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"Resisting from Within": (Re)imagining a Critical Translingual English Classroom

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“RESISTING FROM WITHIN”:
(RE) IMAGINING A CRITICAL TRANSLINGUAL ENGLISH CLASSROOM

by

KATE SELTZER

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Urban Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2017
“Resisting from Within”: (Re) imagining a Critical Translingual English Classroom

by

Kate Seltzer

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Urban Education in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

“Resisting from Within”: (Re) imagining a Critical Translingual English Classroom

Kate Seltzer

Advisor: Ofelia García

This ethnographic case study of an urban, linguistically diverse English classroom explores what happened when space was made for students both to voice their experiences living amidst ideologies that marginalize their language practices and identities and to resist such ideologies through writing that pushed monoglossic boundaries. Intensive one-on-one work with a high school English teacher led to the creation of a year-long curriculum that emphasized metalinguistic inquiry and discussion, linked language, power, and identity, and modeled the ways that writers and other artists take linguistic risks in order to critique monoglossic language ideologies.

Over the course of the year, students engaged with a number of multimodal texts, including articles, blog posts, speeches, podcasts, video clips, spoken word performances, and fiction, that explored how language shapes who we are and how society works. Students also engaged in author studies where they read the work of writers who challenge monoglossic expectations through their use of translanguaging (García, 2009) and the creative integration of diverse linguistic styles. As students analyzed the linguistic choices writers and artists made, they also explored what it meant for them to make choices in their own writing, namely through college essays that invited them to integrate their different language practices.
Finding from this project indicate that students have sophisticated understandings of the ways language ideologies shape their identities and experiences both in and out of school. Though some students articulated an internalization of ideologies that portray their language practices as deficient, they also expressed sentiments that aligned with what I term a *translingual sensibility*, a set of dispositions that includes an emphasis on meaning-making, an understanding of languages as fluid and interrelated, an interest in language practices other than their own, and a resistance to and transgression of monoglossic expectations and rules. Students enacted a translingual sensibility in many elements of classroom work, from in-class discussions to student-generated role-play to analysis of literary texts. However, their high levels of awareness of how their language practices are heard and judged also led them to protect those practices and their identities by making choices about how to include them – if at all – in their “academic” writing.

Overall, the year of instruction at the heart of this project aimed to challenge deficit framings of linguistically marginalized students by reframing them as gifted citizen sociolinguists (Flores, 2015; Rymes, 2014) whose awareness of and flexibility with language enable them to challenge the very ideologies that marginalize them. By implementing a curriculum that fostered students’ translingual sensibilities rather than uphold and reify standard language ideologies (Lippi-Green, 1997), this project demonstrates possibilities and challenges to the a critical translingual approach to the English classroom.
Acknowledgments

First and foremost, thank you to my advisor and mentor Dr. Ofelia García. Ofelia, I don’t know how you provide so many of us with so much support, but I know that I am eternally grateful to be counted among your students. You have made an indelible mark on this project, on my career, and on my life, and there are no words to express my appreciation for the myriad doors you have opened for me. Thank you, also, to the members of my committee, Drs. Wendy Luttrell, Ernest Morrell, and Ira Shor. The three of you have been such sources of inspiration for me, and your input shaped this project in powerful ways. Wendy, thank you for reading my work with such care and thoughtfulness and for having confidence in me as a scholar. Taking your courses and learning from you has made me a more aware and careful researcher. Ernest, I am so grateful you agreed to be on my committee despite your many students and responsibilities at Teachers College. This project truly took root in your seminar, and I aspired to include in it the criticality, innovation, and hope you bring into your own teaching and work with young people in English classrooms. Ira, thank you for your detailed feedback and your enthusiasm for this project. Having you on my committee helped me remember, always, that teaching language and literacy are political acts.

I am blessed to have a loving and supportive family and community, without whom I would never have finished this dissertation. To my parents, Gary and Joanne Seltzer, who let Aaron, Lindy, and me take over their house and who gave me the all-important time and space to write. I don’t know what I would have done without you. Thank you also to my grandparents – Livia, Joseph, Ruth, and Milton. Though Livia and Milton have left us, all four of your ways of languaging served as the very early origins of this project. To Jimmy, thank you for bringing much-needed calm, levity, and humor to what was at times a difficult and demanding process. To
the women in my life who listened, read, texted, called, visited, and accommodated – Alie, Anna, Bayh, Hallie, Jen, Laura, Priscilla – thank you for being there for me and keeping me sane. Special thanks, too, to the brilliant Drs. Nelson Flores and Cati de los Ríos for their invaluable input and advice on this project. Lastly, thank you to Aaron. Before you were born, you were my constant companion throughout my fieldwork; after you were born, you were the best thing to come home to after a day of writing. You gave me the unconditional love and immense joy I needed when I was overwhelmed or discouraged. You reminded me of what truly matters. I adore you.

This project would not have been possible without Lauren Ardizzone, an inspirational teacher and my thought partner, collaborator and dear friend. You took on this project mere months after your own beautiful daughter was born, a feat I surely could not have carried out myself. You opened your classroom and your teaching to me, which is itself a rare act of generosity and bravery. You made the critical translingual approach come alive, all the while reassuring me that our work was new, exciting, and important. This work is as much yours as mine. I am so incredibly grateful to you.

And to the students, thank you all for sharing your English classroom with me. Thank you for welcoming me into your conversations and sharing with me parts of your lives and experiences. I learned so much from your powerful understandings about language, and your humor and creativity made my time at SBHS a joy. Your intelligence, maturity, and insight are the heart of this dissertation. I hope I did you all justice.
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Chapter 1

Introducing a Critical Translingual Approach

Introduction

This project was born out of my own experiences as a high school English teacher of linguistically marginalized youth. In the six years I taught ELA, I consistently saw my students—who I knew used language with their friends and families in ways that were creative, adept, and flexible—fail their English classes and perform poorly on standardized English assessments. I also saw these same students viewed through a deficit lens, rendered “languageless” (Rosa, 2016) by many of the adults around them. Though I tried in my own practice to build off students’ existing language practices and introduce those I believed would garner them success in the context of school, the work I have done in my graduate studies has pushed my thinking further.

Through my extensive study of post-structural approaches to language, namely my work around dynamic bilingualism and translanguaging, I have come to question the very nature of the “English classroom” and to think of new possibilities for, instead, “language arts” (Martínez, 2012). Though it is impossible to ignore linguistic standardization in school—and the role of standard language ideologies (Lippi-Green, 1997) at work in our society—the English classroom can make space for students to name their awareness of such ideologies, gain exposure to the myriad ways that successful “language artists” challenge these ideologies, and leverage their metalinguistic awareness and what I refer to as their translingual sensibilities and practices strategically and creatively to add their voices to the choir of resistance. This chapter summarizes my research project, lays out several concepts that have contributed to its conception and defines several key terms, and provides an overview of the chapters that follow.
**Project Overview**

This ethnographic case study of an urban, linguistically diverse English classroom explores what happened when space was made for students both to voice their experiences living amidst raciolinguistic ideologies that marginalize their language practices and to resist such ideologies through writing that pushed monoglossic boundaries. I worked with a high school English teacher to create a year-long curriculum that emphasized metalinguistic inquiry and discussion, linked language, power, and identity, and modeled the ways that writers and other artists take linguistic risks in order to talk back to monoglossic language ideologies. Over the course of the year, students engaged with a number of multimodal texts—articles, blog posts, speeches, podcasts, video clips, spoken word performances, and fiction—all of which related to the ways that language shapes who we are and how society works. Students also engaged in author studies where they read the work of writers who challenge monoglossic expectations through their use of translanguaging and the creative integration of diverse linguistic styles.

As students analyzed the linguistic choices writers and artists made, they also explored what it meant for *them* to make choices in their own writing. As a culminating project for the year, students wrote college essays that invited them to integrate their different language practices in ways that demonstrated their learning and their identities and challenged those monoglossic expectations held by what Flores and Rosa (2015) refer to as White listening subjects. Overall, my project aimed to challenge deficit framings of linguistically marginalized students by reframing them as gifted citizen sociolinguists (Flores, 2015; Rymes, 2014) whose awareness of and flexibility with language enable them to challenge the very ideologies that marginalize them. By implementing a curriculum that aimed to foster students’ translingual sensibilities—dispositions that engender linguistic transgression, resilience, pride and resistance
to monoglossic norms – and their linguistic creativity and criticality (Li Wei 2014), rather than uphold and reify standard language ideologies, this project demonstrates possibilities and challenges to the creation of a critical translingual English classroom.

Key Concepts for a Critical Translingual Approach to the English Classroom

Heteroglossia and translanguaging

Bakhtin’s groundbreaking post-structural understanding of all language as heteroglossic – that is, multivoiced and in constant “dialogue” with its past meanings and uses – is the foundation upon which this project is built. Too often, students in English classrooms are taught to read and write in ways that maintain the myth of unitary, homogenous language. This process is what Bakhtin (1981) called canonization, or “the process that blurs heteroglossia [and] facilitates a naïve, single-voiced reading” (p.425). To resist this process, English classrooms can highlight the inherent heteroglossia of all speech and texts, illustrating that “languages do not exclude each other, but rather intersect with each other in many different ways” (Bakhtin, 1981, p.291).

Translanguaging, which I explore in more detail in chapter 3, arises out of such post-structural understandings of language and describes the fluid, dynamic language practices that bilingual speakers and their communities use “without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages” (Otheguy, García & Reid, 2015, p.283). Pedagogy that takes up a translanguaging lens views students’ language practices as interconnected and inseparable, and organizes classroom learning so that students can draw on all their linguistic resources – as well as other external resources – at all times in order to make meaning. Though translanguaging as thus far been applied mostly to the education of those speakers viewed as bi-/multilingual, this project extends that lens and asserts that all students – those who are bi-/multilingual across the broad bilingual continuum
(Hornberger, 2003) and those traditionally seen as “monolingual” – can benefit from a more expansive and dynamic understanding of language learning and use in the classroom.

**Languaging race**

Ironically, language is often left out of the conversation in English classrooms. Rather than exclude discussions of language or focus solely on teaching its “standard” forms, English classrooms can take a more expansive approach that “add[s] other voices and Discourses to [students’] repertoires” (Delpit, 1992, p.301). This process requires explicit, transparent talk about language, and a focus on *critical metalinguistic awareness*. One approach to this process is Critical Language Awareness (Clark et. al., 1991; Fairclough, 1989; Wolfram, 1993; Alim, 2005), which understands “educational institutions as designed to teach citizens about the current sociolinguistic order of things, without challenging that order, which is based largely on the ideology of the dominating group and their desire to maintain social control” (Alim, 2005, p.28). Pedagogically, this means teaching all students, and especially those who are “linguistically profiled and marginalized…how language is used and, importantly, how language can be used against them” (p.28).

For linguistically marginalized students of color, raising their critical awareness of language itself and fostering their abilities to articulate such critical metalinguistic awareness must include explicit talk around the intersections of race and language. By designing activities and reading texts that bring forth students’ explicit talk about elements of language, or their *metacommentary* (Rymes, 2014) and their experiences with linguistic racialization (Alim & Smitherman, 2012; Crump, 2014; Alim, Rickford & Ball, 2016) and *raciolinguistic ideologies* (Flores & Rosa, 2015) to the surface, students can grapple with those realities and discuss the possibilities of reimagining those realities through their own creative and critical ways of using
language. In this way, my project aligns with scholarship around hip-hop pedagogies (Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2002; Alim, 2007; Hill, 2009) that center such creative uses of language and critical approaches to literacy and links them to an explicit interrogation of raciolinguistic ideologies in “academic” writing.

“Safe houses” and “literate arts of the contact zone”

English classrooms have the potential to become safe houses (Pratt, 1991; Canagarajah, 1997) “where students can interrogate, negotiate, and appropriate new rhetorical and discursive forms without fear of institutional penalties” (Canagarajah, 1997, p.191). Because these spaces are often defined by “institutional penalties,” with students’ languages and literacies under higher levels of scrutiny than in other subject area classrooms, this idea is a particularly important one for linguistically marginalized students. These students are under enormous pressure to learn a socially constructed “standard” language, a process that, either implicitly or explicitly, devalues their own language practices. Creating a safe house in the English classroom works against this assimilationist process and makes space for the “linguistic creativity and heterogeneity [that] are often absent in classrooms where minority students fear the imposition of a univocal discourse” (p.191). Instead of focusing on such a “univocal discourse,” the English classroom can embrace the “literate arts of the contact zone” such as “transculturation, critique, collaboration, bilingualism, mediation, parody, denunciation, imaginary dialogue, [and] vernacular expression” (Pratt, 1991, p.37). When students are made to feel safe (as well as engaged and inspired), they might share such creative and transgressive language arts with one another, fostering a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1999) that leads to powerful learning and solidarity.


**A critical translingual approach to English**

This project combines a critical metalinguistic approach with a translanguage approach in order to bring forth what I call students’ translingual sensibilities, which encompass those experiences, understandings, and language practices that challenge “standard language ideologies” (Lippi-Green, 1997) and “named language” ideologies (Otheguy, García & Reid, 2015). The creation of a curriculum that utilized texts that demonstrated translanguage and fostered students’ awareness and criticality of language itself and an instruction design that centered students’ translingual sensibilities and related language and literacy practices make up what I refer to in this project as a critical translingual approach.

A critical translingual approach to English harkens back to Bakhtin’s literary focus on text. The texts students analyzed – including those by authors who made explicit the multiplicity of voices at work in their writing – as well as the approach to writing taken up in a critical translingual approach emphasize that “language norms are actually heterogeneous, fluid, and negotiable,” an idea that “directly counters demands that writers must conform to fixed, uniform standards” (Horner et al, 2011, p.305). When we invited students to integrate their different language practices in their writing and cultivate a translingual writing voice, we were also inviting them to “resist from within” (Canagarajah, 2011, p.113). By engaging in a critical translingual approach to writing, then, we hoped students would come to see writing “as something that begets more than superior grades in courses or entrance into rewarding careers. Writing can be about re-making and re-articulating reality” (Morrell, 2003, p.7).

**What comes next: A chapter-by-chapter summary**

The next chapter lays out the four theoretical lenses that laid the foundation for my project.

Though I touched on some of these ideas in this introductory chapter, chapter 2 delves into them
in more detail and explains how their integrated nature led to the conception of this project.

Chapter 3 outlines the “nuts and bolts” of this research, including a thorough explanation of the classroom work, the data collected, and my approach to analysis. This chapter not only lays out my methodology, but goes into the particulars of the curriculum I co-designed with English teacher Lauren Ardizzone. This co-designed curriculum and Lauren’s implementation of the curriculum is at the heart of this project.

Chapters 4 through 7 lay out the major findings of my project. In chapter 4, I draw on students’ classroom talk and poetry writing to highlight their complex and often contradictory feelings about their language practices, which included both linguistic insecurity and elements of what I refer to as a translingual sensibility, such as pride in their language practices and affinity for transgressing monoglossic expectations. Chapter 5 delves further into this idea and explores the twin processes of linguistic marginalization and racialization experienced by students. Here I use students’ metacommentary and their participation in classroom role-plays to demonstrate both their understandings of raciolinguistic ideologies and their articulations of the impact of these ideologies on their subjectivities.

Chapter 6 shifts my focus from students’ metacommentary around raciolinguistic ideologies and their own language practices to a discussion of building translingual literacies in the English classroom. Here I profile six students from across Lauren’s four classrooms and explore each of their experiences with the culminating project of the year: the college essay. In response to our explicit invitation to integrate their different language practices into their writing, students made a number of different choices. Through an analysis of their essays and their talk about the choices they made in those essays, I explore how students’ written performances were also performances of their identities.
In my last findings chapter, chapter 7, I turn my attention to Lauren’s experience of the year, both professionally and personally. Drawing on Third Space theory, I highlight several of what I call Third Space moments to understand how the intentional use of a critical translingual curriculum and approach to pedagogy made space for shifts in the traditional organization and power relations of a classroom. Here I describe the elements of Lauren’s pedagogy I believe brought forth these Third Space moments, what came up when those moments occurred, and Lauren’s responses to those moments. Chapter 8, the final chapter, summarizes the findings of the project overall and points to important implications and future research related to the (re) imagining of the English classroom.

Though the homogenizing, monoglossic forces of English classrooms attempt to obscure them, the inherent heteroglossia of these spaces and students’ creative and critical translingual sensibilities and practices are always at work. Rather than ignore (at best) or attempt to control and tamp down on this ever-present heteroglossia and translanguaging, this project aimed to bring them to the surface of the English classroom and leverage them in order to see what understandings, language practices, and literacies might emerge. It is my hope that by drawing extensively on their metacommentary and taking up a translanguaging lens to read and understand their lived experiences and language practices, this project illustrates that students’ translingual voices and experiences must be at the center of any and all English pedagogy.
Chapter 2
Theoretical Framework

Overview
At the heart of this project is an English Language Arts curriculum and approach to pedagogy that is deeply rooted in theory. Though this curriculum was co-created by English teacher Lauren Ardizzone and me, and was highly responsive to students’ interests and questions, it was informed – from its inception – by several interconnected theoretical lenses. In this chapter, I briefly outline each of these four lenses and discuss how their intersections frame this project. Though I delve more deeply into the literature in each of my findings chapters, this early chapter provides the theoretical backdrop for all that follows.

I begin with the understanding that language itself is ideological. This lens emphasizes that language, far from a neutral system, is often a vehicle for deep-seated ideologies and power struggles. Building on the ideological nature of language, I take up a second, related lens: that “language” is invented and inherently heteroglossic. Rather than view language as a discrete, bounded system, this post-structural approach views linguistic heterogeneity and fluidity as the norm. The third lens conceptualizes identity in a similarly post-structural way: as socially and ideologically constructed. Integral, here, is the understanding that linguistic performances are also identity performances, whereby individuals take up, reject, and appropriate ideological discourses in terms of their subjectivities. Lastly, I ground this project in a fourth lens, literacy as social and local, and take up recent critiques of essentialized notions of race, ethnicity, and culture in literacy instruction. These four interrelated lenses have helped me reimagine what English Language Arts classroom can look and sound like, as well as shaped my approach to understanding what emerged as this reimagining occurred in practice (see Figure 2.1).
**Lens 1: Language as ideological**

Drawing on an economic metaphor, Bourdieu (1991) argues that those who speak dominant forms of a language have more *linguistic capital* than those who do not. This means that some language practices have greater value in the marketplace and grant certain speakers greater access to resources and opportunities than others. In *Language and Symbolic Power*, Bourdieu analyzes how language is used to maintain power, not through overt tactics, but through constant and often unnoticed linguistic vigilance that defines one language as powerful and devalues all others. Bourdieu writes that language *itself* does not have power, and that, in fact, language would *cease* to have power if those who profited from speaking certain forms of it did not actively maintain the hierarchy of those forms over others.

The linguistic vigilance that maintains (and rigs) the “game” is carried out through language ideologies and transmitted through discourse. Ideologies about language – especially those that reify associations between certain language practices and power – emerge and are...
maintained through a complex series of semiotic processes, which Irvine and Gal (2000) refer to as iconization, fractal recursivity, and erasure. In the process of *iconization*, direct lines are drawn between language practices and particular social groups’ “inherent nature or essence” (p.37). These language practices become “iconic” of those social groups so that we see the two as inherently linked. The process of making meaning of our world often involves drawing comparisons and seeing ourselves in terms of others. Further, we tend to understand who we are and where we are in the world by what we are not and where we are not. This distancing process is what Irvine and Gal term *fractal recursivity*. In terms of language ideology, the kind of opposition and duality we hear and see becomes projected onto a larger level, whereby broad categories are formed. Fractal recursivity creates the categories of otherness that are then connected to the process of iconization. Lastly, *erasure* is “the process in which ideology, in simplifying the sociolinguistic field, renders some persons or activities (or sociolinguistic phenomenon) invisible” (p.38). Thus, those language practices or phenomena that do not fit neatly into iconic categories are simply erased, upholding the very ideologies from which such categories arise.

Ideologies about language must be actively maintained if they are to “stick.” This maintenance is kept up through the transmission of language ideologies through discourse. According to Fairclough (1989), language must be understood as a “social practice determined by social structures” (p.17). Viewing language as social practice, rather than a discrete and autonomous system, means viewing it as the primary conduit of those ideologies that uphold systems of power. Speaking broadly, power in discourse involves “powerful participants controlling and constraining the contributions of non-powerful participants” (p.47). When individuals engage in what Fairclough calls an “unequal encounter,” one party exerts more
power over another. A doctor interrupts his patient’s descriptions of his ailments. A teacher passes over students’ contributions until she hears the “right” answer. A man talks over his wife at a dinner party. While these examples seem mundane, that is precisely the point: even the most ordinary face-to-face interactions are saturated with power, endowing some individuals with the right to speak and rendering others silent.

**Lens 2: “Language” as invented and heteroglossic**

Part of the process of maintaining language ideologies through discourse is the mystification and obfuscation of the *inventedness* of language. Rather than acknowledge its rootedness in colonialism and imperialism, we have come to view language as ahistorical and timeless. Like the Wizard of Oz compels us to ignore the man behind the curtain, so too do ideologies obscure the very active and purposeful invention of language. By pulling back the ideological curtain, we can critique this mythology in order to disinvent and reconstitute language (Makoni & Pennycook, 2006). These processes involve “both becoming aware of the history of the construction of languages, and rethinking the ways we look at languages and their relation to identity and geographical location” (p.3). Disinvention, then, requires an understanding of language as inherently heteroglossic (Bakhtin, 1981): multivoiced, fluid, and heterogeneous.

This conception of language works directly against those ideologies that draw hard lines between languages, places, and people and deem certain language practices “standard” or “correct.”

Mary Louise Pratt (1987) explains that the field of linguistics has been framed through a utopic lens aligned with the modern nation state’s “imagined community,” conceived of as, “limited by ‘finite, if elastic, boundaries’…[as] sovereign…and as community” (Anderson, 1983, as cited in Pratt, p.49). Moving away from this linguistics of community, Pratt calls for a linguistics of contact which focuses on “modes and zones of contact between dominant and
dominated groups, between persons of different and multiple identities, speakers of different languages…[and] on how such speakers constitute each other relationally and in difference, how they enact differences in language” (p.60). Pratt (1991) furthers this argument in her article, “Arts of the Contact Zone.” The term “contact zone” refers to “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with one another, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today” (p.34). These spaces – rather than those imagined to be defined and homogenous – have always been the norm, despite attempts to erase them.

The language practices of these contact zones are similarly heterogeneous. Canagarajah and Liyanage (2012) refer to pre-colonial language practices in South Asia as plurilingual, clearly distinct from the monolingualism of the imagined community, but also distinct from today’s notions of “multilingualism.” While multilingualism “refers to separate, whole, and advanced competence in the different languages one speaks” (p.50), plurilingualism allows for the presence of diverse language practices in one’s repertoire even if that person does not have advanced proficiency in those languages. Thus, rather than support colonial notions of one language/one nation (or one language/one identity), pre-colonial, plurilingual language practices remind us that contact and hybridity are the starting point rather than simply “interaction between pre-given discrete ‘languages’” (Otsuji & Pennycook, 2008, p.83).

Like Canagarajah and Liyanage, many scholars have taken up a post-structural critique of language that includes a critique of multilingualism and bilingualism. A growing body of scholarship on translanguaging puts forth a new conceptualization of bi-/multilingualism and its uses in education. A dynamic approach to bi-/multilingualism speaks directly against the framing of languages as separate and bounded. Contrary to an understanding of bilingualism through the
metaphor of a bicycle with “two perfectly round wheels,” García (2009) puts forth the metaphor of the all-terrain vehicle whose “wheels do not move in unison or in the same direction, but extend and contract, flex and stretch, making possible, over highly uneven ground, movement forward that is bumpy and irregular but also sustained and effective” (p.45). Thus, bilingualism is never “balanced” or static and does not conform to monolingual versions of “native” competence. It is this framing of bi-/multilingualism as responsive, fluid, and shifting that informs the concept of translanguaging.

According to García (2009), translanguaging refers to “an approach to bilingualism that is centered not on languages, as has often been the case, but on the practices of bilinguals that are readily observable” (p.45). Translanguaging takes linguistic fluidity as the norm and builds pedagogy from students’ language practices up. In this way, translanguaging as both theory and practice holds “the potential to release ways of speaking of subaltern groups that have been previously fixed within static language identities and hierarchical language arrangements and that are constrained by the modern/colonial world system” (García, Flores, & Woodley, 2012, p.48). Thus far, much of the scholarship around translanguaging has been applied only to bi-/multilingual speakers. However, “the traditional distinction between languages is no longer sustainable, so the distinction between monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual speakers may no longer be sustainable” (Blackledge, Creese, and Takhi, 2013, p.193). Bakhtin (1981) addresses this untenable distinction and conceptualizes all language as heteroglossic.

Like Fairclough’s discussion of discourse, Bakhtin understood language as inextricable from the social world, and viewed purely “systemic” analyses of language as useless. Because we do language, because language is inextricable from the social world and speakers, the “same” language can be wielded in a variety of ways. As language is used over and over by different
speakers, it becomes saturated with social meaning. As Bakhtin puts it, “At any given time, in any given place, there will be a set of conditions – social, historical, meteorological, physiological – that will insure that a word uttered in that place and at that time will have a meaning different than it would have under any other conditions” (p.428). In this way, language shifts and changes depending on how, when, where and by whom it is used.

The saturation of the word with past meaning is what Bakhtin refers to as multivoicedness. He writes, “Within the arena of almost every utterance an intense interaction and struggle between one’s own and another’s word is being waged, a process in which they oppose or dialogically interanimate each other” (p.354). Bakhtin writes that there are forces working against the dialogic, heteroglossic tendencies of language. He refers to these forces as centripetal (centralizing, homogenizing, hierarchizing) and centrifugal (decentering, decrowning, dispersing) and imagines a constant tension between the two (p.425), with the former obscuring heteroglossia in the world. Heteroglossia evokes fear because it counters the idea that any one language is higher, or better, than another. This, of course, challenges systems of power that rest on unequal access to and control of discourse. Hierarchy mythologizes language, rendering it static. Language ideologies that contribute to this mythology obscure the fact that language, inherently dialogic, shifts as speakers appropriate it. This understanding “erodes that system of national myth that is organically fused with language, in effect destroying once and for all a mythic and magical attitude to language and the word” (p.369).

Nowhere is the struggle between centripetal and centrifugal forces clearer than in the classroom. Working against the heteroglossic nature of culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms is what Bakhtin refers to as canonization, or “the process that blurs heteroglossia, that is, that facilitates a naïve, single-voiced reading” (p.425). Rather than encourage a multiplicity of
voices and readings, schools impose homogeneity and rigid separation of language practices. Even though, as Bakhtin says, “languages do not exclude each other, but rather intersect with each other in many different ways” (p.291), schools continue to teach language as if it were a discrete, bounded “subject.” In this way, oppressive language ideologies constrain all students’ heteroglossic voices, especially those linguistically marginalized students whose language practices have been rendered “non-standard” or “incorrect.”

**Lens 3: Identity as socially and ideologically constructed**

Taking a poststructural view, identity, like language, is not something individuals have, but something they do. Rather than a cohesive and static identity that resides somewhere within, various identities are performed at various times. Though language is not the only way these identities are performed, it is certainly the most pervasive. As individuals enact certain features of their linguistic repertoires, they also enact certain parts of their identities. At the same time, while individuals may assert their identities through language, language practices also “mark” them, leading to the imposition of identity categories upon them. This tension between agentive performances of identity and an ideological “marking” of those individuals without their consent raises important questions about the intersections of identity and language practices.

In conceptualizing identity as something we do, Bucholtz and Hall (2005) put forth a useful framework for understanding identity through its production in linguistic interaction. The framework contains five different principles, each of which provides a lens for understanding identity as a “relational and sociocultural phenomenon that emerges and circulates in local discourse contexts of interaction rather than as a stable structure located primarily in the individual psyche or in fixed local categories” (p.585). The first principle, called the emergence principle, critiques the idea that an individual’s language use reflects his or her self-concept or
identity. Instead, identity emerges from social action and language in use. The second principle, the positionality principle, states that identities are composed of more than large categories like race or gender. Though these broader social categories can make up part of an individual’s identity, so too can “local identity categories and transitory interactional positions” (p.592). The third principle refers to indexicality, which “relies heavily on ideological structures, for associations between language and identity are rooted in cultural beliefs and values…about the sorts of speakers who (can or should) produce particular sorts of language” (p.594). Thus, identity is enacted by a variety of indexical processes, such as the use of linguistic features associated with specific groups or the overt mention of identity categories. Relationality, their fourth principle, refers to the idea that identity emerges in relation to others and other things. However, we must look past traditional categories of “sameness” and “difference” to what the authors refer to as “tactics of intersubjectivity,” or the various ways individuals align or distance themselves from others. Lastly, the partialness principle states that identity is so complex that we can never see the whole of it. Parts of it are produced consciously, others more or less unconsciously. Some parts are tied to the ways that others see us. Yet others are affected by larger ideological structures. Thus, identity is “constantly shifting both as interaction unfolds and across discourse contexts” (p.606).

The connection between identity and “larger ideological structures” is of particular relevance to this project. As discussed earlier, ideologies are transmitted and reified through discourse. Thus, as individuals language through their social worlds, they are subjected to ideologies that categorize, police, discriminate, or privilege their ways of languaging. Because these ideologies are so often naturalized, individual identities are formed in response to them, whether the individuals are aware of it or not. Discussing Althusser, Weedon (2004) writes that
“a range of what [Althusser] terms ‘Ideological State Apparatuses’ such as religion, education, the family, the law, politics, culture and the media produce the ideologies within which we assume identities and become subjects” (p.6). For this reason, many poststructural scholars take up the term “subjectivities” to describe the ways that individuals construct self amid the myriad ideologies that pervade their social worlds.

In theorizing identity and subjectivity, Weedon makes a useful connection to language. She writes, “It is in the process of using language – whether as thought or speech – that we take up positions as speaking and thinking subjects and the identities that go with them” (p.18). This means that our ways of languaging – always tied to our subject positions, which are formulated as we take up or reject the ideologies put forth through discourse – provide us with a sense of security and selfhood, which we call our “identity.” Because these ways of languaging index certain ideologies, however, the identities that individuals have available to them are constrained. Or, as Weedon succinctly puts it, “power limits the possibilities of identity” (p.15). This idea is inherently related to the question of agency in poststructural conceptualizations of language and identity.

Norton and Toohey (2011), drawing on Bakhtin, write that because of the dialogic nature of language, speakers are, in effect, working with well-used tools, and are “constrained by those past usages” (p.416). In other words, the language through which individuals perform their identities is heavy with the weight of past meanings, which are then projected onto us, with or without our consent. Regarding agency, however, there is always the possibility that speakers can use language in new ways, appropriating and reimagining those well-used linguistic tools to “express new meanings” (Norton & Toohey, p.416). Butler (1997), too, sees discursive appropriation as a site of agency. She writes,
I would argue that it is precisely the *expropriability* of the dominant, ‘authorized’ discourse that constitutes one potential site of its subversive resignification. What happens, for instance, when those who have been denied the social power to claim ‘freedom’ or ‘democracy’ appropriate those terms from the dominant discourse and rework or resignify those highly cathected terms to rally a political movement? (pp. 157–158)

Instead of viewing language as a reflection of individuals’ static identities, Butler sees it as a vehicle for appropriation and “resignification” of the dominant discourses that limit them. Thus, when individuals take up such hegemonic discourses in new ways, and these new ways are repeated over time, they can coalesce into subversion (Flores, personal communication). Though individuals cannot live outside of ideologies – and are thus constrained by such ideologies – there is the possibility of agency as they push the boundaries of the identity categories imposed upon them through linguistic (and other forms of) appropriation.

**Lens 4: Literacies as social and local**

Directly contradicting past theories of literacy, which took as a given that written literacy had powerful, inherently liberating consequences (Goody & Watt, 1968), scholars such as Scribner and Cole (1988), among others (Graff, 1981, De Castell & Luke, 1983, Scriber, 1988), illustrated that literacy is highly situated and far from neutral, and as such cannot be thought of as autonomous, but rather *ideological* (Street, 1984). In their ethnography of the Vai people in Liberia, Scribner and Cole found that all literacy practices among the Vai were tied to particular activities and social situations, such as writing personal correspondence or reading the Qur’an. Through quantitative assessment, they found that building specific literacy skills (i.e.: memorizing passages of the Qur’an) did not correspond to more general skills (i.e.: memorization overall). This supported Vygotsky’s (1978) assertion that the mind is actually “a
set of specific capabilities, each of which is, to some extent, independent of the others and is
developed independently” (p.31). Thus, to use an example from Vygotsky, increasing one’s
attention to Latin grammar does not increase one’s attention to another task; it simply increases
how much Latin grammar one knows. In this way, then, individuals do not develop literacy, but
literacies, each of which is situated in a particular social context and thus requires particular
practices and accomplishes particular things (New London Group, 1996; Gee, 2000).

Taking up ideas such as the situated nature of literacy, links between literacy and power,
and the value of out-of-school literacies and knowledge, many scholars (Labov, 1969; Cazden &
Leggett, 1976; Garcia, 1993; Moll, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Lee, 1995; and Gutierrez, 1995,
to name only a few) have addressed the inadequacies of school-based literacy education and
provided examples of alternative approaches. The work of such scholars moved literacy research
away from a deficit view of minority students and pushed for assets approaches that bridged
students’ languages and cultures, as well as their existing knowledge and literacy practices, to
those expected of them in school. Recently, there has been a call to extend this work through a
critique of static notions of culture and essentialized connections between language, race and
called culturally relevant pedagogy to culturally sustaining pedagogy, in order:

to question if the terms ‘relevant’ and ‘responsive’ are really descriptive of much of the
teaching and research founded upon them and, more importantly, if they go far enough in
their orientation to the languages and literacies and other cultural practices of
communities marginalized by systemic inequalities to ensure the valuing and
maintenance of our multiethnic and multilingual society. (p.93)

In what they call a “loving critique forward,” Paris and Alim (2014) challenge several
aspects of assets approaches of the past. For example, they question the tendency of such
approaches to measure the language and literacy practices of young people of color “solely against the White middle class norms of knowing and being that continue to dominate notions of educational attainment” (p.86). An additional critique of assets approaches is their overreliance on essentialized connections between race, ethnicity, language, and culture. Rather, the authors write, “it is crucial that we understand the ways young people are enacting race, ethnicity, language, literacy, and cultural practices in both traditional and evolving ways” (p.90). Thus, instead of starting from static identity categories, educators and researchers must turn their attention to the ways young people are negotiating their relationships to their “heritage” or “community” languages and cultures and integrating them into their complex repertoires. In this way, culturally sustaining pedagogy offers “a focus on the plural and evolving nature of youth identity and cultural practices and a commitment to embracing youth culture’s counterhegemonic potential while maintaining a clear-eyed critique of the ways in which youth culture can also reproduce systemic inequalities” (p.85).

A culturally sustaining approach to literacy instruction, then, means creating language and literacy experiences that emerge from and with students. Instead of basing instruction on what educators believe to be “relevant” to students derived solely from their (often assumed) race, ethnicity, or language group, this kind of approach takes students’ plural and shifting identities and lived experiences as the starting point. This approach incorporates many of the theoretical principles inherent in sociocultural understandings of literacy, but also emphasizes how students negotiate their identities and appropriate language amidst systems of power.

**Conclusion: Linking theory and practice**

Too often, classroom educators lack the time and space to incorporate and then translate theoretical understandings into their practice. Scholars and teachers, though often engaged in
very similar thinking and endeavors, function apart from and thus miss the opportunity to learn from one another. This project attempted to explicitly link theory and practice by inviting a classroom teacher into conversations about theory and then observing her translation of that theory into her day-to-day practice. The curriculum Lauren and I co-created was greatly impacted by the theoretical understandings put forth in this chapter. We discussed these ideas constantly, and used them as touchstones for the classroom work we planned together. The result is a curriculum that engaged students in thinking about “language” as socially constructed and situated, as well as power-laden and interconnected with who we are and how we are seen and heard in society.

The theoretical lenses described here helped to shape what García, Johnson, and Seltzer (2017) refer to as our translanguage stance, which was in turn reflected in our design – both our approach to designing instruction and the curriculum itself (see Figure 2.1). Our curriculum was responsive to students’ interests, questions, and suggestions, and though we set up the “skeleton” of the curriculum, it was filled out as we listened to students’ classroom conversations and read their writing. Instead of relying solely on content that pertained to bounded conceptions of race, ethnicity, or language group, we designed activities that invited students to share and reflect on the pieces of their multifaceted, shifting identities that they seemed to grapple with as they critiqued naturalized notions of “language.” This approach to curriculum and instruction – what I call a critical translingual approach – aimed to incorporate students’ histories as well as their present understandings of themselves, making space for their uniquely local, translingual literacies and identities to come to the surface of the classroom.
Overview and Research Questions

In order to create a classroom space that fostered the “literate arts of the contact zone,” honed students’ critical metalinguistic awareness, and utilized a translingual approach to writing, I designed a classroom research project in which I worked with Lauren Ardizzone, an 11th grade English teacher, to create a curriculum that put language at the center of students’ inquiry. As the teacher implemented this curriculum over the course of an academic year, I took on the role of a participant-observer. I sat with students at their tables, listening to and participating in conversations they had around the material they encountered in class. I read their writing and talked to them about their choices. I observed and listened as they navigated their relationship not only to the teacher and their peers, but also to their own language practices and the ideologies made visible over the course of the year. The following research questions helped me organize and make sense of my observations and experiences in the classroom:

1. How do linguistically diverse high school students and their teacher respond to the implementation of a critical translingual English curriculum?
2. What does participation in a critical translingual English curriculum bring up about students’ identities and ideologies in relation to language?

To help me address these questions, I collected data from a number of sources, including classroom observations, audio recordings of teacher-facilitated whole-class discussions and students’ small-group conversations, interviews with the teacher and a small group of students, and documents such as teacher-created lesson plans and student-created texts. I was also able to
have conversations with both the teacher and students about their work, which provided me with the thinking behind these texts as well as the texts themselves. In what follows, I discuss the various pieces of my research design in order to detail what transpired over the course of the 2015-2016 academic year at South Bronx High School\(^1\) (SBHS) and how I went about both documenting and making sense of it.

**Research Design**

*Who am I in this project?*

*Coming back to South Bronx High School*

My relationship to SBHS is longstanding and contributed to my experience of the year. I began my teaching career at SBHS in 2005. After the brief training period provided by the New York City Teaching Fellows, I took the position of English Language Arts (ELA) teacher on what the school then called the “ELL team.” The school had chosen to create a separate 9\(^{th}\) and 10\(^{th}\) grade team for all students labeled English Language Learners (as well as some non-ELL students considered “at risk”). Though I had never heard the term “ELL,” I was placed on this team due to my proficiency in Spanish, which the principal thought would help me interact with the newly arrived students and their families. He was right. Throughout my four years at SBHS, my ability to speak Spanish – and my desire to include students’ Spanish into the English classroom – helped me forge positive relationships with my students and their families.

Unfortunately, my experiences at SBHS were not all positive. I was often dismayed by the ways that ELLs (hereafter referred to as emergent bilinguals, or EBLs) were talked about and treated at the school. Other teachers at the school made troubling comments about students’ low academic performance, their apparent lack of interest in speaking English, and their families’

\(^1\) The name of the high school is a pseudonym.
lack of interest in their education. While this kind of derogatory discourse was similar to the kind aimed at English-speaking students (all of whom were students of color), there was a different flavor of disdain for the EBL students’ solidarity around their shared languages. Teachers explicitly told students to speak English, even amongst themselves in the hallways. Others worried that if they “allowed” students to use their home languages in the classroom, the students would do nothing but talk about them behind their backs. Teachers on the “ELL team,” including me, were constantly told we were “coddling” students when we accepted their use of their home languages with us and in classroom work. Teachers in the upper grades chastised us for sending “illiterate” and under-prepared students into their classrooms.

These deficit perspectives about emergent bilinguals were at odds with my experiences teaching them in my ELA classroom. Though I encountered the myriad challenges of teaching in a high-poverty urban high school, I found that my EBL students had much to offer. They utilized their emerging English skills in creative and often very funny ways. They integrated their home languages (almost always Spanish) and their local, cultural understandings into their discussions of texts. They wrote poetry and stories and even “5-paragraph essays” with linguistic flair and rhetorical success. Yet I knew that once they left our team and entered their new 11th grade English classroom, many of these linguistic gifts would disappear, replaced again by deficit perspectives catalyzed by the urgency of the high-stakes, standardized New York State English Regents Exam they would take that year and which was directly tied to their ability to graduate high school.

After leaving SBHS, I returned in 2014 in a different capacity, as a research assistant with the CUNY-NYSIEB (New York State Initiative on Emergent Bilinguals) project. After talking to the new principal of the school at a party at an SBHS teacher’s home in the summer of
2014, I was impressed with his passion and vision, and I encouraged him to apply to be part of CUNY-NYSIEB. He did, and SBHS was chosen to participate in the project. CUNY-NYSIEB, a collaborative research project of the Research Institute for the Study of Language in Urban Society (RISLUS) and the Ph.D. Program in Urban Education funded by the NYC Department of Education, aims to improve the educational outcomes for emergent bilinguals by helping schools “develop ecologies of bilingualism that build on the home language practices of their students” (CUNY-NYSIEB, 2015). Though SBHS had not made Annual Yearly Progress for their emergent bilingual population for quite some time, the principal and a small group of teachers had begun to put the academic needs of these students center stage by piloting new instructional strategies that leveraged students’ home languages in instruction and by including those languages in the ecology of the school building.

