Trayectorias Humanas Trascontinentales

Being a conduit and culprit of white language supremacy: a duo autohistoria-teoría

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Abstract: In this manuscript, two *normalistas-teachers*, who are Women of Color in the United States, reflected on our experiences as educators. In a chronological narrative structure, we each told stories related to our experiences with languages and literacy. Using Anzaldúa's autohistoria-teoría—a decolonial research methodology—we constructed situated knowledge based on our personal reflections of our experiences. More specifically, we uncovered ways we have been conduits of white language supremacy, interrogated how white language supremacy has impacted our teaching, and revealed our growth in our stance towards linguistic justice. Through the lens of raciolinguistics, we reveal our own victimization, internalized racist linguicism, and subsequent perpetuation of linguistic imperialism. Because of our professional successes as a result of English proficiency, we bought into the myth that acquiring Standard American English was necessary to ensure the success of students with racialized identities and failed to fully value language plurality. At this point in our professional journeys, however, we are committed to work characterized by 1) a recognition of the ways language and race are inextricably entwined, 2) evidenced appreciation for non-Western language varieties, 3) use of translanguaging as resistance, 4) culturally sustaining writing instruction (Woodard, Vaughan, & Machado, 2017), and 5) multimodal communication practices. Our manuscript is important because it models the kind of vulnerability, theorization, and critical reflection necessary for scholars whose

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work aims for decoloniality. It represents our commitment to decolonization of the self.

Keywords: white language supremacy, autohistoria-teoría, raciolinguistics, linguistic justice, translanguaging, decolonization of the self

Résumé : Dans ce manuscrit, deux enseignantes normaliennes, des femmes de couleur aux États-Unis, réfléchissent à leurs expériences comme éducatrices. Suivant la structure d'un récit chronologique, chacune à notre tour, nous racontons des histoires en lien avec nos expériences des langues et de l'alphabétisation. En utilisant la théorie de l'autohistoire d'Anzaldúa, une méthodologie de recherche décoloniale, nous avons construit des connaissances issues des réflexions personnelles nées de nos expériences. Plus précisément, nous avons découvert comment nous avons été les conduits de la suprématie de la langue blanche, et interrogé la façon dont la suprématie de la langue blanche a eu un impact sur notre enseignement et renforcé notre positionnement envers la justice linguistique. A travers le prisme de la raciolinguistique, nous révélons notre propre victimisation, notre linguisme raciste intériorisé et la perpétuation subséquente de l'impérialisme linguistique. En raison de nos succès professionnel grâce à la maîtrise de l'anglais, nous avons adhéré au mythe selon lequel l'acquisition d'un anglais américain standardisé était nécessaire pour assurer le succès des étudiants ayant des identités racialisées et n'avons pas valorisé pleinement la pluralité des langues. À ce stade de nos carrières, cependant, nous sommes engagées dans un travail caractérisé par 1) une reconnaissance de la façon dont les langues et la race sont inextricablement liées, 2) une appréciation explicite des variétés non occidentales de langues, 3) l'utilisation du translingualisme comme résistance, 4) l'enseignement de l'écriture culturellement durable (Woodard, Vaughan et Machado, 2017), et 5) les pratiques de communication multimodales. L'article qui suit revêt une certaine importance parce qu'il modélise le type de vulnérabilité, de théorisation et de réflexion critique nécessaires pour les chercheurs dont les travaux visent à la décolonialité. Cela représente notre engagement en faveur de la décolonisation de soi.

Mots clés : suprématie de la langue blanche, théorie de l'autohistoire d'Anzaldúa, raciolinguistique, justice linguistique, translingualisme, décolonisation de soi

Resumen: En este manuscrito, dos maestras normalistas, que son mujeres de color en los Estados Unidos, reflexionan sobre sus experiencias como educadoras. En la estructura de una narrativa cronológica, cada una cuenta historias relacionadas con sus experiencias con los idiomas y la alfabetización. Utilizando la autohistoria-teoría de Anzaldúa, una metodología de investigación descolonial, se contruye un conocimiento situado basado en las reflexiones personales de sus experiencias. Más específicamente, se descubre formas en que hemos sido conductos de la supremacía del lenguaje blanco y se interrogan cómo la supremacía del lenguaje blanco ha impactado nuestra enseñanza, revelando nuestro crecimiento en la postura hacia la justicia lingüística. A través de la lente de la raciolingüística, revelamos nuestra propia victimización, el lingüismo racista internalizado y la posterior perpetuación del imperialismo lingüístico. Debido a nuestros éxitos profesionales con el dominio del inglés, creímos en el mito de que adquirir el estandarizado inglés estadounidense era necesario para garantizar el éxito de los estudiantes con identidades racializadas; no pudimos valorar completamente la pluralidad de idiomas. En este punto de nuestras trayectorias profesionales, sin embargo, estamos comprometidas con el trabajo caracterizado por 1) un reconocimiento de las formas en que los idiomas y la raza están inextricablemente entrelazados, 2) la apreciación explícita por las variedades de idiomas no-occidentales, 3) el uso del translingüismo como

resistencia, 4) la instrucción de escritura culturalmente sostenible (Woodard, Vaughan, & Machado, 2017), y 5) las prácticas de comunicación multimodal. Proponemos que el manuscrito es importante porque modela el tipo de vulnerabilidad, teorización y reflexión crítica necesaria para los académicos cuyo trabajo apunta a la descolonialidad. Representa su compromiso con la descolonización de uno mismo.

