

Other practices that yield environments of belonging around a community that is enabling growth involve making time in class for group work, decompressing and building connections, emphasizing learning that is motivated by curiosity, experimentation, and meaningful meaning-making, gathering students in community office hours, and deliberately showing students that we care about their humanity by taking purposeful time to learn how to say their names - since mispronouncing and anglicizing their names contributes to stripping away their identities, a phenomenon experienced by indigenous and/or international students, and students of color (Bucholtz, 2016).

At the end of the day, for us, the most important practice is to be intentional about humanizing the classroom by avoiding the "(s)pirit murdering of our students" (Love, 2016, p. 2) and creating spaces for students to feel that they belong and can find joy in learning rather than feeling like frustrated impostors who can never accomplish unreal standards.

The Story of Sharing: Practical Take-aways

Our stories tell us that teachers can develop antiracist pedagogies in ELT by actively listening to each other's experiences; in our case, we learned through conversations about our intersectional linguistic and complex identities. We also put our own identities and those of our students in conversation with other counternarratives that aim to provide accounts of English as experienced by various marginalized individuals and thus, to broaden the scope of what the English language is understood as. These narratives and counterstories do not just give information about critical approaches to language (Smitherman, 2017), embodied language experiences (Anzaldua, 1987) or non-normative language practices (Canagarajah, 2011); they also mimic what impactful language and multimodal choices can look like, providing students with examples of language negotiation in academic settings. Most importantly, they center the Englishes

performed by people who throughout the years have been placed in the margins of ELT, changing dominant narratives in the field and in the classroom space. These pedagogical practices are part of our work to maximize opportunities for students' growth through a pedagogy of radical love (hooks, 2001) and a sense of belonging.

We end our collective story reflecting on the potential that comes with extending the questions we asked for each other, to invite other stories into the conversation and spark collective action. To that end, we ask teacher-scholars to ponder over the following questions:

1. What grounds your teaching practice? What is the story of your teaching mission considering current social inequalities?
2. What aspects of your teaching maintain and/or resist uncritical dominant language ideologies of whiteness?
3. Is reflecting on your own intersectional identities opening spaces for transformation and critical language awareness? How do your identities interact with those of your students?
4. In what ways will you show your students that you value their presence and lived experiences? In what ways do students feel alienated by course materials and in what ways do they feel represented?
5. In what way are you actively examining your own positionality and the ways in which you may be unintentionally promoting racist practices?
6. What do "hush-harbors" (Kynard, 2010) look like in your teaching?

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