Since taking on the role, the principal dissolved the “ELL team,” programming emergent bilinguals across grade level classrooms in an attempt to integrate them more fully into the school community. In my work as a researcher with the school, part of my role was to help guide the principal in his attempts to improve the educational experiences of emergent bilinguals in the school. I also worked with a small group of teachers who engaged in inquiry work in their own classrooms, trying out strategies from a resource guide I co-wrote for CUNY-NYSIEB called Translanguaging: A CUNY-NYSIEB Guide for Educators. As teachers on the team piloted different strategies, I assisted them in their instructional planning, helped them analyze student work, and worked with them to build the multilingual ecology of their classrooms. I continued to work with this team of teachers throughout the 2015-2016 academic year, at the same time I carried out my research project.
My history as a teacher and my subsequent role as a researcher with CUNY-NYSIEB meant that I was not a stranger at SBHS. When I entered the school on the first day, I was not met with the suspicion and wariness that researchers sometimes experience in a new school community. I was greeted warmly by many of the teachers, and when I stopped in to say hello to the principal, we hugged and exchanged pleasantries about our summers. When I sat in the teachers lounge over the course of the year, I was privy to the kinds of “off the record” conversations that so often occur in these spaces. Though I did not often participate in these conversations, I did not feel that teachers censored themselves around me. My long-standing relationship with the school and many of the teachers meant that I occupied an “insider” status that made me feel included into the community, a factor that also contributed to my relationship with the students in the English classroom.

*Miss Kate, the quasi-English teacher*

When Lauren introduced me on the first day of school, she told the students that I was “a researcher” and also a former teacher at the school. Understandably, this led to some confusion, as did my request that the students call me “Kate.” Though some of the students asked me about my research, most seemed to view me as a quasi-English teacher. They asked me for help on assignments, showed me pieces of their writing, and called me “Miss” (though some students got the hang of calling me “Kate,” others settled on “Miss Kate,” which speaks to my split role: part teacher, part real person). Because of my past experiences, I found it easy to slip into the role of English teacher. Though at first I wondered whether I should take on this role, I came to believe that it would be disingenuous and even wrong not to help students when they asked. After all, I was an English teacher and if I was going to ask them for *their* help with my project, how could I not offer them my own?
Despite taking on this role with students, it did seem clear to them through their interactions with me that I wasn’t a “real teacher.” As we got to know one another, I became privy to conversations, jokes, and even “looks” that were part of what Gutierrez, Rymes, and Larson (1995), citing Goffman (1961), call the underlife of the classroom. A specific moment that illustrates the hybridity of my presence in the classroom is when I was sitting with a small group of female students who I became close with over the course of the year. They were riffing on a joke one of them had made, and all four of us were laughing. Suddenly, Lauren turned her attention from the front of the room to our table to gently reprimand us. Because I had my back to her, she did not seem to notice that I was at the table with the students. When I turned around, she paused in her reprimand, unsure whether or not she should continue. I mouthed, “I’m sorry!” and she laughed, as did the rest of the class.

*Building relationships: Avoiding the pitfalls of teacher-research*

I met Lauren when I was still a teacher at SBHS. She started working at the school the year after I did, and we quickly became friends. We respected one another’s teaching practice, enjoyed each another’s company, and felt comfortable sharing the ups and downs of teaching. After I left SBHS, Lauren and I maintained a close friendship. When I began working with the school through CUNY-NYSIEB, Lauren was open to my advice and ideas for making more space in her classroom for emergent bilinguals. Despite my new role as “researcher,” we maintained our relationship and learned from one another over the course of the 2014-2015 school year. Though I knew that Lauren was an excellent teacher, I was impressed by her proactivity and willingness to try out new things in her classroom. When I asked her if she would like to work with me the following year on my research project, she expressed excitement at the opportunity.
There are many pitfalls related to teacher research: the invasive design of a qualitative, single-subject case study, the lack of tangible benefits for the cooperating teacher, the issues of trust between the researcher as a “critical evaluator” and the teacher as the subject of evaluation, and the “power and knowledge differential,” whereby the researcher is perceived as more powerful than the teacher, despite the fact that the teacher has more knowledge of the topic being researched (Ulichy & Schoener, 2010). In order to avoid these pitfalls, I put my friendship with Lauren at the heart of the work from the beginning. Our conversations moved fluidly between work and our personal lives; in fact, as the year went on I came to realize just how inextricable these spheres became when engaged in critical thinking around language. We also engaged in what Ulichy and Schoener call “matching stories,” where we shared struggles, dilemmas, and successes we both faced as educators. Far from jeopardizing the research, my friendship with Lauren facilitated the research. This project would not have been as successful or even possible without it.

“You better bring that baby to school next year!”

One last element of my positionality and its impact on my relationships with both Lauren and the students cannot be left undiscussed. In October – only one month into the project – I became pregnant with my first child. Though I did not share this information with the students right away, I did share it with Lauren very early on. Sharing the news of my pregnancy deepened my relationship with Lauren. As a new mother herself (Lauren had returned to teaching that September after the birth of her first child only the previous June), she was able to answer my questions and listen with an empathetic ear to my feelings about this huge life change. While our working relationship throughout the year always felt equal, her position as “expert” in the realm of motherhood may have contributed to the egalitarian nature of our relationship.
Students found out about my pregnancy later. Because of their extensive preparation for the Regents exam in January, I did not observe classes for that entire month. When I came back in February, I had most certainly changed. The female students were the first to notice (or at least the first to comment) and they responded with what felt like genuine excitement and happiness for me. As the year progressed, I engaged in many conversations with students about my pregnancy and the baby. Some students shared stories about helping to raise their own siblings. Others had close friends who were mothers, and a few were mothers themselves. They gave me advice and constant suggestions for baby names. In some of these conversations, I found myself forgetting that we were not peers, and I was surprised by how much their support and kindness meant to me. When my son was born – just two weeks after my last day at SBHS – Lauren shared the news with students who told her to tell me that, “I better bring that baby to school next year!”

Research site and participants

The school

South Bronx High School (SBHS) is a small school located within a large, stately building that was one of the first public schools built in the New York City borough of the Bronx. The area surrounding the school has undergone significant changes in the last five years, and new apartment buildings and large chain stores now line the major thoroughfare that leads to SBHS. Despite these changes, the neighborhood is part of the poorest congressional district in the United States, with 65% of all residents receiving some form of income support (NYC Department of City Planning, 2011). The socioeconomic and racial/ethnic demographics of the school mirror those of the surrounding community. Of the approximately 430 students in the
school, 72% are Latinx\(^2\) and 26% are African American, and nearly 90% qualify for free and reduced lunch. Students labeled “English Language Learners make up 19% of the overall population, the large majority of whom speak Spanish (Comprehensive Education Plan, 2016-17). There is also a small group of students from West Africa, most of whom speak Fulani and Malinke, as well as French and very small numbers of Arabic, Urdu, and Albanian speakers.

Part of the SBHS mission is to emphasize project-based learning and collaboration. Students sit at square tables rather than individual desks. Twice a year, students present inquiry projects to teachers and outside community members at Roundtable events. Group work for students and team-teaching for staff are integral elements of the school culture. Despite some of its more progressive approaches and its small size, SBHS is in many ways a traditional urban high school. Through my classroom observations with CUNY-NYSIEB, I saw that many classrooms were teacher-centered and lecture-heavy. Though student attendance has improved since I was a teacher at the school, it is still a major problem (according to the 2014-2015 School Quality Snapshot, 57% of students are designated “chronically absent”). Discipline of students is handled punitively. Though the teachers go along with the principal’s attempts to improve instruction through new strategies, their commentary and behaviors at school PD and meetings I have attended seem to indicate that they do so grudgingly. They seem set in their ways and wary of new initiatives. And though many have strong relationships with students, some staff members vocally express their deficit thinking about them.

Though some changes have been made to emergent bilinguals’ educational experiences since Mr. M. became principal and the school partnered with CUNY-NYSIEB, I nevertheless saw evidence of deficit thinking still at work. When analyzing the results of a teacher survey created by the teachers on the CUNY-NYSIEB team, we saw that most teachers at SBHS were

\(^{2}\) I use the term Latinx as a gender-neutral way of referring to students traditionally referred to as Latino/a.
not aware of basic theory and best practices for educating emergent bilinguals. There was reported ambivalence about the use of students’ home languages in their education and many answered affirmatively that English proficiency – gained through a “sink or swim” immersion model – was the most important aspect of students’ education. This feeling seemed to extend to students who are not labeled emergent bilinguals. On more than one occasion, I heard teachers remark that all students at the school lagged in literacy and needed remediation. One teacher even commented that if any student at the school were given the NYSESLAT (New York’s test for English proficiency), he or she would be labeled an “English Language Learner” – even those who spoke no language other than English. This element of the SBHS culture is one I explore in depth – and through the words of students themselves – in this project.

*The teacher*

Lauren Ardizzone³ is an 11th grade English Language Arts teacher. After graduating from Harvard University and spending a year abroad, she joined Teach for America and began teaching at SBHS nine years ago. Since then, she has taken on a number of roles at the school, including the Department of Education’s Lead Teacher position, which promotes exemplary teachers to leaders who coach other teachers, lead department and grade-level meetings, and work with administration to build overall teacher effectiveness. In addition to these tasks, Lead Teachers’ classrooms become lab sites “for demonstrating best practices and implementing Common Core curriculum” (DoE, Teacher Leadership). Lauren took on this role two years ago and has continued to refine her practice. As a result, in 2014 and 2015, she earned a “highly effective” rating on Charlotte Danielson’s *Framework for Teaching* rubric, the tool schools in

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³ Lauren gave permission to use her real full name.
New York City use to assess teacher effectiveness. This rating is difficult to achieve; in fact, Lauren has been the only teacher at the school to earn it.

As already discussed, Lauren was an active participant in the CUNY-NYSIEB project during the 2014-2015 school year. Lauren was enthusiastic about implementing translanguaging strategies that drew on students’ home languages. She took up the underlying theoretical concepts of the project into her planning of a new unit on “language taboos,” which asked students to explore the kinds of words and phrases – across different languages and cultures – that might be considered dangerous or offensive. Through my CUNY-NYSIEB observations, I saw that students were highly engaged during this unit, as they talked about language and engaged in language sharing with one another. It was this unit, as well as her overall enthusiasm for CUNY-NYSIEB, that prompted me to ask her to work with me on my dissertation project.

The students

In the 2015-2016 school year, Lauren taught four sections of 11th grade English. There was de facto student tracking in the breakdown of these sections due to several factors: (1) there was only one section of advanced math, so students taking this course were programmed into similar schedules; (2) there were only three ESL teachers, so programming emergent bilinguals together ensured that they received their mandated hours with the specialized teacher; and (3) similarly, there were only three special education teachers, so students with IEPs (Individualized Education Plans) were also programmed together in order to receive their mandated services. These factors meant that Lauren’s four sections (periods 2, 4, 5 and 7 in Table 3.1) had distinct profiles, which I outline in the table and organize into three categories: “characteristics of the student population,” which provides a sense of the de facto tracking at work, “attendance,” a highly important
element of the class, due to its effect on building classroom culture and prolonged and steady engagement with the ideas set forth in the curriculum, and “engagement and participation,” which outlines my observations about students’ outward behaviors and attitudes toward classroom activities and discussions.

Table 3.1. Profile of Lauren’s four ELA classroom sections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Characteristics of the student population</th>
<th>Attendance</th>
<th>Engagement &amp; Participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Period 2</td>
<td>This section included students taking advanced math, which meant that students were overall higher-performing than students other sections.</td>
<td>Because it was early in the school day, attendance to this section was inconsistent. Many students arrived late (usually 10-15 minutes into the period) and others missed the class entirely, arriving to school after the period already ended.</td>
<td>According to Lauren, this group—because of their “status” as AP math students—had a sense of “complacency” and “seemed to feel like the expectations placed on them (timely arrival, completion of work) were unrealistic and unnecessary” (Personal communication, 2/9/17).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period 4</td>
<td>This was the only section without a defining characteristic in that students had mixed abilities and mixed levels of participation in the classroom work.</td>
<td>Attendance to this class was the strongest, which may have contributed to these students’ ability to make stronger connections among the ideas set forth in the coursework and to see the cohesiveness of the material.</td>
<td>Overall, this was the most consistently engaged section of ELA. Students had lively discussions, seemed excited about the material and assignments, and demonstrated critical thinking. I found that most of my data came from this group of students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period 5</td>
<td>This section contained a large number of students with IEPs and “repeaters” of ELA (i.e.: students who had all their credits to graduate, but had not yet passed the ELA Regents). Most “repeaters” were overage and said that their sole reason for coming to school was to</td>
<td>Students in this class were highly inconsistent with their attendance. It was not uncommon that more than half of the class was absent.</td>
<td>Though this class had attendance issues, the students who did come to class consistently participated in ways that revealed their ability to think critically and their overall interest in the material. Like period 4, I found that students in this class provided me with interesting and thought-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

34
pass the Regents exam. There was a special education teacher present who provided services to students with IEPs.

| Period 7 | This section included students labeled English Language Learners. Students were mostly Spanish-speakers, but there was also one Fulani-speaking emergent bilingual. There was an ESL teacher present who provided services to the emergent bilinguals in the class. | Because this was the second-to-last period of the day, attendance to this class was also inconsistent, as some students left school before the end of the day. | Though this class had a few vocal participants, it had the overall lowest visible engagement. Students often appeared tired, and few students turned in assignments and work consistently. This apparent lack of engagement may have been the result of both its late afternoon timeslot and the larger number of students who struggled with the material due to a combination of emergent English practices and poor attendance. |

While it is easy to report that 70% of the population of SBHS is “Latino” and 26% is “African American,” these demographic breakdowns do not necessarily represent the lived identities and self-identification of the students themselves. Labels like “Latino” or “African American” also obscure students’ identifications that complicate race. For example, though Eric, a student in Lauren’s period 4 classroom, was seen as a “monolingual English speaker” by the school and was phenotypically Black, I learned late in the year that his family was Garifuna from Guatemala. Alfredo, a Latinx young man, strongly identified as Mexican and talked frequently about his minority status among the majority Dominican and Puerto Rican class. Sono, a student from Ghana, wrote in his college essay about learning he was “Black” when he came to the US. Because of these – among many other – complexities, I tried whenever possible to use students’ own self-descriptions when writing about their race and ethnicity. For example, if a student
referred to herself as “Latina” (either independently or when prompted), I describe her as Latina. If the same student instead chose “Honduran” or “Dominican,” I use that descriptor in my writing.

Though there were no designated focal students in my project, readers will notice many of the same names come up repeatedly in the findings chapters that follow. For example, students like Faith and Yessica were not only vocal participants in whole-class and small-group conversations, but also proactive in starting conversations with me about the goings-on of the class and school. For this reason, there are certain students’ voices that are represented more than others in this project. As I chose data for my findings chapters, however, I did my best to include a diversity of student voices and opinions in order to represent the spectrum of experiences that students had over the course of the year. There were a small number of students who refused to sign the consent form for my project. These students still participated in the classroom work (read the same texts, did the same group work, wrote the same college essays), but their classroom talk and written work does not appear in my project.

*The classroom and the curriculum*

On the first day of school, a young woman named Melissa sat next to me at one of the tables near the front of the room. When I said hello, she gave me a shy smile but did not talk to me. As students were working on an introductory activity, I noticed Melissa looking around the room. Our eyes met, and she said, “this room’s cute.” I agreed, and asked what she liked about it. Rather than respond to my question, she merely said, “not all teachers do this,” and returned to her work (Field notes, September 9, 2015). Melissa was right; it was clear that Lauren had spent a great deal of time and energy making the room look good. She had printed out quotes in multiple languages and hung them in the front of the room above the board. Suspended on string
across the classroom were “accountable talk” stems in both English and Spanish, and several posters contained key words pertaining to ELA in both languages. Hand-made posters about responding to text, writing strategies, and tackling the Regents exam were all over the room, as were markers of Lauren’s personal life, such as pictures of her friends and family on her desk and former students’ artwork hanging behind her chair.

In addition to the colorful multilingual ecology of the room, students’ first classroom activity gave them a sense that the focus of this year’s ELA classroom would be language itself. After creating hash tags that described themselves, Lauren projected the following quote by author Junot Díaz up on the SMART Board:

“Motherfuckers will read a book that’s one third Elvish, but put two sentences in Spanish and they think we’re taking over.”

Perhaps taken aback by the expletive in the quote, students giggled and whispered to each other before Lauren engaged them in a discussion of the quote – including the curse in it – and then gave students an excerpt from an interview with Junot Díaz in which he discussed the process of translating his novel, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*. In the interview, Díaz and the interviewer, also a Spanish speaker, moved fluidly between English and Spanish as they talked about his writing. After reading and discussing the interview, Lauren asked students how they thought this year’s English class would be different than their past English classes. There were many responses, many of which echoed the following statement by a student in Lauren’s period 5 class: “we’re gonna talk about things we’re interested in” (Field notes, September 9, 2015).
I provide this description of the ecology of Lauren’s classroom and the short vignette from the first day of school to illustrate that Lauren purposefully designed the classroom space and the first lesson of the year to make it clear that this year’s English class would be different. As we worked together closely throughout the school year, this desire to create instruction and choose texts that helped students think critically about language was constantly on our minds. Though students developed literacy skills often seen in traditional English classrooms – argumentative writing, supporting ideas with text evidence, analyzing text – they honed these skills through the use of different kinds of texts, those that were multimodal, metalinguistic and challenged static notions of “standard English” in writing. Though I discuss elements of the curriculum throughout this project, Appendix 3.1 provides an overview of the year’s work, including a summary of each month’s curricular focus, a description of selected activities and discussions, and a list of texts that served as the basis for these activities and discussions.

Students analysis of our chosen texts and the activities they engaged in around these texts led to insightful, critical, funny, moving, and sometimes troubling discussions about their own language practices and the impact of language ideologies on their lived experiences and identities. In describing what they call a translingual approach to curriculum, Gilmetdinova and Burdick (2016) write that it “requires curriculum to be rethought from its rigid forms to a more protean, improvisational, and shared construct, one that rejects any nod to the homogeneity of human life, but that foregrounds the shared human experience of being in and of language” (p.18). As I hope to illustrate, students’ articulations of their experiences “being in and of language” shaped the curriculum, as Lauren and I chose texts and designed activities that responded to and dialogued with these experiences.
In the summer of 2015, I had several phone calls and email exchanges with Lauren about the
details of the project. I shared my research proposal with her, and explained in broad strokes
what I hoped we would do together that year. I created a Google Drive folder and shared it with
Lauren, and uploaded several of the theoretical and scholarly readings that inspired my project.
Lauren and I decided that we would read these texts and discuss them in relation to her
classroom. This was meant to help us develop a curriculum grounded in theory and critical
questions being explored in the fields of sociolinguistics, bi-/multilingual education, and
English/literacy education. We began by reading the following texts, which Lauren chose out of
those uploaded to the Drive:

1. Linda Christensen, “Language and Power,” from Reading, Writing, and Rising Up
   and language diversity in education”
   revising pedagogies in a resegregated society”
4. Lisa Delpit, “Acquisition of literate discourse: Bowing before the master?”

We met on August 24, 2015 for two hours, discussing both the readings and our ideas for
the year. I did not structure this initial conversation, allowing Lauren to take the lead. This initial
conversation and the many that followed were very rich, moving fluidly between the theoretical,
the practical, and the personal. After this initial meeting, I expanded our Google Drive folder
based on our conversation. I created folders with some of the big ideas we discussed (i.e.: “Language and Power,” “Language and Identity,” and “Heteroglossic Writers”) and began
uploading resources I had. I also reached out to fellow teachers and scholars via social media to
get suggestions for student-friendly readings and resources related to these big themes and topics. As I received suggestions, I added them to relevant resource folders on the Drive.

Starting on the first day of school in September 2015, I took on the role of participant-observer in the four sections of Lauren’s 11th grade English Language Arts class. For eight months (September 2015-December 2015 and February 2016-June 2016), I visited the classrooms two-three times per week, each time staying at the school from approximately 9am to 2pm. During each of the four classes I observed, I sat at one of eight square tables in the room. These tables, which held four chairs each, were rarely full, so I usually sat right with students, rather than in a chair pulled up alongside them. I sat with one table of students each week, rotating around the classroom so I would sit in different locations and with different students. Once I had spent a week at each table, I sat back with the first group, and began the rotation again. This set-up both provided continuity with a given group of students and enabled me to sit with all students in the classroom over the course of the year.

In what follows, I describe the process of collecting the various forms of data that make up my project. I summarize the forms of data and how I collected each one in Appendix 3.2.

Classroom observations and field notes

The majority of my data was collected during classroom sessions. Though I had planned on limiting my observations to one or two of Lauren’s classroom sections, I wound up observing all four for the whole year. Each section had its own personality, and provided me with different insights into the work. Most of my time at the school was spent in Lauren’s classes, but I also sat with Lauren during her prep periods debriefing the lessons and building off of that week’s work to plan for the following week.
As I sat with students at their tables, I was careful not to spend a significant amount of time taking notes. Though I always had a notebook with me and told students I would be recording, my time in the classroom was spent engaged in the classroom work and in conversation with students. When I heard or saw something that I wanted to write about in more detail, I jotted down key words or short quotes. I later revisited these jottings and, with the help of the audio recordings, expanded upon them in my field notes. I also took “notes on notes,” or reflections on my own field notes. These notes included inferences, preliminary analysis, and connections among the data. I also wrote reflective memos, which aimed to “not only capture…analytic thinking about your data, but also facilitate such thinking, stimulating analytic insights” (Maxwell, 2005, p.96).

Being a participant-observer meant that, while I saw and heard events through a researcher’s perspective, I also became part of the daily life of the classroom. From the first day of class, I sat with students and participated in each of the classroom activities they did, from writing down the day’s “aim” (a big question that framed the lesson) and “do now” (an engaging question answered in students’ notebooks and then shared with the whole class) to analyzing texts, to engaging in small-group conversations with students. My participation in daily classroom life influenced the observations I made. The questions I asked, comments I made, and sheer presence in the group shaped what I saw and heard. As much as possible, however, I let students’ questions, commentary, and analysis take center stage. When transcribing audio recordings of classroom observations, I checked myself; when I saw my own words featured heavily in a transcription, I made sure to step back and listen more during the next observation. As a former teacher and highly interested participant, it wasn’t always easy to balance my...
“participant” role with my “observer” role, but I used the data I collected to reflect on my positioning.

**Audio recordings and transcripts**

Before starting to audio record, I felt it was important to build relationships with the students and establish my presence in the classroom. I did not want students to feel that a random woman they didn’t know was sticking a microphone in their faces, and I did not want Lauren to feel she was under surveillance as she adapted to having a researcher in her classroom. When introducing the project and myself on the first day of school, and again a week later when I reviewed the informed consent form with students, I made it clear that I would be recording the class sessions. In late October when I began recording, I did so using my iPhone’s voice memo application. My thinking behind using my phone, rather than a recording device, was that it might be less obtrusive; almost all the students had smartphones, and Lauren constantly had her own iPhone out to time classroom work. Because phones are so ubiquitous, I thought using one to record might make students feel less intruded upon when I sat with them.

In order to keep up with the large task of transcribing the audio recordings, I selectively transcribed moments and exchanges that aligned with concepts that inspired my project and shed light on my research questions. One of the concepts that shaped my listening was what Rymes (2014) calls metacommentary. Simply, metacommentary refers to the ways speakers draw attention to different features of language. For example, a recent spate of blog posts, podcasts, and articles have reported on how elements of young women’s speech keep them from advancing professionally. Though many men end their phrases with an upward lift (what is called “up-speak”) and use the words “just,” “like” and “sorry,” it is only women’s speech that is the subject of such handwringing. This metacommentary about women’s speech, then, reveals more about
our feelings about female speakers than it does about actual language. As the year progressed, there emerged a great deal of metacommentary as students performed, joked about, disparaged, and celebrated different elements of their own language practices and the practices of others. Transcribing instances of metacommentary from the audio recordings of class sessions provided me with fodder for a deeper analysis of both Lauren’s and the students’ talk.

I also listened for “translanguaging moments” in students’ talk. By translanguaging moments, I mean those moments that show fluidity among different language practices. For example, this translanguaging moment occurred when a group of students discussed how Sandra Bland’s language practices may or may not have contributed to her altercation with the police and her eventual death:

| Jorge: Yeah, you, tu siempre va a perder con la policia. How you say? |
| Yari: He say, you always lose when it’s arguing with a police officer. |
| Augustín: Facts. (Transcript, March 10, 2016) |

Though most of the literature on translanguaging thus far has referred to the integration of socially distinct language practices (i.e.: English and Spanish), I also understand translanguaging moments to include those where students integrate different language practices within one language. For example, I wrote about this translanguaging moment in my field notes:

| Janet reads the group’s response [which was addressed to] a friend. She begins by reading off her paper, which is fairly “essay-like”. Then there was a moment when she stopped reading the short response the group had written and went “off script.” There was a distinct shift in her voice and in her tone/style, and she continued, “basically what if a war break through? You not gonna understand the news reporters. You just gonna go lolly dolly, minding ya business, get shot, don’t know what’s happening, just because there’s no translators” (Field notes + transcription, October 27, 2015). |

Like students’ metacommentary, these translanguaging moments provide an opportunity to analyze how and even why students language in these ways. Why did Janet shift from reading her group’s written response to an improvised, dynamic, but less “academic” oral riff? Did she
realize, when reading the words aloud, that they did not effectively represent her opinion on the
topic of making English the official language of the US? Was the written response too stagnant
for a subject she was passionate about? Moments such as these served as jumping-off points for
further conversations with students about their language practices and their feelings and beliefs
about the topics we discussed.

When transcribing the audio recordings of classroom talk, I take Rymes’s (2009) advice
to “jettison the illusory goal of accuracy and instead transcribe with the goal of relevance”
(p.92). This means focusing less on “re-creating speech perfectly in a written transcript” and
more on “how that speech is functioning and how transcription can illustrate that function”
(p.92). Another point about transcription that is highly relevant to my project is the way in which
I represent the different elements of students’ linguistic repertoires. As Rymes puts it, when
transcribing students’ talk, “there is a fine line between making everyone sound the same and
stigmatizing the voices of those who strike you as different” (p.84). This is a line I walked
carefully and I tried to represent students’ voices faithfully at the same time I was reflexive about
this representation.

Teacher and student work

Throughout the year, I collected student and teacher work that was relevant to my research
questions. In addition to my field notes and the audio recordings and transcripts of classroom
talk, these artifacts helped me understand both the ways that Lauren took up the theoretical
framework underpinning the project and translated it into practice and students’ responses to the
curriculum. I saved the PowerPoint documents Lauren created and used each day to structure her
lessons. These PowerPoints not only chronicle the flow of each lesson, but also illustrate
Lauren’s teaching style and personality (i.e.: including pictures of her daughter, using humor in
her models and examples, organizing each presentation to make it clear, visually interesting, and student-friendly). I also collected hard copies of readings and activities Lauren had created in the form of paper handouts that were given to students on a daily basis.

From the students, I collected a variety of classroom artifacts. After an activity or lesson that was especially relevant to my research questions, Lauren shared with me each class’s work that she collected after the period had ended. I skimmed each student’s work, and put aside examples that were particularly interesting and made me reflect on, question, support, and/or critique existing literature and theory as well as my emerging analysis. After I put these examples aside, I scanned them into a sub-folder in a larger “Student Work” folder on my computer. When I wanted more insight into a piece of work, I would talk to the student who created it and ask him/her questions about what I saw or read. These artifacts, then, became stimulus for recall and provided a tangible jumping-off-point for conversations with the students. In addition to student writing, I also took pictures of posters and other visual work. For student work that took the form of performance, oral discussions, or role-play, I relied on audio recordings and field notes.

*Interviews*

Because I was interested in the ways that our curriculum was taken up in a classroom community as a whole, I relied less on individual interviews and more on sources of data that provided insights into how the groups of students across the four classes responded to the course content. However, once students finished their final college essays, I chose several that stood out to me and spoke to the authors about their choices. I felt that speaking with the authors themselves would provide a metalinguistic backdrop for these essays, and might help me understand how students’ written performances connected to their identity performances. Using students’ essays
as stimulus for recall, I conducted semi-structured interviews using a set of questions from which I chose those that fit organically into the conversation I had with each student (see Appendix 3.4). Though the interviews were short, approximately 10-15 minutes each, they provided insightful commentary about students’ writing process, including the ways they integrated their language practices in their essays (or did not), their considerations about audience (or lack thereof), and their feelings about creating such translingual pieces of writing in school.

I also conducted an exit interview with Lauren in June 2016. Drawing on a set of interview questions (also listed in Appendix 3.4), our conversation took place over two hours, the first hour taking place in the school building and the second over dinner at a restaurant near Lauren’s home. The interview was semi-structured, and I asked my interview questions in an order that fit organically with the turns of the conversation. I also asked questions I had not previously thought of when they arose naturally as we spoke. Overall, this interview revealed Lauren’s reflective, metacognitive thinking about the year as a whole, as well as her own mindset, which had evolved through her implementation of the year-long curriculum.

**Data analysis**

Analyzing eight month’s worth of data is an undertaking that requires organization, consistency, and a constant revisiting of the research questions. By keeping the research questions at the front of my mind, taking a systematic approach to coding, and committing to reflexivity as a researcher, it is my hope that my analysis of this large body of data tells the story of what happened in the classroom over the course of a year, as well as opens up a larger conversation about the possibilities and challenges related to the implementation of a curriculum that takes a critical, translingual approach to English education. Though I detail my findings in the coming
chapters, I provide here my overall approach to understanding the data, including my approaches to coding and my use of discourse analysis.

Coding

In the year leading up to the implementation of my research project, I was immersed in its design. I spent months reading across several scholarly fields and then more months writing a comprehensive review of both the theory and the literature that informed my project. I then spent time developing an appropriate methodology, delving into the logistics of the project, laying out my plan for approaching the year, and starting planning conversations with Lauren. I also found myself reflecting on my years as an English teacher, revisiting units I taught and student work I kept that hinted at the kind of linguistic exploration I hoped to foster through this project. All this is to say that I entered into Lauren’s classroom on the first day of school with a number of a priori understandings, beliefs, and expectations.

I begin with this transparency in order to acknowledge my “role as an instrument in the analytic process” (Allen, 2008, p.53). The experiences I’ve had – as a teacher, a graduate student, and a researcher – were in constant conversation with what I saw and heard in the classroom. For this reason, the processes of deductive and inductive coding were very much dialogic. Because my fieldwork took place over the course of a school year, I engaged in analysis throughout the process of data collection. For example, when transcribing classroom talk, I created a margin alongside the transcription where I wrote down some of the more deductive codes I brought with me into the project, such as “metacommentary” (Rymes, 2014) and “translanguaging” (García, 2009; García & Li Wei, 2014). I also jotted down notes about moments I wanted to revisit, connections I made, and questions I had. Emergent analysis also occurred in reflective memos.
After the period of data collection ended in early June 2015, I began a more systematic approach to coding (see Appendix 3.3 for my coding list and Appendix 3.2 for a summary of my coding process). I printed out all of my data – field notes, transcriptions, teacher/student work, and interview transcripts – and made several copies. I did an initial read-through using both the deductive codes I had already established as well as my own codes that related to my a priori understandings. After reading through the full set of data once, I consolidated and pared down my codes and came up with a set that represented different themes emerging from the data. I assigned each code a color and read through the data a second time, highlighting those moments that related to each code. Next, I did a third read of a second hard copy of the data. This time, I took a more emic approach, using participants’ own words to create new, inductive codes. After doing this reading and round of inductive coding, I went through the same process as I did with my deductive codes: I consolidated them into emerging themes, assigned each theme a color, and read through the data again, color-coding moments that highlighted those themes.

What I had at the end of these multiple readings were two sets of color-coded data that were in conversation with one another. In a way, they illustrated the ways in which the voices of the students and the classroom events aligned with, added to, conflicted with, and at times resisted my own etic ideas and beliefs. In short, as Allen (2008) writes, “While coding provided a means for discerning similarities and patterns, it also provided a mechanism for fragmenting data in ways that allowed for different kinds of exploration(s). Examining data in its original form…as well as in its fragmented form…provided an opportunity to brood over the data…and to allow for themes, patterns, and stories to emerge on multiple levels” (p.61).

In order to bring together both sets of data, I compared and attempted to integrate them, looking for similarities, differences, tensions, and insights. I noted which codes emerged most
frequently in both sets of data, and I ultimately finalized groups of prominent codes from both data sets that would make up my “findings” chapters. With this set of prominent, recurring codes, which I assigned new colors, I did a final read of the data, color-coding moments that were most representative and powerful for each of the findings chapters. Though there were many more “themes, patterns, and stories” that emerged from the eight months of data collection and subsequent analysis, it is my hope that the ones I have chosen exemplify the complexities of the year and provide the most fodder for further analysis and future projects.

**Discourse analysis**

In addition to using coding as an analytical tool, I drew on elements of discourse analysis to help me address my research questions from a different angle. Because my research questions ask about the teacher’s and students’ responses to the implementation of a critical translingual curriculum as well as what these responses bring up about students’ identities and ideologies, it was important to listen to the language they used to describe themselves and their thinking in relation to language itself. Again, paying attention to participants’ metacommentary was helpful. As I read through the data, I asked myself, “how do participants talk and what do they say when they talk about language?”

I did not do formal discourse analysis, in that the majority of my analysis rests of the “content” of participants’ speech and writing rather than the micro shifts in turn-taking, intonation, grammatical organization, etc. However, I did take up Allan’s (2008) call to “[pay] particular attention to vocabulary, metaphors, assumptions, conventions, structure, and style of a text” (p.61), specifically when I looked at certain data. For example, when thinking about the role of the teacher in the implementation of a critical translingual approach, I looked specifically at Lauren’s classroom talk. I parsed the classroom talk that emerged in her conversations with
individual students, small groups, and the whole class, and applied one of Gee’s (2011) discourse analysis “tools”: the “relationships building tool.” According to Gee,

> a tool for discourse analysis is a specific question to ask of data. Each question makes the reader look quite closely at the details of language in an oral or written communication. Each question also makes the reader tie these details to what speakers or writers mean, intend, and seek to do and accomplish in the world by the way in which they have used language (p.x).

The “relationships building tool,” then, “asks how words and various grammatical devices are being used to build and sustain or change relationships of various sorts among the speaker, other people, social groups, cultures, and/or institutions” (p.115). As I read through Lauren’s talk over the course of the year, I noted the linguistic moves – her use of certain pronouns, for example – that seemed to close the distance between her and her students and align her more with them than with other adults, such as her teacher colleagues at the school. In this way, I was able to analyze not only how Lauren’s talk “set the stage” for students’ translingual sensibilities and practices to emerge, but also how her language choices signal shifts in representation of her identity in relation to her students.

In thinking about the ways that students are both shaped by and resist raciolinguistic ideologies, I drew on another of Gee’s tools: the “identities building tool.” When using this tool, researchers can

> ask what socially recognizable identity or identities the speaker is trying to enact or get others to recognize. Ask also how the speaker’s language treats other people’s identities, what sorts of identities the speaker recognizes for others in relationship to his or her own. Ask, too, how the speaker is positioning others, what identities the speaker is ‘inviting’ them to take up (p.110).
This tool was especially useful when looking at students’ complex, layered metacommmentary.

Take, for example the following piece of transcript, in which Faith responds to a question posed by Lauren about being judged for their “non-standard” language practices:

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Faith: So, no shade, but I think there’s some people in the world that are very ignorant towards those people who have high vocabulary standards, in which we are able to articulate ourselves. For example, like I’m doing right now. They feel like, um, she’s using these words and she has no idea what they mean and that’s a wrong judgment. Like I said, no shade.
Lauren: Why do you think people would assume you don’t understand the words you’re using?
F: Cause I use a lot of them. And if you look at me as a young Latina, brown, from the South Bronx – I’m from Cypress…[trails off]. (Classroom transcript, 3/14/16)
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One of the ways that Faith builds her identity is in contrast to “people in the world” who are “very ignorant” towards those “who have high vocabulary standards” and can “articulate” themselves. Being one such person who can “articulate ourselves,” Faith positions herself not as a “victim” of such linguistic prejudice, but as an intelligent, high-minded individual who can identify the ignorance of the people who judge her. She also ends this exchange with a series of self-descriptors that align her not only as a sophisticated language user, but also as a young woman of color from a particular neighborhood in the South Bronx. One could connect Faith’s shifting positionality to her linguistic choices: in the first line, she uses an almost exaggeratedly formal style (“there’s some people in the world that are very ignorant towards those people who have high vocabulary standards, in which we are able to articulate ourselves”), but bookends it with the phrase, “no shade,” a slang term for “no offense.” Though she performs an element of her identity as a sophisticated language user through a “formal” way of speaking, she also aligns herself with her peer group through her use of a slang phrase as well as her self-descriptions (“young, Latina, brown”) and reference to her neighborhood in the South Bronx.

I use this extended example to illustrate how the use of discourse analysis tools helped me shed light on the complexities of participants’ words. These tools enabled me to ask
questions and navigate students’ talk and writing in ways that led to connections among their ways of languaging, their identities, and their ideologies. Using such concrete tools helped me understand how participants used language to in agentive ways (as Gee puts it, to “build” and “destroy”) and how such acts of identity and agency relate and respond to the forces of raciolinguistic ideologies that shape their subjectivities, with or without their consent.

Validity

Following Guba and Lincoln’s (1985) call for trustworthiness and credibility in qualitative research, my study includes prolonged engagement, persistent observation, peer debriefing, triangulation of data through the use of different data sources, referential adequacy materials, and member checks (p. 247). The first check is embedded in the study design, as I was in Lauren’s classes for eight months, and classroom observations occurred several times per week. This enriched my relationship with Lauren and helped me develop relationships with the students. The moments that formed and strengthened these relationships took place over time. For example, during a role-play in which students acted out the use of different language practices across contexts (see chapter 5), Eric, an English-speaking student who was phenotypically Black, mentioned earlier in this chapter, alluded to speaking Garífuna with his mother. My ears perked up, not only because it was the first time Eric had mentioned this, but because I had met many Garífuna speakers when I lived in Guatemala after graduating college. I noted the following exchange in my field notes:

| After class, I asked Eric about his use of Garífuna and asked if his family was from Guatemala. He seemed surprised, and said yes. I told him I lived there for a while, close to a place called Livingston, where there is a large community of Garífuna speakers. His eyes widened and he told me that that’s where his mother is from. Then he smiled and said, “I guess you learned something new about me today” (Field notes, April 7, 2016). |
As is evident from the date, this exchange took place months into the project. Without prolonged engagement at the research site and with participants, it is very possible that I never would have learned “something new” about Eric. After this exchange, Eric and I had several conversations about Guatemala (he had never been and seemed interested in my time there), which helped me get to know him better.

The second check, triangulation, is also present in my study through the use of various data sources. Field notes and teacher and student work provided me with different perspectives, which helped me engage in a more nuanced analysis of the data. The audio recordings and transcripts of classroom talk are appropriate referential adequacy materials, as they can “be utilized by the inquirer or others…to test interpretations made from other analyzed data” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.247).

Both peer debriefing and member checks were important to my data analysis. For the former, I shared my developing analysis with members of a writing group organized by Ofelia García. In this group, I shared excerpts from my data, laid out my plans for writing, and grappled with discrepant evidence (Maxwell, 2005). Member checks were also utilized in a number of ways. Because I worked so closely with Lauren, I shared many emerging ideas with her, as well as excerpts from field notes and transcripts that illustrated moments I wanted to analyze. When she was not teaching and I was not observing, we sat together in the teacher’s lounge or in other rooms and talked constantly about the students, the curriculum, and the progress of the class overall. Lauren was far more than a “check” to ensure credibility; she was my thought-partner and her insights were invaluable to this project.

Students, too, provided member checks and helped me in my analysis. For example, when a particularly interesting bit of metacommentary came up or a translanguaging event
occurred, I tried to speak to the student(s) involved. Lauren and I also built reflective elements into many in-class activities, so that students could share their thoughts in writing as well as in conversations with me. Sometimes, students’ responses in these reflections surprised me and made me question my own assumptions. For example, during a discussion about linguistic discrimination, students in one class talked about the treatment of emergent bilinguals by teachers at the school. The conversation turned to Jorge, an emergent bilingual in the classroom. One student, Celi, began by defending teachers at the school, but another, Augustín, refuted her statements:

Celi: Because you see how Jorge speaks English? [To Lauren] You tend – or most people or most teachers tend to understand what he’s saying and they don’t go and try to be rude and say – Augustín: No, but they be mad disrespectful.  
C: Like you tend to understand Jorge the way he talks. And I feel like every single time Jorge talks, you take a minute like, you know, to process what he had said.  
A: Nah, Miss, there be other teachers who when he start speaking just look at him and then go to someone else to give them the answer. [Pause] You know what I’m trying to say?  
L: So you think they’re biased against his language practices?  
A: Yeah.  
L: Jorge, do you – do you want to comment, since we’re talking about you? [Jorge smiles shyly, but does not offer a reply or comment.] (Transcript + field notes, February 29, 2016)

As it was happening, I was embarrassed for Jorge – he was put very much on the spot, as talk centered around his emerging English. However, I was also excited that a discussion about the treatment of emergent bilinguals’ language practices in school had come to the surface. I thought that Jorge might have felt supported by someone like Augustín, an English-speaking Latinx student who seemed to understand the subtle ways that teachers treated him differently. However, my assumption was checked when I read Jorge’s reflection on the conversation:

I disagree with this comment because I’m very satisfied with the bias of the teachers in [SBHS]. They always try to understand what I want to say[, ] If they can’t understand they look for somebody to translate, but their treatment is always nice[,] [E]ven [if] I so bad reading they let me participate so I happiness for being in [SBHS]. (Student work, February 29, 2016)
Here, Jorge rejects his peer’s opinion and expresses his satisfaction with teachers at SBHS who “let” him participate despite his “so bad reading.” His commentary not only provided me with an interesting negative case (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), but also pointed out one of my own assumptions. Because of my own beliefs about linguistic racism and bias in the education system, I thought that Jorge – who I assumed experienced this kind of bias – would agree with his peer and respond with his own critique of the system. This was not the case, and his response gave me the opportunity to check my own biases, which in turn led to more credibility in my analysis.

Lastly, my hope is that writing in a rich, narrative format will help readers see the participants as real people as well as understand my observations and analysis. Wherever and whenever possible, I have included excerpts from field notes, transcripts, and student work to provide context for my findings. This kind of “thick description” is meant to provide “enough information about a context, first, to impart a vicarious experience of it, and, second, to facilitate judgments about the extent to which working hypotheses from that context might be transferable to a second and similar context” (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p.248).