Palabras clave: la supremacía del lenguaje blanco, la autohistoria-teoría, la raciolingüística, la justicia lingüística, translingüismo, la descolonización de uno mismo

Resumo: Neste manuscrito, duas maestras *normalistas*, que são mulheres de cor nos Estados Unidos, refletem sobre experiências como educadoras. Na estrutura de uma narrativa cronológica, cada uma conta histórias relacionadas com as experiências com os idiomas e a alfabetização. Utilizando a teoria auto-histórica de Anzaldúa, uma metodologia de pesquisa descolonial, um conhecimento situado é construído com base em reflexões pessoais de suas experiências. Mais especificamente, são descobertas maneiras pelas quais nos temos sido condutos da supremacia da língua branca e são levantadas questões sobre como a supremacia da língua branca impactou nosso ensino, revelando nosso crescimento na nossa postura em relação à justiça linguística. Através da lente da raciolingüística, revelamos nossa própria vitimização, o linguismo racista internalizado e a subsequente perpetuação do imperialismo lingüístico. Devido aos nossos sucessos profissionais com proficiência em inglês, acreditávamos no mito de que a aquisição do inglês americano padronizado era necessária para garantir o sucesso de estudantes com identidades racializadas; não pudemos avaliar completamente a pluralidade de idiomas. Neste ponto de nossas trajetórias profissionais, sem embargo, estamos comprometidas com o trabalho caracterizado por 1) um reconhecimento das maneiras pelas quais línguas e a raça estão inextricavelmente entrelaçadas, 2) apreciação explícita por variedades de idiomas não ocidentais, 3) o uso do translingualismo como resistência, 4) a instrução de escrita culturalmente sustentável (Woodard, Vaughan e Machado, 2017), e 5) as práticas de comunicação multimodal. Propomos que o manuscrito seja importante porque modela o tipo de vulnerabilidade, teorização e reflexão crítica necessária para os acadêmicos que trabalham na área da decolagem. Representa seu compromisso com a descolonizar a si mesmo.

Palavras chave: supremacia da língua branca, a teoria auto-histórica, raciolingüística, justiça linguística, translingualismo, descolonizar a si mesmo

As English and Spanish/English bilingual teachers, our personal and professional lives have been steeped in linguicism, the beliefs and practices that maintain inequitable division of power and resources through language (Phillipson, 2012). Both consciously and dysconsciously, we've received and perpetuated the message that standardized notions of English and Spanish are superior language practices necessary for student success. We've believed in the myth of Standardized American English (SAE*[3])--that there exists an idealized static English the educated populace should ascribe to (Lippi-Green, 2012). This myth is sustained because of what Martin, Pirbhai-Illich, and Pete (2018) described as hegemony of the English Language that makes it the "world language". For Ale, I've also internalized and perpetuated standardized Spanish, or more specifically that Castilian, textbook Spanish is superior to all other forms of Spanish (García, 2014). Between the two languages, we've also experienced and perpetuated *English* linguistic imperialism, where SAE* dominates not only all other English varieties, but also all other languages. Thus, in both our own schooling and in our schooling of others, we have at once been conduits and culprits of white language supremacy, a specific tool of linguicism that Inoue (2019) defines as the indoctrination that white language practices, such as standardized English or Spanish, are superior to all other language practices.

Review of Literature

These beliefs about language standardization are built on a foundation of linguistic deficit discourse (Cassels Johnson, Johnson &, Hetrick, 2020) influenced by raciolinguistic ideologies. That is, white language supremacy positions the languaging of racialized peoples as deficient and inferior to the languaging of white speakers by function of the white listening subject (Flores & Rosa, 2015). To frame and be in dialogue with our journeys, we invoke the work of Flores' (2013) nation-state colonial/governmentality as a tool of white language supremacy in the curricularization of language (described in depth by Babino & Stewart, 2020). Then, we describe how a translanguaging perspective that names and complicates our conceptions of language may in part work toward linguistic justice (Baker-Bell, 2020).