**Limitations**

It is important to address several limitations to this project. Firstly, both Lauren and I are English-dominant. Though Lauren speaks some Italian, she does not share the language practices of her students. This was most limiting in her 7th period classroom, which contained a number of emergent bilinguals. This class was often the least engaged of the four; there were a few vocal participants, but most students were frequently quiet and did not readily participate. This class also had the lowest rate of assignments turned in, and usually had a few students missing who had been present earlier in the day. Though all of this could be attributed in part to scheduling
(the class was at the very end of the school day), I believe the disengagement also had to do with a lack of understanding. Though Lauren and the ESL teacher she co-taught with made an effort to include Spanish (the majority LOTE) vocabulary and key words in PowerPoint presentations and handouts, there was not enough home language support to help the less experienced bilinguals keep up with the content and contribute in meaningful ways.

Though I consider myself an emergent English-Spanish bilingual, I am much more comfortable using English. Despite having conversations with students in both English and Spanish, it is evident from the data that the more in-depth discussions I had were in English. In part, this is due to the English dominance of most of Lauren’s students. Other than the students in her period 7 class, most – even those who were bilingual – utilized English in their academic work. Thus, conversations around content mostly took place in that language. That said, if I were more comfortable using Spanish, I could have engaged the Spanish-dominant students in discussions about their thoughts and feelings as they muddled through the difficult content in English. What was it like for these students to engage in a curriculum about language in English, a language they were struggling to understand? What would have emerged if the focus were on students’ metacommentary in Spanish about their learning in English? How did newly arrived immigrant students of color experience linguistic discrimination and racism differently than their English-speaking (though similarly racialized) peers? Keeping these questions in mind, I see this limitation as a possible opportunity for expanding this project in the future.

Additionally, this project did not rely heavily on interviews with individual participants. This could be seen as a limitation, as it reports mostly on what I observed and heard in the larger classroom context. The interviews I did conduct – an interview with Lauren and short interviews with several students about their college essays – yielded some interesting information, but made
up a very small percentage of my collected data. The student interviews, especially, provoked further questions and possible research. As will be discussed in chapter 6, students’ talk about their writing revealed their tactics for negotiating their own voices with an anticipated audience. For example, one student, Lucia, responded to my question about how she meshed English and Spanish in her essay:

Lucia: I guess I did it without warning, so I decided – cause my drafts, somebody said “you have to, like, tell me when you’re gonna speak in, uh, Spanish and English.”
Kate: Was that, um, another student who told you you should do that?
L: Yeah. When we were writing drafts. So I was like, “OK, so I’m not gonna do that, put a whole entire essay in Spanish and English,” so I was like, maybe I’ll just, like, translate? Do little footnotes on the bottom? With lines, so like Americanos/Americans, ingles/English…
K: So you did little footnotes instead of translate in the essay. And what made you decide to do it that way rather than put translations in parentheses afterwards, or do something else, put in quotations, or –
L: I don’t know. It would change the style if it was like all the words – there’s so much Spanish, it’d look, like, bad. (Student interview, 5/20/16)

Lucia’s talk illustrates the choices she made as a bilingual writer anticipating a monolingual audience. Though she knew she had to include an entry-point for non-Spanish-speaking readers, she also knew that using in-text translations would “change the style” of her piece. She discusses her use of footnotes as an accommodation, which sheds some light on her thinking, but the short nature of our interview did not allow me to delve deeper into what she meant by the Spanish in her text “looking bad” with translations or what she thought about another student instructing her to “tell” when she was going to use both languages. Perhaps a future study could include interviews with student writers throughout the process of translingual text production that bring forth the choices students made as well as the rationale for and their feelings about making those choices.

4 In all transcriptions, I refer to myself as “Kate.”
Chapter 4

“My English trips but keeps walking”:
Translingual sensibilities amidst monoglossic language ideologies

*I feel fluent in all my language practices except for Spanish. Even my English, it's not so fluent neither because I have a – like, sometimes Spanish will come out. Even though I’m not fluent in Spanish* (Jacqui, Classroom transcript, May 6, 2016).

*If you ask me if my English is perfect, I will tell you To stop asking me so many goddamn questions* (Nia, “My English,” December 2015).

Introduction

This chapter explores students’ attitudes about their own language practices and their responses to ideologies that impose deficit perspectives onto those practices. Through an analysis of students’ classroom talk and poetry writing, I highlight the complex and, as is evident in the epigraph above, contradictory ways that students expressed their thoughts and feelings about their language practices. Through their talk, students in Lauren’s classroom, both those across the bilingual continuum (Hornberger, 2003) and those students of color who would traditionally be viewed as monolingual English speakers, expressed their experiences of marginalization and stigmatization of their language practices.

Though linguistic insecurity was a prominent theme in students’ metacommentary, it is important, too, to recognize the ways they pushed back against these ideologies. This resistance, which I explore through students’ poetry writing, is integral to what I call a translingual sensibility. I define a translingual sensibility as a positionality that shapes students’
understandings of and experiences with language. A translingual sensibility aligns with theoretical concepts that inform translanguaging: language practices as fluid and unbounded, the ideological nature of “standard” language, and an emphasis on meaning-making over “perfect” or “native”-like language performances, to name a few. Importantly, a translingual sensibility has at its center a resistance to and transgression of monoglossic norms and rules. Though I discuss at length throughout this project how our curriculum and pedagogical approach brought to the surface and aimed to foster such a translingual sensibility, in this chapter I draw on students’ poetry to better “define” this positionality and to illustrate the ways in which young people of color articulated their experiences living and languaging amongst monoglossic ideologies.

**Overview of findings**

Students’ metacommentary about their language practices revealed an internalization of both a “named languages” ideology (Otheguy, García, & Reid, 2015) and standard language ideologies (Lippi-Green, 1997) transmitted by schools. Students’ talk showed how these ideologies have shaped their feelings about their own language practices, but also the ways in which they grapple with and push back against such ideologies. After a discussion of students’ metacommendary in relation to their teachers and the school, I turn to students’ poetry writing, where students articulated both their linguistic insecurity and their enactment of a proud translingual sensibility.

I begin by describing a literacy design which used a spoken word poem entitled “My Spanish” by Melissa Lozada-Oliva and served as a model for students’ own metalinguistic, translational writing. Students’ poems, which asked them to reflect on their own language practices, movingly reveal their insecurities as well as their pride in their ways of languaging. Importantly, this literacy design made space for students not only to reflect on their language
practices but also to actively *resist* the oppressive ideologies they are subjected to both in and out of school. Through this kind of translingual writing activity, students were given license to create texts using their complex and diverse linguistic repertoires. The resulting poetry provides an insight into how such translingual literacy activities in the English classroom can bring forth students’ counter-narratives about their own language practices, expressions of their translingual sensibilities, and challenges to language ideologies that marginalize them.

**Literature Review**

**Language ideologies and schooling**

In her discussion of what she terms “standard language ideologies,” Lippi-Green (1997) writes, “the educational system may not be the beginning, but it is the heart of the standardization process” (p.65). Historically, schools have worked alongside other institutions to proliferate the subordination of certain language practices and the standardization of others. This has been done through overtly oppressive language policies, such as those that have outlawed bilingual education (Crawford, 2000; Gándara, 2000; Gutierrez, Baquedano-López, and Asato, 2000; Uriarte, Tuny, Lavin & Diez, 2010; Darder & Uriarte, 2013) and the use of Ebonics in schools (Perry & Delpit, 1998; Smitherman, 2000; Rickford, 2002), as well as more subtle tactics, often couched in “common sense” practices such as teaching “academic language” (Flores, 2015). These policies and practices naturalize the idea that (a) “standard”, “academic” language exists, and (b) it is objectively better than all other languages.

Richardson (1998) asserts that, “it is the job of schools to immerse students in the standard language/variety of English” (p.160). Though this appeal could be spun as democratic, its true intention is the maintenance of existing power structures and the continued cover-up of inequality. As Lippi-Green puts it, “the process of standardization and language subordination is
concerned not so much with an overall homogeneity of language, but with excluding only certain types of language and variation, those linked to social differences which make us uncomfortable” (p.121). Thus, our discomfort with certain speakers’ language practices (which is actually our discomfort with the speakers themselves) has led to their mischaracterization and trivialization as well as the marginalization of their proponents and speakers, a process that has had subtractive (Valenzuela, 1999) effects on the education of bilingual students and students of color.

**Student resistance to linguistic stigmatization**

Though some students may internalize the stigmatization of their language practices, many others actively resist schools’ attempts to police and control their language practices and related identities. For example, in their study of heritage language schools in England, Blackledge and Creese (2009) described how young people resisted the ethnolinguistic identities being imposed upon them. The students used the “heritage” language to act out; they mocked their teachers, cursed and used profane language, and parodied the language (i.e.: used a stylized Chinese accent in a Cantonese classroom). Because these schools focused on “heritage” languages, the authors infer that students were actually rebelling against static representations of their identities. They write, “The students’ discourse became a battleground on which to play out oppositions between the ‘heritage’ identity imposed by the school and the students’ contestation and renegotiation of such impositions” (p. 250). By subverting the teacher and classroom, students asserted their linguistic identities – those of the present, not of a “heritage” past.

English learning contexts are often sites of similar resistance, as individuals negotiate the integration of a new (and highly powerful) language into their repertoires. In her study of adult learners in a Canadian ESL classroom, Norton (1995, 2001, 2010) offers the notion of investment
as a way of understanding “the socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language and their often ambivalent desire to learn and practice it” (2010, p.353). The framework of investment views learner identity as shifting and contingent, and emphasizes agency. Connected to this idea of investment is the *imagined community*, which Norton defines as a “place” (actual or abstract) outside the classroom that learners wish to inhabit and belong. Access to this community determines how and how much learners invest in a target language. For example, Norton (2001) explored why English learners chose an extreme version of non-participation by dropping out of their ESL classes. Through the stories of immigrants Katarina and Felicia, Norton illustrates that individuals who are forced to choose between their identity in the English classroom and their identity in an imagined community often choose the latter. She writes, “when language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with target language speakers, but they are constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world…Thus an investment in the target language is also an investment in a learner’s own identity, an identity which is constantly changing across time and space” (p.166). To preserve their self-worth, then, students may choose failure over relinquishing control of their imagined identities to the world of school.

Young people also illustrate their resistance through literacy practices that are unsanctioned and/or separate from school learning. For example, in his English classroom in Sri Lanka, Canagarajah (1993) saw how his students displayed “a confusing range of accommodative and oppositional tendencies” (p.603) as they moved through the course, which utilized an English textbook that taught standard US English, rather than “the Englishes students bring with them” (p.608). Students subverted textbook content by secretly writing in their own comments, jokes and drawings. Canagarajah saw these glosses as “counterdiscourses that
challenge the textual language, values, and ideology” of the book, as well as the English class overall (p.613). Similarly, Mendoza-Denton (2008) saw that high school girls in the Spanish-speaking Sureña gang circulated small poetry notebooks amongst themselves. The poems were anonymous, with some even written in code. In resistance to “sanctioned” literacy activities in their English classes, the girls purposefully kept their “underground linguistic skills” (p.192) apart from the world of school, helping them maintain their identities despite the negative categories (gang banger, illiterate, English learner, drop out) imposed upon them.

*Speakers, not languages: A translanguaging approach to students’ language practices*

New conceptualizations of bilingualism and bilingual education provide a different lens for understanding minoritized students’ language practices. Though this lens has thus far been applied to students who speak two or more socially distinct languages, a post-structural, translingual approach is useful for framing the language practices of all minoritized students. This framing necessitates a move away from an understanding of students’ language practices as separate, bounded, and relegated to one context or another (i.e.: “home” language and “school” language or “English” and “Spanish”). This separation of languages is inherent to concepts such as code switching, which, “no matter how broadly and positively conceived…still constitutes a theoretical endorsement of the idea that what the bilingual manipulates, however masterfully, are two separate linguistic systems” (Otheguy, García & Reid, 2015, p.282). This separation also undergirds those language practices that have been conceptualized as “hybrids,” such as Spanglish (Otheguy & Stern, 2010), which often index negative perceptions of US bilinguals’ language practices.

Otheguy, García, and Reid (2015) clarify how the term translanguaging is distinct from what they call a “named languages” view. They write:
Translanguaging adopts the perspective of the individual, the view from inside the speaker; it offers a description based strictly on the internal categories of lexical and grammatical structure. The named language adopts the view from outside the speaker, a perspective from which the speaker has to fit as a member of a set group; it offers a description based on external categories that emanate from, and in turn reaffirm, sociocultural or national (and often also political) structures. (p. 297)

A translanguaging approach, then, places emphasis on *speakers*, not on *languages*. This crucial distinction deemphasizes – in fact, does away with – the idea of an objectively “standard” language. In educational contexts, this approach requires teachers to design instruction and curriculum from the speakers up. In Lauren’s classroom, the curriculum we designed aimed to bring forth students’ idiolects, which Otheguy, García and Reid define as “a person’s own unique, personal language…language viewed from the internal perspective of the individual, language seen separately from the external perspective of the society that categorizes and classifies named national languages” (p.289). Rather than separating and categorizing students’ language practices, we chose texts and designed activities that brought students’ complex and interrelated idiolects to the surface and promoted metalinguistic thinking that pushed students to interrogate “named languages.”

In my data, students’ expressions of insecurity and ambivalence about their own language practices were tied to ideologies, transmitted by the school and their teachers, which both separate and rank different languages. Students’ subjectivities have been shaped by such ideologies, which have been both overtly and covertly transmitted to them throughout their schooling. However, as will be shown through their talk and writing, students did not take such deficit views of their language practices lying down. Students’ expression of a translingual sensibility – including their linguistic pride and resistance to efforts to police and control their
language practices – often occurred alongside their expressions of linguistic insecurity, a coexistence that is emblematic of lives lived amidst language ideologies.

**Findings**

For both Latinx students and students of color traditionally described as monolingual English speakers, their metacommentary pointed to both an internalization *and* a rejection of limiting language ideologies. These contradictions are illustrative of what Alim and Smitherman (2012) call our society’s “love-hate relationship with Black America and its language” (p.24). Despite the ubiquity and emulation of what Alim and Smitherman call “Black verbal culture” everywhere from popular culture to politics, the language practices associated with African Americans (and, as seen in my data and data from other studies such as Paris, 2011 and Martínez, 2015, taken up by many urban students of color) continue to be stigmatized as incorrect, inadequate, and taboo. As will be discussed in more detail in chapter 5, these raciolinguistic ideologies – which “conflate certain racialized bodies with linguistic deficiency unrelated to any objective linguistic practices” (Flores & Rosa, 2015, p.150) – pervade students’ schooling and shape students’ subjectivities.

Students were well aware of negative perceptions of their language practices, particularly by their teachers and the school at large. In response to this understanding, students took up different perspectives. Some students’ metacommentary revealed what seemed to be an internalization of these negative perceptions. Many students expressed an alignment with “discourses of appropriateness” (Flores & Rosa, 2015) that simultaneously framed a “standard” language as the only one appropriate for academic contexts and relegated their own “non-standard” language practices to the margins. Some Latinx students across the bilingual continuum expressed attitudes about their bilingualism that similarly aligned with discourses of
appropriateness and monoglossic, “named language” ideologies. Alongside students’ alignment with oppressive language ideologies, however, were also their expressions of pride in their diverse language practices and resistance to such limiting ideologies. Through one classroom writing assignment, a poem that explored their relationships to their language practices, I explore this apparent contradiction and use students’ poetry to define the proud, transgressive positionality I refer to as a translingual sensibility.

**Language ideologies in school: Students’ understandings and responses**

*Teachers, students, and the policing of language*

Flores and Rosa (2015) define “discourses of appropriateness” as those that promote “the conceptualization of standardized linguistic practices as objective sets of linguistic forms that are understood to be appropriate for academic settings” (p.150). Beneath these discourses, the authors argue, are raciolinguistic ideologies that render people of color “as linguistically deviant even when engaging in linguistic practices positioned as normative or innovative when produced by privileged white subjects” (p.150). In other words, the appeals for teaching students of color “academic language” skirt a larger issue: even if students of color speak in the ways deemed “academic,” they will still be *heard* by White listening subjects as “un-academic” (less intelligent, less professional, less competent).

Because our curriculum actively invited students’ metacommentary and reflections on language, there was much discussion throughout the year about connections between language and various aspects of students’ lived experiences. A topic that came up in students’ classroom talk over and over again was their interactions with teachers and their awareness, in these interactions, of “discourses of appropriateness” at work. In some cases, students shared memories of teachers explicitly policing their language practices. For example, in response to a
question about linguistic bias, a student named Demesia said, “Some teachers tend to have a bias against the languages we use, because they would say, like, ‘that’s not appropriate for school’ or ‘don’t use that language.’ When Lauren asked her what language Demesia thought they were referring to, she replied, “AAVE [African American Vernacular English], slang” (Transcript, 2/29/16). Similarly, two Latinx emergent bilingual students, Juan and Natasha, shared teachers’ explicit directives about the use of Spanish:

Juan: I see it sometimes when I start speaking Spanish. The teachers that don’t speak Spanish be like, “oh, speak only in English.”
Natasha: I remember that happened to me. The teacher told me that it was rude, but I didn’t find it rude because it was like eight kids in the classroom and we all speak Spanish and she was like, “oh don’t speak Spanish it’s rude” (Classroom transcript, 2/29/16).

Some students, on the other hand, understood their teachers’ comments about their language practices as benign attempts to help them. In my field notes, I noted the following comments from two students, David, an African American student, and Baboucar, a Fulani-speaking emergent bilingual from Liberia:

David said that sometimes teachers might tell you not to speak a certain way because they’re trying to help you. He shared a story of one teacher at his old high school who told him, “you shouldn’t speak in certain ways because you’re a young Black man,” implying that he could be subjected to the very linguistic prejudice we’ve been discussing. Baboucar, too, shared that some teachers want him to use “big words” so that he would be prepared for college (Field notes, 3/8/16).

Students also shared examples of more coded teacher discourse. For example, Marie, a student whose family immigrated from Guinea when she was in elementary school, brought up a memory of a teacher correcting her grammar:

When I used to – with my sentences? I used to write, like, ‘what is you doing?’ And she’d be like, ‘it’s not what is you doing it’s what are you doing?’ She didn’t force it, but she corrected (Classroom transcript, 3/8/16).

Here, Marie makes a distinction, saying that her teacher didn’t “force it” (referring to a “standard” English practice), but “corrected it.” Such grammatical correction on students of color
in literacy classrooms has been linked to ideological notions that students’ language practices are “incorrect” and in need of remediation (Delpit, 2006). Though Marie says the teacher didn’t force a particular language practice upon her, she clearly connected her former English teacher’s correction of her grammar (in particular a grammatical structure common to what scholars have called by a number of names, but was referred to in Lauren’s class as African American Vernacular English\(^5\) or AAVE) to the class discussion, which had to do with linguistic prejudice.

Another connection students made between teachers and their more implicit language ideologies had to do with “tone.” Throughout the year, students made reference to the ways in which teachers (as well as their parents and other adults) commented on their tone in derogatory ways. Students were told to “watch their tone” or, as one student put it, “check that tone,” despite their reported inability to hear the tone these adults policed. One day, during Lauren’s 4th period class, Ariana sat at her table with her head down. Because Ariana and I had developed a good relationship over the course of the year, I knew this was not typical behavior and asked her what was up. She responded:

| Ariana: Um, I got into a – I had a situation with a teacher and she was just like, “oh, your tone, you come off like you’re angry and you talk like you don’t care.” And I’m like, it’s not that! She was like, you speak to everyone like you speak to your friends. It’s not like I do it intentionally, so when that happens I’m just mad. So I can’t control it. Kate: Do you feel like your tone reflects how you feel? A: No. My tone comes off bad sometimes. People are like, “oh you have an attitude!” And I’m like, no I don’t. But then I get an attitude. [Laughs.] But I try to maneuver it. I try. I’m just ready for June (Classroom transcript, 5/6/16). |

Ariana’s comments here reveal her frustration with what she saw as a misunderstanding of her ways of communicating. She acknowledges a kind of loop that gets her in trouble: her “tone,” which “comes off bad,” makes people, like her teacher, think she has an attitude; she gets

\(^5\) In our early discussions about how to “name” languages – an act that was a necessary but fraught part of this project – Lauren began using “African American Vernacular English” or “AAVE.” Though many other terms exist for this set of language practices, from “Black English” to “African American English” to “Black Vernacular English,” I take up Lauren and her students’ use of AAVE.
angry at this misperception, which leads her to “get an attitude”; she gets in trouble, which only makes her more frustrated. The teacher’s comment – that she speaks to everyone like she speaks to her friends – reveals an indexical relationship between the ways urban students of color communicate and perceptions of them as angry, inappropriate, rude, or insubordinate. Ariana’s last comment, that she was “just ready for June” – meaning ready for the school year to be over and summer break to begin – illustrates that this interaction, and the resulting sense that she had been mischaracterized because of her “tone” (something she can’t seem to control), led her to express feelings of disengagement from school.

Lastly, students expressed the understanding that even teachers’ positive perceptions of their language practices had a deeper meaning. Tania, for example, drew on her own positive experience with the same teacher Marie remembered correcting her grammar:

| So last year, [the teacher] liked me more because I used to read a lot of books so I used to speak more…like I used to use big words, we’ll say. And if I read a…significant book with a lot of pages, she’s be like, “you finished it?” And I was like, “yeah.” And she was like, “that’s awesome!” And she started recommending me to other teachers and stuff (Classroom transcript, 2/29/16). |

Tania draws a straight line between her affinity for reading “significant” books to her use of “big words” and the beneficial treatment she received in class. Because Tania’s language and literacy practices more closely aligned with those considered “standard” in an English classroom, she was not only seen in a more positive light by the teacher, but she was also “recommended” to other teachers in ways that reproduced this beneficial treatment.

Faith, too, seemed to understand how teachers’ language ideologies affect their treatment of students of color. In one whole-class discussion, she gave a nuanced analysis of the intersections of language, race, and teacher attitudes towards students like her:

| Even in middle school and elementary school, there were certain teachers that, um, gravitate towards students that speak articulate. They get called on more to read, they get called on more |
to do certain things. Like when you have a Latina, those who are dark-skinned, who don’t conduct themselves in that manner, teachers don’t really care what you say. And when you do speak, they – like their facial expression shows – like y’all get scared, like some teachers get scared or get, um, defensive when you speak ‘cause they automatically assume you gonna come at them. And we’re really not (Classroom transcript, 3/8/16).

Here, Faith makes a connection between certain students’ positive treatment in school and their ways of languaging. Like Tania’s coded reference to her own use of “big words,” Faith highlights the fact that students who “speak articulate” also get more beneficial treatment in the classroom. The word “articulate” itself is ideologically- and racially-loaded (Alim & Smitherman, 2012), and Faith seems to understand that students of color who don’t “conduct themselves in that manner” – meaning “appropriate,” White ways of languaging – are often ignored and neglected. When such students (like Faith herself) do speak, being ignored and neglected quickly turns to being feared. Here, she even implicates Lauren (“y’all get scared”), with whom she seemed to have a positive relationship, illustrating her feelings of being stigmatized and misunderstood by teachers as a whole.

Internalizing a “named languages” ideology: Latinx students and bilingualism

For Spanish-speaking Latinx students across the bilingual continuum, their metacommentary was steeped in monoglossic ideologies. Such ideologies stigmatize those speakers who do not fit the ideal of perfectly balanced bilinguals, whose two languages are “native-like” (Brutt-Griffler & Samimi, 2001). By holding speakers up to such monoglossic standards, many US bilinguals – especially Latinx, who are also subject to the effects of raciolinguistic ideologies – are silenced and, as Rosa (2016) puts it, rendered languageless. These ideologies about students’ bilingualism are deeply entrenched in educational settings, even in those settings that are explicitly bilingual (Palmer et al, 2014; García & Li Wei, 2014). The bind inherent to bilinguals’ experiences in monoglossic school contexts is clearly articulated by Jacqui and Ariana in the following
In response to the question about fluency, both Ariana and Jacqui’s responses reveal the impact that monoglossic ideologies can have on bilinguals’ self-perception. As ideologies are reproduced through what Fairclough (1989) calls naturalization, appealing to and reifying our “common sense” notions, they also warp our own perceptions. Despite the fact that Ariana says she speaks Spanish and grew up in a home where Spanish is spoken “every day,” she reports that she does not speak the language “fluently.” She speaks “Spanglish,” which is different (worse, less fluent) than the “proper Spanish” she is taught in school. Though Jacqui says that she is not fluent in Spanish, she also perceives her English as lacking fluency because some of her words “sound like they ‘bout to be in Spanish,” indicating that because her English is interrelated with her Spanish, it diminishes her fluency. Instead of viewing their language practices as shifting, contingent, and interconnected – a concept inherent to translanguaging – Ariana and Jacqui have internalized the monoglossic, “named languages” ideology that leaves them feeling less than fluent in any of their languages.

In the exchange that follows, Yessica expressed insecurity about how she would perform on the upcoming English Regents exam. Though Yessica was one of the highest performing students in the class, the exam seemed to bring up linguistic insecurities that extended past the
exam to English itself:

Yessica: I don’t like English. I’ma do horrible.
Kate: Why? You’re so good at it!
Y: I’m not good at expressing myself.
K: Really?
Y: Not even writing it, or saying it, I’m not – I can’t express myself! (Classroom transcript, 12/2/15).

Only minutes later, Yessica took a break from her classwork and began the following exchange:

Yessica: What languages do you know how to speak?
Kate: Do I know how to speak? English and Spanish would be my strongest ones, but my mother is from Italy, she spoke Italian growing up, so I know some Italian –
Y: [Interrupts me] You know I’m learning Hindi? Because I like the culture.
K: Yeah? How are you learning it? What are you doing?
Y: I watch movies. I see the caption and I know what they’re saying. And then I’m learning – so it’s Hindi, Portuguese, cause my stepmom is from Brazil, so I understand what she’s saying. I just gotta learn how to say it right. Oh and I’m learning French.
K: How are you learning French?
Y: There’s an app that helps you (Classroom transcript, 12/2/15).

The juxtaposition of Yessica’s insecurity about the English Regents exam (which she seemed to link to her overall inability to “express herself”) and her rich out-of-school language practices clearly illustrates the ways language ideologies can warp students’ perceptions of their own languaging. Because of the exam’s ideological emphasis on a constellation of language practice often referred to as “academic language” (Valdes, 2004), bilingual students like Yessica who are linguistically curious and savvy (and, in fact, high performing in English class) view themselves as inadequate.

In addition to expressing insecurity and inadequacy about their language practices, some Spanish-speaking Latinx students in Lauren’s classroom distanced themselves from Spanish altogether. For example, early in the school year, students explored their own language practices by creating what Betsy Rymes (2015) calls “language diversity pies.” These pie charts visually represented the different language practices students used for their “different slices of social
life.” In talking to Naomi and Maria about their different language practices, I noted the following in my field notes:

At my table, I asked Naomi and Maria what languages they spoke. Naomi said English and Spanish, as did Maria. But, Maria said, “I speak Spanish but I choose not to.” I asked her why, and she said she doesn’t like speaking Spanish. I glanced at her notebook, and saw her answer to the do now was, “I tell people I only speak English” (Field notes, 9/11/15).

During a different period that same day, when students were formulating questions that would be included on a language diversity survey, Augustín expressed a similar sentiment:

One of Augustín’s language survey questions was, “what language do you prefer speaking?” I told him this was a good question and asked his preference. He said English, and when I asked why, said, “because I get tired of hearing Spanish. I hear it all day.” I asked him if his family spoke Spanish, and he said, “all the time.” When I asked what language he spoke with friends, he said English (Field notes, 9/11/15).

Both Maria and Augustín – as well as other students who expressed similar sentiments – had been born and raised in the US and spoke Spanish with varying degrees of proficiency. Though I often heard Maria engaged in translingual conversation with her friends and had watched Augustín deftly translate for a Spanish-speaking student in the class, these two students expressed their preference for English over Spanish in ways that may indicate a deeper ambivalence about their bilingualism and language practices.

**Enacting a translingual sensibility through poetry writing**

As seen in students’ classroom talk in the previous section, and as will be shown in a sample of their poetry, students talked about their own language practices in ways that revealed an apparent alignment with ideologies that stigmatize their ways of languaging. It is also important to note, however, that such ideological alignments were juxtaposed with students’ expressions of *resistance* to those same ideologies through their enactment of what I refer to as a translingual sensibility. Enacting this sensibility, which I define using the ideas present in students’ poetry,
was a way of rejecting perceptions of their language practices (and of themselves) as deficient and lacking. It was also a way of transgressing those monoglossic ideologies that circulated through the discourses of appropriateness students were subjected to both in and out of school.

*Reading and writing metalinguistic poetry: A critical translingual literacy design*

Between November and December 2015, students engaged in a unit that posed questions about the connections between language and identity. To help students explore these connections, Lauren and I designed opportunities for students to read and discuss texts that took up similar metalinguistic exploration. Though we designed activities around several multimodal texts – from poetry to blog posts to creative nonfiction essays – I focus here on a week of lessons that centered the spoken-word poem, “My Spanish” by Melissa Lozada-Oliva (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fEc4Bj_RT0).

The week began with students watching a clip of Lozada-Oliva’s performance of the poem. As they watched and listened, they also read along with a transcript of the poem, given to them in the form of a handout. After watching the performance once, Lauren told students they would watch it a second time, and prompted them to underline lines from the poem that stood out to them. After the second viewing, Lauren told students to add notes to their initial glosses so that they could better express why they had underlined certain parts of the poem. She also asked them to think about the “central idea” of the poem, a skill emphasized on the English Regents exam.

The poem, written and performed in English, explores the poet’s relationship to Spanish. The phrase “My Spanish” is repeated, as are the phrases, “If you ask me if I am fluent in Spanish…” and “My Spanish is…”. Through a series of metaphors, Lozada-Oliva reflects not only on her relationship to the language, but also on the relationship of the language to various
aspects of her identity. This first stanza is representative of the style and central idea of the poem overall (see Appendix 4.1 for a full transcript of the poem):

| If you ask me if I am fluent in Spanish I will tell you      |
| My Spanish is an itchy phantom limb: it is reaching for a word |
| and only finding air                                         |
| My Spanish is my third birthday party: half of it is memory, |
| the other half is that photograph on the fridge              |
| is what my family has told me.                               |

Though the poem was written about the author’s feelings and relationship to Spanish, the activity that followed asked students to reflect on any aspect of their language practices. At this point in the year, students had already engaged in many discussions and activities that asked them to think and talk metalinguistically about links between their diverse language practices and their lived experiences. Using “My Spanish” as a model, students wrote metalinguistic poetry, reflecting on their own language practices through the kinds of metaphors that Lozada-Oliva had used in her poem. Though Lozada-Oliva’s poem is written in English, Lauren explicitly told students that they could use any language practices they thought would help them express themselves.

In the process of coding my data, I found that the poetry activity I described above generated a number of deductive and inductive codes. The richness of the poetry, and their alignment with larger thematic codes such as “linguistic insecurity,” “linguistic pride,” and “resistance and transgression” (among others, see Appendix 3.3) spoke to their importance in highlighting both students’ contradictory feelings about their language practices and their translingual sensibilities. I began a more in-depth analysis of these data by reading through all of Lauren’s students’ poems. Out of all the students across her four classes, approximately 25 turned in finals drafts of their poetry. I set aside those poems that contained high incidences of both the deductive and inductive codes (16 poems in total; included in full in Appendix 4.2) and
read through each one closely. Because the poem students used as their model was organized around a set of creative metaphors about the poet’s Spanish, I paid special attention to and coded the metaphors that students themselves used to describe their language practices. Though students’ poetry contained images and ideas that pointed to an internalization of oppressive language ideologies, students also came up with metaphors that helped me define a translingual sensibility. I draw on these metaphors to lend insight into students’ relationships to their own language practices and the ideologies that impact their subjectivities.

“*My English is lost in space*”: *Expressions of linguistic insecurity*

A theme that emerged from students’ poetry was an expression of insecurity and/or misunderstanding when it came to their language practices. Though students drew on a number of metaphors to express these feelings, one that came up in several poems was that of travel or movement through different spaces. As the above line from Andrew’s poem illustrates, the students who drew on metaphors of travel or movement (or lack of movement) seemed to communicate feelings of confusion or being lost.

Marie compared her English to “a long bus ride/Making lots of stops before reaching/its destination.” Catherine and Nadia, too, alluded to travel when talking about their Spanish and English language practices. Using similar metaphors, the students describe their languages as “on vacation”:

```
If you ask me if I’m good at Spanish,
I’ll tell you that
My Spanish went on vacation and never came back.
```

*(Catherine, “My Spanish”)*
Unlike Nadia, whose English leaves her for a vacation in Mexico, Ricardo – also designated an ELL – describes his English in an almost opposite way, waiting patiently until it can be free:

| At school, my English stay sit waiting until the bell rings so he can walk out from school. | My English wake up in the morning and does not eat breakfast. My English have a lot of dream that fell down. |

Though Catherine and Nadia describe their Spanish and English as having agency (their languages go on vacation and, in Catherine’s case, never come back), Ricardo characterizes his English as static and inactive. Rather than taking a trip, Ricardo’s English sits patiently in school and waits until it can leave at the end of the day. Throughout his poem, in fact, Ricardo’s English could be read as a stand-in for himself and his insecurities about his English abilities. For example, two excerpts from his poem read:

| My English wake up in the morning and does not eat breakfast. My English have a lot of dream that fell down. |

Tellingly, Ricardo compares his English to “a book in other language/that nobody understand[s].” Though here he describes his English as misunderstood or – to extend the book metaphor, misread – he also alludes to another language in which his English (and, perhaps, he himself) has much more to say.

**Resisting oppressive language ideologies: Enacting a translilingual sensibility**

Though students wrote movingly about their insecurity and feelings of being misunderstood,
these same students also expressed resilience and an ability to stand up to and combat this insecurity and misunderstanding. These expressions of resilience are part of a larger positionality I refer to as a translingual sensibility. Similar to Garcia, Johnson and Seltzer’s (2017) discussion of a translanguaging stance in teachers of bilingual students, a translingual sensibility refers to students’ overall bent towards many of the theoretical and epistemological foundations of translanguaging. Despite their apparent internalization of oppressive language ideologies, there seemed to be an understanding among students that language was flexible, fluid, and constantly changing. A translingual sensibility extends the conception of a “translanguaging stance” in that it highlights an actively resistant and transgressive element of students’ points of view that speaks directly against monoglossic ideologies.

Linguistic fluidity and integration were very much a part of students’ lives. Perhaps because of their frequent mobility (both within the US and transnationally), their experiences in linguistically diverse families and neighborhoods, and their savvy uses of the Internet and social media in ways that shortened linguistic distances, students expressed a number of attitudes that align with translanguaging theory. They emphasized meaning-making over “perfect” languaging, expressed an interest in one another’s language practices, and used others and other resources to seek out and take up new language practices, as we saw with Yessica’s discussion of learning Hindi. In the excerpts from students’ poetry that follow, I draw on their use of metaphors that help define a translingual sensibility, including an understanding of language practices as interrelated and complex, a sense of linguistic resilience, and an expression of transgression and resistance in the face of monoglossic language ideologies.

“My English can dance bachata with Spanish”: Interrelated languaging

One element of a translingual sensibility is an understanding of language as fluid, interrelated,
and unbounded, an idea that aligns with translanguaging theory. In their poems, students expressed this understanding when they wrote about the diverse influences on their language practices. These descriptions reveal the multivoiced nature of students’ languaging and point to their perceptions of themselves as cosmopolitan and complex. In stark contrast to monoglossic ideologies that render many linguistically minoritized students “languageless,” students’ metaphors characterized their language practices as products of a translingual, urban multivocality.

Several students wrote that their Engli\hesses were “mixed” or interrelated with other language practices. Like Lucia, who wrote that her English “can dance bachata with Spanish,” these students described their Engli\hesses in terms of other languages. Demesia, for example, described her English as speaking “to the Caribbean sounds.” Melissa tied her English to her Spanish (and to her overall ethnic identity) when she wrote, “My English is mixed with Spanish/Which makes me Hispanic.” Andrew’s discussion of his English and his Spanish reveals an almost love-hate relationship between the two:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My English holds back my Spanish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If I don’t know the word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My English dances with my Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from time to time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My English slowly kills my Spanish</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Andrew’s English has a bullying quality; though it dances with his Spanish “from time to time,” it also holds his Spanish back and even “slowly kills” it. This internal tug-of-war not only reveals the complexity of Andrew’s bilingualism, but also his relationship to the ideologies that authorize his English to dominate his Spanish.

In addition to their interrelatedness, some students described their language practices in
ways that alluded to modernity and, more specifically, to an urban, cosmopolitan sensibility.

Robert, for example, wrote:

| My English grew up at home  
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| But it roams the street.  
| My English picks up what it hears  
| It's a colorful person learning modern things.  
| My English comes from different cultures.  

Similarly, Martin described his English as “diverse as New York City,” with “styles from all over the world/My English can adapt to where it’s at.” Dre utilized a particularly creative metaphor that speaks to his English’s modern nature:

| My English is like a super modified animal that could adapt to any environment on the block.  
|--------------------------|

These three students’ descriptions of their Englishes are both explicitly (in Martin’s case) and implicitly tied to the city, a sentiment similar to what Otsuji and Pennycook (2011) refer to as metrolingualism. Robert’s English – “colorful” and curious – “roams the street” and picks up diverse language practices and “modern things” it hears, integrating them into “its own mind.” Dre’s English is also modern, a “super modified” animal with the ability to “adapt to any environment on the block.” Robert, Dre, and Martin’s connections between their Englishes and their urban context speak to their translingual understanding of their language practices as interrelated and connected to the city’s diverse and shifting character.

“*My English asks for help and Appreciates it*”: Linguistic resilience

In the face of language ideologies and explicitly negative perceptions of their language practices, many students drew on metaphors of tripping and falling, but quickly getting back up, an image
that points to another element of a translingual sensibility: linguistic resilience. In her poem, excerpted in the sub-heading above, for example, Marie personifies her English as both in need of help, but also proactive in asking for assistance and appreciating the help that it gets. This sense of inner strength was present in several students’ poems, and demonstrates that despite their awareness of negative perceptions of their language practices, they push forward and persevere.

Lucia describes how her English “runs/Then trips and stumbles/and slows down.” Martin, too, describes his English in this way, writing, “Sometimes [my English] trips if it’s running on the street.” Nadia combines this metaphor of linguistic clumsiness with a personification of her English as someone on the receiving end of ridicule. She writes:

| My English makes people laugh when it speaks and the accent is mocking it (Nadia, “My English”)
| My English trips with its own self but that don’t stop it it keeps walking (Nadia, “My English”)

Despite their many trips and falls, students’ Englishes and Spanishes were described as having an inner resilience and strength. Nadia’s poem continues,

| My English trips many times but keeps going My Spanish will soon win a most improved medal till then my Spanish is only beautiful to me. (Catherine, “My Spanish”)

Catherine, too, describes her Spanish as resilient:

Though some students described their language practices as awkward and unable to walk without tripping and falling, the kind of resilience they ascribe to those same language practices
speaks to an important element of students’ translingual sensibilities: their strength and ability to get back up again when confronted with others’ negative perceptions of their languaging.

“If you ask me if my English is perfect, I will tell you/To stop asking me so many goddamn questions”: Transgression and resistance

Students’ writing demonstrated another important element of their translingual sensibility: their resistance to and transgression of ideologies that stigmatize their language practices. In Nia’s case in the subtitle, her response to her the “you” who asks if her English is “perfect” is direct and even hostile. Her response shuts down this hypothetical questioner, and empowers Nia to end this marginalizing line of inquiry. In other students’ poetry, there is similar resistance and – like Nia’s use of the word “goddamn” – linguistic risk-taking and transgression. This resistance and transgression could be read as a challenge to the very ideologies that stigmatize their language practices and attempt to erase the linguistic resilience, creativity, and cosmopolitanism seen in earlier excerpts from their poems.

One of the ways that students resisted such deficit perceptions of their language practices was by characterizing their Englishes as savvy and resistant to “rules.” Marie’s poem states this explicitly:

| My English does not follow rules of pronunciation. |
| My English is its own rule. |
| My English is its own world. |

(Returning to their poems, Robert and Dre describe their Englishes as slippery; they anticipate the kinds of “rules” that will tie them down and shift or “switch” in response: | My English does not follow rules |
| Of pronunciation |
| My English is its own rule. |
| My English is its own world. |

(Marie, “My English”)
My English is the wacka-mole arcade game. It pops up and goes back down. Always switching lanes. It comes when needed Leaves when it decides (Robert, “My English”)

My English is like a super modified animal that could adapt to any environment on the block. My English could be offered with a lot of slang And in school that order would be switched in Seconds (Dre, “My English”)

My English understands appropriate times My English is the wacka-mole arcade game It pops up and goes back down Always switching lanes It comes when needed Leaves when it decides

My English is like a super modified animal that could adapt to any environment on the block My English could be offered with a lot of slang And in school that order would be switched in Seconds

Martin, too, characterized his English as hard to pin down:

My English changes every day It’s alive just as you’re alive [...] My English can’t be defined by people Cause it’s ever growing. (Martin, “My English”)

The changing, growing nature of Martin’s English – and the shifting, adaptive nature of Robert and Dre’s Englishes – challenges ideologies that marginalize students’ language practices. In contrast to portrayals of young people of color as linguistically lacking, these students describe their language practices as too expansive, too quick, and too shrewd to be understood by a listener who hears them in this deficit way.

Some students in the class took up our invitation to integrate different language practices into their poems. Interestingly, the students who did so paired their translanguaging with language and ideas that suggest transgression. Though most students wrote their poems in a fairly “standard” way, some included translingual events that provide glimpses of the multivoiced nature of students’ linguistic repertoires.
Melissa, for example, included English practices that seemed to relate to her upbringing and her background. She writes,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My English is Bro, why you acting up?</th>
<th>My English is bro, why you acting up?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My English is from W. Fordham Rd,</td>
<td>My English is from W. Fordham Rd,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where I was raised at.</td>
<td>Where I was raised at. (Melissa, “My</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English”)</td>
<td>English”)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Directly following this stanza, Melissa uses the following metaphor:

| My English is the bomb that might explode while having a convo. | My English is the bomb that might explode while having a convo. (Melissa, “My English”) |

In addition to using words like “bro” and “convo” and grammar constructions like “why you acting up?” and “where I was raised at,” Melissa compares her English to a potentially explosive bomb. Melissa, a Spanish-English bilingual born and raised in the Bronx, relates her language practices to where she is from. There is also a connection between the kind of English she uses and a kind of volatility; there is unpredictability in her use of the word “might,” as though her English is poised on the brink of explosion.

Andrew, too, describes his English in a way that reveals an underlying aggression or explosiveness. In this more extended excerpt from his poem, we see glimpses of his different language practices:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My English rides or die</th>
<th>My English rides or die</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My English lies</td>
<td>My English lies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My English slowly kills my Spanish</td>
<td>My English slowly kills my Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My English would be confused</td>
<td>My English would be confused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and say “What the fuck you mean”</td>
<td>and say, “What the fuck you mean”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My English is lost in space</td>
<td>My English is lost in space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My English may be broken to you</td>
<td>My English may be broken to you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m proud of my English</td>
<td>I’m proud of my English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m proud because it’s who I am</td>
<td>I’m proud because it’s who I am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My English is me</td>
<td>My English is me (Andrew, “My English”)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The line “My English rides or die” connects his English to a hip-hop trope. To “ride or die” means sticking with someone through good and bad, even being willing to die for that person. This echo of hip-hop in Andrew’s English reveals the multivocality of his writing style and language practices. Andrew also takes a risk in his writing by including the lines, “My English would be confused/And say, ‘What the fuck you mean?’” With the inclusion of an expletive, Andrew is simultaneously transgressing the implicit rules of English class writing and imbuing his English with a kind of aggressive, no-nonsense attitude. Like Melissa’s English that asks, “bro, why you acting up?”, Andrew’s English interrogates the hypothetical source of its confusion by asking, “what the fuck you mean?” Despite some negative pronouncements about his English (that it “slowly kills” his Spanish; that it is “lost in space”), Andrew ends this excerpt by expressing pride in his English (“I’m proud of my English”) and explicitly linking that English to himself (“it’s who I am/My English is me”).

Anna’s poem contained a more extended translanguaging event. In the following excerpt, she uses both English and Spanish to describe her English:

Anna writes that her English is “good enough,” but still sometimes changes, and communicates to her audience that this contradiction “no es muy complicado” [is not very complicated]. For Anna, and other urban bilinguals like her, this element of her translingual sensibility – an understanding and awareness of her language practices as fluid and dynamic – renders this fact uncomplicated. However, in the line that follows, she anticipates her audience’s lack of understanding of this translingual understanding. Anna acknowledges the inevitable misunderstanding and pushes back against the very need for her audience to understand her. Her
use of unmarked translanguaging – her meshing of the two languages without translations or other accommodations – is as much a transgression as the blunt last line, “Doesn’t matter!” Both Anna’s medium and her message speak to her pride and her refusal to change her language practices to conform and make her ideas comprehensible to a monolingual audience.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

Despite the negative impact of oppressive, limiting ideologies ascribed by teachers and the school onto language-minoritized students, this chapter offers several important implications that point to positive directions for English classrooms. First, it was clear that students in Lauren’s classroom had high levels of linguistic awareness. They understood how their teachers, among others, saw and heard them, and picked up on the myriad and often covert ways that these interlocuters’ attitudes manifested in their attitudes toward and treatment of them. This consciousness, as has been shown in the large body of literature on language awareness (Clark et al., 1991; Fairclough, 1989; Wolfram, 1993; Alim, 2005), is a valuable tool that can be leveraged in students’ learning. Second, despite some students’ alignments with stigmatizing language ideologies, their talk and their writing reveal a translingual sensibility that leads to a sense of pride in their language practices and a willingness to push back against these ideologies. By leveraging this sensibility in the ELA classroom – through choices about text, careful and purposeful design of metalinguistic literacy activities, and explicit invitations to write drawing on students’ diverse, multivoiced idiolects – this transgressive spirit can be cultivated.

The critical class discussions and opportunity to write metalinguistic, translingual poetry – among other activities that took place over the course of the year – fostered the elements of students’ translingual sensibilities that enabled them to challenge negative perceptions of themselves as well as imagine new ways of languaging in the English classroom and beyond.
Oscar, a Dominican student designated an ELL, expressed this idea clearly:

I think [we] shouldn’t change our language practices because then it’s never gonna change. If we keep changing our language practices, everybody’s gonna keep thinking that we’re not educated – that the way we speak is not educated. So if we start, maybe, incorporating our language practices [into our writing], they gonna get, like, a different perspective. (Classroom transcript, 3/14/16)

Oscar acknowledges the deficit ideologies about his and his peers’ language practices (“everybody’s gonna keep thinking that we’re not educated”), an awareness and criticality that is integral to, as Alim (2005) puts it, understanding “the sociolinguistic order of things” (p.28). If students like Oscar can see what is often intentionally obscured, and then be apprenticed into a critical awareness of language and discourse through a critical translingual English curriculum, they might gain tools for change. Additionally, Oscar’s comment seems to suggest that despite his understanding that these deficit views of his languaging exist, he believes that he can change those views by incorporating his language practices into his writing. This action-oriented, hopeful element of his translingual sensibility is one that holds promise when imagining new ways of educating linguistically minoritized students in the English classroom.
Chapter 5

“They look at us like, ‘what are you saying?’”:
Struggling at the intersections of race and language

Introduction

As seen in in their metacommentary and poetry writing in the previous chapter, students held complex and contradictory notions of their own language practices. This chapter builds on this idea, adding a more explicitly racial dimension to the discussion of language ideologies. I begin by providing background on an approach to understanding how, as Alim and Smitherman (2012) put it, “we not only see race but we hear it too” (p.25). This approach, which Flores and Rosa (2015) call raciolinguistics, makes clear connections between language ideologies and processes of racialization, which account for phenomena ranging from linguistic profiling (Baugh, 2003) to anti-Ebonics (Delpit & Perry, 1998) and anti-bilingual education to the use of “mock Spanish” by White speakers (Hill, 1999) to the proliferation of stigmatizing classifications for bilingual Latinxs in school (Flores & Rosa, 2015).

After outlining a theory of raciolinguistics, as well as pedagogical approaches that can enable teachers and students take up a raciolinguistic lens, I return to Lauren’s classroom. As I did in chapter 4, I begin with an analysis of students’ metacommentary, namely their explicit talk around the intersections of language and race, and then turn to a classroom activity: student-generated role-play. Through these data, I illustrate the ways in which students voiced and enacted their understandings of the intersections of race and language and wrestled with the impact of such intersections on their subjectivities.
Overview of Findings

When coding my data, there were many moments that pointed to students’ awareness of the links between race and language. Students’ metacommentary revealed understandings of how their language practices were heard, as well as how indexically White ways of languaging were heard and hierarchized over their own. Though my I drew on such deductive codes as “raciolinguistic ideologies,” “talking White,” and “conflating race and language” in my initial read of the data, it was through the more emic approach of looking carefully at participants’ own words as they analyzed their lived experiences through this raciolinguistic framing that themes began to arise.

The theme I explore in detail in this chapter is an understanding of languaging as a performance. Students’ metacommentary illustrated their powerful understandings of how their ways of using language “marked” them and connected to their being racialized. Unable to language in ways that are “unmarked,” as idealized White, “native”-English speaking subjects are able, students articulated feelings of being policed and surveilled. Whether they were using language practices that came “naturally” to them or taking up those language practices they were told would gain them entry into academic and professional success (i.e.: White languaging), students’ metacommentary contained language that spoke to feelings of being watched and heard by an unsympathetic and judgmental audience.

I explore this idea first through students’ classroom talk and metacommentary, which revealed an understanding of their languaging – and they themselves – as subject to the twin processes of being seen and being heard in ways that racialized them. The constant subjection to judgment from White listening subjects leaves young speakers of color without the ability to language in ways that are unmarked, a reality that seemed to lead to their understanding of all languaging as a performance, one they participated whether or not they wanted to. I next turn to
a classroom activity that involved literal performances – student-generated role-plays – that further highlight students’ experiences of raciolinguistic ideologies. Through an analysis of these role-plays, I illustrate how students enacted their understandings of the performative nature of all languaging, particularly their awareness of and relationship to the White listening subject as audience.

Literature Review

Raciolinguistic ideologies

Raciolinguistic ideologies are those that “produce racialized speaking subjects who are constructed as linguistically deviant even when engaging in linguistic practices positioned as normative or innovative when produced by privileged white subjects” (Flores & Rosa, 2015, p.150). In other words, the ways in which speakers of color communicate – even if they are linguistically similar to the ways that White speakers communicate – will always be stigmatized because of larger racial ideologies mapped onto language. Flores and Rosa frame their discussion of raciolinguistic ideologies as being in “critical dialogue” with those who promote additive approaches to language education. Additive approaches are built upon the idea that certain language practices are “appropriate” in certain contexts, and that there is an objective set of practices – i.e.: “academic” language – that is appropriate for school. Proponents of additive approaches argue that students must be taught to “code switch” and use dominant varieties of English in order to be successful. Others argue for the (temporary) use of bi-/multilingual students’ home languages as “bridges” or “scaffolds” to “academic” English. These approaches, though certainly superior to “subtractive” approaches that explicitly stigmatize and degrade students’ language practices, miss a larger point. As Zentella (2007) succinctly puts it, “language is not the fundamental solution because it is not the fundamental problem” (p.36).
To take up a raciolinguistic lens means moving away from a focus on the *speaker* to a focus on the *listener*. This analytic turn rejects the notion that speakers of marginalized language practices are deficient or lack proficiency in a quantifiable language of power. Instead, it is how these speakers are *heard* that leads to their stigmatization in and out of school contexts. As Rosa and Flores (2015) write in their response to the so-called language gap (the idea that children growing up in economic poverty also suffer a kind of linguistic poverty that results in a “gap” between their linguistic abilities and those of children from more affluent backgrounds), these deficit framings are “not based on the empirical linguistic practices that emerge from the mouths of speaking subjects…but rather from the racially and socioeconomically stigmatizing language ideologies that orient the ears of listening subjects” (p.78).

To make this idea more concrete, I return to Jacqui’s metacommentary from chapter 4. During a classroom activity, another student, Ariana, was interviewing Jacqui about her language practices. Ariana asked Jacqui whether or not she felt “fluent” in all her language practices, and Jacqui responded:

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I feel fluent in all my language practices except for Spanish. Um, even my English, it’s not so fluent neither because I have a – like, sometimes Spanish will come out. Even though I’m not fluent in Spanish. Some of my words sound like they ‘bout to be in Spanish (Classroom transcript, May 6, 2016).
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In Jacqui’s words, we hear both her linguistic insecurity and her awareness of how she “sounds” to an outside listener. Her perceptions of her language practices – that she is “not so fluent” in either one – align with Rosa’s (2016) concept of languagelessness among Latinx in the US. Because Jacqui’s bilingualism does not align with monoglossic expectations of perfect, accent-less, “native”-like fluency, she has come to view herself as deficient in her own languages.

Though Jacqui’s bilingualism is viewed as incomplete, one can easily imagine her linguistic dexterity and bilingual abilities framed more positively if packaged in a different way.
(Whiter) body. In thinking about Jacqui’s perceived lack of fluency as tied to her accent (her “words sound like they ‘bout to be in Spanish”), it’s useful to recall New York City’s former mayor Michael Bloomberg’s use of Spanish, which he called upon when giving press conferences and public statements. Despite receiving some ridicule for his accent (there was even a fake Twitter account with the name Miguel Bloomito that mocked his Spanish), it is ludicrous to imagine Bloomberg’s Spanish hindering his life as a businessman or politician. Taking up a raciolinguistic lens means recognizing that Bloomberg’s Whiteness (as well as his maleness and his wealth, among other privileges) exempts him from the stigmatization that Jacqui is subjected to, despite her bilingual abilities.

*Pedagogical approaches that take up a raciolinguistic lens*

Rather than focus solely on teaching “standard” or “academic” forms of English, English classrooms must engage students in critical inquiry into language itself, “interrogating the societal reproduction of listening subject positions that continually perceive deficiency” (Rosa & Flores, 2015, p.79). This process requires explicit, transparent talk about language and the cultivation of students’ metalinguistic awareness. One approach to this process is Critical Language Awareness (Clark et. al., 1991; Fairclough, 1989; Wolfram, 1993; Alim, 2005), which “views educational institutions as designed to teach citizens about the current sociolinguistic order of things, without challenging that order, which is based largely on the ideology of the dominating group and their desire to maintain social control” (Alim, 2005, p.28). Pedagogically, this means teaching all students, but especially those who are “linguistically profiled and marginalized…how language is used and, importantly, how language can be used against them” (p.28). According to Clark et. al. (1991), Critical Language Awareness can “foster self-consciousness about how people are positioned in discourse” (p.46). When students gain a more
nuanced understanding of discourse through such heightened consciousness, they also engage in “emancipatory discourse,” talking back to and reclaiming that which is meant to silence them. The authors highlight several forms of emancipatory discourse, including “poetry or prose about themselves, drawing upon their own vernacular” and “practices of critical and oppositional reading, listening and viewing” (p.46-47).

Other scholars offer practical ways to foster metalinguistic awareness and emancipatory discourse, encouraging educators to “get a little sociolinguistic” (Paris, 2011, p.123) by explicitly utilizing students’ languages as the basis of study. Alim and Smitherman (2012) suggest that educators engage young people in sociolinguistic inquiry through the collection of data on, for example, linguistic profiling (Baugh, 2003). They write that by engaging in such inquiry, “Youth are not only thinking critically about language, but they are putting their knowledge to work for their communities by developing consciousness-raising campaigns” (p.188). Nero (2006) suggests that teachers of Caribbean English-speaking youth “Use dialect features and discourse patterns found in students’ speech and writings to discuss their appropriateness for various genres and audiences and to compare and contrast the rhetorical styles used in the home and school cultures” (p.509). Like Alim and Smitherman, Nero argues that critical metalinguistic awareness can help marginalized youth understand how language is connected to power.

Additionally, by teaching students to talk back to systems of power through modes like ethnography and critical research (Morrell, 2008; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Cammarota, 2007), teachers can address the access paradox (Janks, 2000) and help students challenge the system from within.

_A raciolinguistic emphasis in curriculum_
Over the course of the year, students in Lauren’s classroom engaged in a number of activities that aimed to raise their consciousness about raciolinguistic ideologies and elicit their metacommentary about the intersections of race and language in their lives. For example, students explored language practices often stigmatized in the US, such as AAVE (African American Vernacular English), Spanglish, and “slang.” Rather than simply “name” students’ languages for them (which, as Godley and Minicci (2008) point out, can be problematic, especially coming from a White teacher), and possibly reifying a “named languages” ideology (Otheguy, García & Reid, 2015), we provided students with texts that emphasized the role of ideology on perceptions of these language practices.

Students also inquired into the phrase “broken English,” using Amy Tan’s essay, “My Mother’s English,” among other texts, to discuss how different Englishes – especially those spoken with an “accent” by racialized speakers – are perceived. In July 2015, the summer before my project began, a 28-year-old African American woman named Sandra Bland was pulled over for a minor traffic violation, arrested, and later found dead in her jail cell. In addition to analyzing the obvious racial overtones of the case overall, students read several sociolinguists’ (Rymes, 2015; Holliday, Burdin, & Tyler, 2015) analyses of how Bland’s language practices contributed to the events surrounding her death and engaged in a Socratic Seminar, a classroom activity in which students themselves facilitate a small group conversation and share their ideas about a text. Lastly, students analyzed comedian Larry Wilmore’s speech at President Obama’s Correspondents Dinner, which included language practices typically associated with Black languaging. This textual analysis led students through an exploration of topics ranging from President Obama’s languaging (Alim & Smitherman, 2012) to the use of the n-word in majority White spaces.
Each of these activities and inquiries brought forth rich metacommentary in which students revealed high levels of awareness about the intersections of race and language. Our conversations – and the writing and other text production that emerged from these conversations – centered the listener and the ideologies that influence the listener, rather than the speakers, particularly speakers of color. In what follows, I analyze students’ metacommentary and their creation of role-plays to highlight their understandings of raciolinguistic realities and, importantly, their attempts to articulate the impact of those realities on their subjectivities.

Findings
As outlined previously, our curriculum design provided students with opportunities to engage with texts about different language practices, with a particular focus on the ways those practices intersect with race. Students watched clips from comedians Key and Peele’s raciolinguistically adept sketch comedy show, read blog posts about “AAVE,” “Spanglish,” and “standard” English, listened to Jamila Lysicott’s spoken word poem, “Three Ways to Speak English,” read Amy Tan’s essay on her mother’s Chinese-inflected English practices, and reflected on the ways their own language practices were perceived (and racialized) by different “listeners” in their lives. In encounters with these different texts and ideas, students demonstrated nuanced understandings of how language practices are connected with racializing processes that equate non-White speakers with those practices considered deficient. In what follows, I draw on students’ metacommentary to outline how these nuanced understandings came to be organized around the idea that all languaging is a kind of performance, one that students were enlisted in with or without their consent.

“They look at us like, ‘what are you saying?’”: Articulating the dual processes of racialization
In this first excerpt from students’ classroom talk, Ariana, Jacqui, and Maya discuss their awareness of and feelings about being “judged” for their language practices. The excerpt starts with Ariana sharing an anecdote from her weekend “in the city.” Though these students themselves lived in the Bronx, a borough of New York City, for them (and for many outer borough residents) “in the city” referred to Manhattan:

Ariana: Um, people do discriminate against other people’s languages, because if you talk slang – alright, like I was in the city on Saturday and people were just looking at me and my friends, like looked at us weird.
Lauren: So you think they were judging your language practices –
A: Yeah, cause we was loud and laughing, so we was just like –
L: And do you think – did you make any judgments about their language practices?
A: They were like – they were using the same [language] we do but [in] like fancier terms, like…they look at us like, ‘what are you saying?’ But we’re saying the same thing as they are just in shorter terms.
Jacqui: It depends like…it depends where you are, though. Cause let’s say you’re in the Bronx and you talk slang, it’s not like people look at you funny. But if you’re around a lot of grown ups and in the city and stuff –
Maya: If you’re around White people, just say it. It’s like basically if you use slang or a lot of AAVE then basically that’s when people start judging you. If you don’t, then you don’t really…feel the judgment (Classroom transcript, 2/29/16).

All three students’ descriptions of these moments of raciolinguistic awareness point to an almost physical discomfort they feel in spaces where they perceive their language practices as judged. As Maya put it, they “feel the judgment” when they use certain language practices, even if those ways of speaking are – as Ariana noted – nearly the same as those being used by those doing the judging. One can also read this sense of bodily discomfort in Ariana and Jacqui’s descriptions of their experiences “in the city.” As seen in the bolded phrases in the excerpt above, both young women link, through their wording, being “looked at” with being “heard.” This connection illustrates the implicit link between being seen and heard that is key to the process of racialization. As Ariana aptly put it, the people in the city “look at us like, ‘what are you saying?’” In her retelling of this moment, we can hear her discomfort with being “on stage,”
subjected to the simultaneous White gaze and White listening, both of which are integral to the reification of raciolinguistic ideologies.

Similarly, when responding to a question posed by Lauren about whether teachers hold discriminatory attitudes towards students’ language practices, Demisha responded with this recollection of being judged during a visit the school she attended prior to SBHS:

[When] I went back to my old school, they was like, the way you used to talk I thought you was gonna have like four kids, be in a shelter and stuff. They [were] discriminating because of the way I used to talk (Classroom transcript, 3/8/16).

Here Demisha connected her teacher’s racialized assessment of her to her ways of languaging. In Demisha’s retelling, we hear her belief that the way she “used to talk” was the reason her teacher linked her future to that of a mother of multiple children in a shelter. This image brings up a number of ideologically infused qualities and ideas – poverty, homelessness, among others – that are also indexically tied to race, particularly to poor, urban African Americans. For her teacher, hearing Demisha talk and seeing her as Black enlisted Demisha in a highly racialized – and highly offensive – performance of her future, one that she rightly identified as discriminatory.

A year older than most of her classmates (she was a senior retaking 11th grade English in order to pass the Regents and graduate), Faith was mature and self-assured. She often referred to herself as a poet, and shared her poems with the class when she felt they resonated with a particular discussion or topic. Of all of Lauren’s students, she was perhaps the most adept at critiquing the raciolinguistic ideologies we explored over the course of the year. At times, she questioned calls to “switch” her language practices and pushed against White ways of languaging she knew were expected of her in school and beyond. However, Faith also saw her own languaging as more sophisticated than her peers’, and took pride in sounding “different.” In
In this regard, I return to an excerpt of Faith’s metacommentary that I discussed in chapter 3, in which articulates the reality that her language practices put her on the receiving end of judgment:

**Faith**: So, no shade, but I think there’s some people in the world that are very ignorant towards those people who have high vocabulary standards, in which we are able to articulate ourselves. For example, like I’m doing right now. They feel like, um, she’s using these words and she has no idea what they mean and that’s a wrong judgment. Like I said, no shade.

**Lauren**: Why do you think people would assume you don’t understand the words you’re using?

**F**: Cause I use a lot of them. And if you look at me as a young Latina, brown, from the South Bronx – I’m from Cypress...[trails off]. (Classroom transcript, 3/14/16)

Faith starts her commentary here with a hedge, a communicative strategy of “‘qualification and toning-down of utterances and statements in order to reduce the riskiness of what one says.’ The motivation for their use is given as ‘mitigation of what may otherwise seem to forceful’ and ‘politeness or respect to strangers and superiors’” (Dictionary of Stylistics, as cited in Markkanen & Schröder, 1992). Her use of the phrase “no shade” (or “no offense”) could be read as softening a comment that sounds somewhat cocky; she identifies herself as a speaker whose “high vocabulary standards” are judged by “people in the world who are ignorant.” When Lauren pushed Faith to explain why such listeners might assume she does not understand the “high vocabulary” she uses, Faith provides an explicit raciolinguistic explanation: being young, brown, and Latina in the South Bronx automatically signals that she cannot language in these (White) ways.

**White language and performance**

In each of Lauren’s ELA classrooms, discussions that related to the intersections of race and language often contained at least one allusion to or performance of what I refer to as “White girl speak.” A quick Google search of the term “White girl speak” results in links to websites, blog posts, and videos with titles like “25 Terms All Basic White Girls Say” and “How to Talk like a
White Girl.” This large Internet presence and amount of metacommentary around White girl speak was mirrored in Lauren’s classrooms. In most cases, students performed bits of White girl speak (through the use of “up-speak,” or the raising of one’s voice at the end of a sentence, the frequent use of the word “like,” and the repetition of the phrase, “oh my GOD”) when discussion turned to the idea of “talking White.” In the moments when Lauren asked students to talk about these stylized performances, what emerged was the sense that students associated White languaging with stereotypes of White people, particularly White girls. We see this in the exchange between Lauren and Oliver:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oliver:</th>
<th>[To Lauren] Most of y’all – most White people…talk the same. [Laughter from the class.]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L:</td>
<td>All White people talk the same way?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O:</td>
<td>No, I never said all of them. Basically I heard a lot of them in one group and they talk – it’s annoying to me, “like…” [More laughter from the group.] –</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L:</td>
<td>Can you give me an example?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O:</td>
<td>Like, heyyyy, like. [This evokes a lot of laughter.] It’s like they talk like – I don’t know</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In a different class, during a discussion about whether there is such a thing as “talking White,” Faith drew on Kim Kardashian (whose way of languaging has been tied to another trope of White girl speak, “vocal fry”) to describe how some of her peers “try” to talk:

| Sometimes I | [talk White]. There’s two girls in school who try to sound like Kim Kardashian, so to, like, mock them? I’m like, “oh my GOD, like” [lots of laughter]. I’m just doing it to make fun of them (Classroom transcript, 12/15/15). |

In these two examples, Oliver and Faith describe the ways that White people talk through stylized, stereotypical performances of White girl speak. I view students’ connections between White languaging and White girl speak as indicative of students’ views of White languaging as inherently performed and stereotypical. White languaging is used to mock, it is used by pop

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6 Interestingly, this Google search also resulted in links to YouTube videos with titles like “White girl speaks Hindi,” “White girl that speaks Yoruba fluently – Amazing” and “White girl speaks awesome Korean.” It is in keeping with a raciolinguistic framing that White girls are praised on sites like YouTube for engaging in language practices other than English (and especially with language practices not associated with Whiteness) while non-White speakers’ language practices (English and others) are consistently policed and judged.
Students also grappled with their inability to language in “unmarked” ways in metacommentary about their writing. As part of the final unit of the year, students were grouped and assigned an author whose writing challenged monoglossic, “standard” forms of writing. These authors helped students explore “risky” rhetorical and linguistic choices and served as models for the kind of translingual writing they themselves would attempt in their college essays. Faith’s group had been assigned Junot Díaz, a Dominican-American author whose translingual writing (and extensive metacommentary about his writing choices) made him an ideal model for our work. In an introductory discussion about linguistic choices in writing, Lauren provided each group with a quote from its assigned author about that author’s writing process. She gave Faith’s group the following quote from Díaz: “I don’t explain cultural things with italics or with exclamation or with side bars or asides. I was aggressive about that because I had so many negative models, so many Latinos and Black writers who are writing for White audiences, who are not writing to their own people” (from interview with Céspedes & Torres-Saillant, 2002). In discussion about the quote, Faith said:

I really do relate to the last quote though. Cause when you read my poetry, even my own family, like my mother or my cousin, they feel like…they can’t relate. Not in the sense that they don’t know what I’m talking about, but…they feel like my writing is…White. Like I read it to my mom and she sits there, for a good like two minutes after, like, I guess, analyzing everything, and she goes, “why you talk like that? You not writing an essay.” And that’s – that’s where I’m most comfortable, writing poetry. There’s some poems where I have curses and it comes off as – people could read it and think it’s a rap, like that’s how it comes, but – I relate to that. Cause even, there’s people who get offended, like “oh, you’re not writing to us, you can’t relate to us.” (Classroom transcript, 4/11/16)

Faith’s metacommentary here illustrates the complex positionality of speakers and writers of color, especially those whose language practices do not always align with the indexical
relationships between language practices and race. Upon reading her poetry, Faith says that her mother and cousin label her writing as “White” because it reads like “an essay.” Though Faith also says that some of the language she uses in her poetry does, in fact, align with her audience’s raciolinguistic expectations of her (in that it has curses and reads like a rap), it is clear that she takes pride in those ways of languaging (characterized by her family as “White”) that set her apart.

It is interesting to read Faith’s comment here next to an earlier comments she made about White girl speak. As stated previously, she made the following comment about this performative language practice:

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Sometimes I [talk White]. There’s two girls in school who try to sound like Kim Kardashian, so to, like, mock them? I’m like, “oh my GOD, like” [lots of laughter]. I’m just doing it to make fun of them (Transcript, 12/15/15).
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The way Faith is “talking White” here is different from her description of her poetry, which her family also labels as “White.” Though her use of White girl speak is clearly mocking (she uses it to make fun of girls in the school who play at sounding like Kim Kardashian), she describes her use of White languaging in her poetry as her voice, her way of expressing herself outside the expectations of an audience – White or non-White. Though she makes fun of those who “try to” sound like White girls, and thus take up an inauthentic, performative voice, her use of those language practices in her poetry that are ideologically linked to Whiteness (“high vocabulary,” “essay”-like language) is a point of pride, a feature that defines her writing and her identity. Though she does write poetry that is more like rap, she also explores those language practices that are not expected of a “young Latina, brown, from the South Bronx.” For Faith, her voice crosses raciolinguistic boundaries, enabling her to use different language practices (both those associated with Whiteness and those associated with “her people”) in different ways to
different effects. Her metacommentary here reveals this complexity as well as the limiting nature of raciolinguistic ideologies that aim to segregate and essentialize her language and literacy practices as well as her identity.

“Why should you care?”: Grappling with the White listening subject as audience

It is clear from the metacommentary discussed thus far that students in Lauren’s classes understood raciolinguistic realities and could articulate connections between the ways they used language and racialized perceptions of them in the eyes (and ears) of White listeners. In this way, students were always “on stage,” constantly considering their ways of languaging in terms of this audience of White listening subjects. The concept of audience is particularly important when thinking about language and literacy classrooms. Because language is ostensibly the focus of such spaces, students’ ways of languaging are often highly judged and policed. Students seemed to have an inherent understanding of this reality, and expressed their complex relationship to the White listening subject as audience, especially in the context of school.

When discussing Sandra Bland, the African American woman who was pulled over and arrested for a traffic violation and later found dead in her jail cell, and the intersections of race and language present in her case, Lauren posed the question of whether or not Bland should have changed her language practices in her interaction with the police officer who pulled her over. Students had mixed responses. Some expressed sadness at what happened and wondered if a more “appropriate” way of talking and behaving with authority might have saved her life. Others said that it was the responsibility of police, not civilians like Bland, to act appropriately in such situations, and that even talking about Bland’s languaging was blaming the victim. Still others, like Dre, struggled with the very idea of “changing” one’s language practices, drawing a connection to his own experiences in school:
Sometimes it gets hard to change your language practices. Like when I’m at school, sometimes I wanna ask a teacher, and, like, I have to think. I’m so used to saying “yo” to get someone’s attention instead of, like, “excuse me” or, like, “sir” or “ma’am.” It can be hard to switch. Like if you’re used to speaking a certain way and someone asks you to change it? I’d be upset. You don’t wanna change the way you talk to be like everybody else. You wanna be you. (Classroom transcript, 3/10/16).

Dre’s comment highlights his understanding of what kind of language is “appropriate” in school (i.e.: the use of “excuse me” instead of “yo”) as well as the difficulty inherent in taking up such language practices. To “switch” or change your language practices in ways that align with those expected of you in school (or in Bland’s case, in interactions with police) is no easy thing; it means tacitly accepting the negative perceptions of one’s “authentic” language practices, ceding to the White listening subject’s authority, and ultimately becoming “like everybody else.”

In his argument against code switching, Young (2009) relates the concept to segregation in the Jim Crow South. Through seemingly benign approaches like “translating” Black English or Spanglish to “standard English,” he argues, educators teach young people of color to segregate their language practices, to keep them “separate but equal” in different physical locations (“home” language there, “school” language here). In this way, code switching reifies the racial and linguistic ideologies inherent to such separation. As Young puts it, “to require folks to parse out the parts of their dialect that are standard and attempt to codify those into a form of acceptable public expression and then to parse the parts of their speech and writing that are ‘nonstandard’ and codify those into a form of private, informal expression is both illogical and profoundly problematic” (p.62). Though Dre expresses an understanding of the White listening subject’s expectation that he leave his “non-standard” talk outside and take up “standard” or “appropriate” talk inside, his commentary reveals the problematic nature of such a linguistic “switch” as well as the ways in which such switching can strip young people of color of being themselves.
David expressed a similar sentiment and a similar grappling with the White listening subject as audience. In April 2016, Larry Wilmore gave a speech at President Obama’s last Correspondents Dinner. In his speech, Wilmore, who is known for both his work as a correspondent on “The Daily Show” and as host of his own show, “The Nightly Show,” used his trademark biting humor and incisive commentary about race in the US both to rib the establishment (including some taboo remarks about Republicans in the audience) and honor Obama’s status as the first Black president. Though Wilmore’s speech contained several controversial moments, none was more discussed – and more maligned – than his use of the n-word when addressing President Obama. The following excerpt comes from the end of his speech:

When I was a kid, I lived in a country where people couldn’t accept a Black quarterback. Now think about that. A Black man was thought by his mere color not good enough to lead a football team — and now, to live in your time, Mr. President, when a Black man can lead the entire free world. Words alone do me no justice. So, Mr. President, if I’m going to keep it a hundred: Yo, Barry, you did it, my n—. You did it. (Transcript, The Washington Post)

At the time, students in Lauren’s class were at work on their college essays, which we hoped would contain evidence of students’ integration of their different language practices. A major point of emphasis in this project was the concept of audience: who were the potential readers of students’ college essays? What did the reality of the readership mean for their translingual writing choices? Though we did not use this language with students, we had in-depth discussions about whether or not they would accommodate their reader, who would be – no matter who the actual human reader was – a White listening subject. Lauren and I saw Wilmore’s speech and its subsequent treatment in the media as an opportunity to explore this idea, and to delve into how Wilmore the writer had (or had not) accommodated his mostly White audience. The class watched a video of Wilmore’s speech, read the transcript, and listened to an...
Interview with Wilmore on Terri Gross’s National Public Radio show, “Fresh Air,” during which he engaged in metacommentary about the choices he made in the speech. In a subsequent discussion, Lauren asked students how Wilmore’s audience might have misconstrued the end of his speech. David responded:

David: Maybe like, he wasn’t really – he was trying to make the audience feel a little uncomfortable. Just make them feel uncomfortable, right, like just because I’m a Black man doesn’t mean I’m gonna follow what y’all think I should do.

Lauren: So what do you guys think, was it a good idea or a bad idea [to use the n-word in his speech]? Cause he’s getting a lot of criticism.

D: Why should you care? Like, right now what just popped into my head is…is, why should, like, as a Black person, right, like that’s my nationality, why should I really care what they – what White people gotta say? (Classroom transcript, 5/10/16)

In David’s comment, we see both his understanding of how Wilmore’s speech connected to his status as a Black man in a mostly White space and his own resistance to his potential White reader/audience. David read Wilmore’s use of the n-word (and his overall use of a Black speech style) as a purposeful act of defiance, his way of using the platform to make the audience “a little uncomfortable.” David seemed to understand that Black ways of languaging made others, especially White people, uncomfortable or even fearful, and Wilmore’s use of such languaging spurred David’s question of why Black people should care about what White people have to say. David, as both a writer and a young Black man in the US, grappled with the very idea of accommodating a White listening subject (here understood as a literal White audience).

Though I did not get a chance to ask David about it, his choice of the word “nationality” when discussing his Blackness is an interesting one. Perhaps it imbues his racial identity with the kind of significance and weight usually associated with the word “nationality.” Perhaps he did not have experience talking explicitly about his Blackness in the classroom, and thus lacked a way of articulating its role in his personhood. What was clear in the moment was the seriousness of David’s question, his genuine struggle with the complex issue of the White listening subject,
and his connection between acts of linguistic resistance and his sense of pride in his own Blackness.

Students’ understanding of the White listening subject as audience extended to their performances on school-based assessments. The linguistic skills held by language minoritized students are often overlooked in school, and those abilities that might be highly valued if present in different speakers are devalued and disregarded in Latinx speakers in particular (Orellana, 2009; Martínez, 2010; Rosa, 2015; Flores & Rosa, 2015). Rather than value their local ways of languaging in both English and Spanish, schools hold bilingual Latinx students to standards—often through State-mandated assessments—that render their ways of speaking deficient. In one conversation, Yessica highlighted this fact in her dismissal of New York State’s standardized Spanish Regents exam. Steven, an African American student who did not speak Spanish, chimed in:

Yessica: That’s why I don’t wanna take [the Spanish Regents]. Because it’s like the way they say things in Spanish is not the way I grew up saying it. So it’s like, they’re testing you based on another country that you don’t live in, that their language wouldn’t stick to you cause where you grew up it’s different.
Steven: Cause you be speakin’ that hood Spanish. That’s what it is. They don’t want you speakin’ hood Spanish (Classroom transcript, 4/13/16).

Both Yessica and Steven demonstrate an awareness of the bias inherent to tests like the Spanish Regents. In Yessica’s words, the test assesses her Spanish skills using as the model a kind of Spanish she did not grow up speaking. This Spanish—found in “another country you don’t live in”—is different from her own Spanish, which Steven diagnoses as “hood Spanish.” It is telling that both Yessica and Steven refer to the test itself and its potential “audience” with the nameless pronoun “they.” This was echoed in another student’s comment earlier in the year, made just days after students had taken the standardized English Language Arts Regents exam: “the test was talking White” (Classroom transcript, 2/10/16). This personification of standardized
exams – especially those that test students’ languaging against an ideological standard – speaks to the presence in students’ minds of a White listening subject as audience, one who is not only constantly watching and listening, but who also holds the power to fail them if their “hood” languaging is detected.

“Society is what makes you”: Enacting raciolinguistic realities through role-play

Lauren and I designed activities in which students created and performed role-plays at several different points in the school year. Each time, we first engaged students in a discussion around a big question or idea that related to our larger inquiry into language. Once students had explored this question or idea through discussion and engagement with different texts, they were asked to “answer” the question in a short scene. Our rationale for the use of role-play was twofold. First and foremost, it resulted in active participation from students, even from those who were not often (visibly) engaged. Each time students created and performed their role-plays, we were excited by students’ enthusiasm and impressed by their creativity and thoughtfulness. Second, role-play was methodologically aligned with both my theoretical framework and our overall approach to the class. Through their role-plays, students drew on their translingual sensibilities to create heteroglossic texts that highlighted their metalinguistic awareness and brought forth their multiple voices and ideologies regarding language.

In her multi-sited ethnography of urban drama classrooms, Kathleen Gallagher (2014) writes that the goal of such classrooms “is [to be] similar to Foucault’s description of a space that is both a representation of the real but also a contestation of it” (p.120). For our students, their role-plays – which centered on every-day events – enabled them to act out the ways in which linguistic interaction and ideology shaped their lived experiences. At the same time, as the creators of these performed texts, students could make new meaning of such events, authoring
their own understandings of the role of language in their lives. Through their performances, students were also able to play with representations of their own subjectivities. This is particularly important in the classroom context, which is often a space that reifies deficit perceptions of students. Role-plays make space for students to grapple with these perceptions in “safe” ways; by putting on a character, students can be simultaneously close to and distanced from the vulnerability that comes with identity exploration. As Gallagher puts it, “Even though the social masks of schooling can be constraining and difficult for students, what they enjoy about drama is the play between so called fiction and reality, the play between an intentional performance and a social one” (p.122-123).

The descriptions and transcripts of the three performances that follow draw on similar themes that emerged from students’ metacommentary: an understanding of the dual racialization processes of being “seen” and “heard,” White languaging as performance, and an awareness of and grappling with the White listening subject as audience. In each of the performances, students’ characters grapple with the ways their own “authentic” language practices are heard by White listening subjects (both “real” – as enacted by students playing White characters – and hypothetical). As students enacted the raciolinguistic ideologies at play in their lives, they also enacted the ways that such ideologies shaped their subjectivities. Though the role-plays were light and often very funny, within them we can see students’ understandings of raciolinguistic realities and their feelings of being “on stage,” simultaneously heard and seen by an audience of White listening subjects.

*Role-play #1: The college interview*

For this particular role-play, students were asked to create a scene that demonstrated instances in which they navigated different language practices in different parts of their lives. In preparation
for creating this role-play, students watched several videos by Canadian YouTube star Lilly Singh, otherwise known as “Superwoman.” Singh, whose family is from India, artfully uses her different language practices to create clever and humorous videos that illustrate her cultural and linguistic flexibility and awareness. Students discussed the ways that Singh used her language practices – from her use of accent and slang to her considerations (or lack there of) for different audiences – and were then asked to create role-plays that showed the various ways they themselves navigated their own language practices.

The role-play featured here was created and performed by Eric, Frank, and Eddy. When students chose their groups, Lauren was concerned that this particular trio might not stay on task long enough to complete the assignment; the three young men were good friends and not the most diligent students in the class. When it came time for them to perform, it was clear that they had not planned out much more than the basic skeleton of the role-play, and instead engaged in improvisation. Through this improvisation, power dynamics emerged that shed light on how these students understood the role of the White listening subject in their lives, even when imagined in humorous ways. The scene began with Eric and Frank standing in front of the class while Eddy remained seated. When Lauren asked Eddy – very much the class clown – why he wasn’t in the scene, he jokingly replied, “I’m at my desk, yo!” Lauren laughed and asked the group to give the class some context for their scene. Eric told us that he and Frank were friends who run into one another and talk briefly before Eric’s character goes in for a college interview with Eddy, who played the interviewer. Below is the transcript of the group’s role-play, in full:

| Eric: Yo, what’s good, bro?  |
| Frank: Doin’ good, bro.    |
| E: Chillin’, chillin’?    |
| F: Yeah.                  |
| E: Yo, I haven’t seen you in a minute, bro, what’s happening? Aight, I’m-a holla at you homie. I got this college interview. Feel me? |
F: Yeah. [They part ways and Eric walks back to the table where Eddy sits.]
Eddy: Hello there, Eric.
E: Hello, how are you sir?
Eddy: Very good, very good. Why would you like to attend Harvard University?
E: I feel like it’s a good college for me. I’m trying to better myself, get myself out there.
Eddy: You play basketball?
E: No, football.
Eddy: Football? OK. What’s your GPA?
E: 4.0.
Eddy: 4.0, are you sure?
E: I’m positive.
Eddy: Do you have any records to show this?
E: Yeah.
Eddy: OK. So what are your strengths? What do you do?
E: Well, I just told you –
Eddy: Your strengths in school, bud. [Lots of laughter from the class at Eddy’s use of the word “bud”.
E: I mean –
Eddy: So do you rap?
E: No, sir.
Eddy: What is your nationality? [Pause. Eric looks at Lauren a little pleadingly, as if to say, “Can we stop now?” Lauren tells them they can wrap up their skit and the class applauds.] (Classroom transcript + field notes, 4/7/16)

There are several notable elements present in this scene. First, it is clear that the group wanted to show the kind of linguistic shift that occurs when Eric is talking to his friend versus the college interviewer. Not only was this shift clear in his word choice and way of speaking; it was visible in his body. He greeted Frank with a complicated handshake and was physically loose and expressive as he spoke. When he entered Eddy’s “office,” both his language and his body were different; he shook Eddy’s hand very “professionally,” sat down stiffly in his seat, and did not seem as physically comfortable as he had “outside.” Because the group’s role-play was improvised, it was not clear whether Eric’s discomfort was part of the skit or an actual linguistic and physical response to the scenario.