Nation-State Colonial/Governmentality

We purport that nation-state colonial/governmentality (Flores, 2013) is integral to understanding the resulting language ideologies surrounding the inferior positioning of racialized languaging and its speakers. In brief, nation-state colonial/governmentality refers to the co-construction of the colonial nation/state in standardizing a language variety associated with the nation, with its accompanying vision of the ideal citizen. These nation-states are often colonial powers of white European ruling classes that create a dynamic that orders the feelings and beliefs about (il)legitimate language and its speakers (Heller, 2007; Kroskrity, 2010). These language ideologies then determine what is considered (in)appropriate language that affects white and racialized bilinguals differently (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Garcia & Otheguy, 2020), with white language practices sanctioned as superior to racialized language practices. Schools function as actors of the state to institutionalize, homogenize, regulate, and exclude language

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3 We use an asterisk next to Standard American English like Lippi-Green (2012) does in order to explicitly problematize the ideologies and effects of "standardized English" in U.S. school settings.

practices. The goal of the school, then, is to curricularize language, so that language is not a:

> unique communicative system acquired naturally in the process of primary socialization, but as an academic subject or skill the elements of which can be ordered and sequenced, practiced and studied, learned and tested in artificial contexts (Valdés, 2020: 116).

Accordingly, language is an idealized object created by those with the most political power to be mastered, policed, and reformed (Mignolo, 1995). From this perspective, standardized languages are forms of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1991) that necessarily distinguishes social hierarchies; all other language practices not sanctioned by the state and its actors are considered deficient (i.e. racialized bi/multilinguals). Furthermore, as colonial, neoliberal subjects, these racialized bi/multilinguals subsequently positioned as lacking, the symbolic capital to participate as those with standardized linguistic capital in the state--despite the fact that their language practices are just as complex and legitimate (Flores, 2013; Halliday, et al., 1965).

Translanguaging Perspective

A translanguaging perspective can interrupt white language supremacy. García and Li Wei (2014) describe translanguaging as the way multilingual people flexibly and strategically draw from all of their named languages to make meaning. Like the term languaging, translanguaging primarily focuses on all the natural language practices of bi/multilinguals; however, translanguaging moves beyond using two separate languages unilaterally for different purposes (Cummins, 2008) to using an infinite combination of linguistic features to communicate including all of the varieties, registers, and styles (Coulmas, 2005). With influences from Bahkin's (1981) heteroglossia, translanguaging theory also includes the mixing and juxtaposition of worldviews and voices. It further includes not only all of one's *linguistic* resources, but also all of their semiotic resources (Garcia & Otheguy, 2020), *paralinguistic* resources like tone, pitch, speed, and stress, as well as their *extralinguistic* resources like gestures, facial expressions, and movements (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001). This view of language and languaging stands in stark contrast to monoglossic language ideology that historically "sees language as an autonomous skill that functions independently from the context in which it is used" (Garcia & Torres-Guevarra, 2010:182).

Importantly, García & Li Wei (2014) posit that a translanguaging lens views bilinguals not as having two disparate systems, but rather one fluid and complex linguistic repertoire from which they draw from and express their transnational worlds. They clarify that named languages are primarily a function of the nation-state that determines what is considered appropriate language practices and language users. The insider/outsider dialectic is a continual consideration in the political project of translanguaging: at once it recenters the natural ways bi/multilinguals make meaning through hybrid/heteroglossic practices at the same time it acknowledges and attempts to disrupt the social outsiders' norms for monolingual, monoglossic standardized language practices. In turn, this allows us to contest the damaging raciolinguistic ideologies intertwined within linguicism in general and white language supremacy and English linguistic imperialism in particular.

Methodology and Materials

Anzaldúa taught Women of Color, "When we the objects, become the subjects, and look at and analyze our own experiences, a danger arises that we look through the master's gaze, speak to his tongue, use his methodology--in Audre Lorde's words, use the 'master's tools." (Anzaldúa, 2000: 134). For this reason, we engage in a decolonizing methodology--autohistorias--to reflect on our work as *normalistas*, particularly as language (English and Spanish) teachers. Anzaldúa defined *autohistoria,* also known as *autohistoria-teoría,* as a way for Women of Color to write about abstract ideas by grounding them in their personal and community histories (Anzaldúa, 2000: 242). She further outlined autohistoria in this way:

> This form goes beyond the traditional self-portrait or autobiography; in telling the writer/artist's personal story, it also includes the artist's cultural history—indeed, it's a kind of making history, of inventing our history from our experience and perspective through our art . . . (Keating, 2015: 62)

Autohistoria-teoría integrates life history with reflection. Though autohistoria-teoría can take many forms, our manuscript consists of personal narratives from each author—narratives that include personal and cultural critique, chronicles of self-growth, and revelations of healing. Bhattacharya (2020) described the work of autohistoria-teoría as "deep excavation" (p. 199) that engages "personal and collective trauma" (p. 200). Although autohistoria-teoría is expansive in its reliance on spiritual, or magical, and intuitive elements such as dreams, visions, and imagination, in this work, we depend mostly upon our memories of our languaging experiences. Consistent with autohistoria-teoría, we reconstruct these experiences, critique our (in)actions, reveal our self-growth, and describe our transformation-in-process. Through engaging in this work, we begin to heal ourselves (Keating, 2009).