Also interesting to note is the choice of context. The group did not choose just any college, but Harvard University, arguably the most prestigious college in the country. The choice
might have been, at least in part, an allusion to Lauren, who had attended Harvard as an undergraduate, but it also reveals students’ understanding of the school’s status and requisite selectiveness. As we can see from the kinds of questions Eddy asked Eric, the interview process was not conversational, relaxed, or even particularly personal. Instead of building off of Eric’s comment about why he wanted to attend Harvard (to “better himself” and “get himself out there”), Eddy asks a seemingly unrelated question about whether or not Eric played basketball. When Eric responds that he does not, Eddy inquires into his GPA (which also reveals students’ awareness of context; though most colleges utilize GPAs, SBHS grades students with percentage grades – i.e.: a student would see an 85% on his report card, not a 3.0). Eric tells him he has a 4.0 and Eddy immediately asks if he is sure, and if he has “records to show this.” This sets off a series of questions that sound more like an interrogation than an interview, from more stereotypical questions (“do you rap?”) to those that may have euphemistically alluded to Eric’s race (“what’s your nationality?”). At this last question, Eric grew visibly more uncomfortable and Lauren allowed the group to end the scene.

Eddy’s performance of the Harvard interviewer and Eric’s responses lend insight into students’ understandings of White languaging and White listeners. Though Eric’s languaging and comportment were seemingly aligned with the context (as seen in the clear linguistic shift from his interaction with his friend outside the interview space), he was nevertheless subjected to a kind of examination. The questions Eddy asked Eric were stereotypically linked to his race (allusions to basketball and rapping), and his interrogation of Eric’s perfect GPA reveals a deeper suspicion about Eric’s rightful place at an elite institution like Harvard. Though the role-play was very funny (students especially liked Eddy’s performance of the interviewer, whose tone and choice of words like “bud” indexed an older, White professional), it demonstrates that
these three students did not see the college interview as an opportunity to get to know the school or show the interviewer how qualified they were. It was a highly monitored performance, and even when they languaged and styled themselves in ways that aligned with the White listening subject’s expectations, they were still subjected to (barely) coded processes of racialization.

**Role-play #2: The job interview**

In preparation for this second role-play activity, students discussed and read texts that related to the question, “What is the relationship between the language practices we use and the context we’re in?” Though many students set their role-plays in the school or classroom, others drew on out-of-school settings where they saw the impact of their different language practices on a given context. Like Eddy, Eric, and Frank above, one group of students created a role-play around an interview, this time for a job. When the scene began, Christina was the only employee seated in front of her potential boss. The student playing the boss sat on one side of three desks students had placed side by side to mimic a longer more “corporate” desk and asked Christina questions. As he did so he took on a deeper, more “professional” way of speaking and sat very straight and tall in his chair. Christina took on a “professional” and “formal” manner, very much “acting the part:” she answered the boss’s questions quietly and sat with her legs crossed and her hands folded neatly in her lap. A few seconds into the role-play, Maya interrupted the interview, barging onto the scene and loudly apologizing for her lateness. Both Christina and the student playing the boss acted taken aback, and the interview continued, with both students answering the interviewer’s questions in what they intended to be opposite embodiments and ways of languaging. Though I was not yet audio recording at this point in the year, I noted the following in my field notes:

> The interview skit was particularly effective because Maya really committed. She walked into...
the skit and said “hello,” but with an inflection that I think was supposed to sound like Tyler Perry’s character Madea (it sounded like “hellerrrr”). She introduced herself by saying, “my name is Shawneesha,” which elicited a lot of laughter from the class. She continued to talk using an exaggerated form of what one might call AAVE. She was also considerably more forthright than Christina in her rationale for why she wanted the job, at one point saying, “yo, I want this job cause I need the money.” Students in the class seemed highly entertained, and continued to talk about the skit after it was over.

When debriefing the skits, students reflected on what they saw. One student said that the way Maya talked was “funny.” Another student commented that she thought Maya’s character should’ve gotten the job, and that her take-away from the skit was, “be yourself, don’t be fake” (implying that Maya’s character was more real than Christina’s). This led Lauren to ask, “How do you know Christina wasn’t naturally professional?” The student laughed, and other students in the class made side comments about how this was not the case, and that Christina’s character was putting something on by talking the way she did (Field notes, 10/2/15).

In this role-play, and students’ reactions to it, we see different responses to the understood raciolinguistic reality that in the “real world,” certain ways of languaging – those that align with the expectations of the White listening subject – are deemed appropriate in particular contexts. The group’s enactment of a job interview illustrates many allusions to what Fairclough (1989) calls “ideological common sense”: the male student playing the interviewer sat alone behind his desk in front of the two female students being interviewed. He asked the questions and expected answers. His language was “formal” and “professional,” Christina matched his tone, and Maya’s Shawneesha, who was performed as a particular archetype of a Black woman (what one student referred to as “ratchet”) was portrayed as “inappropriate” for the setting.

Though the role-play could be read as a straightforward illustration (albeit stylized and exaggerated) of a raciolinguistic truth, students’ reactions to it point to something deeper. Though Christina’s character played the role of the good, competent, “appropriate” interviewee, the one who would, commonsensically, get the job, students read her as inauthentic and “fake.” Maya’s character, on the other hand, was “herself,” and, according to students, should have been the recipient of the job offer, despite the fact that her language practices clashed with the
interview context. It seemed that in order for a person like Christina to talk and behave in these (White) ways, she would have to be acting, performing an identity not authentic to her. This could point to an inherent sense that those ways of languaging (and comporting oneself) associated with Whiteness were also associated with disingenuousness. Though Maya’s stylized performance of Blackness might have garnered negative perceptions from a White listening subject (due to its indexical relationship to other racialized stigmas, such as “ghetto,” uneducated, low-class, etc.), her “realness” and her refusal to adapt her language practices to align with the context was something students in class seemed to respect.

*Role-play #3: The family argument*

Unlike the first two scenes, this role-play was set in the home, apart from any actual White listeners. However, as we will see, students’ performances reveal that even out of earshot of White listening subjects, raciolinguistic ideologies infiltrate even potentially safe spaces like the home. In this performance, by Jania, who played a mother, Janet, who played her sister, and Tanisha and Alfredo who played Jania’s children, we see how language becomes intertwined with such racialized concepts as “the ghetto” in ways that impact the subjectivities and lived experiences of speakers of color. The scene begins with Tanisha’s character talking to her mother:

| Tanisha: Yo, ma, did you –  
| Jania: Excuse me?  
| T: [Sighs and speaks in an exaggerated and over-enunciated style] Mother, did you cook today?  
| J: Oh, yes I did. I made a shepherd’s pie. [Jania speaks in a similarly stylized, formal way, over-enunciating her words. Lots of laughter from the class.]  
| Alfredo: When’s Auntie coming?  
| J: Like 5 minutes. [Janet enters the scene.]  
| Janet: Yo, what’s up sis? How you been?  
| J: Don’t come in here with that nonsense. Janet: What nonsense? Why you actin’ like you don’t know nobody?  
| T: Come on, Auntie. [Tanisha and Janet walk away as if going to another room.] Yo, she bugged. |
She act like she didn’t come from this background. She act like she too high-class for us.
Jania: She think cause she got out the ghetto that she better than everybody.
T: [In a stylized, formal way that mimics and mocks Jania’s] “Shepherd’s pie.” Like, gimme some fried chicken what are you doin’? [Lots of laughter from the class.]
A: Hey Ma, Tanisha’s talkin’ ghetto over here.
J: [Quietly, under her breath] This child here. Excuse me! Why are you teaching my daughter this slang?
T: She’s not teaching me slang. It’s our generation!
J: No it’s not. I brought you outta that to better yourself.
Janet: You act like just cause you moved out the ‘hood that you better than everybody. At the end of the day we came out the same house.
J: OK, you right, we came out the same house, but I bettered myself moving out of that. Do I want my child raised around guns and drugs? [This elicits lots of laughter from the class.]
T: It’s a language!
J: But it’s a bad one!
Janet: At the end of the day, though, you worried about what society think about you.
J: Because society is what makes you. [Class erupts with “ooohhh” and “wowwwww!” They applaud loudly, and there is praise for the performance.] (Classroom transcript + field notes, April 7, 2016)

This group’s role-play highlights the kind of conflict that can emerge around language, even within one family. It also highlights the ways in which choices about language come to index choices about particular speakers’ identities and worldviews. Jania’s character draws a straight line from the “nonsense” that her sister and daughter are speaking to the “ghetto” or “hood” lifestyle she moved her family away from. The mother sees “getting out the ghetto” as “bettering yourself,” and “bettering yourself” means leaving behind the “nonsense” language practices associated with the “ghetto.” For her sister and her daughter, this is an act of betrayal. Their language practices are part of both Tanisha’s character’s youthful “generation” and Janet’s character’s identity as someone who remembers where she came from and doesn’t care what “society” thinks of her. Jania’s character’s physical move away from the “ghetto,” paired with her desire to keep “the ghetto” out of her house by forcing its language out of her house, results in Janet’s assertion that Jania has forgotten who she is.
In this role-play we see the complex interplay of raciolinguistic ideologies and the identities of speakers of color. The fact that actual White listeners are not present is beside the point; “society” – a word so often used to represent the multifaceted machinery that reifies power structures – is the driving force behind the choices people make about their language practices. Just like “guns and drugs,” the language Jania’s character associates with guns and drugs – a “bad,” “ghetto” language – is dangerous enough to catalyze both a physical and personal distancing, even if it puts a rift between her and her family. Though students in the audience laughed at Jania’s performance of the “guns and drugs” line (she said it with a over-the-top, stereotypically White stylization), their reaction to Jania’s final assertion, that “society is what makes you,” garnered what seemed to be earnest praise. This praise was clearly related to the performances themselves, which were excellent, but also, perhaps, to the resonance and truth the scene contained for students.

Discussion and Conclusion

The data explored in this chapter point to several important take-aways. First, students’ metacommentary and classroom role-play reveal high levels of awareness of the raciolinguistic ideologies at work in their lives both in and out of school. Students articulated the complex process of racialization that occurs as they are simultaneously seen and heard by both real and metaphorical White listening subjects, as well as how that process leads to negative perceptions of their language practices and their identities. As Demisha’s painful memory of the teacher at her old school reminds us, students’ language practices can be judged so harshly that their entire futures are projected in offensive and highly limiting ways. Students articulated feelings of being “looked at” and judged, and saw their language practices as contributing to such negative
perceptions – by strangers and teachers, on exams, at job and college interviews, and even in their own families – of their intelligence and value.

Second, students’ own performances of White languaging – through “White girl speak” and as White characters in their role plays – illustrate that those language practices ideologically associated with Whiteness are not simply new codes students can easily “switch” into. White communicative styles were something to be taken up in humor or when mocking someone. They were “put on” when students were placed in situations where they were being judged and evaluated, but were not integrated into their identities. In fact, such White ways of languaging were seen as fake and inauthentic, distancing a person from her real self and community rather than becoming neatly integrated into a developing, fluid identity. As Dre and David expressed, it can be difficult to “switch” into such White ways of languaging and being and, perhaps, speakers of color should shrug off attempts to accommodate White listening subjects through the use of such languaging.

Lastly, Faith’s commentary about her own languaging illustrates the complicated bind inherent to developing one’s personal and writerly identity amidst raciolinguistic ideologies. Though Faith was critical of people who “put on” White languaging (i.e.: her use of White girl speak to make fun of her peers), parts of her linguistic repertoire that she was proud of, that were part of her identity as a poet, were also indexically linked to Whiteness. She knew that this fact put her on the receiving end of judgment, both from a White audience of listeners who heard her “high vocabulary,” saw her “young, Latina, brown” body, and dismissed her and from her family and community who read such languaging as fake and not “for them.” So what can be gleaned from Faith’s predicament? How can we teach English and foster students’ voices in ways that do
not essentialize connections between race and language, thus reproducing raciolinguistic ideologies?

The curriculum that Lauren and I created serves as an example of culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014) that makes space for a translingual – and what Alim (2016) refers to as the “transracial” – subjectivity. Though I am well-aware that one year of 11th grade English did not undo the raciolinguistic ideologies that are embedded in students’ existing subjectivities, students’ metacommentary points to the ways our curriculum and approach to language and literacy pedagogy opened up what Mignolo (2000) calls “cracks in the modern world system” (p.23). By choosing texts, questions, and classroom activities that brought up the kind of metacommentary seen in this chapter, our curriculum and Lauren’s pedagogy created a safe house (Canagarajah, 1997) where students could share and struggle with topics not often broached in the English classroom. Explicit and open talk about race, opportunities to act out understandings of the impact of raciolinguistic ideologies on students’ lives, and the use of multimodal texts that connected language to the world and to students’ experiences as racialized subjects were all integral to students’ productive, if sometimes painful, grappling with the performative elements of languaging for an audience of White listening subjects. As will be discussed in the next chapter, such an approach also makes space for students to bring this kind of awareness and grappling into their writing, shifting the focus from essentialized connections between language and race (as well as various other identity categories) to the fluid, interconnected, and shifting nature of their language practices and identities.
Chapter 6

“I would never share out my story”:

Writing choices as identity choices in the translingual writing process

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the implementation of a translingual writing process in the English classroom. To take up an approach that centers on what I have referred to as students’ translingual sensibilities – those dispositions that align the theoretical underpinnings of translanguaging, including an understanding of languages as flexible, fluid, and interconnected – requires re-framing linguistically marginalized students as linguistically and sociolinguistically gifted (Rymes, 2014; Flores, 2016). As was shown in chapters 4 and 5, students were highly adept at articulating their observations and understandings of language ideologies at work in their lives. They critically analyzed their experiences both in and out of school, and their metacommentary revealed connections between those experiences and their ways of using language. So how might this high level of awareness and criticality relate to literacy instruction, particularly to the writing process? Can a translingual approach to the writing process tap into students’ complex, fluid language and literacy practices in ways that result in creative and critical (Li Wei, 2011) text production? To explore these questions, I draw on six students’ college essays, as well as their metacommentary and classroom talk around translanguaging in their writing. Using these data, I discuss the intersections of students’ writing performances and identity performances, and connect them to the implementation of a translingual approach to writing in the English classroom.
Overview of Findings

Despite their understandings of the reality of limiting raciolinguistic ideologies, students also demonstrated what I’ve called translingual sensibilities, which manifested in their openness to and interest in linguistic diversity, affinity for flexible meaning-making over linguistic purity, and pride in those language practices that transgressed monoglossic norms. Part of this project’s aim was to leverage those sensibilities through both curriculum and instruction and see how (or if) students’ linguistic and sociolinguistic might translate into their writing. In this chapter, I draw on students’ metacommentary and classroom talk around writing as well as their forays into translingual text production – namely their college essay writing – to better understand both the possibilities and the challenges to bringing students’ translingual sensibilities to the surface of the literacy classroom.

Though I have illustrated how these sensibilities informed students’ creative, multimodal text production (i.e.: their poetry in chapter 4 and their role-plays in chapter 5), it was in their college essay writing that I saw the most challenges to a translingual approach. As students prepared pieces of writing for a hypothetical audience of readers they knew had the literal and figurative power to either accept or reject them, they made choices about which (if any) elements of their linguistic repertoire to include and how to include them. Students’ linguistic choices were also acts of identity (Paris, 2011), agentive decisions about how or how much of themselves they were willing to reveal to an audience of White listening subjects.

Literature Review

As seen in the previous two chapters, students in Lauren’s classroom demonstrated impressive metalinguistic awareness and articulated how the simultaneous process of being seen and heard by White listening subjects contributes to their racialization and negative perception. This kind
of critical metalinguistic thinking necessitates a shift in teachers’ views of students from linguistically deficient to sociolinguistically gifted. Rather than a *subtractive* approach that treats linguistically marginalized students as though they are in need remediation or even an *additive* approach that “bridges” students’ “home language” practices to those of school or teaches them to “code switch” without questioning the systems of power beneath linguistic dichotomies, new approaches – such as a *culturally sustaining* approach (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014), a *raciolinguistic* approach (Flores & Rosa, 2015), or a *translanguaging pedagogy* (García, Johnson & Seltzer, 2017), to name a few – build instruction and pedagogy from students’ language and literacy practices up.

These approaches promote instruction and curricular designs that encourage students to think critically about language and its connections to race, ethnicity, and other social categories without imposing or reifying essentialized notions of such categories. Instead, educators who take up such approaches can create opportunities for students to read their lived experiences and the world around them – through the use of multimodal, bi-/multilingual, multicultural texts – in ways that foster creative and critical literacies that benefit students in the classroom and beyond. The curriculum I co-created with Lauren, and Lauren’s pedagogical choices while implementing this curriculum, serves as one example of such approaches to ELA instruction and illustrates the translilingual literacies that can emerge.

*Writing and “resisting from within”*

Though students exhibited impressive multimodal literacies, I focus here on *writing* for two main reasons. First, at every level of formal education, and most certainly at the high school level, writing is highly valued, and evidence of competence is required for students to pass standardized exams and graduate. For this reason, writing was a natural modality to focus on in
an 11th grade ELA classroom, where students were required to take the high-stakes English Language Arts Regents Exam required for graduation. Second, writing has long been a mode of resistance, critique, creativity, and appropriation. As Morrell (2003) puts it, it is possible for students to learn “to perceive writing as something that begets more than superior grades in courses or entrance into rewarding careers. Writing can be about re-making and re-articulating reality” (p.7). By taking up acts of written literacy that grant them access to different audiences, venues, and opportunities, students can learn to, as Canagarajah (2012) puts it, resist from within through various literate arts of the contact zone (Pratt, 1991) that challenge those very audiences, venues, and opportunities.

This emphasis is also important because writing has been used as a tool of oppression, rather than empowerment (Shor, 1997). Remedial writing programs, for example, “ha[ve] been part of the undemocratic tracking system pervading American mass education, an added layer of linguistic control to help manage some disturbing economic and political conditions on campus and off” (p.93). Similarly, in K-12 education, linguistically marginalized young people are taught from very early on that their writing is in need of remediation. Calling for an end to these programs, Edelsky (1994) writes, “Retheorizing language education to make it serve education for democracy means highlighting the relationship of language and power….It means figuring out and then spelling out how systems of domination are part of reading and writing, part of classroom interaction, part of texts of all kinds” (as cited in Shor, p.101). If part of the process of critical literacy is uncovering the invisible upkeep of the status quo, then students must learn to write and create texts that reveal the proverbial man behind the curtain.

Making young people aware of the connections between reading, writing, texts and power is one way of extending the work of the English Language Arts classroom. In line with
this approach is a reimagining of the English classroom not as a rigid space focused on but one language practice, but as a contact zone that, as Pratt (1991) puts it, has its very own “literate arts,” such as “transculturation, critique, collaboration, bilingualism, mediation, parody, denunciation, imaginary dialogue, [and] vernacular expression” (p.37). These arts are mobilized through a more flexible, creative, and innovative approach to text production. Teaching students that we all have a rich linguistic repertoire from which we enact features is one way of reimagining writing and other forms of text production. If students can be taught to tap into this repertoire, they can draw on the linguistic strengths they already have in order to read and create texts in ways that are both creative and critical (Li Wei, 2011).

Many scholars have highlighted the strengths that linguistically and culturally diverse students bring to the writing process. Smitherman (1994) and Ball (1995), for example, illustrate the success of students who employ African American discourse styles in their school writing. Orellana (2009), Orellana and Reynolds (2008) and Martínez, Orellana, Pacheco, and Carbone (2008) have shown how bi-/multilingual students’ translation skills can serve as bridges to successful school writing. In addition to the academic benefits of drawing on students’ language practices, inviting students’ voices into the process of text production has important implications for identity development. To explore this concept further, I turn to the work of Gloria Anzaldúa and Junot Díaz, two writers that students in Lauren’s classroom explored in their author studies. Both writers served as models for students’ own writing, as they analyzed how each one created multivoiced, heteroglossic texts that challenge ideologies about language and illustrate powerful connections between language and identity.

*Performing a translingual sensibility through writing*
At the heart of Anzaldúa’s (1987) writing is a call for a new consciousness, one that transgresses man-made, colonial borders and appropriates old forms of languaging into something representative of a new, hybrid existence. She writes that her language, which she calls Chicano Spanish, “is a border tongue which developed naturally. Change, evolución, enriquecimiento de palabras nuevas por invención o adopción have created variants of Chicano Spanish, un nuevo lenguaje. Un lenguaje que corresponde a un modo de vivir. Chicano Spanish is not incorrect, it is a living language” (p.77). Anzaldúa writes that a new language corresponds to a new way of living. To live as a Chicana – one who lives on or near physical borders, and, as such, occupies two worlds – one must language in a way that combines two lived experiences. Like Anzaldúa, Junot Díaz sees a new kind of languaging as integral to his writing as a transnational, translingual subject. Díaz says of his writing,

it's so hard in some ways to pull a self together when you have all these disparate threads running through your lives, when you have all these experiences, when you're always asked to choose one or two voices and that's it because too many would be too many, you know…In [my novel, The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao] it's like the one place I felt that all the voices that I had running through my head could have a home and could, like, speak at once and speak together. (Interview with Terry Gross, 2007)

By allowing all his voices and languages to live together in his work, Díaz represents through his writing a fluid, heteroglossic subjectivity.

To write, as Anzaldúa puts it, “from both shores at once” (p.101), could be seen as one of Pratt’s literate arts of the contact zone. The kind of multivocality seen in Díaz’s and Anzaldúa’s writing, however, is seldom modeled or taught in the English classroom. As such, students are rarely invited to explore their own translingual experiences and subjectivities through the writing process. Teaching students to read, analyze, and create heteroglossic texts opens the door to the
kind of work that can “help to develop empowered identities and help students cope with fear, alienation, and other negative outcomes associated with being a member of a marginalized group in society” (Morrell, 2008, p.170). Heteroglossic literacy experiences in the writing process, then, could enable students to tap into their fluid language practices and identities in order to cope, create, and take steps towards positive changes in their lives and in society.

In the field of composition, some scholars have put forth such a heteroglossic approach to teaching writing. In their discussion of what they term translingual writing, Horner and his colleagues (2011) identify “language differences and fluidities as resources to be preserved, developed and utilized” (p.304). Horner et. al. see writing not as a vehicle for perpetuating “standards,” but as a way of talking back to the mythology of standard language. They write, “By addressing how language norms are actually heterogeneous, fluid, and negotiable, a translingual approach pushes back against demands that writers must conform to fixed, uniform standards” (p.305). By teaching standards in writing as “historical, variable, and negotiable” (p.311), educators engage in a disinvention of such standards and release students’ heteroglossic writing voices.

Canagarajah (2011, 2013) also advocates for a translingual approach through a writing process he calls code meshing, which he conceptualizes as translanguaging realized in writing, a way that students can bring together various features of their linguistic repertoires for rhetorical effect. Because translanguaging in writing is more heavily sanctioned in the school context than “spontaneous speech acts,” students must be taught to “develop a critical awareness of the choices that are rhetorically more effective” (2011, p. 402). Like Horner et. al. Canagarajah views code meshing as an act of resistance against dominant, monolingual norms. Through an exploration of the rhetorical and linguistic choices one of his students, Buthainah, makes while...
writing a literacy narrative, he illustrates how she draws on English, Arabic, French, and “deploys emoticons, provides visual cues, stylizes print, and captures auditory effects” (p.405) in her writing. In her narrative, Buthainah not only explores her own literacy, but delves into her negotiation of the English language. Through conversation with Canagarajah, Buthainah explains her creativity with, for example, English idioms, asking, “From whose perspective is something unidiomatic? What if the tradition of use by native speakers is irrelevant? Should not we give value to the new meanings multilinguals may negotiate from these phrases in their contexts?” (p.407). Instead of working within the norms of “native” English speakers, Buthainah “appropriates English for her purposes, and uses it with a critical and creative orientation” (p.407).

Michael-Luna and Canagarajah (2008) outline several pedagogical strategies that make space for this kind of writing, including multilingual text selection, activation of knowledge from inside and outside the text, valuing multilingual code meshing, modeling oral code meshing, modeling written code meshing, and strategic scaffolding of text negotiation. These six strategies can assist teachers in “modeling the ways to ‘bend’ the rules…inside the academic discourse being taught, so that student voice and agency has a place alongside the conventional norms and values” (p.71). When my project exposed students to writers like Díaz and Anzaldúa, for example, they saw the kinds of rule-bending mentor texts Michael-Luna and Canagarajah discuss. When designing the implementation of a translingual writing process, Lauren and I hoped that the use of these exemplars, as well as the explicit teaching of voice, audience, writer’s purpose, and other literacy skills, would inspire students to create their own translingual texts.

**Findings**
Despite our use of translingual mentor texts, our year-long focus on challenging monoglossic expectations and unpacking language ideologies, and our explicit invitation for students to include different language practices in their work, it was in the realm of writing that I saw the most challenges to leveraging a translingual sensibility in the English classroom. Despite the possibilities that emerged as students began to tap into their translingual sensibilities through multimodal, creative text production, there were also challenges that presented themselves as they honed a latent literacy practice not often acknowledged – let alone actively leveraged – in English classrooms.

In what follows, I profile six students who presented different attitudes towards the process of creating a translingual college essays. Through their essays and their classroom talk and metacommentary on the writing process I explore the ways in which students’ writing performances were tied to their identity performances amidst the centripetal forces (Bakhtin, 1981) of raciolinguistic ideologies. Students’ essays and their articulation of the choices they made in those essays present important considerations for implementing a critical translingual approach to writing in the classroom. I argue that although students’ translingual sensibilities hold the potential to deepen and expand their classroom literacy experiences, teachers can leverage these sensibilities and talents only to a point. In the process of writing in an “academic” genre – here, the college essay – that is inevitably judged by White listening subjects, students asserted their agency by making deliberate choices about which elements of their language practices, and which elements of their identities, to incorporate and which to leave out.

As already stated, the college essays were the culminating project for the year, inviting students to demonstrate their new understandings about language as well as their different language practices through translanguaging. Lauren and I chose the genre of the college essay as
a final project for several reasons. First, for those students who wished to attend college, the essay was a “real world” piece of writing. We thought that this might motivate students and connect their choices about writing to an authentic task. Second, the college essay, more so than genres like poetry, memoir, or other “creative” writing, is a heavily scrutinized piece of “academic” writing. By their very nature, college essays are meant to speak for the applicant and are tasked with setting that applicant apart from his or her peers. As such, writers must walk the difficult line between representing her/himself as a unique candidate who would enrich the college community and meeting the discursive expectations of their readers, whose task is to rank and judge them. These elements of the college essay made it fertile ground for our project, and as students navigated the process, their choices and their accommodation (or lack thereof) of their White listening subject readers point to important considerations for taking a critical translingual approach, particularly to “academic” writing.

In the weeks leading up to writing their essays, students engaged in author studies, through which they analyzed their assigned writers’ use of different language practices in writing, practiced incorporating their language practices in their own writing, and discussed the risks and rewards that present themselves when writers translanguage in ways that challenge monoglossic expectations. Lauren and I hoped that this explicit writing instruction paired with metalinguistic discussions about the authors’ and students’ own writing would prepare them to explore their own thinking and language practices in their essays.

Honing students’ ability both to translanguage and to articulate the translingual choices they make in their writing could be considered part of what Flores (2016) refers to as building *linguistic architecture*. He writes that the process of linguistic exploration – a critical sociolinguistic inquiry into the ways language works – “would support language-minoritized
students in becoming language architects who are able to apply the knowledge that they gained through their critical inquiry to design language in their own terms and for their own purposes” (Blog post, “What if we treated language-minoritized children like gifted sociolinguists?”).

According to Wikipedia’s description, architecture includes:

- planning and designing form, space and ambience to reflect functional, technical, social, environmental and aesthetic considerations. It requires the creative manipulation and coordination of materials and technology, and of light and shadow. Often, conflicting requirements must be resolved. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Architecture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Architecture))

Students’ essays and metalinguistic talk reveal such “creative manipulation and coordination” as well as the ways that they resolved “conflicting requirements” in the process of translingual writing, especially in a genre like the college essay. In students’ choices – to include parts of themselves or not; to bring in one of their voices or another and why or why not; to take risks or not; to consider an audience or not – we hear decisions made by sophisticated writers.

After reading all students’ college essays, I first coded and then set aside those that related to existing deductive (i.e.: “discourses of appropriateness,” “translanguaging,” and “linguistic architecture,” among others; see Appendix 3.3) and inductive codes (i.e.: “linguistic risk-taking” and “making choices about translanguaging in writing;” again see Appendix 3.3 for additional codes). Once I had chosen those essays that were particularly representative of these codes, I wanted to talk to their authors. I had two opportunities to do so: the first opportunity arose at the school’s Panel Presentations. In its commitment to project based learning, SBHS held a bi-annual event called Roundtables in which students present completed project work to their families, peers, and the school community. First, though, students must go through the process of explaining their work to members of the school community who are not their classroom teachers. This stage is meant to help students edit and revise, providing them with
outside feedback in order to improve their work before the main Roundtable event. Using the set of questions Lauren had put together for panelists to ask her students (see Appendix 6.2), I was able to ask students about their experiences writing their college essays.

The second opportunity was one I designed as part of my project. After students had turned in their final essays and presented their work at Panels and the school’s Roundtable event, I asked to speak with students whose work contained glimpses of translanguaging, linguistic criticality, or both. For these conversations, I drew on a set of interview questions (see Appendix 3.4) I hoped would bring forth students’ metacommentary about their creation of translinguademic essays. Once I had spoken to the student writers whose essays related to my coding, I chose six essays that were particularly representative of the themes that had emerged from students’ writing experiences and talk about those experiences. In what follows, I profile those six students and share excerpts of their writing and metacommentary that provide insights into the implementation of a translilingual writing process in the English classroom.

**Yessica: “I would never share out my story”**

Yessica moved from the Dominican Republic to New York when she was very young. She lived in the Bronx with her father and siblings, though her mother remained in the Dominican Republic. She often spoke of DR with pride, despite the fact that she hadn’t been back in a long time. In fact, when she was first assigned to an author study group focused on Gloria Anzaldúa, she told me she was disappointed because she wanted to be in “the Dominican group” (by which she meant the group focused on Junot Diaz). Despite this strong affiliation with DR, Yessica was also highly interested in languages other than Spanish. As seen in an earlier excerpt of classroom transcript, she was teaching herself Hindi through the use of Bollywood movies and YouTube clips and French and Portuguese through the app Duo Lingo.
In addition to her rich out-of-school language practices, Yessica was one of the highest performing English students in the grade. She was always prepared with assignments and homework, participated in classroom discussions, and often stayed in Lauren’s classroom during lunch and after school to work. What impressed me about Yessica was her maturity and her genuine engagement with the content of the course. She asked interesting and complex questions, took up critical perspectives, and, more than any other student, questioned me about the project itself. She also took an interest in me personally: she asked me where I went to college and how I met my husband, told me about Dominican recipes I should cook, and gave me dozens of potential baby names for my son. She was funny, smart, and insightful, and her contributions to the class were invaluable.

Yessica’s openness and interest in the class belied what was seemingly a lack of confidence in herself as an ELA student. Yessica often made passing comments about how poor a writer she was and how bad an English student she’d been in the past, a fact that surprised me. Because she had always been quite open with me, she also surprised me with her aversion to sharing “her story” in her writing. During their author study, students discussed the ways in which their assigned authors’ life stories and experiences were reflected in the language they used in their writing. To dig into this idea, Lauren posed the following for one lesson’s “do now,” or warm-up question: Do you think it’s possible to write a story that has nothing to do with your own life/experiences? Sitting with Yessica as she wrote her answer in her notebook, she told me that it is, in fact, possible because she herself would never share her story. I asked her why:

Yessica: I don’t like my story. I would never share my story out.
Kate: What don’t you like about it?
Y: Everything. For real, Miss. I would never share out my story, my experiences, nothing.
K: Huh.
Y: They’re not good, so…

As an answer to the do now, another student, Faith, offered to read one of her own poems, which she said was an example of how one could write a story or create a text that has nothing to do with the writer herself. The poem she read was a spoken word piece about destructive relationships, and when she finished the class erupted in applause. Yessica shouted, “Girl, can I get a copy?” Lauren complimented Faith, but continued to argue that every writer brings something of themselves to their work. Yessica pushed back, seemingly annoyed:

I don’t [sucks her teeth] – I think it’s possible not to write about yourself. Like, there’s people who would, like, want to be another person, so they would try to change everything up. They would probably talk proper English and everything. But I don’t believe, like – at least a part of you will not be included if that’s your goal. If your goal is to not put anything about you, that would happen eventually. You just have to focus on it. [Lauren acknowledges her point and moves on to another comment. Yessica says quietly to me, “I would switch up everything. My name’s not Yessica, it’s Jane.” I laugh a little, and she says, without smiling, “I’m serious.”]

(Classroom transcript + field notes, 3/17/16)

In Yessica’s response, both here and in her earlier comment, there was resistance to sharing her real story – even her real name – in her writing. Taking up “proper English,” here, was linked to the process of becoming “another person,” meeting the “goal” of leaving one’s real self out of one’s writing. Though Yessica’s college essay does make reference to her language practices as elements of her identity, this distancing sentiment can be read in her choice of which language practices to include in her essay. For example, Yessica began her essay as follows:

“Main aapakee madad kaise kar sakata hoon,” said a woman, dressed in a white sari with a handful of colorful bangles, speaking in Hindi. “I am sorry, I don’t understand,” I replied. Although I loved the sound of the words she had just spoken.

That is when I thought to myself, maybe I should learn Hindi. I already utilize four different language practices in my daily life, why not learn another.

―“Main aapakee madad kaise kar sakata hoon,” said a woman, dressed in a white sari with a handful of colorful bangles, speaking in Hindi.

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―That is when I thought to myself, maybe I should learn Hindi. I
Her essay goes on to describe her interest in other languages. She writes that coming to the US from the Dominican Republic at six years old “obligated” her to learn English. Knowing how it felt to be judged for her English practices, she decided never to judge other people for their language practices. This decision made her more “open-minded” and committed to helping others. She ends the essay by saying, “Languages or language practices have become a huge part of my identity and who I am.”

Though she states that language is a “huge” part of who she is, she does not provide any additional information in this short college essay. In fact, I was surprised at the brief nature of Yessica’s project; an ambitious and conscientious student, I thought she would have written more or developed her ideas further. Though I was not able to interview Yessica about her writing choices, and thus resist the imposition of my own singular reading, it is interesting to note that the only language practices she included other than a fairly “standard” English is Hindi. Despite stating that she used “four different language practices” and only spoke Spanish when she came to the US, she chose not to include those practices in her essay. Her choice to include a transliterated Hindi phrase – and her reference to her use of Spanish and three additional language practices – enables her to represent herself as a multilingual person and a lover of languages without actually using any of her “own” language practices to which she alludes. In a sense, Yessica chose to “tell” rather than “show” readers of her college essay that her language practices are part of her identity, a move that may have been purposeful, as it allowed her to keep those practices out of the essay itself.

*Marie: “It’s just, like, a whole new language that I speak”*
Like Yessica, Marie was one of the strongest English students in the grade. Though her attendance to school was less consistent than other high-performing students, she still managed to complete her work and participate meaningfully in whole-class and small-group conversations. Though I spent quite a bit of time with Marie over the course of the year, and she was warm and inviting to me, I did not learn much about her life outside the classroom. When I did catch glimpses of her personal life – an anecdote about her Muslim faith shared during a small-group conversation, a reference to a “promise ring” she wore on her left hand, a gift from her boyfriend – they were brief and a little cryptic. Though I never saw this side of her in the classroom, Lauren told me that Marie had the tendency to “cop an attitude” with some of her other teachers.

Marie and her family had emigrated from Guinea to the US when she was in fifth grade. Though she did not talk much about her life outside the classroom, she did reveal during a class discussion that she had been on the receiving end of ridicule because of her emerging English.

During an inquiry into the phrase “broken English,” Marie shared:

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Marie: I was gonna agree with what you said, that people do make fun of people who speak broken English. I mean, I was made fun of when I was learning English in fifth grade.
Lauren: And how did that make you feel?
M: Um, it made me feel bad, honestly. (Classroom transcript, 11/23/15)
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Marie reported being trilingual. In addition to English, she indicated on the classroom language survey that she spoke French and Malinke at home with her family. She also referenced her frequent use of “AAVE” and “slang.” In a discussion about how students might react if the school implemented a “standard English only” rule, a few students shared that it might benefit them to “practice” speaking in this way for their future jobs. Marie, a little heated, said,

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But Miss, like, we know. When we are at a certain place, like a job interview or something, we know we’re not supposed to speak slang. We know what to do when we get there. So it’s not like we have to practice, we know! (Classroom transcript, 3/29/16)
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This comment seemed to reveal a frustration on Marie’s part with the explicit teaching of “standard” English. It was as if the idea of being told what language to speak in what context was unnecessary because, as she said repeatedly, “we know!” I relate this sentiment to a choice Marie made in her college essay. Though the content of her essay was critical – it discussed such issues as linguistic prejudice and her experiences being “corrected” when speaking AAVE – it also emphasized her ability to “style shift” (a term picked up from our reading of an excerpt from Alim and Smitherman’s *Articulate While Black*). She wrote:

> For example, in school I style shift my language practice when I come to class, especially when I go to my English class. I style shift my language practices when I am in school because I know I would be corrected if I spoke AAVE [and] slang. [...] While writing my college essay, I want to make sure that the college admission officers know that I have different language practices. Also that I know when to style shift my language practices based on who or what the situation is. (Marie, College Essay)

Her choice to write about her “style shifting” abilities could be read as a hedge; though she does, in fact, use different English practices including AAVE and slang, she made it clear in the essay that she knows when and where it is “appropriate” to do so. When talking to Marie about her essay, she again made reference to the separate nature of certain of her language practices from the realm of school (and the essay):

> Marie: I chose to use standard academic English, but I’m gonna – like I’m going to incorporate one of my language practices that’s not, like, you know, slang or AAVE. It’s just, like, a whole new language that I speak.
> Kate: Which – what language?
> M: French. So, like, I wanna include, to let them know that I do speak another language. But I chose not to write in AAVE cause – I mean, to me I personally feel like [pause] you know in a college essay that’s what they want. So yeah, I feel comfortable just using that.
K: How do you plan on incorporating your French?
M: So, basically in my essay I wrote that, you know when I go home, I say hi to my mother in English, I say “hi mom,” and she responds to me in French like, “don’t greet me in English, greet me in French.” So I put that in, and I put the line that she says in French (Panels presentation, 5/19/16).

Unlike AAVE or slang (or, interestingly, Malinke), Marie saw French as more in line with her readers’ expectations (“that’s what they want”). Though AAVE and slang were part of her linguistic repertoire, they were not appropriate for the college essay genre; she wrote about them, but not in them. French, however, is a part of Marie’s linguistic repertoire that might benefit her. As such, including it in her college essay, even in a small way, as in a line of dialogue (it is worth noting, however, that in the final draft of her essay she submitted to Lauren, Marie did not include this line), sets her apart as a multilingual speaker of “a whole new language,” not of the socially and racially marked English practices she “knows” are separate from the academic or professional realm.

Demisha: “I used to write stuff like that. But then I stopped.”

In her 11th grade year, Demisha was in the process of reinventing herself as a student. Despite having struggled academically in the past, she expressed a desire to turn things around and take school more seriously. Demisha was loud and funny, and did not hesitate to make her opinions known. She had a self-admittedly volatile temper, and there were days she stormed into the classroom, sat at her table, and refused to speak to anyone. On those days, Lauren would take Demisha out into the hallway to calm her down and usually a story would emerge about how she had been disrespected or mistreated by another teacher or student.

Issues with teachers seemed to have plagued Demisha throughout her schooling. She spoke often of being misperceived by her teachers as “ghetto” because of the way she spoke and comported herself. Demisha’s talk about her language practices included a kind of linear
narrative that moved, in a process linked to maturation, from using “slang” to using more “standard” language in their writing. In a class discussion, Demisha linked the idea of “growing up,” to learning how to write differently:

Demisha: I used to – like when I used to write I used to be like “wanna,” “gonna.” I used to write stuff like that. But then I stopped…I don’t know. I guess as I was growing up, I got taught like, “you have to write like this” and “you have to do it like this.” And then when they give my paper back, they have the corrections there.

Kate: Do you think there’s a way of doing both?

D: I mean, yeah like if I’m writing – say if I’m writing a letter to Jacqui. Then I’d be like, “I’m gonna go” –

K: So the genre matters.

D: Yeah, like right now I’m like, “I’m gonna go do this.” But if it’s like an interview or something, I try – I try to use a full sentence. (Classroom transcript, 3/14/16)

In chapter 5, I referenced a story Demisha told about a teacher at her old school who said that the way she “used to talk” indicated a future living in a shelter with several children. Here, as with the arc of the story she told about her former teacher, we see Demisha link her personal language and literacy narrative to a narrative of “growing up” and learning how to write “appropriately.” As she learned to remove words like “wanna” and “gonna” from her school writing, she also learned to assign her different language practices to different genres: “wanna” and “gonna” might work in a personal letter, but not in more professional venues. Interestingly, Demisha compares her use of “gonna” in a written genre like a letter with an oral mode like an interview, during which she would try to use “a full sentence.” As Demisha mixes her metaphors here, we can see the effects of ideologies on her language practices. Though she learned how to “write like this” and “do it like this” as she “grew up,” she is still under the ideological thumb of such forces, trying her hardest to “use a full sentence” in her interactions with those in power.

Demisha’s essay centered on an interaction between a friend of hers, Doris, a Krio-speaking student from Sierra Leone, and a teacher who she felt disrespected Doris. In her telling of the story, Doris attempted to answer a question posed by Lauren, but another teacher in the
room interrupted her several times to correct her grammar. Though Doris attempted to “brush off” the teacher’s corrections, Demisha was offended and took action:

My English teacher and I exchanged a look, she knew what I was thinking. In that moment, not able to stay quiet any longer, I blurted out, “Ms., that’s how she speak.” In that second I thought about power and language, something I’ve learned throughout the school year in English class.

 [...] 

I took that specific topic personally because the language I utilize can give off a misperception teachers believe that standard academic English (SAE) is more superior than other language practices students employ in their everyday life. By teachers misconstruing students, teachers are denying students the ability to reveal their authentic identity. (Demisha, College Essay)

Later in her essay, Demisha relays a different event in which her own language practices were judged. When talking with a friend, Demisha used the word “ain’t,” and a teacher told her “you are not going to get into college speaking like that.” Demisha again took action, replying:

Holding my ground I replied back and said, “I utilize and maneuver my language practices depending on the context I’m in.” I believe college is an environment you don’t have to hide your true self, you can be who you want to be without being discriminated by your professors and classmates. They won’t anticipate for you to speak Academic English.