Further, in our narratives, we do the hard work required of autohistoria-teoría--"examining repressed and disowned parts of ourselves" (Bhattacharya & Keating, 2018: 345). Our selection of a constructivist research methodology stems from our epistemological stance that knowledge is constructed through experiencing and reflecting on those experiences. As such, we create knowledge by reflecting on our experiences with languaging and the teaching of languages. In the manner of Bhattacharya & Keating (2018), we share this space in which we connect our experiences and reflect on our commitment to decolonial language instruction. The only materials engaged were our memories and critical reflections of extant scholarship. Knowledge revealed through intense engagement with the self reflects an epistemic shift from Western positivistic methods of knowledge construction and validation. In this way, the decolonial turn is reflected in our methodology, and as will be revealed, in our teaching practice.

In our manuscript, remaining true to this methodology, we illustrate the following theoretical, or abstract, concepts that are central to our work as academics: linguistic justice (Baker-Bell, 2020), linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 2012), white language supremacy (Inoue, 2019), and linguistic deficit discourse (Cassels Johnson, Johnson & Hetrick, 2020). We ground these concepts in our own lived experiences with languaging and teaching and cultural histories as Women of Color. Through our duo autohistoria-teoría, we seek to:

1. uncover ways we have been conduits of white language supremacy,
2. interrogate how white language supremacy has impacted our teaching, and

3. reveal our growth in our stance towards linguistic justice.

Results of "Deep Excavation"
Altheria's Autohistoria-teoría

> Internalized anti-Blackness is real,
> and it will have you on the frontlines reinforcing
> a system of white supremacy and upholding racist policies and practices
> that legitimize your own suffering and demise (Baker-Bell, 2020: 6).

I remember hearing her speak at an international conference. The language she spoke sounded like the language I used with my African American friends. I wondered if I were the only one shocked that she, a senior scholar, conducted her presentation using the language that seemed to be home for her--Black English. Questions bounced around inside my head: "Isn't she afraid they won't understand her? Or that they'll deem her unintelligent? Or that they'll think she sounds too Black?" She did not code-switch, or adjust her language based on the audience. Instead, she spoke with an authority that seemed to validate her Black languaging practices. (Years later, when I encountered Baker-Bell's (2020) use of Black English in her monograph on linguistic justice, I was not as shocked.) Her confidence suggested that she, unlike me, had not drunk the Kool-Aid. In other words, she had not internalized the myth that Black English was in any way substandard. I questioned if I could "get-away with" using my native language. "Surely not," I thought, "Her English was Black. Urban. Hip. It clearly wasn't Southern. Southern meant country, backwards, illiterate. I'd be wise to use the English that had garnered my academic and professional success." As is evident in my internal monologue, I was struggling to rid myself of internalized myths of inferiority--that Southerners were uneducated and unrefined because of our language (Love, 2013).

From Home to School: Switching Codes

I grew-up in Alabama speaking Southern Black English--African American Vernacular English. I realize now that this was my first language. It was the language I used in conversation with family and friends. It wasn't right or wrong; it just was. Schooling would teach me a different language, one that was similar to my own but different enough that I had to "learn" it. The language used in the books from which I learned to read--the language I was taught to use when writing--was different from the language I used at home and in my community. At that point, I was too young to know that languages are not neutral, that some have more value than others. It would take decades for me to learn that language value was socio-politically determined by those who hold the power to decide. By white men. But I digress, as we often do in my culture's languaging practices.

I was an easy convert to the new language. I excelled in reading and writing in these primary school years. My earliest standardized assessment scores and grades reflected proclivity for reading and writing. One of my earliest reading memories is me ordering books from our local library and having them delivered to our rural home. They'd arrive in a brown envelope, the color of a paper bag and firmly sealed with clear tape. I'd hungrily read the four books that had been loaned to me, return them, and request four more. These books, I'm sure, taught me how to write in the new language. I was always writing. I can still see my little red diary, in which I recorded my latest crushes and my favorite songs. According to the gatekeepers of the language--my teachers--I wrote well. In 8th grade, my English teacher, Mrs. Nicholas, told me that she enjoyed reading my journal.

From High School to College: Becoming Proficient at Using the Master's Tools

When I started high school, I was placed in all advanced academic courses. By my senior year, the only one I remained in was AP English. The class was rigorous. The level of literary analysis required challenged me, and I definitely didn't get straight As. Still, Miss Bizzell--the most-feared and respected English teacher at our high school--complimented me, "Altheria, you write really well. You should take the AP exam." My chest ballooned with pride. Although I knew that my mama couldn't afford to pay for me to take the exam, I loved that Miss Bizzell liked my writing.

I wrote so well, in fact, that the college placement tests marked me worthy of Honors English as a college freshman. Although I was initially a biology major, my English professor encouraged me to major in English, so I did. When I was asked what kind of literature I liked, I proudly exclaimed, "British Literature". "The writing is so beautiful," I'd add. In a conversation with my academic advisor, Dr. Lowe, I was obviously speaking my first language instead of my developed language, and she said, "Altheria, if you're going to be an English major, you need to speak like an English major." This was a pivotal point for me in my language development. From that point on, I became mindful of my speech and worked really hard to use the language schooling had taught me. I became less and less comfortable speaking my home language. When I went home from college to visit my family on the weekends, I remember thinking, "*They sound so country*." I'd correct their speech in my head, and sometimes aloud. My college English had positioned me above them. Perhaps this is the point when I realized that language has the power to separate individuals into groups: the educated and the uneducated. It would be much later, though, that I'd recognize many other separations made by language.

From College to Career: Perpetuating the Myth

When I returned to my small town after college graduation with an English degree, I didn't know how to start pursuing a career as a writer, so I chose a career that had a clearer and more direct path. I'd become a teacher. I began graduate school a month after graduating from college, and again, I'd major in English. This time, with plans to teach high school English. After earning an M.Ed. in English Education and secondary teaching certification, I began teaching middle school English and reading in an urban school in Alabama. Every single one of my students was African American, Like I did when I was their age, they spoke African American Vernacular English. I tried my best to standardize their speech and their writing, which meant that I was always penalizing them for not adhering to the rules I was taught to teach them. I never questioned the rules, who made them, or why. I was doing what I was certified to do—teaching them to use SAE*, or White Mainstream English (Baker-Bell, 2020). In actuality, there is no standard: "The use of 'standard' is problematic, suggesting that the United States does, in fact, have an accepted standard language." (Cunningham, 2017: 88) I thought I was just a conduit of proper language. It would be much later before I realized that I was helping to sustain white language supremacy.

I'd continue my career as an English teacher in Texas as a community college writing instructor. For reasons of which I wasn't aware at the time, my white students always outperformed by Black and Latino students on their essays. I recognized the language my Black students used in their papers. It used to be mine. Still, I forced them to make sure their subjects and verbs agreed, to not leave prepositions at the end of sentences, to not use double-negatives, and to use auxiliary (helping) verbs.

For example, when a student wrote, “He going to the store,” I used my ^ proofreading symbol to indicate that he should insert “is” in the sentence. I never questioned why the original sentence wasn’t acceptable. I, for certain, completely understood the sentence, so why was it wrong?

During my time at the community college, I was promoted instructor to department chair and from department chair to dean. My supervisor, the vice-president, told me that one of the reasons I had been selected for the dean position was because the selection committee was impressed with my writing ability. “Professional communication would be important as an administrator,” she had said. Again, I beamed with pride, just as I had when Mrs. Nicholas and Miss Bizzell had told me that I wrote well when I was a child. Over the years, many people have told me that I write well. In fact, it’s probably the praise I’ve received most in my lifetime. It is only today that I’m questioning what people *really* mean and whether this *ability* should be merited.

Waking Up

I now realize that throughout my adult life, I’ve distanced myself from my first language. I’ve tried to not appear Southern and to not appear Black in my uses of language. Writing these words hurt. Tremendously. This writing prompted a memory that I had repressed. I was working alongside professors with middle school immigrant students in a summer class. On the first day, they were asked to introduce themselves and include in their introductions the languages they speak. When it was my turn to introduce myself, I told the class, “I only speak one language. English. Well actually, I speak another one, Southern Black English.” I didn’t expect the students to beg me to hear my other language. “Can you show us how it sounds?” I refused. I was embarrassed. One of the professors, Dr. Silva--a bilingual scholar--, called me outside the classroom. “Never be embarrassed of the languages you speak. No language is good or bad. All that matters is that it meets the needs of those who use it.” This was the beginning of my “waking up”.

In 2019, I listened to a speech by Asao B. Inoue entitled, “How Do We Language So People Stop Killing Each Other, Or What Do We Do About White Language Supremacy?” The end of this speech was the beginning for me, as I started interrogating ways white language supremacy had impacted my life. I realized that my academic and career success could, at least in part, be attributed to my ability to conform my most authentic way of communication to one that has, at times, seemed contrived. As a Black woman, I am accustomed to having to negotiate aspects of my identity. Anzaldua captured this negotiation in an apt simile: “Some of us are forced to acquire the ability, like a chameleon, to change color when the dangers are many and the options are few” (Anzaldua, 2009: 124). I saw myself as having only two options. Switch codes (languages) or fail. So, I switched. When schools force students into these two corners, they become victims of linguistic racism (Baker-Bell, 2020). For many years, I did not realize that I was a victim, or, more importantly, a victimizer.

I am now a university professor—a teacher educator. In this position, I have found that the students who struggle most in writing are Black students. Or perhaps the writing I’ve been trained to correct comes mostly from Black students (Cunningham, 2017). I frequently refer them to the writing lab for assistance and provide resources to help them standardize their writing. Just recently, I was teaching a summer course for graduate students pursuing a master’s degree in teaching. One of my students, the only Black male in the class, submitted a paper that I deemed to be poorly written. Many of the *mistakes* were characteristic of Southern Black English. I

marked-up his paper in the way that college professors do, then scheduled a one-on-one meeting with him to discuss his writing. In a nutshell, I told him that if he wants to be successful in graduate school, he must learn how to write.