Through my high school career I’ve encountered teachers telling me the way I speak is wrong or incorrect. I believe I can actually teach my teachers the language practices I employ in my daily life. This also illustrates I can [transition] my language practices in which the context I’m in. This is the rationale why I would be good for your college. (Demisha, College Essay)
In both excerpts, Demisha used her college essay as a platform to speak out against unfair treatment by teachers against her and her friends. She envisions college as an improvement over high school, a place she could be herself without the pressure to “speak Academic English.” Like Marie, she also emphasizes that her ability to “maneuver” her language practices makes her an ideal candidate for college. More than other students, Demisha drew on classroom vocabulary in her essay. The words “maneuver,” “context,” “anticipate,” “misconstrue” and “authentic” were all vocabulary words students had been given (and tested on) throughout the year. Demisha’s use of “academic” vocabulary and writing practices in her essay – echoed in her first statement during class – seems linked to her becoming a mature, college-ready person. Despite standing up against linguistic prejudice in her essay, Demisha seems to understand that she must represent such activism in her writing through “standard academic English.” Like in a job interview, she tries in her college essay to work against misperceptions that her readers might already have about her as a student of color from the Bronx. Her essay, then, could be read as a performance of her identity as an intelligent, competent future college student and an attempt to distance herself from a limiting racialized identity imposed on her by others.


Andrew was one of the students I spoke with most over the course of the year. When I sat with him, he talked with me about topics ranging from music to his family to his love of basketball (he was a big Steph Curry fan, so much so that he took to writing “Andrew Curry” at the top of his papers). Despite enjoying his status as class clown, Andrew also took his grades seriously. Though they often came in right at (or a little after) the deadline, he usually got his assignments done.
From the beginning, Andrew struggled with the idea of including different language practices in his writing. For example, early in the year, students were asked to write persuasively for different audiences through the use of different language practices. After going back and forth about how they write “to a friend” versus how they write in English class, both Andrew and his friend Sono got to work, excited to write, as Andrew put it, “like I do on Facebook.” As he wrote, Andrew asked Lauren and me repeatedly if this kind of writing was “allowed.” Though each time we told him it was not only allowed but encouraged, Andrew seemed unsure. Later in the period, I asked Andrew how the writing went. He responded:

Andrew: I wrote it like, as in, like, I was in English class.
Kate: What?
A: I couldn’t do it, I don’t know. (Classroom transcript, 10/27/15)

Andrew did not include different language practices in this particular piece of classroom writing, opting instead to write like he was “in English class” (which, of course, he was). Despite his awareness of how he used language in different ways in different contexts, at the time he was unable to “translate” that awareness into his actual writing.

Later in the year, however, he seemed willing to try and incorporate elements of his linguistic repertoire into his writing. Toward the end of the year, as Andrew was working on his college essay, Lauren came over to check his progress. She read a piece of his essay to herself, and then asked him to read it aloud:

Andrew: “Sono saw Andrew and said, ‘yo, bro, we out playin’ ball.’ ‘Aight we out,’ he said, and began to get up.”
Lauren: Who said?
A: Andrew. So I gotta address it. [makes an edit on his paper]. “Sono asked, ‘what’s score, bro? I bet I’m gonna – I’m’ [makes an edit] ‘I bet $10 I’m going to win.’”
L: Is there anything missing from that sentence? [Pause.] “Sono asked, ‘what’s score, bro?’” Does he want to know the score? [Andrew starts to make the edit on his paper.] But is that how he said it?
A: I guess.
L: What’s score?
A: Yeah. That’s how we say it, “what’s score, bro?”
L: Well, that’s why I was asking you to read it out loud.
A: The problem is, you – it’s like, you don’t know our lingo, Miss. [Lauren reminds the three students about the due date for the essay and walks away.] See, I got questioned. I got pressed. I got mad defensive. (Classroom transcript + field notes, 5/20/16)

At the end of the period, after I had turned off my recorder, Andrew asked the group if they “ever got the feeling” that their writing “didn’t make sense.” Though I did not sense that Lauren’s questioning of Andrew’s writing was meant as an interrogation, he nevertheless felt attacked (or “pressed”). To have his voice, which he seemed to have attempted to represent in his essay, questioned by his teacher – someone who, in Andrew’s opinion, didn’t “know our lingo,” – made him feel like his writing didn’t make sense.

Andrew began his essay by retelling an event that made him aware of his own language practices and how those practices related to (mis)perceptions of him by others, especially those in authority. During an interview for an internship, Andrew “slipped” in his response to the interviewer’s question of why he would be a good candidate. Andrew responded, “I think because of my determined mentality and how fast and good I work I will be good for this job and also I ain’t no slacker I get the job done by any means.” Andrew realized later that this response, which made his interviewer’s “eyebrows raise,” was probably the reason he did not get the internship. His reflection on that realization begins with a critical perspective and even includes a line of translanguaging, which stands on its own on the page:
Sometimes I wonder why are my language practices so bad? I have seen those who speak my language practices succeed and yet our language is still considered inferior. We grow up in a society where the way white people speak is considered the “correct” way of speaking. What makes the way they speak so different than ours? Throughout our country’s history, the white population have been dominant and we, hispanics and african americans, have been struggling, struggling to make us all feel equal but things aren’t. Our country is run by rich white men and women so people view the way they speak as the “correct” way of speaking and we get judged because we do not speak “proper” English like them. We get put in a category of unintelligent speakers.

My mother always told me just because yo hablo un poquito de Español does not make me dumb! Just because I curse does not mean I am a criminal! 

Later in the piece, Andrew’s message seems to shift. He writes that before his internship interview experience – when he was “young and blissfully unaware” – he did not realize that, “my language practices can affect how people view me and potentially deny me the opportunity.” In response, he writes, he learned to “adapt and change in certain contexts I am in…Now knowing this I am more aware of the words I say to the people I am around and the places I am in.” Like Demisha’s narrative of growing up, Andrew’s move from being “young and blissfully unaware” to “more aware of the words” he uses is part of maturing and understanding the “real world.” Andrew ends with what feels like a foot in both the critical realm where he began his essay and the reality he became aware of as he grew up:
Despite his nod to language ideologies that deem his ways of languaging inappropriate for “careers” Andrew wants to pursue, he ends his essay with what sounds almost like a threat: that though he knows he must use “proper” English in his career, his audience should “not think for one second” that his (“non-standard”) language practices mean he is unintelligent.

When talking with Andrew about his college essay, he spoke about the difficulty he had including language practices other than “standard English”. Even when I asked him about his use of Spanish in one line of his essay – though Andrew was Dominican, he rarely spoke in or about Spanish in class – he told me it was his way of “just trying” to include different language practices in his writing. I asked Andrew how he felt about using words in Spanish or different English practices in his writing, and he responded:

I’m not sure if I should include it. But if I get the chance to include it when we’re writing, I’ll definitely include it. But I’ll make sure it’s like appropriate and like it fits with what I’m writing.
(Students interview, 6/7/16)

In this response, like in his essay, there is a kind of “back and forth.” Though Andrew articulates understandings of raciolinguistic realities and writes in a way that resists such limiting ideologies, he links the process of growing up to his growing awareness of the need to change his language practices to meet the expectations of the professional sphere. In his classroom talk, as well as in this excerpt from his interview, he expressed enthusiasm about using different language practices. In his actual writing, however, there is a hesitance to do so, perhaps because
he has not had experience with this kind of writing or perhaps because he fears the kind of misunderstanding or “pressing” he experienced with Lauren.

**Amir: “I wouldn’t give them my identity”**

It is telling that I have few instances of Amir’s classroom talk or writing to draw from. Quiet and a little withdrawn, Amir rarely participated in discussions or turned in assignments. There were also times when Amir engaged in behaviors that seemed to subvert the classroom work. For example, during one lesson, Lauren used the poetry writing of Elaine, an emergent bilingual from the Dominican Republic, as a model. The poem was beautiful, but its language pointed to Elaine’s emergent English practices; there were a few moments that required the reader to “fill in the gaps,” and Lauren seemed to want to build that kind of generous readership amongst students in the class (for more on this use of Elaine’s poem by Lauren, see chapter 7). When Lauren asked students to talk about the poem, Amir made a side comment and started laughing with another student. When Lauren asked him what was funny, he continued laughing but refused to give an answer. This kind of passive subversion – quiet jokes, comments made under his breath, putting his head down on the desk – was fairly common for Amir.

Another time, however, I caught a glimpse of Amir’s engagement with the class content. As part of students’ writing process for their college essays, they sat with members of the school community and “defended” their work. One student talked about his experience presenting his essay to a math teacher at the school, sharing that the teacher had told him that he should use “academic English” in the entrance essay, and take a risk only after he got into the school. This kind of “compromise” approach was one that some students seemed to agree with, and Lauren facilitated a conversation around this idea. Amir posed the following question:

"I got a question – I got a question about Mr. H. What if, what if you use SAE to get in, and then..."
[they] expect you to use SAE all the time? What you gonna do? (Classroom transcript, 5/20/16)

In Amir’s question is a subtle challenge to the approach suggested by the teacher. He seems to be saying that by taking up “Standard Academic English” to get into a college, there might be the expectation that you use that language practice all the time. What, then, would they do if they had to continue to use SAE to meet the expectation they set up by using that practice in their essays?

When looking through the essays turned in by students, I was pleasantly surprised to see Amir’s draft. I was even more pleasantly surprised when he agreed to talk with me about his writing. Amir’s essay explored the fact that, though he is an “Arabic person,” he does not speak Arabic. He writes that although he does not speak Arabic, he has other language practices such as “AAVE” and “SAE.” However, just as his lack of Arabic puts him on the receiving end of judgment, so too do some of his other practices:

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Many people talk to me in Arabic and when I tell them I don’t understand Arabic they laugh at me. For example, my uncle was having a conversation with me on my language practices and was telling me that I need to learn Arabic because it is my country’s language and my nationality. And also they make fun of me when I call my family members “nigga” or “yo.” (Amir, College Essay)</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>of Arabic. Many people talk to me in Arabic and when I tell them I don’t understand Arabic they laugh at me. For example, my uncle was having a conversation with me on my language practices and was telling me that I need to learn Arabic because it is my country’s language and my nationality. And also they make fun of me when I call my family members “nigga” or “yo.”</td>
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Amir ends his essay with the idea that the connections between language and identity should go beyond “nationality”:
In conclusion your identity does not have to do with your language practices. You can be born to a certain language practice and you could also learn a certain language practice. However there are many people that have different language practices or do not speak their national language. You can also learn certain language practices based on the people you hang out with or a certain area you live in. I live in the Bronx, NY so I speak a lot of slang and AAVE. (Amir, College Essay)

When talking to Amir about his essay, I asked him if being from Yemen was part of his identity. He responded that it was, because “our culture is different. The way we speak, the way we dress, it’s different than Americans” (Student interview, 6/7/16). In addition to identifying with being Yemeni, though, was an identification with the Bronx, also seen in his essay. He shared that he “spoke a little Spanish” and spoke “AAVE all day” with the customers at his family’s store and with his friends. On the topic of identity, however, Amir expressed some of the reticence I had seen throughout the year. When I asked him if he would submit this essay to an actual college, he replied that he wouldn’t. When I asked why, he said:

Amir: Cause if I was to submit it, I wouldn’t talk about my identity like that. I would like talk – I wouldn’t give them my identity. I wouldn’t use some words. Like some words in AAVE? Yeah, I wouldn’t take a risk. I’d try to write Standard Academic English.
Kate: And when you say you wouldn’t give them your identity –
A: Yeah. I don’t wanna talk about myself. And my background and stuff.
K: Why not?
A: I feel like...they don’t need to know that stuff.
K: They don’t need to know that stuff?
A: It depends, if they’re asking me about my... it depends on the topic.
K: So if the topic were specifically about your background or your identity, maybe you would share it?
A: Yeah, I’d share it but in a different type of way. Like I’d tell them the good things from my background and keep the bad things.
K: So you would share, but you’d share...selectively.
A: Yes. (Student interview, 6/7/16)
Amir’s use of the words “give” and “keep” reveal a desire to hold parts of his identity close. Including language practices like “AAVE” would mean “giving them,” meaning readers of his college essay, access to parts of himself that he’d rather not share. Similarly, if he were to share things about his identity or background, he’d do so in a “different way,” “keeping” the “bad things” out of his writing. This is reminiscent of Yessica’s refusal to tell her story in her writing. Though neither student gave more information about what “bad things” they were referring to, what is clear is that there are elements of their stories (backgrounds, experiences, feelings, etc.) that are off limits in school writing. In Amir’s case, he identifies the less risky approach of writing in “Standard Academic English” as a way of avoiding “giving them” his identity.

**Lucia: “I never wrote in Spanish and English at the same time”**

Lucia was shy and reserved, and often arrived late to class because she overslept. Despite the dry humor and intelligent insights I heard when sitting with her in small groups, Lucia seemed to disappear in the classroom. She rarely participated in whole-class conversations and missed assignments – particularly homework – because of her attendance issues. The work she did hand in, however, was excellent. Lucia was a strong writer and her work evidenced thoughtfulness, care, and, as was evidenced in her essay, a willingness to take rhetorical risks. Her essay reflected on her identity as a bilingual, bicultural Dominican-American, and her metacommentary revealed Lucia’s simultaneous enthusiasm for and cautiousness about this new kind of writing.

When I first read Lucia’s college essay I was struck by the fluidity with which she wrote in both English and Spanish. For example, she writes:
Then my father chuckled and said, “Americanos, ustedes son Americanos.” He interrupted the debate I was obviously winning.

“No somos Americanos!” I replied.

My father told us we were Americanos because we speak too much Ingles. I grew up with both Ingles y Español. I have Spanish speaking parents but in a country that dominantly speaks Ingles. Yo necesitaba aprender Ingles y Español because I spoke en Ingles outside and Spanish inside. (Lucia, College Essay)

Lucia’s essay goes on to talk about how her Spanish-speaking family and the English-language television she watched led her to “mix” her languages into “Spanglish,” something her family did not like. She writes, “Hearing comments like ‘learn more Spanish’ and ‘ustedes son Americanos’ made me think that Español and Ingles have a complicated relationship,” and goes on to expand upon that relationship as well as her own relationship to the two languages. Citing Gustavo Pérez Firmat, the writer she studied in her author study group, she writes, “I agree with Firmat’s quote that when yo hablo en uno de los dos languages one seems to interrupt the other. It is just something that happens.”

Lucia’s fluid use of English and Spanish in her college essay highlights her experience living within two languages. Rather than function apart from one another, they are in a “complicated relationship,” sometimes “interrupting” one another. She explicitly links this linguistic experience to her identity in this excerpt of her essay:

“My two languages connect to me it’s part of me and I can’t change that. My identidad is linked to my language practices. Both of my language practices expreso quien yo soy y de donde yo soy.

[...]

My two languages connect to me it’s part of me and I can’t change that. My identidad is linked to my language practices. Both of my language practices expreso quien yo soy y de donde yo soy.
In conclusion, language is an important part of our lives. Language is gained and full of experience you have had. Language is universal, it develops and changes just like your identidad. (Lucia, College Essay)

Though other bilingual students, like Marie, chose to include languages other than English in short bits of dialogue, Lucia did so extensively throughout her essay. She also, unlike other students, had included footnotes at the bottom of her essay with translations of the words she used in Spanish. When I spoke to Lucia about the choices she made in her essay, I asked about her choice to integrate English and Spanish the way that she did:

Lucia: I guess I did it without warning, so I decided — cause in my draft, somebody said you have to, like, tell me when you’re gonna speak in Spanish and English.
Kate: Was that another student who told you you should do that?
L: Yeah. When we were writing drafts. So I was like, OK, so I’m not gonna do that, put a whole entire essay in Spanish and English, so I was like, maybe I’ll just, like, translate? Do little footnotes on the bottom? With lines, so like Americanos/Americans, ingles/English…
K: And what made you decide to do it that way, rather than put translations in parentheses afterwards, or do something else, put in quotations…
L: I don’t know. It would change the style if it was like all the words — there’s so much Spanish, it’d look, like, bad. (Student interview, 6/7/16)

Because Lucia’s essay was a translanguaged piece of writing, it would have been difficult for her to translate all the Spanish words within the text itself. As she put it, it would’ve changed the style of the piece and simply “looked bad.” In a way, then, her choice to include footnotes was a compromise; she was able to write in a fluid, bilingual style but did not wholly leave out her non-bilingual (English-speaking) readers.

Writing in this way was a different experience for Lucia. As she said in our conversation, “I never wrote in Spanish and English at the same time.” As such, she figured out a way to ensure that the language she used would be representative of her bilingual voice:

I would like sound sentences out to see if, like, it fits in, the Spanish with the English. Like, when I speak Spanish some English comes out and when I speak English some Spanish comes out, so…yeah, it’s like, sound it out to see how I hear it. (Student interview, 6/7/16)
Lucia’s talk reveals the thoughtfulness and care she brought to her essay writing. The integration of her language choices not only helped her represent her “identidad,” but also seems to have been a linguistic challenge she enjoyed taking on. Lucia’s metacommentary about her linguistic choices also reveals a kind of savvy that she brings to the writing process. When I asked her about her choice to include Spanish but not other language practices, she expressed a similar sentiment to Marie in her discussion of her choice to use French. Lucia said:

Well, like, Spanish...I feel like maybe it might slide because you remind them that you have two languages. Some people aren’t aware of – that slang can be two languages. So I think that they’ll think you’re just uneducated because of that. They think that slang is just uneducated and, uh, two languages is...you’re multilingual. (Student interview, 6/7/16)

This consideration of her audience extended to her choice of whether or not to submit this essay to a hypothetical college. In his discussion of writers who take up code meshing, Canagarajah (2011) highlights their strategy of recontextualizing, or “gauging the congeniality of the context for codemeshing and shaping ecology to favor one’s multilingual practices” (p.404). When writers consider code meshing, they first get the lay of the land – will this context support me in my code meshing? Is it friendly to the use of different language practices? From her talk, it was clear that Lucia had engaged in this process of recontextualizing, and would make a decision about submitting her essay based in part on who might read it:

Lucia: Like, I have to look at the college and see if it’s, like, diverse in people.
Kate: And when you say diverse in people, you mean you would look and see, like, what the student body is like at this school –
L: Yes. Yeah. Because maybe they might understand some of it. (Student interview, 6/7/16)

Lucia seems to be aware of the language ideologies that exist in institutions like colleges. Though writing in a fluid, bilingual style aligns with her “identidad,” her choices – from including footnotes, to playing up her multilingualism but leaving out “slang,” to gauging the “diversity” of a potential college – illustrate the kind of complex considerations writers must...
make when taking a heteroglossic, linguistically risky approach, especially in a genre that by its nature is used to rank and judge.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

Students’ essays and the choices they made in those essays suggest important considerations for educators who wish to take up a translingual writing approach in the English classroom. Though students expressed translingual sensibilities and, in some cases, exhibited an impressive ability to translate such sensibilities into their writing, doing so in a genre like the college essay is not without complications. To write in this way, students must tap into literacies not often taught or even acknowledged in English classrooms. “Translating” one’s oral language practices (or language practices used in, for example, digital modalities) into a piece of “academic” writing is not something most students have been taught to do. Though a student like Lucia came up with her own tactics – “sounding sentences out” to see if the Spanish and English “fit” – many others, like Andrew, struggled to represent their fluid oral languaging in their writing without it being read as “incorrect” even by more generous readers like Lauren.

Choices about language are, as Paris (2011) puts it, acts of identity. As such, the choice to include racially “marked” language practices in writing is highly loaded. As I have shown repeatedly, students demonstrated sophisticated understandings of the ways that they were racialized by their language practices. They knew that, as people of color, speaking “slang” or “AAVE” or “Spanglish” would lead to their being perceived as unintelligent, uneducated, and unfit for “professional” and “academic” worlds. This raciolinguistic awareness was also at work when students were writing. As we saw in Demisha and Andrew’s essays, even when students expressed ideas that aligned with a translingual sensibility, they did so using “standard” written English practices, perhaps for fear of being seen and heard through a limiting, racializing lens by
their White listening subject audience. Their talk around their writing reveals an ambivalence about including such “marked” language practices; if including certain of their language practices leads to their being marginalized, it is understandable that they would be unsure about doing so. Similarly, when Marie and Lucia chose to include languages other than English in their writing, it points to their understanding that being bi-/multilingual might benefit them in the eyes of their audience. As Marie put it, using French would highlight that she speaks “a whole new language,” but using AAVE or another racially marked practice would go against what her potential readers “want” in an essay.

Overall, what these six students’ writing and choices about writing speak to is their agency: students can and will draw on their translingual sensibilities and practices when it affirms their identities. In classroom talk, in in-class writing assignments, and in multimodal text production, many students were able to express their metalinguistic awareness and bring their different language practices together in innovative, clever, and creative ways. Like Lucia, students came to understand that their English classroom was friendly to their translingual sensibilities, and many took up our invitation to bring such sensibilities and related language practices to the surface. However, when it came time to perform such a sensibility in a decontextualized, ideologically-saturated genre like the college essay – which would more than likely land in the hands of a reader with a monoglossic, White listening subject’s lens – many students chose not to take the risk, or made choices that mitigated that risk. In short, educators must keep in mind that while students’ translingual sensibilities are powerful and can be leveraged for creative and critical literacy experiences, how and how much they are leveraged is not our choice to make. Though we can set up safe havens (Canagarajah, 1997) for students to enact a translingual sensibility, their linguistic performances – especially in heavily policed
genres like “academic” writing – will reflect those elements of their identities and lived experiences that they choose to bring to the surface, not those that will subject them to further raciolinguistic marginalization.
Chapter 7

“No, must continue engaging”:

A teacher’s experience of Third Space moments in a critical translingual classroom

Introduction

Up to this point, I have focused my analysis on what came up for students: their complex and often contradictory feelings about their own language practices, their sophisticated awareness of language ideologies, their acts of identity through purposeful writing choices, and their ways of grappling with their subjectivities amidst raciolinguistic ideologies that marginalize them. In this last findings chapter, I turn my attention to the other major player in this project: the English teacher, Lauren. What came up for her as she implemented a curriculum that challenged hierarchies that lie beneath traditional English instruction and her own role as an English teacher? How did she experience this year, both personally and professionally?

Though my study focuses on only one English teacher, and an exceptional teacher at that, I believe that Lauren’s experience over the course of the 2015-16 academic year has implications for preparing all teachers of linguistically marginalized young people. Importantly, Lauren’s profile as a White, English-speaking educator of linguistically marginalized students of color is the norm in public schools today. Despite the declining numbers of White students in public schools, White teachers are still the majority (US Department of Education, 2016). As well, due to expansive, shifting (im)migration patterns, there is increased linguistic diversity in all schools (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). This means that all teachers must be prepared to work in what Paris and Ball (2009) call culturally and linguistically complex classrooms where they will encounter
students whose language backgrounds do not align with their own. A focus on practice alone cannot sufficiently address this challenge. As Britzman (1994) reminds us,

"Unless the narrations of practice are read through theories of discourse—that is, as representing particular ideological interests, orientations, communities and meanings, and as deploying relations of power—there remains the danger of viewing the teacher’s practical knowledge as unencumbered by authoritative discourse and as unmediated by the relations of power and authority that work through every teaching and research practice. (p. 72)"

Thus, a focus on relations of power – especially in English classrooms, especially by White, monolingual English-speaking teachers – is integral to the reimagining of these spaces. This chapter explores how my project, with its emphasis on an approach to English curricula and instruction that challenged monoglossic, raciolinguistic ideologies, was experienced by the teacher, and how the experience relates to her personal and professional development.

**Overview of Findings**

The development of a curriculum and approach to pedagogy that explicitly invited students’ translingual sensibilities made way for Third Space moments in the classroom, or those that disrupt traditional hierarchies such as teacher/student, “home”/“school,” “English”/“home language” (Moje et al, 2004; Gutiérrez, 1995; 2008). Different than other research around Third Space, it is important to note that Lauren and I *intentionally* made space for such Third Space moments to occur. Because of her adoption of a critical translingual curriculum and approach to instruction, students in Lauren’s classes were actively encouraged to share their counter-narratives and experiences with linguistic marginalization, both of which led to moments of disruption and transgression. Thus, though the moments themselves were unplanned, Lauren’s pedagogical practices, which I detail here, intentionally fostered and encouraged them. Here I
also detail Lauren’s classroom talk – namely her use of a language of solidarity\(^7\) – as illustrative of how a teacher’s everyday language can make space for Third Space moments to emerge.

Having put forth the intentional pedagogical moves that I believe were tied to the emergence of classroom Third Space moments, I next discuss what occurred in such moments. Drawing on students’ conversations with Lauren and with one another, I show how Third Space moments included students’ active critique of traditional school and classroom hierarchies, especially as they pertained to teachers and the “hidden audience” of English instruction. Lastly, I return to Lauren and examine her responses to the emergence of such Third Space moments. Through excerpts from both her classroom talk and an extended exit interview I conducted in June 2016, I illustrate that although certain Third Space moments led to Lauren’s discomfort or surprise, they also connect to her own professional and personal uptake of the role of “linguistic agitator.”

**Literature Review**

When implementing pedagogy that brings forth students’ translingual sensibilities, teachers – especially those whose backgrounds and lived experiences are different from their students – must take up new approaches to curriculum and instruction, but also new views on the world. A translanguaging pedagogy, for example, requires teachers to adopt their own translanguaging stance, a set of beliefs about bilingualism, bilingual students, and bilingual families and communities that inform their approach to everything from the design of the classroom space to their choices of texts to their assessments of students (García, Johnson & Seltzer, 2017). Taking

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\(^7\) Danny Martínez (2017) uses the phrase “language of solidarity” to refer to the ways educators and activists can hone solidarity between Black and Latinx youth. Though I wholeheartedly agree with Martínez’s call to action – and see many points of similarity between his work and my own – our uses of the term are different. I use the term to refer to the small linguistic choices (i.e.: choice of pronouns) Lauren made that align herself with her students, while Martínez uses the term to refer to a broader framework for standing with Black and Latinx youth against the “physical and linguistic violence” they experience in their lives both in and out of school.
up what Alim (2007) calls critical language pedagogy means “(1) engag[ing] teachers in the same type of critical language pedagogies outlined for their students, (2) provid[ing] teachers and their students with a “wake up call” of linguistic inequality, and (3) encourage[ing] teachers and students to interrogate received discourses on language, which are always connected to issues of race, gender, power, class, and sexuality” (as cited in Baker-Bell, 2013, p.358). To expand resource- or assets-based approaches of the past, teachers must understand that demographic shifts, globalization and 21st century literacies have complicated the kinds of pedagogies that have been considered “culturally relevant” (Ladson-Billings, 1995). As Paris and Ball (2009) write in their discussion of culturally and linguistically complex classrooms, “We cannot identify linguistic or cultural practices by ethnicity alone, nor can we predict the hybrid language and literacies that emerge within such contexts” (p.390).

Though my project adds to the growing body of literature that provides practical, classroom examples of such new approaches to the education of diverse, linguistically marginalized young people (Baker-Bell, 2013; Godley & Minnici, 2008; García & Kleyn, 2016; García, Johnson & Seltzer, 2017; de los Rios & Seltzer, forthcoming), it expands such studies by focusing, too, on the connections between theory, practice, and identity development when teachers themselves engage in this work. My project also adds to literature on Third Space in the classroom (Gutiérrez, 1995, 2008; Moje, 2004) by exploring the ways in which a teacher’s theory-based classroom practice – from curricular choices to classroom talk – contributes both to the construction of such Third Spaces and to the possibility of new teacher identities that integrate the personal and the professional.

**Teacher generativity and ideological becoming**

In a longitudinal study of teacher education, Ball (2009) focused on *generativity*, or “teachers’
ability to continually add to their understanding by connecting their personal and professional knowledge with the knowledge that they gain from their students to produce or originate knowledge that is useful to them in pedagogical problem solving and in meeting the educational needs of their students” (p.47). Ball worked with teachers in culturally and linguistically complex classrooms in both the U.S. and South Africa and created a professional development program with a strong theoretical foundation. The program asked teachers to make personal connections to the theory as well as create theoretically informed action research projects with their students.

Taking a sociocultural approach, Ball views generativity as a process of “cognitive change…that takes place within an individual’s zone of proximal development if he or she is allowed to grow within safe spaces where risk taking is encouraged” (p.66). As teachers in her study were introduced to relevant theory, organized around the concepts of metacognitive awareness, ideological becoming (Bakhtin, 1981), internalization (Vygotsky, 1978), and teacher efficacy, they also participated in reflective writing and discussion about themselves and their practice. By integrating theory and new instructional strategies into their existing practice, teachers were able to replace feelings of “insecurity, discomfort, and inadequacy” around teaching in culturally and linguistically complex classrooms with feelings of “agency, advocacy, and efficacy” (p.46).

Ball writes that Bakhtin’s concept of ideological becoming “suggests that the coming together of new perspectives, new ideas, and new voices is essential to a person’s growth” (p.49). This kind of growth is catalyzed by “engagement with the discourses of others” in ways that influence “our ideologies, thoughts, beliefs, and ways of theorizing about a body of ideas, their origins, and how they operate” (p.49). As with any encounter with new discourses and
ideas, there is an inherent tension in this process of ideological becoming. This dialogic process challenges what individuals have assumed to be true – about themselves, about the world – and introduces new truths through alternative narratives. In Ball’s approach to teacher development, the “discourses of others” that teachers engaged with came both from the theoretical framework that informed their practice and the voices of the students they taught. As teachers’ own approaches to practice, and their sense of self, was put into dialogue with this multiplicity of new “voices,” they adopted new pedagogical stances, which became integrated in their evolving identities.

Like Ball’s work with teachers, I aimed to build my work with Lauren on a strong theoretical foundation. Thus, before the school year began, Lauren and I met several times to discuss readings that I suggested. Before meeting, Lauren and I read separately, taking notes and preparing questions, commentary, and connections to the classroom work. Through these discussions about theory and practice, we put together ideas for a curriculum that challenged students to engage in the same kind of thinking we ourselves were engaged in. This study expands Ball’s work through its case study format; over the course of a year, I was able to observe Lauren translate these new theoretical understandings into practice and talk with her about her evolving ideas. As will be seen in this chapter, as she dialogued with new theoretical ideas and approaches to practice, with me, and with her students in the classroom, she become engaged in the kind of generativity Ball promotes.

I connect Ball’s work around generativity with Third Space theories. As teachers engage in the process of ideological becoming, as they grapple with the integration of disparate voices and narratives into their subjectivities, there is necessarily struggle and tension. As a teacher questions a traditional (authoritative, hegemonic, monoglossic) script and allows students’
counter scripts to surface, new space is made for co-learning and ideological shift. What teachers do with such shift – how they encounter “Third Space moments” is an important element of educating teachers who work in culturally and linguistically complex classrooms.

**Third Space**

There have been different conceptions of the term “Third Space” (Bhaba, 1994; Gutiérrez, 1995, 2008; Moje, 2004; Soja, 1996), but each, at its core, is about moving past false dichotomies and binaries towards an emergent realm of possibility, innovation, criticality, and hybridity. For those scholars, like Gutiérrez and Moje, who take up Third Space theories in educational research, this means working towards an understanding of how new learning and knowledge production can occur by transcending binaries such as home/school, teacher/student, first language/second language, etc. To open up such Third Space in the classroom means interrogating the power relations and hierarchies that inform such binaries.

For Moje and her colleagues (2004), for example, this interrogation involves breaking down and (re)integrating the literacies of “home” and “school” (as well as other sources and networks that shape students’ literacies) so that “everyday resources are integrated with disciplinary learning to construct new texts and new literacy practices, ones that merge the different aspects of knowledge and ways of knowing offered in a variety of different spaces” (p.44). Through in-depth ethnographic work with young Latinx students both in and out of school, Moje et al explore the various texts and resources that inform students’ content area literacy development. Their findings indicate that students’ funds of knowledge (Moll et al, 1992) – including family, community, peer group, and popular culture – could be connected to literacy experiences in the content area classroom. By integrating students’ various spaces (physical and metaphorical spaces), Moje et al imagine a Third Space “that brings the texts
framed by everyday Discourses and knowledges into classrooms in ways that challenge, destabilize, and, ultimately, expand the literacy practices that are typically valued in school and in the everyday world” (p.44).

Over the course of nearly twenty years, Gutiérrez has explored the concept of Third Space. In early work, Gutiérrez, Rymes and Larson (1995) bring together Third Space theory with Bakhtin’s work on heteroglossia. They characterize the two spaces within the classroom – that of the teacher and that of the students – as having their own “scripts,” which are “characterized by particular social, spatial, and language patterns” (p.449). The teacher’s script is the “official” script and is imbued, through repetitive practice, with power. The students’ script – which by its nature subverts the teacher’s script – contains “local knowledge that is neither recognized nor included within the teacher script” (p.451). It is when “teacher and students let go, slightly, of their defensive hold on their exclusive cultures” that “the interaction between their scripts creates a third space for unscripted improvisation, where the traditionally binary nature of the student and teacher script is disrupted” (p.453).

More recently, Gutiérrez (2008) has linked a conception of Third Space with what she terms sociocritical literacy. Through her work with a summer program at UCLA that brings high school students from migrant farmworker backgrounds to campus to take part in a variety of powerful learning activities, she describes how the space became an articulation of the zone of proximal development (ZPD). The discourse of this Third Space was oriented towards the future – not just an academic future, but the creation of a better world. Students were invited into this future thinking through the development of sociocritical literacy, or “a historicizing literacy that privileges and is contingent upon students’ sociohistorical lives, both proximally and distally” (p.149). As students gained access to skills that helped them succeed academically, they also
learned more about their own histories and about who they are in the present. In this way, a “collective Third Space” was created as students brought together experiences and literacies from different spaces in their lives – including those ascribed to an “academic” space – and imagined a new, more just future for themselves and their communities.

In this chapter, I build upon these conceptions of classroom Third Space. Similar to Gutiérrez’s work, I explore those pedagogical and linguistic “moves” that contribute to the opening up of a Third Space. Like what Gutiérrez refers to as a “grammar of hope,” which included a prevalence of “metaphors that referred to dreaming” and “modals, questions, volitional directives (want/wanna), verbs as evidentials, direct directives, and conceptual metaphors that promoted participation in shared practices and oriented students toward cognitive activity” (p.157), I look closely at Lauren’s classroom talk to understand how her language contributed to the opening of Third Space moments. I also examine such Third Space moments, unpacking how students’ unofficial scripts came to the surface of the classroom. These moments provide important insights about power structures at work in the classroom. As well, I discuss how Lauren experienced these Third Space moments and how they may have contributed to shifts in her professional and personal identity.

Findings

Making space for Third Space: Pedagogical moves

Lauren’s pedagogical choices and classroom talk contributed to the creation of what Canagarajah (1997), drawing on Pratt (1991), calls “safe houses” for linguistically marginalized students in the English classroom. Through her approach to instruction and her explicit invitation of students’ language practices and translingual sensibilities, Lauren aimed to create a space “where students can interrogate, negotiate, and appropriate new rhetorical and discursive forms without
fear of institutional penalties” (p.191). In his discussion of code meshing, Canagarajah (2011) discusses the important related strategy of recontextualization, or “gauging the congeniality of the context for codemeshing and shaping ecology to favor one’s multilingual practices” (p.404). In this first section, I illustrate how Lauren fostered such congeniality for heteroglossia – which I argue made room for Third Space moments to emerge – through a broadening and redefining of conventional terms, use of what I term a language of solidarity, and various pedagogical moves that pushed students to challenge monoglossic expectations in texts.

Broadening and redefining vocabulary of the English classroom

One of the pedagogical moves Lauren made that connected to glimpses of Third Space moments was her explicit talk around broader conceptions of language and literacy practices. This included moves that seemed small, but taken together created a sense of flexibility around traditional concepts in the English classroom. For example, early on in the year, we introduced language journals, an on-going assignment that asked students to reflect on their everyday encounters with the concepts we explored in class. As students engaged with new ideas about language, we asked them to connect those ideas to things they read outside of class, came across on social media, heard from friends or family, etc. Students shared their journal entries with one another, and several became the basis for whole-class discussions throughout the year. When introducing the language journal, Lauren explicitly opened up the assignment to linguistic flexibility:

| So, your language journal is yours, right? It’s about your language use, your language practices, and your identity. So you can write in whatever style of language or language practices you see fit. You want to be paying attention to how you use language and how that connects to who you are. (Classroom transcript, 11/5/15) |
A broader conception of language and literacy was also present in Lauren’s chosen classroom “vocabulary.” As we saw in the above excerpt of her classroom talk, Lauren used the term “language practices” from the first day of class. Students took up this shift in terminology in their own talk and writing (they used the term in their college essays, as seen in chapter 6). In fact, Lauren relayed to me that students were using the phrase outside the classroom, even with figures of authority. Via text, Lauren wrote to me, “the AP today was like, all the kids keep telling me ‘don’t have misconceptions about me based on my language practices!’” This kind of uptake of vocabulary – especially when speaking with someone like the Assistant Principal – illustrates students’ integration of such language into their own repertoire and a willingness to challenge narrow, limiting perceptions of their languaging.

Lauren’s redefinition of other common terms also invited broader conceptions of them than is typically found in English classrooms. During their author study unit, Lauren focused students’ attention on their authors’ “voice” in their writing. To get them thinking about the idea of voice, Lauren posed the following question as the do now for the lesson: “Think about your favorite singer/rapper/artist. What makes his/her voice distinct? What do you like about it?” In response, Yessica and Lauren had the following interaction:

Yessica: Miss, I have question. What’s the difference – for example, when you’re saying “artist” and like a “singer” artist?

Lauren: That’s a good question. The reason that I wrote singer, rapper, or artist is that an artist is anyone who creates art. And art is whatever you define it to be. So some people think of art as like a painting, other people think of art as music, poetry, um, sculpture, dance, writing. So there’s lots of different – it’s open to interpretation. It’s open to you deciding what it means to you. So when I put “artist” it lets us think about anybody. The same way when I put “text” I don’t always mean a piece of writing. A text can be a commercial, it can be a photograph, it can be a scene you’re acting out. Yeah, that’s a very good question, thank you for asking it.

(Classroom transcript, 4/20/16)

In her answer to Yessica’s question, Lauren opens up the concepts of “artist/art” and “text” in ways that make them more flexible. “Art,” for example, is “whatever you define it to be.”
“Text,” too, extends past “a piece of writing” to a more multimodal conceptualization. Important to her talk around “art” and the “artist” is the way she frames students as the arbiters of such concepts. “Art” is “open to you deciding what it means to you.” An “artist” can be “anybody.” This kind of redefining of well-worn terms – and this positioning of students as authorities on these terms – was important in a classroom that challenged monoglossic ideologies; it contributed to the sense that terms like “art” and “texts” (as well as “language”) were malleable and, as Lauren put it, “open to interpretation.”

Lastly, Lauren’s redefinition of the idea of “English” itself was key to broadening the scope of the class overall. During one class discussion, Jania and Steven were engaged in a back-and-forth debating the differences between “standard” English and “proper” English, which they argued were separate concepts. The debate had emerged after students were asked the following do now question: “Do you have to use ‘proper’ English to sound smart?” The provocative question engaged the whole class in lively discussion, and after Jania and Steven had talked for a few minutes, Lauren stepped in:

The two of you are bringing up an important point, which is why I used quotation marks. There’s no standard definition of “proper” English. If there were a “proper” then there’d be an “improper.” We’ve talked all year about the idea of language practices, not right or wrong, or good or bad, or proper or improper. This is our class where we have some really advanced thinking about language. In society, people still have some pretty old-school ideas, where they say there’s formal or informal, proper or improper, good English or bad English, White English or Black English. We’ve talked a lot about these different labels people put on language. But the question I’m asking with “proper” in quotation marks is basically, if we use any other of our language practices, are people going to misjudge us as unintelligent? Do people only judge you as smart if you use only what’s considered “standard” or “proper” English? (Classroom transcript, 3/14/16)

In her reframing of Jania and Steven’s debate over the difference between “proper” and “standard” English, Lauren is, in effect, asking students not to lose sight of the forest for the trees. This broader take on language practices and the ideologies that deem certain practices
“proper” (or “standard”) and others “improper” made way for students to see past such terms. Through this reframing – and through her choice to surround the word “proper” in quotation marks on the board – Lauren modeled a contestation of the term’s authority and encouraged students themselves to contest such terms.

Taking up a language of solidarity

In the above excerpt, we see Lauren set the classroom apart as a space that has “some really advanced thinking about language.” By framing the English classroom as a kind of lab site for “advanced,” innovative, and creative thinking and languaging, Lauren fostered a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1999) in which everyone – including Lauren herself – learned from one another. Lauren’s classroom talk, which I refer to here as a language of solidarity, points to the sense of co-learning and community that emerged in the classroom.

When Lauren set the class apart, as she did in the above excerpt, she aligned herself with students through the pronouns “we,” “us,” and “our.” For example, during one class, Lauren paused a conversation when she noticed students struggling to answer her questions about a particular text. After she reassured students that the work they were engaged in was “really sophisticated stuff,” Oscar, a student who had moved from the Dominican Republic only two years prior, asked a question that pushed Lauren to expand upon her role as a co-learner:

| Lauren: We’re doing really sophisticated stuff in our class because you guys are extremely intelligent and can handle it. But the outside world isn’t quite ready for us. They’re not quite on par with the level of thinking that we have, so these are big ideas. And if you’re feeling like, “I’m not sure how to answer this, I don’t really get this question,” that’s ok. These are really big questions and I think a lot of the teachers at this school don’t quite have the – they don’t think about language the way we do in here.  
Oscar: Including yourself?  
L: Well, I certainly have evolved a lot in my thinking about language over the course of this year. Because I’ve learned a lot with you guys about the history of different language practices and how people who have power determined what language is considered good or valid and people who didn’t have power, their languages – or language practices – were considered |
In characterizing the class as engaged in a kind of radical learning, Lauren sets the classroom apart from “the outside world.” As a community, the class is operating on a level that people on the outside – including other teachers at the school – aren’t “quite ready” for. Interestingly, this prompts Oscar to question Lauren’s affiliation with students (“we”) rather than other teachers (“they”). In her response, Lauren takes up a co-learning stance (García & Li Wei, 2014), which “moves the teacher and the learner toward a more ‘dynamic and participatory engagement’ in knowledge construction” (p.112). Interestingly, a few minutes after this exchange between Lauren and Oscar, Oscar offered his thoughts on whether, as the class was discussing, writers should change their language practices to be compatible with their audience.