The latent message I was sent to him was, "Your languaging practices are insufficient and inappropriate." And because language is central to identity, I was, in essence, telling him, "Students like you don't belong in institutions of higher education." From Dr. Inoue's speech, I had learned that the hierarchical valuations of language practices reflect our personal judgment (2019). Although I tried not to appear to be judging my student, I realize now that I was, as I had done to Black students many times in my almost twenty-year career in education. Unfortunately, this student quit our program. I can only hope that I am only partly to blame.

Valuing African American/Black English

Although I was an English major as an undergraduate and graduate, I was never taught to value African American/Black English. As a result, in all of my formal academic studies in English, no teacher ever told me that African American English is a legitimate language, although Black English scholars like Smitherman, Green, and Delpit, among others, have been preaching this message for decades. Even though I have been an advocate for culturally responsive pedagogy for more than a decade, I just recently learned that being culturally responsive means centering Black English and other racialized languages. As Pullum (1999) declared, "African American Vernacular English is not standard English with mistakes." In fact, it is its own language system. Dr. Inous instructed his audience, "The key to fighting white language supremacy is in changing the structures, cutting the steel bars, altering the ecology, in which our biases function in our classrooms and communities." At this point in my career, I am pondering what these actions look like in terms of supporting users of Black English in the classroom. What I know for sure is that the arbitrary valuing of SAE* over racialized languages causes teachers to penalize Students of Color and serves to further white dominance. Holding a singular view of SAE* superiority caused me to enact linguistic violence upon students (Boutte & Bryan, 2019).

Ale's Autohistoria-teoría

Interrogating my own position
in the larger context of empire's intricate net of oppression
helped me to understand my own self as layered
[...] in short, understand myself
as both colonizer and colonized" (Chávez-Moreno, 2020: 6).

My name is Ale—not Alex, nor Ali. It doesn't rhyme with pale; it's spelled A-l-e in Spanish and pronounced "Ali" in English. From the youngest age, I have insisted on it and continue to do so until this day. In both its spelling and its pronunciation, it contains the two worlds and languages that are so intricately a part of me, but haven't always been at peace. You see, I have two first languages, Spanish and English. Growing up with a Mexican mom and estadounidense[4] dad in Houston,

4 Most of my life, I've said I have an "American" dad. However, this term is problematic since there are many Americas, with the United States being just one. At the same time, I realize that "American" is often an emic term that some Mexicans use to denote someone from the U.S. I prefer to use the Spanish word "estadounidense" that is more specific to who my dad is

Texas, I don't even remember formally acquiring them. Like my daughter, the "two" languages were just *language* that I spoke to different people—that is, until I mis-raced a boy in pre-school.

Early childhood: Mis-racing and losing Spanish

Like acquiring my languages, I don't even remember this incident happening except for it being retold to me, with its indelible impact on the rest of my (teaching) life. My mom tells the story that I reached out to a brown boy at school and started speaking Spanish to him. Surprised (or confused?), he yells at me, "What are you saying?" He laughed (or mocked?) me, quieting my connection to him and later quieting my Spanish. My mom says I stopped speaking Spanish after that. That incident though quick and seemingly simple would reverberate throughout the next three decades of my life: how race and language co-constitute one another, including who speaks Spanish and English well, to whom, and why. It also became a meaningful life-marker, because for a decade and a half I would live a mostly English monolingual life--except los fines de semana[5] when we would visit our family.

Several years later, I *do* remember going to my abuelita's house and Mom speaking Spanish to a gardener. Sitting in the back seat and peering through the car window, I have no idea what she asked him en español, but I acutely remember preguntándome, "*How* did she know to speak Spanish to him?" Me explicó que she just knew; it was a part of her mestiza consciousness (Anzaldúa, 1987). Todavía, ¿Cómo sabía? Acabo de aprender that not all brown people speak Spanish. This seemed to be a subaltern knowledge (Cervantes-Soon & Carrillo, 2016) obscured by my socialization into whiteness already in my short life.

Childhood to adolescence: from English monolingualism to reclaiming Spanish

Like many biracial and/or bicultural people, I adapted to my surroundings. Growing up in a largely white, upper middle-class neighborhood (though my family was *far* from upper middle class), Spanish was relegated to (extended) family time and English was relegated to the rest of my life. This led me to not only bifurcate my language practices, but also my identities: there was the güera mexicana Ale quien habla español con sus parientes y estadounidense Ale that walked through the world as a physically (and culturally) white English speaker.

Further entrenching parallel monolingualism (Escamilla et al., 2014) and English linguistic imperialism were my experiences as a student in school. Designated gifted in language arts through advanced classes, I remember earning 100 averages and winning yearly awards. Now I can see how my mother's and my own socialization processes into whiteness with its standardized forms of English enhanced whatever natural ability I had: learning English as a second language in school settings, my mom's primary experiences with English was curricularized by school. She spoke a more formal, standardized English that would later serve as one of the greatest language influences on my language practices (Potowski, 2016).

(a person from the United States) and thus distances itself—however so slightly—from colonial whiteness as property (Harris, 1993) that this term reinforces in the U.S.

5 As a way to resist English linguistic imperialism and to normalize translanguaging practices, I have chosen not to translate or italicize Spanish words and phrases.

In secondary Spanish classes, I remember learning (curricularized) Spanish faster than non-heritage speakers; I wasn't exactly a sequential bilingual, but neither did I fit the characteristics of a simultaneous bilingual. I was a heritage speaker/learner, who practiced Spanish with my abuelita and my mom. Little did I know that this, too, reinforced WLS; curricularized forms of both English and Spanish dominated my learning and language practices. Still, like some Spanish heritage language speakers, formal Spanish classes represented a complex tangle of emotions and motivations (Briceño, et al, 2018). I was embarrassed by my lack of Spanish and anxious about my identity as a Mexican American that couldn't speak "perfect" Spanish. In an effort to reclaim parts of my Mexican identity, I saw learning standardized forms of Spanish taught by my high school and undergraduate Spanish teachers as means of authenticating myself.

Early adulthood and teaching: reclaiming Spanish and enacting WLS

Twisted into these motivations was also a genuine love of languages and desire to communicate more fully with my abuelita y other Mexican family members. In these classes, I would also become indoctrinated by neoliberal sensibilities of bilingualism, that primarily positioned Spanish (and other world languages) as a commodity to be sought, bought, and utilized in the competitive global market (Flores, 2013). I double-majored in English and Spanish, aiming to apply what I had learned in my English composition courses about analysis and rhetoric to my Spanish writing. I completed grammar and translation assignments with an almost religious tenacity. I consulted and honored the Real Academia Española (RAE) for the "right" Spanish words and memorized and drilled myself on grammar rules. And without knowing it, I was wholly and solely consuming and reproducing white, standardized forms of Spanish into my linguistic repertoire.

So, this is how I entered a fourth-grade bilingual classroom: a second generation, Mexican American, yes; but also one that had seriously separated uses for English and Spanish—more specifically academically sanctioned English and Spanish that I would benevolently share with my students. Furthermore, because of my Mexican American's family proximity to whiteness, by "passing" as white when out in public and accumulating social and cultural capital from being bicultural that transferred to economic capital (Rich, 2010), I had seen my family largely achieve the American dream (Rendón, 2019). We were a verifiable success story that I wanted to share with my students, so they could do the same.

As part of a transitional bilingual program, I taught mostly in English, but supported students in Spanish, further reinforcing English linguistic imperialism. Through these programmatic language policies, Spanish was good—to a point: in order to learn English. Of the two languages, English was more important and what would help them be successful (Babino & Stewart, 2017a). Because I experienced language loss, I was also intent to honor and make space for Spanish (Babino & Wickstrom, 2017b), specifically the circularized Spanish I learned in school settings and was reinforced with my family. These duel desires soon become dueling desires amidst state standardized testing pressures that privileged passing tests in English, so that my bilingual students would be labeled as making progress in their academic and English language development (Cervantes Soon, et al., 2017).

A teaching turning point: considering and adjusting within WLS

"No me gusta leer" Valeria told me at the end of the school year. She was easily one of my top students, who performed well on standardized tests—and she looked dejected, utterly exhausted. This was my third year teaching bilingual fourth grade and my first year as Spanish teacher in a one-teacher, one language 50/50 model of dual language bilingual education. In this bilingual (DLBE) program type, the goal is for students to sustain their bilingualism, biliteracy, and cross-cultural competence while attaining high academic achievement. As the strongest form of bilingual education (Baker, 2011), it is additive as opposed to subtractive in nature like the transitional bilingual program I had been a part of. Still, the pressure of English linguistic imperialism through and in addition to standardized testing continued. Furthermore, as part of the DLBE model, languages were strictly separated. So as the Spanish teacher, I aimed to never utter a word of English in an effort to be faithful to the program, my students' Spanish maintenance, and (sub)consciously my legitimization as a Spanish bilingual teacher. In this maelstrom of pressures (Babino & Stewart, 2018), I narrowed my literacies and languaging practices to academic written Spanish assessed on standardized tests. I was proud of my use of leveled readers and reading strategies, accompanied by detailed guided reading notes analyzing my students' progress. After three years and a master's degree, I knew what to do and how to get my students to be successful on these myopic measures through these means...or did I?