The following exchange ensued:

Oscar: I think no, Miss, we shouldn’t change our language practice because then it’s never gonna change. If we keep changing our language practices, everybody’s gonna keep thinking that we’re not educated – that the way we speak is not educated. So if we start, maybe, incorporating our language practices, they gonna get like a different perspective?

Lauren: Well, that’s right up there as of the most intelligent things I’ve heard today. Really, really profound. If we always adjust our language practices, then we perpetuate, we keep the idea that there are certain ways of speaking that are good and certain ways that are bad. So let’s not change, let’s use our language practices and resist the ideas of what’s good and what’s bad that society has. (Classroom transcript, 3/14/16)

In his response, Oscar seems to take up the language of solidarity set forth by Lauren. His use of “we” and “our” seems to encompass the classroom of writers (or, perhaps more broadly, writers in general whose language practices do not align with expectations of a “standard”), and he suggests that by “incorporating our language practices,” perhaps “they” will get a different perspective. Oscar’s comment, which earned high praise from Lauren, prompted her to take up an even stronger language of solidarity, aligning herself with students and encouraging the class as a whole to “use our language practices and resist” society’s marginalization of those practices.
Though Lauren, a White, elite-educated, English-speaking woman, does not find herself marginalized by raciolinguistic ideologies, she used a language of solidarity to align herself with her students over “society” (including other teachers). As we see in the excerpt below, Lauren continued to use this kind of “we/us/our” framing even when the “they” being referenced could very easily include someone like her. In discussions about the use of different language practices in students’ college essays, there was much talk about the riskiness inherent to such a choice. Some students felt that the college essay genre was not open to such risks, and that readers of their essays would not welcome their translanguaging. In one conversation, a student posed the question, “What if it’s not what they’re looking for?” Lauren responded:

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Well, that’s a good point, too. What are they looking for is something for us to think about and [pause] how could we both give them what they’re looking for and also…push some of the limits that we might see or think exist? I understand that you feel a little concerned about that. To be honest, I do too. It’s a risk; it’s a new kind of…radical idea that we have. But we’ll work through it together. (Classroom transcript, 4/5/16)
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Again, Lauren refers to the potential readers of students’ college essays as “they”—they are on the outside; they are not privy to the sophisticated thinking students have been engaged in; they may not be able to handle students’ “radical idea[s]”. However, she also acknowledges the very real fear that underlies the student’s question, and admits that yes, writing in this way is a risk. As she does this, Lauren takes up the “we” pronoun again, assuring the student, and the class as a whole, that they will not be alone if they do decide to take such a risk.

*Subverting monoglossic expectations in texts*

Another pedagogical move Lauren made that fostered and brought to the surface students’ translingual sensibilities was pushing them to critique and even subvert the often-unacknowledged monoglossic expectations present in classroom texts. One way she did this was by explicitly inviting students to include different language practices in an otherwise English-
medium piece. As they prepared to create translingual college essays, Lauren scaffolded this final project by making space for students to take smaller linguistic risks in their writing. For example, after reading the poem “Bilingual/Bilingüe” by Rhina P. Espaillat, which explores how language shapes a daughter’s relationship with her father, Lauren asked students to think about the language practices of their own families in preparation for creating their own poetry.

She asked students to begin the writing process by brainstorming a word or phrase they remember a parent or family member saying to them about their language practices. One student, Janet, shared:

Janet: When I’m at my grandparents’ house and I speak English they start yelling at me. So my grandfather will be like, ‘you’re not a real English speaker, speak your language.’
Lauren: Is he saying that in English or in Spanish?
J: Spanish.
L: Do you feel like you could write that down in Spanish?
J: Yeah, I could write it down. I hear it every day, of course I can write it down. [Laughter.]
L: That might be an interesting way to include his actual language practices – the ones that you’re hearing – in your poem. (Classroom transcript, 2/26/16)

By providing students with a bilingual poem (Espaillat uses both English and Spanish) and encouraging them to include the “actual language practices” of their families, Lauren made space for students to experiment with creating texts that transgress monoglossic expectations. By emphasizing that students should write what they hear, she invited the inherently dynamic and fluid language practices always at work in linguistically complex families and communities (García, 2009) into students’ school writing.

Lauren also encouraged students to interrogate the ideologies that they themselves projected onto texts. After students wrote their “My English” poems (see chapter 4), Lauren chose one from each class to analyze as a group. The chosen poem became a model for the use of poetic devices (an understanding students had to demonstrate on the Regents exam) and served as a jumping off point for a larger discussion about poetic analysis. For period 7, the class that
contained the largest number of students labeled “English Language Learners,” Lauren chose a poem written by Elena, a recently arrived student from the Dominican Republic. Elena was an older student, 19 years old in her junior year. Elena was an incredibly hard worker, and she spoke constantly about the importance of learning English to her life, despite how difficult it was for her. Elena’s poem spoke to this complex relationship with her new language.

Lauren gave the class a photocopy of the poem (with Elena’s name removed), which, as a result of her emergent writing practices in English, contained what students read as “errors.” When she asked someone to read the poem aloud, Osvaldo volunteered. As he read, he stumbled over some of the writing, and there was quiet laughter from several students in the class. After Osvaldo finished reading, Lauren began the discussion:

| Robert: I don’t understand this. Who wrote this? |
| L: A brilliant student who shall remain anonymous. What do you like about the poem, Robert? |
| R: I don’t like nothing, Miss. |
| L: You don’t like anything? [Some students in the class comment that this isn’t a nice thing to say. Robert backpedals a bit, and Lauren tells him to “look again.”] |
| R: She’s writing…she’s writing…it’s broken. Her English is broken, the way she’s writing. |
| L: So…tell me a part you’re looking at. [Pause] Amir, what’s so funny? [Amir demurs, doesn’t answer Lauren’s question.] So I know Amir is not laughing at the English in the poem – Amir: Nah, nah, nah. |
| L: I know he’s not, but let’s talk about it. Is the English in the poem what we might consider “perfect”? [Some in the class respond with, “no.”] No. |
| Teresa: No, there’s no such thing as perfect English. |
| L: Exactly right, Teresa, there’s no such thing as perfect English. And I think that this poem has so many really beautiful elements that are being done in the person’s second language and that’s really, really difficult to do. I don’t think I could do that in Italian and I’ll bet a lot of us would struggle to do that. So we’re not looking at this from a place of judgment because, like Teresa said, there’s no such thing as perfect English. We’re looking at it to see what we can learn from it. There’s so much good stuff here that we can learn. (Classroom transcript, 12/10/15) |

Because the class contained emergent bilingual students and students who were considered “monolingual” English speakers, the choice to use Elena’s poem as a model challenged the idea that the “native” English speakers were the only linguistic experts or models.
Instead, as Lauren explicitly states, there is “so much good stuff” in Elena’s poem “that we can learn.” In addition, her use of Elena’s poem brought students’ existing language ideologies to the surface, forcing the class as a whole to interrogate them. When Robert called the language of the poem “broken” and said there was nothing about it he liked, and when Amir (and other students) laughed at the poem, Lauren pushed them to examine their own monolingual lenses and reconsider or re-see it for its value. By “naming” the language ideologies at work on the poem, by acknowledging that the poem is not (and could not) be “perfect,” Lauren normalizes the work of students whose written English practices are emergent and promotes a more heteroglossic (and generous) approach to texts overall.

A final “text” that Lauren pushed students to interrogate or subvert was the English Regents exam. Coming back to Lauren’s pedagogical move of redefining conventional terms, she decided early in the year to name “Regents writing” as its own language practice. In the way, the language used on the Regents was not only characterized as specific to a “genre” (the test) but was put on the same level as other language practices we discussed, such as “AAVE” and “slang.” By naming “Regents writing,” Lauren sent the message that the language of the test was simply a new practice students could add to their own repertoire, not the monolithic, vaguely defined “academic language” that they lacked. Because students were juniors, the Regents loomed large in their minds. They knew that they had to pass the test not only to pass the class, but to graduate from high school. As stated already, there were seniors who came to school solely for Lauren’s English class because they needed to pass the exam in order to graduate.

Lauren understood the importance of the test, and took students’ performances on it quite seriously. However, as students discussed the inclusion of different language practices in their
college essays, she took a more transgressive stance towards the Regents. The exchange begins when Lauren identifies that one student, Linda, is skeptical about translanguaging in her essay:

Lauren: Linda, I see your face, what do you think? What do you think the teacher’s reaction would be?
Linda: That you’re not following directions.
Gina: So the directions on [the essay]—it says don’t use Spanish, don’t use slang?
L: So if the directions say, as on the Regents they do, “follow the conventions of standard academic English,” you are not following directions, that’s right. But we talked about how that could potentially be an opportunity for an act of resistance, resisting those rules because we don’t agree with them. We don’t think there’s only one way to sound smart. (Classroom transcript, 3/16/16)

Though Lauren acknowledges that there are stated rules on the Regents that dictate the kind of language students should use, she also floats the idea of *resisting* such rules because “we don’t agree with them.” Rather than reify discourses of appropriateness (Flores & Rosa, 2015), Lauren pushed students to question such discourses, even on an important assessment like the Regents. Though Lauren diligently prepared her students for the exam—including explicit instruction that emphasized the “Regents writing” expected of them—this kind of classroom talk also points to the possibility of transgression of the linguistic rules that govern students’ in-school literacy practices.

*Third Space moments: What comes up?*

Having laid out some of the pedagogical and linguistic moves Lauren made that invited and fostered students’ translingual sensibilities and practices—from broadening and redefining the vocabulary of the English classroom, to the use of a language of solidarity with students, to a subversion of monoglossic expectations in texts—I turn to the Third Space moments that emerged in the classroom. Building particularly off of Gutierrez, Rymes, and Larson’s (1995) early conception of Third Space, I see these moments as glimpses of a third “script” that transcends the teacher’s authoritative script and students’ subversive counter-scripts. In the
moments when students’ counter-scripts – so often relegated to what the authors, citing Goffman (1961), call the “underlife” of the classroom – came to the surface of whole class discussions, there emerged new possibilities for classroom roles and power structures. In this section, then, I lay out elements of students’ counter-scripts that emerged in these Third Space moments, particularly their transgressive talk about their teachers and their critique of the English class itself.

**Transgressive talk about teachers**

In our discussion of Amy Tan’s essay, “My Mother’s English,” students encountered the phrase “broken English.” There was much discussion of this term amongst students, and several said they agreed that there was such a thing as “broken” language. Lauren and I saw this as an opportunity to dig into the language ideologies at work in such a phrase, and designed a week-long inquiry into the term. Students read several texts that took up and deconstructed the term, had small group and whole class discussions around their findings, and ultimately created posters that contained quotes from texts they read, images they drew or printed out that represented a “central idea” about their inquiry, and original phrases that summarized students’ learning. At the beginning of the week of inquiry into the term, Lauren provided the following quote and asked students to respond to it: “Never make fun of someone who speaks broken English. It means they know another language.” After some initial discussion, one student, Josh, offered a connection to his science teacher, who was originally from China:

| Josh: I was about to say, I see how people like make fun of [teacher], like how he talk and stuff. |
| L: Uh-huh. |
| Yessica: Oh yeah. |
| Gina: Oh, like [another teacher]! Instead of spinach she says ‘spee-nach.’ [Laughter from class] |
| Maya: He just talk like, [does an impression of the science teacher in a stylized Chinese accent] “hello class, hello class” – [Lots of laughter] |

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8 This small project was adapted from Aida Walqui’s (2010) Collaborative Poster activity.
L: So –

Yessica: But we all talk some kind of a way, then.

Dominic: [Also does an impression of the science teacher in a stylized Chinese accent] “OK stupid.” [Laughter continues]

L: Go ahead Yessica, you were saying?

Y: Um, like, we find that weird, like when they speak like that, but imagine how they would feel when we speak, probably. I don’t know, they feel some type of way too. They probably be making fun of us too, I’m not gonna lie.

J: You ever notice how offended they get when you try to correct them, though?

L: Well…when you say ‘they,’ I don’t know who you’re referring to.

J: Like, alright, case in point, when you try to correct [the science teacher], he always gets an attitude, like “you know what I’m trying to say,” but I’m just trying to help you enunciate your words better. You try to tell me what’s the homework, and I’m lookin’ at you like, “I don’t understand what you’re saying,” so when I repeat the word you’re trying to say, you get your same attitude? (Classroom transcript + field notes, 11/23/15)

The concept of “broken English” seemed to bring forth students’ own language ideologies about accent. Because the science teacher speaks English with an accent, students identified his English as “broken.” Though Yessica offers a different interpretation, putting herself in the teachers’ shoes and asserting that teachers have their own perceptions of students’ language practices, other students rejected this interpretation and took up a different point of view. In addition to Maya and Dominic’s stereotypical impressions of the teacher’s accent, Jania says that “they” (referring to the teacher, and perhaps other “broken English” speakers) get offended when she corrects their English. When Lauren pushes Jania to be more specific, she says that when she tried to help the teacher “enunciate his words better,” he got “an attitude.”

After this exchange, Lauren attempted to get the class back “on task” by transitioning to an activity that asked students to read different texts on the phrase “broken English.” After they did so, and after they shared their thoughts on the reading, Lauren brought the class back to their earlier talk around their science teacher:

Lauren: So earlier when we had the discussion, right, about [teacher] and potentially…his reactions… I think Jania, you mentioned not liking how he reacted and someone brought up the fact, like, well, he’s responding to feeling like he’s being made fun of, we’re talking about… we're talking about him in a pejorative way, right, we’re talking about him in kind of a
When Lauren asserts authority – enforcing what kind of conversation is “appropriate to have in the classroom and to have about your teachers” – students do not consent. Jania’s sarcastic comment destabilizes Lauren’s “lecture” and Maya and Dominic push back, reiterating that the teacher calls them “dumb” and “stupid” and making the class laugh again through parody and impression of his accent. When students refused to submit to Lauren’s teacherly authority, they also seemed to refuse the narrative that they, as students, did not have the right to talk critically about their teachers, especially those who they felt disrespected them. Jania’s sarcasm and Dominic’s performance of the teacher’s accented English enabled them to take back the narrative, subverting the imposition of Lauren’s authoritative script and forcing their own counter-script to the surface.

*Questioning English and English instruction*

Jania and Dominic seemed to use their status as speakers of un-accented (or “un-broken”) English to upend power relations between them and a teacher they felt disrespected them. Their ability to speak English “better” than the science teacher was a trump card, a way of pushing back against the hierarchies that granted teachers the authority to call them “dumb” and “stupid.” This counter-script overtook Lauren’s indictment of their talk as “inappropriate,” and subverted Lauren’s traditional teacher script and role. One could also read Jania and Dominic’s assertion of their own English expertise over their teacher as a way of destabilizing the raciolinguistic ideologies that many teachers communicate to students. In a similar way, Third Space moments
occurred when students questioned English instruction and even English itself – its purpose, its “hidden audience,” and its transmission, through Lauren, of a hegemonic standard upon their language practices.

In an introductory conversation about the links between language and power, students were given a series of discussion questions that they would attempt to “answer” over the course of the unit. One question asked students if they thought their teachers held biases about their language practices. As students shared their experiences – and many affirmed that teachers did, in fact, hold negative views of their language practices – Natasha shared a story, which Jacqui related to a text the class had read:

Natasha: I remember that happened to me. The teacher told me that [speaking Spanish] was rude, but I didn’t find it rude because it was like eight kids in the classroom and we all speak Spanish, and she was like, “oh don’t speak Spanish it’s rude.”
Jacqui: That’s like the passage we read…I want to be comfortable to use my languages when I want to. Like I shouldn’t be criticized against the way I speak, like, if I want to speak this language, I want to speak it. Maybe it’s helping me more than English. (Classroom transcript, 2/29/16)

After the two students questioned teachers’ policing of their language practices – even if those practices help them “more than English,” Lauren asked them, and the class as a whole, a follow-up question:

Lauren: Do you guys think that teachers – when they tell you to speak English – are ever suggesting that because you’re in school and we’re – school… I’m wondering if ever they’re telling you not to speak Spanish because it’s more important to be speaking English in school. And I don’t know. What do you guys think?
Tania: There’s classes for Spanish speaking kids and the teacher speaks Spanish to them so what’s the problem?
Jacqui: Yeah, and it’s not like English is mandatory.
L: That’s a good point. Yeah, it’s just – just a curiosity. (Classroom transcript, 2/29/16)

When Lauren suggested that teachers’ rationale for policing students’ language practices is because “it’s more important to be speaking English in school,” Tania and Jacqui immediately pushed back. If it were more important to speak English, Tania asks, why were there classes in
Spanish for Spanish-speakers? And, though in reality English (as a class) is mandatory, Jacqui’s comment destabilizes the very necessity of English. Lauren heard the two students, acknowledged their points, and backed off.

When analyzing Larry Wilmore’s Correspondents Dinner speech (for a description of how this speech was used in class, see chapter 5), students engaged in sophisticated discussion about audience. Whether or not people of color should cater to an audience of White listening subjects in their speech and writing became a topic of intense debate, and Faith had strong opinions on the subject:

I feel like, me personally [pause] personally, I could really care less about the White audience. ‘Cause that’s not my audience. I don’t relate to the White – to the White society. Um, it’s not that I wouldn’t want to learn about White society, I mean I’m around it in school, I have teachers – like you, who are [White]. I don’t wanna sound offensive, but I’m just saying I could really care less. When I write my poetry and when I write my songs, I’m not doing it for people who live in suburban – in suburbs. I’m doing it for my people, for my block, for people I know who could relate to me. That’s my audience, that’s my truth. (Classroom transcript, 5/10/16)

By dismissing a White audience, Faith voices a perspective that she acknowledges might “sound offensive,” especially to Lauren, whose Whiteness she names explicitly. The fact that her own writing is not for “White society” or “people who live in suburbs,” is her “truth,” and asserting this truth was important, even if it offended. Faith’s delegitimizing of the White listening subject – the “hidden audience” present in English instruction, especially writing instruction – is subversive; it is not an opinion commonly voiced in English class. Her willingness to do so represents a shift in what is typically “sanctioned” in student talk as well as a shift in thinking around issues of power.

In the last chapter, I explored students’ college essay writing as well as their talk around that writing. Revisiting an excerpt of classroom transcript from that chapter, we see how Andrew’s attempt to include a translation of his oral languaging in his writing was read, by
Lauren, as an error. When Lauren asks Andrew to read a piece of his essay aloud, she identified that a word was missing, but Andrew pushed back:

The problem is, you – it’s like, you don’t know our lingo, Miss. (Classroom transcript, 5/20/16)

In the last chapter, I suggested that Andrew’s foray into translingual writing was “policed” in this moment; his attempt to translate his oral language into his writing resulted in Lauren’s assessment that he had made a mistake. However, this feeling of being “pressed” by Lauren, as Andrew put it, was not taken passively. Andrew asserted the validity of his language practices and explicitly identified Lauren’s lack of knowledge about their “lingo” as the source of the problem. Though the moment was light –Andrew did not act outwardly angry or hurt – this exchange suggests that students may have been emboldened by Lauren’s moves, over the course of the year, to validate and center their language practices. In a way, then, Andrew’s flipping the script and finding fault in Lauren’s diagnosis of error in his writing is an inevitable (and positive!) result of instruction that challenges those ideologies that legitimate certain language practices over others.

“Struggling with another’s discourse”: A teacher’s experience of Third Space moments

As seen in the above examples of Third Space moments, the upending of traditional “scripts” in the English classroom often involved Lauren herself. Because the curriculum we designed and she implemented intentionally encouraged students to interrogate the raciolinguistic ideologies at work in students’ lives, she was necessarily on the receiving end of this destabilization. As we saw in the previous section, when students talked openly about their teachers or questioned assumptions about the power structures at work in English instruction itself, they seemed to wrest authority away from Lauren. Though this role shift is necessary to the opening of Third Space moments, it is not always comfortable. In fact, discomfort, tension, and struggle are
integral to the process of ideological becoming. As Bakhtin (1981) puts it, “The importance of struggling with another’s discourse, its influence in the history of an individual’s coming to ideological consciousness, is enormous” (p. 348). That being said, there is little attention paid – both in scholarly literature and in teacher preparation – to what this struggle looks like from a teacher’s point of view. Thus, in this last section I return to several of the Third Space moments already explored, as well as introduce Lauren’s own commentary in an extended interview I conducted in June 2016, in order to explore how Third Space moments that challenge language ideologies are experienced by a teacher.

Dealing with discomfort

In several of the interactions discussed in the last section – Jania and Dominic parodying their Chinese science teacher’s accented English, Natasha, Tania, and Jacqui pushing back on her question about the enforcement of English in school, Andrew calling her out for not knowing his “lingo” – Lauren was put on the proverbial ropes. In these Third Space moments, Lauren was forced to confront students’ counter-scripts in real time. At times, Lauren responded by distancing herself. For example, after the moment when students parodied the teacher, Lauren attempted to regain control by telling students that talking about their teachers in this way was not “appropriate” for class. Undeterred, the students continued their talk through sarcasm and parody. I return to that excerpt, and add Lauren’s talk, which occurred directly after:

Lauren: […] [W]e're talking about [teacher] in a pejorative way, right, we're talking about him in kind of a negative way, so that’s not an appropriate conversation to have in the classroom and to have about your teachers.
Maya: [The teacher] call us stupid, he be like, “oh you stupid.”
Dominic: He be like [taking back up the stylized accent] “OK dumb, OK stupid” – [Lots of laughter from the class]
L: So if he also speaks about you in a pejorative way – the point is we want…we want to be careful, right, when we're talking about different people and thinking about these issues and
making sure we don’t have a pejorative attitude towards them. Because judgment is a very
loaded thing, right, it’s very easy to judge things [pause] especially in terms of language. Guys,
we’re a little off today so let’s try to stay focused. So a quick review of central idea, because as
we know this is the major skill we’re focusing on. (Classroom transcript, 11/23/15)

Lauren navigated a number of elements in this Third Space moment. First, she was
grappling with a subversion of her authority. When Jania sarcastically said, “Awwww” after
Lauren’s call to end their talk around the teacher, she challenged Lauren’s “last word” on the
subject. Second, she was grappling with a taboo issue: though students said that the teacher had
disrespected them, Lauren might not have been entirely sure this was true, as she did not see or
hear it herself. Thus, to “side” unequivocally with students might not have been possible, and
Lauren’s discomfort as students talked negatively about her colleague was palpable. Lastly, as in
her final comment, she was attempting to challenge the language ideologies that students
themselves drew on to assert authority over speaker like their teacher. As she said, “it’s very easy
to judge things [pause] especially in terms of language.” Paradoxically, in her attempt to bring
students back to a central theme of the year, she was forced to side with a teacher who students
believed disrespected them. In the end, Lauren distanced herself from this complex Third Space
moment by drawing on a conventional teacher trope (“let’s try to stay focused”) and returning to
conventional English instruction (“central idea” a literacy skill expected of students on the
English Regents).

Linguistically, Lauren distanced herself from the discomfort inherent to Third Space
moments by shifting from the language of solidarity discussed earlier, namely the use of
“we/us/our” pronouns, to the use of “they/them” and second person “you” pronouns. For
example, returning to the interaction about the enforcement of an English-only rule, Lauren
responded to students’ comments about being told not to speak Spanish at school:

Lauren: Do you guys think that teachers – when they tell you to speak English – are ever
suggesting that because you’re in school and we’re – school… I’m wondering if ever they’re telling you not to speak Spanish because it’s more important to be speaking English in school. And I don’t know. What do you guys think?
Tania: There’s classes for Spanish speaking kids and the teacher speaks Spanish to them, so what’s the problem?
Jacqui: Yeah, and it’s not like English is mandatory.
L: That’s a good point. Yeah, it’s just – just a curiosity. (Classroom transcript, 2/29/16)

As seen in the bolded words, Lauren began by distancing herself from the policing of students’ language practices; it is “they” – other teachers – who tell them to speak English, not Lauren. However, she shifted in the second line to “we,” but then in the same turn switched back to “they” (“they’re,” meaning the school, telling them not to speak Spanish). She ultimately backed off at the end of the interaction, after Tania and Jacqui pushed back. Similar to the first interaction, it is possible that Lauren was struggling with two oppositional worlds, or, to use a Third Space metaphor, scripts. Though she is a teacher, tasked with upholding the traditional script – which ideologically includes the hierarchy and importance of English – she was also privy to students’ counter-script, which pushed back against this ideology. As she vacillated between the “they” and “we” pronouns, the push-pull tension of her engagement with students’ discourses is evident.

A more concrete way that Lauren distanced herself from the discomfort of certain Third Space moments was by physically removing herself from a situation. For example, after Andrew tells her that her lack of knowledge of his “lingo” was the reason for her mis-read of his writing, I wrote in my field notes: Lauren reminds the students about the due date for the essay and walks away (Field notes, 5/20/16). The traditional organization of classrooms grants freedom of mobility to teachers, but not to students. In this way, teachers not only have access to the goings-on of the whole of the classroom; they can also remove themselves from those same activities.

As I sat with the students throughout the year, and was thus positioned physically below Lauren,
I felt how teachers’ positioning in space imbued them with more authority. However, in this moment with Andrew and the other students at the table, I also felt a groundedness that surprised me; I realized it was on Lauren – not on the students sitting at the table – to make a move, to stay or to leave the moment. In walking away, Lauren distanced herself from an uncomfortable situation, in effect ceding ground to the students (and to the students’ challenge of her authority).

Disrupting repetition: Revisiting the every-day

Though I began this section with those Third Space moments that led Lauren to distance herself, it is important to note that this was not her only response to such discomfort and tension. In other ways, she “sat” in that tension, and was able to talk through how it contributed to her professional and personal life. In this way, those moments of discomfort when she was forced to dialogue, both literally and figuratively, with students’ counter-discourses contributed to Lauren’s ideological becoming.

The experience of teaching students through a critical, translingual lens seemed to lead Lauren to question what Kumashiro (2002) refers to as “repetition” in pedagogy. Repetition, here, refers to the every-day, unquestioned practices that make up conventional classroom practice. According to Kumashiro, “people often consider some practices and relations to be part of what schools and society are supposed to be, and fail to recognize how the repetition of such practices and relations – how having to experience them again and again – can help to maintain the oppressive status quo of schools and society” (p.68). For example, though the English Regents has always been an important consideration in Lauren’s teaching, she expressed how her thinking about this exam changed over the course of the year, especially in terms of language:

What’s been interesting, too, is…everything we’re saying is…is then, kind of paused, like “now go to the Regents that reverts back to all the prior ideas that we had about language,” um, and what language is appropriate to use on a test, and what language they’re going to see on a test.
So I feel like there’s less of a space for them to feel comfortable expressing themselves because they know that they’re – it’s expected to use, you know, one form of language. (Exit interview, 6/7/16)

Lauren characterizes the Regents not as the focal point of the year – as it is often framed in English classrooms that contain linguistically marginalized students (Menken, 2008; Seltzer & Collins, 2016) – but as a “pause,” a break in the critical work students were engaged in the rest of the year. Here, Lauren grapples with the repetition inherent to this standardized exam: its importance, its ingrained language ideologies, and its effects on students. Though Lauren understood the very real effects of this test on students’ lives, she also critiqued it both here in the interview and with students themselves (i.e.: her use of the term “Regents writing” in the classroom).

Another kind of “repetition” Lauren questioned was her use of certain language. During our interview, she brought up how some of the moments that made her uncomfortable were when she used a word or a phrase that no longer “fit” within the framework of the class. This is something I, too, have struggled with in my work and we discussed how difficult it is – even when engaged in work that aims to push against limiting raciolinguistic ideologies – to break with conventional terms like “standard,” “native,” and even “language” itself. Lauren discussed this challenge, especially in unplanned classroom moments:

You know, you think fast on your feet as a teacher, so you say a lot of things without necessarily prepping. So if you don’t have a term in mind… I definitely said “proper” way more, way more than I meant to. I mean, probably only a handful of times, but it wasn’t what I meant. But you realize how easy it is to reinforce these things. (Exit interview, 6/7/16)

Lauren’s recognition of the unconscious repetition of a term like “proper” illustrates a high level of awareness about her own language use. Though this awareness did not always stave off uncomfortable moments – such as when she used “old” language that wasn’t what “she meant” –
it disrupted the repetition that so often reifies oppressive language ideologies that circulate through discourse.

As Lauren’s own practice was disrupted – both pedagogically and linguistically – so too was her view of the repetition being carried out by the school as a whole. Perhaps because of our raciolinguistic emphasis over the course of the year (including students’ explicit references to Lauren’s Whiteness), Lauren discussed the role of race in such repetition:

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I think as a school that serves this population, that’s staffed mostly by White people, it shouldn’t be much of a surprise that there’s some disengagement. Because we’re not necessarily asking [students’] needs and wants – meeting their needs and wants, willing to put aside our own ideas about what they need and recognizing that there is a lot more to it than just what we think (Exit interview, 6/7/16).
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In her comment here, Lauren takes up an important element of Kumashiro’s discussion of repetition: teachers’ assumptions of what their students “need and want” and their desire to control what they learn. He writes, “Presuming to know and control what students are to learn makes only certain kinds of changes and closes off the infinite changes yet to be imagined. This presumption is especially problematic when recognizing that all knowledge is partial” (p.76). In fact, he goes on to write, “In many ways, teaching is unknowable and uncontrollable” (p.78). Embracing the idea that teaching is, as Lauren puts it, more than “just what we think” is integral to Third Space moments, but also an obvious source of discomfort for teachers. To cede control of the authoritarian role of teacher and take up the role of co-learner is destabilizing, and brings students’ counter-scripts or alternative discourses to the surface of the classroom. However, it is this kind of necessary discomfort needed not only for teachers’ own ideological becoming, but the “infinite changes yet to be imagined” in the classroom.

“No, must continue engaging”: Interrogating privilege
Locating the source of students’ disengagement in the racial disconnect between students and staff is an example of Lauren’s interrogation of privilege, both her own and those close to her. In fact, the Third Space moments that she identified as causing her discomfort seemed to be markers of that very privilege:

A lot of this thinking was very new for me. Um, and it’s so funny, you realize you have so much privilege when you get uncomfortable thinking about things that you can avoid thinking about... because your privilege allows you that. [Laughing] So I’d be, like, trying to think about these ideas – it, like, hurt my brain, and I’d be like “no, must continue engaging.” (Exit interview, 6/7/16)

Here, Lauren identified her own privilege as the source of her discomfort. Because of her own positionality, she has been able to avoid the topics and ideas that were at the center of the classroom work. When those uncomfortable Third Space moments came up, Lauren was, upon reflection, able to identify her own desire to distance herself or disengage (as at times, in the moment, she did). Though, as she put it later in the interview, being “a White woman from an upper middle class background, from a suburb” imbued her with the privilege not to have to think about the raciolinguistic realities her students encountered every day – things that “hurt her brain” – she pushed herself to “continue engaging” with these difficult realities in her interactions with students.

This acknowledgment of her positionality and the privilege inherent to that positionality extended to Lauren’s personal life. In this way, Lauren’s interrogation of the privilege at work in her life also led her to interrogate the privilege of those around her. In her exit interview, as happened naturally over the course of the year, our conversation meandered and shifted from our work in the classroom to our personal lives and back again. Being a teacher was integral to Lauren’s identity and she related our classroom work to her relationships with her family and friends, her experiences as a wife and a mother, and her consumption and analysis of the media.
and the news. In particular, she engaged in conversations about the course content with her husband. Lauren’s husband, like Lauren, was Harvard-educated. He had found professional successful in banking, and by Lauren’s own description had done well for their family financially. In Lauren’s words, her husband was “a foil” to the work we were doing in the classroom:

| He’s this well-meaning, well-intentioned, not bigoted, open-minded, elite educated person who’s like, “well, no, the way they speak is wrong you have to teach them, like, proper grammar.” Which is such an over-simplification of such a complex issue, but when you kind of explain it to him, he’s like, “yeah…but they still need to know their grammar.” Um, and I think I’ve gotten a lot more…eloquent in my discussions with him. I think he’s still in that place where the privilege of not having to hurt yourself thinking is more appealing. You have to say, my success is in large part not due to anything I have done. I was born into a group of people who speak this particular language practice, which happens to be privileged, therefore I can maneuver much more easily through institutions. And I think it’s a lot easier to feel like, “well, no, I’m educated and speak properly.” So yeah, you know, I’d like to think I pushed his thinking, but he’s – I think it’s hard for people to recognize how unfair so much is. (Exit interview, 6/7/16) |

Despite her husband’s good intentions and open mind, she identifies him as the kind of privileged person who does acknowledge his own privilege. As she put it, he’s “still in that place” where his positionality makes it easy for him to see his success as due to his hard work, elite education, and ability to “speak properly” rather than due to his privilege. Lauren’s use of the word “still” to define her husband’s mindset, which upholds those language ideologies that limit her students, positions her as someone whose thinking has shifted (perhaps gone further) and who comes from a different “place.” Though she takes on the role of “pushing his thinking,” she still acknowledges that it’s hard for “people” (like her husband) to see the unfairness that “makes her brain hurt.”

This interrogation of privilege – both her own and her husband’s – even extended to what I read as an interrogation into my privilege as a researcher. During our interview, Lauren brought up something she had “grappled with”:
You know, one thing I’ve grappled with… I don’t know if you’ve thought about this – there’s like a bit of privilege involved in risk taking, too. [T]he idea of, like, social justice and, uh, pushing for this idea of language practices as opposed to just, like, “learn how to speak proper.” You know, it’s easy to do that from a very comfortable, tenured job where no one’s gonna – and it’s a different thing to ask students to explore those ideas. (Exit interview, 6/7/16)

The “risk taking” we asked students to engage in – which Lauren associates with “social justice” and “pushing for this idea of language practices” over simply teaching students to “speak proper” – is itself, she says, privileged. Though I do not have a comfortable, tenured job (as Lauren refers to her own), she implicitly points out that our positionality as White, (upper) middle class women makes this work around language much “easier” for us than it is for the young people of color that we worked with. Though some of what she says here echoes Kumashiro’s description of educators who resist anti-oppressive pedagogy, questioning “whether it is even ethical to knowingly lead students into possible crisis by teaching things that we expect will make them upset” (p.74), her comments certainly gave me pause. Like Kumashiro, I firmly believe – and based my project upon the belief – that “what is unethical… is leaving students in harmful repetition” (p.74). However, Lauren is not wrong in her assessment that it is easier for us (for me) to promote linguistic risk-taking than it is for the students we worked with to actually take those risks. In this way, Lauren’s interrogation of privilege extended to the very project that aimed to engage her in this thinking.

Stoking resistance: Taking on the role of agitator in and out of the classroom

The Third Space moments that challenged Lauren and made her think more critically about herself, her family, and her teaching – those moments that, in effect, caused shifts in her teaching stance – also connected to shifts in performances of her identity at school. For Lauren, teaching was not just a job, it was an important facet of her identity. She was one of the teachers who had been with the school longest, and this tenure as well as her status as an experienced, effective
teacher gained her respect among her peers. She also had a close relationship with the school’s principal, and was treated as a de facto administrator herself as she and Mr. M. collaboratively established the instructional mission of the school. Lauren had also taken on a number of roles at the school that built up her “cred”: instructional coach and teacher mentor, union representative, and grade team leader. She participated in all of SBHS’s spirit-building activities, attended students’ extracurricular after-school events, organized a yearly college trip for students paid for through her fundraising, and planned the teachers’ holiday and end-of-year parties. In short, Lauren was indispensible to the school and that indispensability was an important element of her sense of self.

Her participation in this project seemed to strengthen or extend an element of her teacher identity that was already there – that of an “agitator,” someone who made her opinions known, challenging what she saw as ineffective practice, disrespectful treatment of students, or backward thinking on the part of teachers. Starting with her participation in CUNY-NYSIEB in the 2014-2015 school year, and continuing through our work together the following year, a major topic on which Lauren took up the role of agitator was around language. As already discussed in an earlier section, Lauren’s uptake of the agitator role in the classroom was one of the ways she “set the stage” for the kind of Third Space moments discussed in this chapter. This stoking of resistance in the classroom did not go unnoticed by some of the other teachers at the school. In part, this was because Lauren specifically referenced other teachers (and sanctioned talk about teachers by students) in her classroom talk. For example, she said the following to students when discussing teachers who talk negatively about language practices other than “proper English”:

There [are] some serious implications of teachers telling students that they should only use proper English. And I would encourage you guys to push back a little, resist this idea – respectfully – if it comes up. Educate. Like I’ve said many times in here, what we’re doing is really, really advanced stuff. A lot of people are not quite on the same level as we are in terms of
Stoking “respectful resistance” in students – as well as pushing them to “educate,” even their teachers, on the “advanced” work they were doing in class – had tangible effects. Over the course of the year, and especially as students were writing their college essays, they often discussed conversations they had with teachers about the work they were doing in English class. They also got a chance to “educate” their school community during the Roundtable event, when their teachers read their college essays and questioned them about their choices. Though students reported that some teachers were interested and highly engaged with their ideas, others were skeptical, not just of the project but of Lauren herself and the ideas she was imparting to students.

After students had done their Panel presentations, Lauren asked them to reflect on their experiences discussing their work with other teachers. Several students reported having to “defend” not just their work but also the thinking behind the project itself. Osvaldo shared that one of his panelists, an African American teacher, “gave him advice” to “use proper English” until you get into college, then do what you want. He went on to explain how the teacher used the metaphor of getting past a security guard: you do what needs to be done to “get past” this gatekeeper, and then you enjoy more freedom once you’re in. Lauren’s response illustrates her engagement with this teacher’s push-back, but also her commitment to the project and her willingness to challenge her colleagues:

I’m thinking about – like, what are we trying to get past? I think what we’re trying to get past is the idea that standard academic English is the only appropriate language practice, right? And I think [the teacher’s] advice makes sense – give people what they want, and then once you’re inside safely, then take risks. But I wonder if in doing that we’re just continuing to perpetuate or keep the idea going that there’s only one appropriate language practice. (Classroom transcript, 5/20/16)
This kind of critique from teachers on the thinking behind the project extended to Lauren herself, in part, perhaps, because of the linguistic agitator role she had taken on in the classroom with students. The most explicit resistance to the project and to Lauren herself came from another teacher on the 11th grade team. When this teacher noticed a student reading a handout from Lauren’s class that contained lyrics from a Beyoncé song, she approached Lauren to ask its purpose. When Lauren explained that she had used the lyrics as a text for students to analyze for the writer’s linguistic choices, the teacher told her she thought it was “inappropriate language for an academic task” because it contained the n-word. Going further, this teacher, an African American woman, asked Lauren her own thoughts on the n-word. Lauren, recounting the event, said she responded, “my role is to encourage students to think critically about how and why people use words and language, as well as the implications of these choices, not to make those determinations myself.” She went on to say that “the use of the n-word is a complex and often intentional choice,” and she wanted students to analyze how and why Beyoncé used it. The teacher reiterated that she thought the text was inappropriate and, according to Lauren, said that “there was no educational value in using it since that’s not how we should be encouraging our students to speak or write” (L. Ardizzzone, personal communication). Lauren felt that the interaction was personal, and that this teacher had taken issue not only with the text, but with Lauren – a White woman – introducing these ideas to students of color.

These interactions with other teachers – particularly teachers of color – are complex and fraught. I did not speak with those teachers, and thus cannot report their thoughts and opinions on these situations. However, what these interactions seem to highlight is the personal and professional discomfort that can emerge when making pedagogical choices that challenge language ideologies, especially coming from a White teacher of students of color.
Discussion and Conclusion

In this chapter, I shifted my focus from students’ experiences of the year to Lauren’s. I began by outlining those pedagogical moves and elements of her classroom talk that I identify as related to the occurrence of what I refer to as Third Space moments, or moments when traditional teacher-student scripts are questioned and destabilized, and students’ counter-discourses take center stage. These moments were the result of intentionality; we aimed to bring such moments forth through our approach to curriculum and instruction, which differentiates this work from conceptualizations of Third Space as inherently oppositional between teacher and students. Nevertheless, these Third Space moments were unplanned and ushered in the very destabilization and critique that define Third Space. Lauren’s response to these moments ranged from a desire to distance herself from the kinds of shifts that upended her position of authority to an engagement with them in a way that led to a more critical understanding of herself, her relationships, her teaching, and her school.

Lauren’s dialogue with new theory and with the alternative discourses of her students affected her approach to pedagogy and became integrated into her own sense of herself as a teacher-agitator. It is telling that the year after our project was implemented, Lauren re-taught our curriculum, constantly sharing with me new readings, new projects, and student work that excited her. She also continues to fill me in on conversations she has with others both at school and in her personal life that relate to our work together. This continued engagement in the work tells me that it “mattered” to Lauren, and I am excited by the new ideas, texts, and approaches she has taken up in her classroom.

Our work together has implications for approaches to teacher preparation, both in English education and across content areas. First, as I discussed earlier in this chapter, Lauren’s
experience of the year illustrates that engaging in this kind of critical, translingual approach involves much more than new strategies, texts, or literacy activities. To truly engage in this work means grappling with alternative discourses and ideas and developing a new stance that shapes both a view of teaching and a view of the world. Teachers must be encouraged, as they were in Ball’s professional development work, to struggle with such new ideas, to move towards generativity and ideological becoming in ways that extend past the classroom. This can occur, as it did in my own project, through extended engagement with theory and inquiry work that aligns curriculum and teaching practice to new theoretical understandings.