Valeria's honest statement evoked the question: ¿Vale la pena si después de todo a los estudiantes no les gusta leer? My heart said "no", at the same time I intuited the answer to linguistic justice was and continues to be multifaceted. The next year I began a doctorate in Literacy and Language Studies, where I expanded my views of literacies, languaging, and the dynamic teaching and assessment practices that function in light of these complexities. This was the first time I engaged with translanguaging as a pedagogy and a theory, grappling deeply with it. To be frank, it's not so much that I struggled with the theory; what I wrestled with in pedagogy at the elementary level was introducing English into protected Spanish space that was already in danger of being lost. Additionally, I had complicated feelings regarding standardized, circularized Spanish: I saw and believed my students' vernacular Spanishes as worthy and creative; at the same time, I knew much of my success as a bilingual was due to my practice of the right (white) Spanish. At this intersection, a new question penetrated my teaching: what is linguistic justice for racialized bilingual students in and between their languages? My beginning attempts included protected spaces for Spanish as well as explicit inclusion for many literacies through class workshops, projects, and library. During my last three years in the elementary bilingual classroom, I started strategically planning translanguaging spaces and projects for students with an emphasis on building complex bilingual identities García Mateus & Palmer, 2017).

Teacher educator and researcher: naming and breaking rank with WLS

As my role transitioned from classroom teacher to teacher educator, my journey hasn't been a straight line from supporting to countering WLS. Because I have and continue to benefit from WLS, it is a contested site of continual (un)learning, (re)viewing, and (re)acting. However, I would say this fight is significantly fortified through a (re)integration of my racio/ethnic and linguistic identities and the

subsequent commitment to (try to be) unapologetically my full self across spaces. In my literacy, ESL, and bilingual education classes, I explain how both my socialization into whiteness *and* my Mexican American heritage inform my views and use of literacies and languaging practices. I regularly speak in heteroglossic Spanish and English, even when my students are largely monolingual in my literacy and ESL classes. I aim to normalize bi/multilingualism not only through my identity and speech, but also by assuming it as the norm for the global majority in our discussions of research, best practices, and curriculum. I create spaces and assignments where pre-service teachers take bi-, multi-, and trans- lenses on teaching literacies and languaging (Babino & Stewart, In press).

Yet, I still wrestle with state standardized tests in English and Spanish for teacher certification. Because of this, I still provide "feedback" to my pre-service bilingual teachers on standardized conceptions of Spanish (though I limit it to two suggestions per assignment, address the *message* of their work first, and share with them how I manage the power dynamics of world Spanishes). I still battle with the "need" for the master's tools. Furthermore, in fear of low evaluations as a pre-tenured faculty member, I sometimes use code words for WLS, like "those with power" or "the dominant class". I don't always correct colleagues when they language microaggressions towards our students and their/our communities. I still want to be liked. Each time, what lulls me out of my fear is thinking about the freedom I've experienced in naming and disentangling myself from WLS and the freedom that our students deserve. It's further strengthened by purposeful partnerships with like-minded colleagues of all positionalities with the ensuing commitment to curricularlize linguistic justice in and across our classes.

Discussion

Coming to realize that we have been conduits and culprits of white language supremacy is not completely shocking considering that colonialism is "a totalizing system that has affected every aspect of society" (Martin, Pirbhai-Illich, & Pete, 2018: 236). Still, because we aim to do "decolonial work," we felt compelled to be honest about the ways our internalization of the master narrative caused us to perpetuate linguistic imperialism. Simply stated, we have been guilty of using the "master's tools" to recolonize our students. Writing duo autohistoria-teoría allowed us to examine our language and literacy histories and gave us space to acknowledge and accept responsibility for our complicity in marginalizing Students of Color within a system that insists on white language supremacy. Our goal as normalistas who are teacher educators is to disrupt white linguistic hegemony that results in discursive violence against Students of Color in favor of linguistic justice that affords Students of Color the "linguistic liberties that are afforded to white students (Baker-Bell, 2020: 7). As part of writing this article, we are seeking to further decolonize our teaching perspectives and practices and find new tools that humanize Students of Color. These practices include the following: 1) recognizing the ways language and race are inextricably entwined, 2) centering non-Western language varieties (Pirbhai-Illich, Pete, & Martin, 2018: 3) using translanguaging as resistance, 4) enacting culturally sustaining writing instruction (Woodard, Vaughan, & Machado, 2017), and 5) integrating multimodal communication practices. We consciously reject our previous roles as conduits and culprits of white language supremacy. Moving forward, we aim to be intentional and strategic about continuing to decolonize our practices, even though we cannot completely escape the colonized institutions and systems in which we are situated. The urging of Martin, Pirbhai-Illich, & Pete seems apropos as final thoughts:

> This work requires a commitment: a commitment to discomfort, a commitment to questioning oneself and one's identity, a commitment to engagement with difficult truths . . . a commitment to critical and hyper self-reflexivity . . . a commitment to investing in new ways of being and doing (2018: 253)

We hope that our duo autohistoria-teoría evidences these continually contested commitments.

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