Additionally, teachers must have time and space to struggle not only with creating opportunities for students’ translingual sensibilities to emerge, but also to struggle with what happens when they do emerge. As seen in this chapter, Third Space moments are by their very nature uncomfortable; they challenge established boundaries, rules, and hierarchies, and they force hidden power structures to the surface. How teachers handle this discomfort and tension is a necessary point of focus in teacher preparation, especially for teachers whose backgrounds and lived experiences differ from their students’. Similarly, teachers must be given the time and space to work through what it means to be an “agitator,” both with students and with their fellow teachers. When Lauren took up this role, for instance, some teachers in the school – and especially teachers of color – took issue with her approach. As Lauren engaged in a disruption of her own pedagogical repetition, she also disrupted her fellow teachers’ repetition and brought to the surface others’ deep-seated language ideologies. We do not teach in a vacuum, and a topic for further research is how to prepare teachers to encounter resistance to this ideological disruption in their professional communities as well as how to grapple with the raciolinguistic realities that often lie beneath such resistance.
Chapter 8
Implications, reconceptualizations, and future thinking

Introduction
This last chapter reviews the findings of my project and takes up a prospective view, which
expands these findings and looks towards future research. I begin by summarizing my findings,
weaving together the threads I have pulled from the data in previous chapters. It is here that I
hope to drive home the importance of the work that went on in Lauren’s English classrooms and
illustrate that though it was but one year of instruction in students’ long academic lives, it made
space for the kinds of dialogue, interactions with texts, experiences with writing, and relationship
building not typically found in the high school English classrooms of linguistically marginalized
youth. Next, I explore the implications of my project, namely a “reconceptualization” that is
integral to the implementation of a critical translingual approach to English Language Arts
pedagogy. Here, I take a post-structural, translingual view of the dichotomy of “home” and
“school” language, and use students’ talk around these constructs to rethink them. I also touch on
a topic for future research tied to this reconceptualization: preparing teachers of different
backgrounds to take up the role of linguistic agitators as they embrace a translingual approach in
their classrooms. Lastly, I provide some final words that conclude my project.

Summary of Findings
In chapter 2, I laid out the theoretical framework that serves as the foundation for my project.
This framework has four interrelated lenses – (1) that language is ideological, (2) that language is
both invented and inherently heteroglossic, (3) that identity, constructed through linguistic
choices but also shaped by language ideologies, is socially and linguistically performed; and (4)
that literacies are both social and local, which calls for a curriculum and pedagogy built from students’ practices up, not handed down from above. These lenses collectively informed the creation and implementation of my project, as well as the curriculum Lauren and I co-created for students.

Integral to my conception of this project and to our creation of a critical translingual curriculum was the understanding that “language” is not a rigid, static structure but a fluid, dynamic set of practices tied to acts of identity (Paris, 2011). The reified hierarchy of certain of these practices over others is a naturalized product of language ideologies, not linguistic truth. As such, though language ideologies have limiting and oppressive consequences on students, they are also subject to critique, interrogation, and resistance. When designing this project, I hoped that by facilitating students’ inquiry into and disinvention of the concept of language (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007) in ways that revealed the effects of ideologies on their own language practices and literacies, students might engage various literate arts of the contact zone (Pratt, 1991) in ways that challenge such ideologies.

Chapter 3 put forth the design of my project and detailed my work with the teacher, Lauren, and her 11th grade students throughout the year. Through my role as a participant observer, I was able to observe and become integrated into the classroom. I watched and took note of the “moves” Lauren made that translated the theory we had explored together into the daily practice of teaching. I listened as students engaged with one another in ways that illustrated the creative, fluid, subversive nature of translanguaging and saw them grapple with what it meant to bring such translanguaging into the “sanctioned” discourse of the English classroom. I was privy to critical, sophisticated conversations around multimodal, heteroglossic, metalinguistic texts – sketch comedy, YouTube videos, spoken word poetry, speeches, fiction, blog posts, news
articles, essays, interviews – that themselves challenged monoglossic norms and served as mentor texts for students’ writing. Most importantly, I saw and heard the complex and contradictory responses students had to the curriculum Lauren and I designed. These responses points to necessary considerations for the implementation of such a curriculum and approach to pedagogy and illustrate the ways that linguistically marginalized students of color make sense of their experiences living amidst raciolinguistic ideologies both in and out of school.

Chapters, 4, 5, 6, and 7 explored the students’ and Lauren’s responses to the year of critical translingual instruction. If the broad question my project asks is, “what comes up when this kind of approach is taken in English Language Arts,” these chapters served as an “answer.” Though many different stories could have been told from my data, it is my hope that these four chapters highlight those responses, moments, and insights that represent the possibilities and challenges to taking up a critical translingual approach. Chapter 4 highlighted students’ awareness of language ideologies and their understandings of how these ideologies had been transmitted to them through their schooling. Drawing on their classroom talk and poetry writing, I illustrated that although there was evidence of an internalization of language ideologies that rendered their languaging deficient, lacking, or inappropriate, there was also an enactment of what I refer to as a translingual sensibility, a constellation of beliefs and performances that reveal students’ affinity for meaning-making, understanding of the fluidity, dynamism, and interrelatedness of their language practices, and pride in transgressing monoglossic expectations and rules.

Chapter 5 similarly explored students’ responses to language ideologies, but added an explicitly racial component. Our curriculum, through its use of translingual mentor texts and emphasis on critical metalinguistic inquiry, elicited students’ metacommentary (Rymes, 2014).
around the role of language in their lived experiences. One of the topics that came up repeatedly in students’ metacommentary was a connection between their language practices and race. In their talk around these connections, students articulated the twin experiences of being *seen* and *heard* in the process of racialization, which shaped their experiences both in and out of school. Through students’ metacommentary and their creation of role-plays, I illustrated that students understood *all* languaging as a kind of performance before a “hidden audience” made up of what Flores and Rosa (2015) refer to as White listening subjects. Whether they were using language practices that felt like their own or those that were ideologically linked to academic and professional success, students were enlisted in such performances with or without their consent.

Chapter 6 built on the understanding that students’ performances in language and literacy activities – especially those related to “academic” writing – are subject to the oppressive raciolinguistic ideologies that shape the ways students are heard (and read) by White listening subjects. This “hidden audience” for students’ writing was something that Lauren and students spoke about explicitly, and students struggled with whether they should (or *could*) include “non-standard” language practices in their writing. The chapter looked closely at six students’ college essays, an assignment that served as the culminating project for the year, as well as their talk around creating those essays in order to understand the ways students engaged with this audience of White listening subjects. Reading students’ essays and listening to their talk, which included a discussion of metalinguistic choices they made (i.e.: to accommodate their potential audience or not, to take linguistic risks or not, to include “non-standard” language practices or not), also lends insight into which (if any) elements of their identities students are willing to share with an audience of White listening subjects.
Lastly, chapter 7 shifted the focus from students’ experiences of the year to Lauren’s experience implementing a critical translingual curriculum and approach to pedagogy. I based my discussion in Ball’s (2009) use of Bakhtin’s (1981) concept of ideological becoming in teacher development and Third Space theories in education (Gutiérrez, 1995, 2008; Moje, 2004) to show how Lauren’s pedagogical and linguistic “moves” in the classroom – which emerged out of her evolving thinking around language – intentionally made space for “Third Space moments” to occur. After exploring such teacher moves, I discussed what came up when students’ heteroglossic voices were (at least momentarily) released and their counter-scripts surfaced in the classroom. These moments were destabilizing, and pointed to students’ critique of and resistance to the linguistic authority exerted upon them by their teachers, including Lauren herself. Lastly, I drew on Lauren’s classroom talk and her reflections in an exit interview to understand how she experienced these destabilizing Third Space moments. I ended by linking her responses – ranging from distancing herself to taking up the role of linguistic agitator as she worked against what she perceived as oppressive language ideologies in both her personal and professional life – to the education and preparation of teachers who wish to take up a critical translingual approach.

Reconceptualizing “home” and “school” languaging

Overall, this project adds to large the body of literature and scholarship that calls for shifts in teachers’ philosophical and pedagogical stance and resulting classroom practice towards a “re-seeing” of students for their linguistic – and sociolinguistic – gifts. This project centered around a curriculum that encouraged students to engage in linguistic exploration so that they could hone their critical thinking and abilities to (re) construct the linguistic architecture of their lives (Flores, 2015). Importantly, the project did not “teach” students how to engage in linguistic exploration, nor did it “produce” the translingual sensibilities and practices they demonstrated.
Rather, it provided the venue and made space for the sociolinguistic thinking students were already doing (what Rymes, 2014, refers to as “citizen sociolinguistics”) and leveraged students’ existing translingual sensibilities and practices in classroom literacy activities.

This kind of approach, which I have called a critical translingual approach, is a tangible example of a culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014), in that it starts with and continuously responds to students’ multifaceted identities and language practices, not essentialized language/race, language/ethnicity, or language/other identity category connections. Though Lauren and I began planning the curriculum based on our own beliefs and understandings, that curriculum shifted and changed over the course of the year as we responded to students’ metacommentary – the ways they drew attention to certain aspects of language or repeated certain phrases or words (Rymes, 2014) – and followed their line of linguistic inquiry. This approach is also an example of a critical language pedagogy (Alim, 2007), in that it challenged both students and teacher to question “the current sociolinguistic order of things” through an interrogation of the “dominating discourse on language and literacy” through an understanding of the “interconnectedness of identities, ideologies, histories/herstories, and the hierarchical nature of power relations between groups” (p.166).

Because of its post-structural framing and its use of a translanguaging lens to understand the language practices of all students, my project suggests a reconceptualization that extends the approaches discussed above: a rethinking of the concepts of “home” and “school” languaging. Though this may not seem like a new idea, I believe it plays an especially integral role in problematizing and pushing the conventional boundaries of the English classroom, both for bi-/multilingual students and for those who are viewed as monolingual. This reconceptualization of “home” and “school” languaging emerges from (1) my attention to students’ metacommentary
about language and (2) my adoption of a translingual view of a typically “monolingual” space. The first consideration enables a reconceptualization “home” and “school” languaging from students’ – rather than educators’ or researchers’ – points of view. The second consideration opens up the English classroom to the possibility of breaking down false dichotomies between discrete “languages” and reimagining such categories from a translingual stance. Rather than consign “languages” to physical venues or essentialize connections between “languages” and students’ identities, a translingual view makes possible an understanding of “home” and “school” languaging as dialogic, not oppositional, as well as tied to acts of identity (Paris, 2011).

Complicating “home” and “school”: Which is which?

Students’ metacommentary about their languaging complicates conventional understandings of “home” and “school” language in a number of ways. For example, revisiting the talk of two students profiled in chapter 6, Marie and Lucia assert that language associated with “school” or the “academic” realm can include certain, but not all, of those language practices often associated with the “home” (or “community”) realm:

Marie: Um, I chose to include standard academic English, but I’m gonna – like I’m going to incorporate one of my language practices that’s not, like, you know, slang or AAVE. It’s just like a whole new language I speak.
Kate: Which – what language –
M: French. So like I wanna include that to let them know that I do speak another language? But I chose not to write in AAVE cause – I mean, to me I personally feel like [pause] you know in a college essay that’s what they want? So yeah, I feel comfortable just using that. (Panels presentation, 5/19/16).

Lucia: Well, like, Spanish…I feel like maybe it might slide because you remind them that you have two languages. Some people aren’t aware of – that slang can be two languages. So I think that they’ll think you’re just uneducated because of that. They think that slang is just uneducated and, uh, two languages is…you’re multilingual. (Student interview, 6/7/16)

By choosing to include their languages other than English in their college essays, but not their “AAVE” or “slang” practices, Marie and Lucia exhibit an understanding that the former
might be sanctioned in “school” languaging, but not the latter. The use of French and Spanish in an school essay “might slide,” as Lucia put it, because it alerts readers to the fact that they are “multilingual,” not “uneducated” (as they might be perceived if they used AAVE or slang). The two students’ writing choices here reveal a nuanced understanding of which “home” language practices might actually “pass” as “school” language because of their prestige in the view of their readers.

Jania, too, complicates the dualistic nature of conventional understandings of “home” and “school” languaging by locating “school” language in her “home”:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kate:</th>
<th>So who speaks standard English?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jania:</td>
<td>My mother. Professionals. People like that. Old people. My grandmother – she speaks standard English all the time. You can’t speak to her in slang. That would be a smack across your face.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gina:</td>
<td>So how you have to speak to your grandmother?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J:</td>
<td>[Starts talking in a softer voice] You have to speak to her like this, you have to speak to her very proper, and in complete sentences all the time –</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G:</td>
<td>Sophisticated?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J:</td>
<td>Very sophisticated, very calm. (Classroom transcript + field notes, 11/23/15)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here (and, interestingly, in her portrayal of the mother in her group’s role-play detailed in chapter 5) Jania ascribes what she calls “standard English” to her family, namely her mother and grandmother (as well as “professionals” and “old people”). In Jania’s home, language practices like “slang,” which she uses in school (at a different point in this same conversation, she shared that she spoke “slang” and “AAVE” with those teachers she felt comfortable with), are not accepted. In fact, when talking to her grandmother she has to shift her language practices to be more “proper,” “sophisticated” and “calm” – adjectives students used at other times to describe the language of the “academic” and “professional” spheres.

Yari and Doris’s talk around what counts as “home” and “school” languages points to the pervasiveness of certain “home” language practices in the school space. When planning out a
role-play, which asked students to enact a situation in which they navigated different language practices, Lauren first asked students to think about when and where they used different language practices. In their group, Yari responded:

| Yari: It’s mostly during school. |
| Doris: No, me at home. |
| Y: Well – |
| D: Cause here’s it’s only one language, English. |
| Y: Well…with you. Because I use Spanish and English. (Classroom transcript, 4/7/16) |

The student body at SBHS was majority Latinx, and Yari’s comment points to the way that a “minority” language like Spanish can transcend “home” and “school” language dualities in such Latinx-majority spaces. On the other hand, Doris – one of the few African students and the only Krio-speaking student at the school – sees “only one language, English” as the language of school. This makes sense, as Doris does not typically use Krio during the school day, nor does she use her other “four native languages,” Mende, Temne, and Limba (Letter of Introduction, 9/19/16). Thus, unlike Doris, the fact that Yari is in the demographic majority and uses Spanish, a language practice that is omnipresent in both the school and in the larger neighborhood, leads to her perception that both languages are part of her “school” languaging.

“I just wanna get out”: “School” language as protection

Another way that students’ metacommentary complicated the “home”-“school” language dichotomy was their description of language practices typically associated with “school” (i.e.: what students in Lauren’s class came to refer to as “SAE” or “standard academic English”) as protection against having to share other, perhaps more vulnerable or private parts of their lives and identities. As we saw in chapter 6, Yessica and Amir explicitly linked the use of this kind of “standard” English in writing to their reticence to, as Yessica put it, tell their stories:

Yessica: I don’t [sucks her teeth] – I think it’s possible not to write about yourself. Like, there’s
people who would, like, want to be another person, so they would try to change everything up. They would probably talk proper English and everything. But I don’t believe, like – at least a part of you will not be included if that’s your goal. If your goal is to not put anything about you, that would happen eventually. You just have to focus on it. [Lauren acknowledges her point and moves on to another comment. Yessica says quietly to me, “I would switch up everything. My name’s not Yessica, it’s Jane.” I laugh a little, and she says, without smiling, “I’m serious.”]

(Classroom transcript + field notes, 3/17/16)

Amir: […] I wouldn’t talk about my identity like that. I would like talk – I wouldn’t give them my identity. I wouldn’t use some words. Like some words in AAVE? Yeah, I wouldn’t take a risk. I’d try to write standard academic English.

Kate: And when you say you wouldn’t give them your identity –
A: Yeah. I don’t wanna talk about myself. And my background and stuff.
K: Why not?
A: I feel like…they don’t need to know that stuff. (Student interview, 6/7/16)

In Yessica and Amir’s words here, one can read an understanding of “school” languaging – rather than language practices more closely linked to their identities – as something like a cover, a shield against the kind of negative perceptions students experience as a result of their racialized languaging. Using this kind of “school” language, then, is a way of avoiding a “risk” and even becoming “another person,” both of which enable students like Yessica and Amir to keep their “stories” and their “identities” to themselves.

In the quote that serves as the sub-heading for this section, Adam shared his experience talking to another teacher about his college essay. In relating that teacher’s comments, Adam said:

Adam: She said not to use slang or other language practices. Just be professional.
Lauren: And what did you say to that?
A: Um, I agreed with her.
L: You agreed with her? So in your essay you’re not going to take any risks?
A: I just wanna get out. (Classroom transcript, 5/20/16)

Similar to Yessica and Amir, Adam seems to be expressing that the use of “professional” language practices (which align, ideologically, with “school” language practices) and the avoidance of linguistic risks in his writing is a necessary step to “getting out.” In this way, the
use of “school” languaging is actually the way out of school, not a way to gain access to the “academic” or “professional” realm, as it is typically understood. By taking up the language practices associated with these realms, then, Adam paves his way out of high school (perhaps towards college, though it was not clear where “getting out” might lead) without taking the linguistic risks associated with “slang or other language practices.”

“It stays with me”: “School” language and identity

As I began to formulate the broad findings of my project, I found myself struggling with some students’ metacommentary around those language practices typically associated with “school.” Though I heard many students speak about their own language practices as different (less “proper,” “standard,” or “professional”) than those expected of them in school, others expressed that these “school” language practices were part of their linguistic repertoires and identities. This points to yet another complication in the “home”/“school” language dichotomy: what if “school” language feels like “home”?

Jacqui, for example, saw the language she used in school as part of her “regular language,” and seemed to associate the performance of those language practices with her identity as a good student and a motivator for her friends. In one class discussion, she said:

To me, I just use my regular language. I don’t switch it up. Like, the language I use in school, I talk the same way I talk to my friends. Like to convince them, like “you have to go to school!” Yeah. I don’t know, it sticks with me. It stays with me. Like before, I used to talk very loud, cursing every other sentence, like, using mad slang, but now I don’t use as much as before. Cause, alright, when you’re learning English, all these words you learn, they eventually stay in your head and you use them. So that becomes your new language. (Classroom transcript, 3/14/16)

As we saw in Demisha’s metacommentary around her college essay in chapter 6, Jacqui links her use of “school” language with the process of growing up and maturing. Though she “used to talk” in a different way, the language she learned in school – specifically in English –
has “stuck” and “stayed” with her. When I thought back to this conversation with Jacqui, I struggled to “code” it as an example of students’ internalization of oppressive language ideologies. Jacqui had spoken about her “new language” with pride, connecting it with her role as a motivator, urging her friends to go to school. When Jacqui expressed that “school” language had come to feel like her “regular” language, I could not portray her as merely a subject of limiting, raciolinguistic ideologies.

A contradiction also emerged out of Faith’s metacommentary, which I have drawn on extensively in this project. As I detailed in chapter 5, Faith set herself apart from her peers through her language practices. She talked about herself as a poet whose “high vocabulary standards” put her on the receiving end of judgment from two different sets of listeners – those Flores and Rosa (2015) refer to as White listening subjects and those in her own family and community. As we can see in the following excerpts of her talk, Faith’s description of her language practices and her attitude towards her potential “audience” is highly complex:

Faith: So, no shade, but I think there’s some people in the world that are very ignorant towards those people who have high vocabulary standards, in which we are able to articulate ourselves. For example, like I’m doing right now. They feel like, um, she’s using these words and she has no idea what they mean and that’s a wrong judgment. Like I said, no shade.

Lauren: Why do you think people would assume you don’t understand the words you’re using?
F: Cause I use a lot of them. And if you look at me as a young Latina, brown, from the South Bronx – I’m from Cypress…[trails off]. (Classroom transcript + field notes, 3/14/16)

[…]

Cause when you read my poetry, even my own family, like my mother or my cousin, they feel like…they can’t relate. Not in the sense that they don’t know what I’m talking about, but…they feel like my writing is…White. Like I read it to my mom and she sits there, for a good like two minutes after, like, I guess, analyzing everything, and she goes, “why you talk like that? You not writing an essay.” And that’s – that’s where I’m most comfortable, writing poetry. There’s some poems where I have curses and it comes off as – people could read it and think it’s a rap, like that’s how it comes, but – I relate to that. Cause even, there’s people who get offended, like “oh, you’re not writing to us, you can’t relate to us.” (Classroom transcript, 4/11/16)

I feel like, me personally [pause] personally, I could really care less about the white audience. Cause that’s not my audience. I don’t relate to the White – to the White society. Um, it’s not that
I wouldn’t want to learn about White society, I mean I’m around it in school, I have teachers – like you, who are – I don’t wanna sound offensive, but I’m just saying I could really care less. When I write my poetry and when I write my songs, I’m not doing it for people who live in suburban – in suburbs. I’m doing it for my people, for my block, for people I know who could relate to me. That’s my audience, that’s my truth. (Classroom transcript, 5/10/16)

Though Faith draws on terms like “high vocabulary standards” and “White” to refer to her own language practices – which in effect links them more with the “school” realm, ideologically – she seems to be trying to define her own authentic voice, which cannot fit neatly into this category. Though her writing and her way of speaking may be associated with “White” languaging (which is ideologically tied to the languaging typically associated with “school”), she also “could care less” about White listeners and sees her community and “her people” as her audience and her “truth.” In this way, the dualistic nature of concepts like “home” and “school” language are far too simplistic for someone like Faith, whose identity and language practices transcend such rigid, ideological categories.

“Not tricking them but tricking them”: Appropriating “school” language

Students’ college essays provide yet another complication to the “home”/“school” language dichotomy. In conversations about their essays, some students’ metacommentary revealed that their use of “standard” English was a purposeful way of resisting oppressive language ideologies. In this way, students appropriated “school” language practices in ways that met their needs and enabled them to express their opinions. In her college essay, for example, Doris chose to write about the topic of linguistic prejudice. Her essay explained how in Sierra Leone, her language, Krio, was “stolen” by the British and belittled in the English-medium schools she attended. She also included a story about her mother, which connected her pride in Krio to her desire to learn what she calls “Standard Academic English”:

My language represents all the women in my family, most importantly my mom who decided not
to attend my parent-teacher association meeting because she could not write a full sentence in English.

She will usually say, “A na get natin fi gi ou, na educashin nimir a get so larn Englesh.” (I do not have anything to give you but only education so learn English.)

My mom’s words made me determined to stand up for what was mine, this eventually made me determined to learn Standard Academic English for it is the only opportunity I had that will make me prosper as an immigrant in the United States [...] I am determined to explain the significance of my language and also that it is not inferior, neither is it superior but it is just a means of communication.

My language is the only thing my ancestors left me as a child. I won’t ever let it be disempowered, but I can only accomplish that through education and that is my rationale for planning on going to college.

Though Doris’s essay ends with what might sound like a choice to uphold a linguistic status quo, her rationale for doing so complicates this message. Doris’s use of “Standard Academic English” is a form of appropriation, a way of resisting from within (Canagarajah, 2011) so that she can empower her language and fight linguistic prejudice. In addition, her use of her mother’s Krio words in an essay written in a more or less “standard” style adds to her main idea: that her “home” language can be honored and empowered through and alongside her use of “school” language practices.

Eva and Osvaldo, too, took up tactics of linguistic appropriation when it came to the use of “school” language practices in their college essays. When I asked whether Eva would actually submit her essay – which contained, as she put it, “standard” English, Spanish, and “Mexican Spanish” – to a college, she replied that she would not; the risk was too great, and she did not want to get rejected because of her essay. When I asked her about future writing, however, she responded differently:

Kate: If you were to submit a more traditional essay to a college, once you got in would you consider taking more risks in your writing? Or do you think you would –
Eva: No, I think I would take some risks.
K: Once you got it.
E: Yeah. I got in, they can’t tell me not to. [Laughing.] (Student interview, 6/7/16)

Osvaldo talked through a similar strategy: though at first he might not bring those language practices associated with “home” in his “academic” writing, he might do so once he had established himself. Thinking forward to his future writing, Osvaldo said:

Like, say I was writing a book to my audience. They’d mostly see SAE. Say, my first book I’m gonna write, trying to make it – try to get them, like, accommodated with me, like, slowly but surely get followers, and then after awhile, I write my second book. I add my language practices and they would be psyched to read it cause they read my first book first and they’ll think it’s still good. Even with my [other] language practices in it. It’s like tricking them? Like, not tricking them but tricking them. (Student interview, 6/7/16)

This kind of “bait and switch” tactic is a savvy one for writers like Eva and Osvaldo. Perhaps this strategy reveals an understanding that their positionality does not grant them the kind of privilege required to engage in translingual writing right away. They must slowly build up to this kind of risk-taking, playing the game first and challenging the rules later. In this way, Eva and Osvaldo seem to view “school” languaging as a means to an end, not as an “end” itself. This kind of attitude demonstrates that students may not always conceptualize the use of “standard” or “school” language as giving up their identities or losing their “home” languages; it may be that students like Doris, Eva, and Osvaldo appropriate such practices to do and say what they want.

Future thinking: What does it mean for teachers to agitate?

In listening to their metacommentary, it is clear that labels like “home” and “school” language – as well as the conventional, “linear” understanding of such terms – simply do not apply to students’ languaging. To summarize the ideas put forth in the excerpts of students’ talk above, we learn that: (1) “home” and “school” language are not easily separated: some students understood their “home” languages to be part of “school” languaging and sometimes they
associated “school” language with their “home” and family life; (2) some students did not wish to bring their “home” language practices into school at all, and saw “school” language as a way of keeping their “stories” or “identities” apart from the school realm; (3) other students saw “school” language as, to use Jacqui’s words, their “regular language” and saw such practices as part of their identities as intelligent, sophisticated language users; and lastly, (4) students appropriated “school” language practices in ways that helped them accomplish something.

For educators, taking a translingual approach to English Language Arts means letting go of such terms and ceding control of students’ languaging. In fact, taking up such an approach means understanding that we, as educators, have never had control over students’ languaging. Rather than cling to those categories that provide a false sense of control – those that ascribe students’ languaging into one “box” or another – be it “home”/“school language,” “first”/“second language,” or any other duality – language and literacy teachers can listen to the ways that students actually use language, design opportunities that bring their heteroglossic voices and sophisticated metalinguistic awareness to the surface, and provide evidence that their diverse voices and unique positionality can be leveraged in creative and critical ways. As I saw over the course of the year, not all students will bring those heteroglossic voices into the classroom; that is their right, and part of the project of taking up a translingual lens is ceding control of students’ languaging in this way as well. Educators (and researchers) can never truly know the extent of students’ translinguaging. We are only privy to the external manifestations of students’ voices, the words they speak aloud and the words they write on the page. We do not know the sound of students’ internal voices, what García, Johnson, and Seltzer (2017) call intrapersonal voices, those they hear as they alone engage with texts and make sense of their lived experiences. To try to define translinguaging, to track and organize students’ fluid
language practices in order to make them legible in either teaching or research, is itself one of the centripetal forces Bakhtin saw as working *against* heteroglossia. All we can do is set the stage and make space for students’ translingual sensibilities and related literacies and language practices to emerge on their own terms.

Making space for students’ heteroglossic voices and lived experiences to surface can be fraught with tension and discomfort for teachers. In fact, struggle is a necessary element of what Bakhtin (1981) called ideological becoming. As they grapple with counter-discourses, educators must shift and change their own understandings of what is true and who they are. The Third Space moments I explore in chapter 7 represent glimpses of these counter-discourses, and Lauren’s responses to such moments are instructive for all educators who teach linguistically minoritized students and wish to take up a critical translingual approach. Though there were certainly times when Third Space moments led Lauren to distance herself or reassert a more authoritarian discourse, I also discuss her uptake of the role of “linguistic agitator” in both her personal and professional life. She stoked resistance among students, encouraging them to “educate” those that discriminated against them because of their language practices, including their teachers. She “pushed” her husband’s thinking and urged him to explore his own privileges. She engaged in conversation with other teachers who were critical of her approach and her use of texts and language practices they deemed inappropriate for the academic context.

Though taking up a translingual approach to the English classroom will inevitably bring up these kinds of fraught moments, different teachers will face different struggles. For Lauren, her various privileges – her Whiteness, her elite education, her status as a highly effective teacher, her close relationship with her principal, her unmarked way of languaging, her tenured job – both enabled her to take on the role of linguistic agitator *and* complicated that role. As she
put it herself in her exit interview, it was much easier for her and I, from our positions of privilege, to invite students to include “non-standard” language practices in their writing than it was for them to actually take that risk. When the teachers of color on staff questioned the project and Lauren herself, she came up against a critique situated in lived experiences she could not possibly understand. Though she saw herself as engaged in a fight against oppressive language ideologies, these teachers seemed to see her and the thinking she was fostering in the class as unhelpful and even harmful to students.

The complexity of Lauren’s role as a linguistic agitator is an important one to keep in mind as teachers from diverse backgrounds take up a critical translingual approach with linguistically minoritized students of color. As I look towards future research, I see the transgressive, “agitating” elements of a translingual approach as important sites for further inquiry. What does it mean for White, monolingual teachers to push students of color to resist language ideologies? How does one effectively “agitare from this positionality? How can teachers interrogate their own internalized White listening subject even as they “agitare alongside students – and colleagues – of color? In taking up an approach that challenges those language ideologies deeply ingrained in all speakers’ subjectivities, it is important to consider how dispensing with terms like “home” and “school languaging, among other ideological shifts, is more than a change of terminology or even a change in an individual teacher’s stance; it is a destabilizing, subversive and political move that affects a community in ways we cannot anticipate. Preparing educators to take up a translingual approach and the role of “linguistic agitator” with this in mind is a subject worthy of further research.

**Final thoughts**

As I wrote up this project, it was helpful to hear about what is going on Lauren’s classroom this
year. Lauren and I have kept in close communication; I have shared drafts of this dissertation with her, asked for her input on analyzing data, checked with her about details of interactions or lessons that have gotten fuzzy in my memory, as well as continued to share resources I come across that I think would be useful to her classroom work. Lauren continues to share student work, resources she has used, new approaches and perspectives she has taken, and questions she has. Ours continues to be a rich partnership, and I have no doubt we will continue working together in the future.

Recently, Lauren and I were discussing my coming to the school to visit with students and introduce them to my son, Aaron. She had shared the idea with the students – now seniors – and they were excited to see me and meet Aaron. As we were talking through some possible dates, Lauren said to me that more than any other group of students in her years of teaching, the students we worked with for this project have actively maintained a relationship with her: many visit her during lunch and their off-periods, come to talk with her after school, and keep her up to date on their lives as seniors (L. Ardizzone, personal communication). Hearing that her relationship with the students has continued is heartening, and points to the socio-emotional piece of a critical translingual approach. It is my hope that the relationship between Lauren and the students has endured because of their positive experiences in her classroom and a feeling that she was their ally.

In this project, I have attempted to demonstrate both the challenges and the exciting possibilities that emerge when a critical translingual approach is adopted in an English Language Arts classroom. By focusing a year of instruction on language itself – deconstructing it, interrogating it, connecting it to power and identity, appropriating it in creative and critical ways – elements of students’ experiences as linguistically minoritized people of color surfaced and
lent insight into the ways language ideologies shape their subjectivities. Through my descriptions of our approach and students’ and Lauren’s responses to it, I have aimed to illustrate how a critical translingual lens can help (re) imagine the English classroom as a flexible space that fosters students’ heteroglossic voices and understandings of “how language is used and, importantly, how language can be used against them” (Alim, 2005, p.28). As has been seen throughout this project, enabling students’ translingual sensibilities to come to the surface of the English classroom brought forth metacommentary and as well as language and literacy practices that challenged standardizing “named language” ideologies.

The title of my project contains the word “(re)imagining,” and the parentheses around the prefix speak to reclamation and to reinvention; linguistic heterogeneity and fluidity have always been the norm, and this project aimed to reestablish that norm through curriculum and instruction that fostered creative and critical (Li Wei, 2011) literate arts of the contact zone (Pratt, 1991). It is my hope that my project provides tangible evidence of how such philosophical and pedagogical shifts are implemented in a linguistically diverse English classroom and how these shifts can reveal and leverage students’ linguistic and sociolinguistic gifts.
## Appendix 3.1

### Curriculum Calendar: Curriculum focus, selected activities, and texts

| Month  | Curricular Focus                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Selected Activities & Discussions                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Selected Texts                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| September | - Establish themes that would be explored throughout the year  
- Engage students in introductory linguistic exploration and sharing  
- Introduce key vocabulary shifts, such as the move from “language” to “language practices”                                                                 | - Writing about their own language backgrounds in “letter of introduction”  
- Taking a teacher- and student-generated language survey  
- Introducing the idea of “language practices” and exploring language practices students might be familiar with (“Englishes,” including AAVE and slang, “Spanishes,” “Regents Writing” as its own language practice)  
| October | - Continue to engage students in linguistic exploration and sharing  
- Elicit students’ metacommentary (Rymes, 2014) through classroom readings and discussion  
- Re-frame the English Regents exam and                                                                                                                                                                                                 | - Exploring the relationship between where we are and how we speak  
- Creating role plays that illustrate the connections between context and language choices  
- Defining “Regents Writing” through a mini-unit on argumentative writing around the topic of making                                                                 | - Series of readings and other multimodal texts both for and against making English the official language of the U.S.                                                                                                                                             |
| November | Unit: Language and Identity | - Discussing how the language practices we grew up with shape (or do not shape) who we are  
- Organizing a week-long inquiry into the phrase “broken English”  
- Organizing a series of lessons that unpack the phrase “talking White” | - Spoken word performance, “3 Ways to Speak English” (Jamila Lysicott, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k9fmJ5xQ_mc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k9fmJ5xQ_mc))  
- Essay, “My Mother’s English” (Amy Tan)  
| December | Unit: Language and Identity | - Discussing how the language practices we grew up with influence who we are  
- Writing poetry on students’ own relationships to English and other language practices using “My Spanish” as a model  
- Poem, “Two Names, Two Worlds” (Jonathan Rodriguez) |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Unit: Language and Power</th>
<th>Content Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Lauren shifted the class’s attention to the English Regents exam, which they took at the end of this month. She focused explicitly on deconstructing and understanding each section and teaching students strategies for encountering those sections. Students practiced both the writing and the multiple choice sections using teacher-created resources and past exams.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| February| Unit: Language and Identity | - Continuing discussion of language and identity through poetry  
| March  | Unit: Language and Power | - Transitioning from how language practices connect to our identity to how language is linked to larger issues of power in society  
- Inquiring into the case of Sandra Bland and its connection to language  
- Discussions and readings around two essential questions:  
1. How can language both open and close doors?  
2. How can language be used as resistance?  
To explore essential question #1:  
- Excerpt from book *Reading, Writing, and Rising Up* (Christensen, 2000)  
- Readings that explored how language played a role in the death of Sandra Bland  
To explore essential question #2:  
- Excerpt from *Articulate While Black* (Alim & Smitherman, 2012)  
| April & May | Unit: Author Study & College Essay Writing | - Building off of the idea of writing as resistance, students were broken into small groups and assigned an author who translingualized in their writing and whose work pushed the boundaries of “standard” language practices. Writers included:  
  o Junot Díaz  
  o Gloria Anzaldúa  
  o Alice Walker  
  o Amy Tan  
  o Gustavo Perez Firmat  
  - Discussing writers’ language choices and the implications (both positive and possible negative) of those choices  
  - Writing college essays in which students were encouraged to translanguage and make purposeful choices about what language practices they included | - Article, “Speaking English is never neutral in Alaska” ([http://www.adn.com/education/article/hometown-u-speaking-english-never-neutral-alaska/2016/01/17/]())  
  - Reading heteroglossic authors:  
    - Junot Diaz: Excerpts from *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao, Drown, and This is How You Lose Her*;  
    - Gloria Anzaldúa: Excerpts from *Borderlands/La Frontera*  
    - Alice Walker: Excerpts from *The Color Purple*  
    - Amy Tan: Excerpts from *The Joy Luck Club*,  
    - Gustavo Perez Firmat: Poem, “Bilingual Blues”, excerpts from *Next Year in Cuba*  
  - Discussing writers’ language choices:  
    - Excerpts from media interviews with each writer in which he/she discusses choices about language  
    - Video, “Why I Don’t Italicize” (Daniel José Older - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=24gC13Ur7FM])  
    - Speech and interview, Larry Wilmore at the Correspondents’ Dinner (Video of speech - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1IDFt3BL7FA]; Interview about speech - ) |  
<p>| June | Unit: Author Study &amp; College Essay Writing | - Sharing college essays with | - N/A |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>classmates</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Doing end-of-year reflections (written reflections and reflections in class discussions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Presenting college essays at the school’s Panels and Roundtable events</td>
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Appendix 3.2
Alignment of research questions, data collection, and data analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What does participation in a critical translingual English curriculum bring up about students’ identities and ideologies in relation to language?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. How do linguistically diverse high school students and their teacher respond to the implementation of a critical translingual English curriculum?</td>
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<tr>
<th>Addressing the Research Questions: Data Collection and Analysis</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data Collected</strong></td>
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</table>
| Field notes on classroom observations | • Classroom observations took places 2-3 times per week over the course of 8 months (September-December 2015 and February-June 2016)  
• Classroom observations were done in all four of Lauren’s ELA classroom sections  
• In-class “jottings” were written up in detail after each class session | 1. **Analytic memos & “notes on notes”**  
• Bi-weekly memos that summarized the previous week’s classroom work, noticings, and emerging ideas  
• Re-reading and adding “notes on notes” to field notes that included questions, emergent analysis, and deductive codes from literature/theoretical framework |
| Audio recordings and transcripts of classroom observations | • Audio recordings of classroom observations began in late October 2015  
• Recordings included Lauren’s “lectures,” whole-class discussions, and small group talk that occurred at the tables I sat at during each class  
• I personally transcribed all recordings, but excluded talk that did not relate to my project | 2. **Coding**  
• Initial coding (throughout school year)  
  o Deductive coding using codes from literature/theoretical framework (see Appendix 3.3 for list of codes)  
• Formal coding (June 2016, September 2016-January 2017)  
  o **Round 1**: Read through of all data and application of deductive codes from literature, theoretical framework, and my a priori understandings/thoughts  
  o **Round 2**: 2nd read through, color-coding moments that related to Round 1 deductive codes  
  o **Round 3**: 3rd read through, used inductive, emic codes that emerged from participants’ words  
  o **Round 4**: 4th read through, color-coding moments that related to Round 3 emic codes  
  o **Round 5**: Comparison and integration of 2 sets of coded data |
| Student and teacher work | • Student work: copies of select writing and in-class activities and pictures of artifacts such as student-made posters  
• Teacher work: pictures of the classroom ecology, | |
### Audio recordings and transcripts of initial planning conversations and exit interviews

- In August 2015, two initial planning conversations took place between Lauren and me outside of class and were recorded and transcribed. These conversations included talk about the scholarly/theoretical readings Lauren chose from a series of texts I uploaded to our Google Drive and about curriculum planning.

- Interviews took place with Lauren and with several students from each of the 4 English classes. Lauren’s interview was a reflective, exit interview. Interviews with students took place after they wrote their college essays. I spoke with several students whose writing demonstrated translanguaging or contained explicit metacommentary about language. These interviews were recorded and transcribed.

- All interviews were semi-structured. I drew on a set of interview questions I had generated, but asked questions out of order in a way that shifted with the conversation. I also asked questions that emerged organically out of the individual conversations.

### 3. Discourse analysis

- Read through data for examples of metacommentary (Rymes, 2014) and translanguaging moments that emerged in talk (whole-group discussion, small group work, role-play [see chapter 5], one-on-one conversations, etc.) and writing (namely poetry [see chapter 4] and college essays [see chapter 6])

- Took a macro approach to understanding student and teacher spoken and written discourse, paying attention to “vocabulary, metaphors, assumptions, conventions, structure, and style” (Allan, 2008)

- Drew on Gee’s (2011) “tools” of discourse analysis including “relationships building tool” and “identity building tool”

- Used tools/noticings about students’ and teacher’s language to make connections among their talk and writing, their identities, and their ideologies
## Appendix 3.3
List of Codes and Alignment with Findings Chapters

| Deductive codes | • Metacommentary (Rymes, 2014)  
|                 | • Translanguaging (García, 2009)  
|                 | • “Creative and critical” languaging (Li Wei, 2014)  
|                 | • Raciolinguistic ideologies (Flores & Rosa, 2015)  
|                 | • “Discourses of appropriateness” (Flores & Rosa, 2015)  
|                 | • Language sharing (Paris, 2012)  
|                 | • Translingual literacies and writing (Horner et al., 2011; Canagarajah, 2012)  
|                 | • Third Space (Gutiérrez, Rymes & Larson, 1995; Gutiérrez, 2008; Moje et al., 2004)  
|                 | • Linguistic exploration and linguistic architecture (Flores, 2015)  
|                 | • “Gifted (socio)linguists” (Rymes, 2014; Flores, 2015)  
|                 | • Language awareness/metalinguistic awareness (Alim, 2005)  
|                 | • “Arts of the contact zone” (Pratt, 1991)  
|                 | • “Translanguaging stance” (García, Johnson & Seltzer, 2017)  
|                 | • Identity performances |

| Inductive codes | • Language in need of improvement  
|                 | • Linguistic insecurity  
|                 | • “Broken English”  
|                 | • Linguistic risk-taking  
|                 | • Conflating race and language  
|                 | • Linguistic pride  
|                 | • Resistance and transgression  
|                 | • Wanting to learn more languages  
|                 | • “It’s still school”  
|                 | • “Setting the stage”  
|                 | • “Talking white”  
|                 | • Contradictions around language  
|                 | • On Spanish (and Spanglish)  
|                 | • On AAVE  
|                 | • Difficulty talking about language  
|                 | • “Caught off guard”  
|                 | • Teachers and language  
|                 | • Translingual sensibility  
|                 | • Complicating ‘home’ and ‘school’ language  
|                 | • “We know”  
|                 | • Making choices about translanguaging in writing |
• Translanguaging (García, 2009)
• “Creative and critical” languaging (Li Wei, 2014)
• Language sharing (Paris, 2012)
• Translingual literacies and writing (Horner et al., 2011; Canagarajah, 2012)
• “Gifted (socio)linguists” (Rymes, 2014; Flores, 2015)
• “Arts of the contact zone” (Pratt, 1991)
• Language in need of improvement
• Linguistic insecurity
• Linguistic pride
• Resistance and transgression
• Contradictions around language
• Teachers and language
• “Translingual sensibility”

Chapter 4:
“My English trips with its own self, but that don’t stop it”: Translingual sensibilities amidst monoglossic language ideologies

• Metacommentary (Rymes, 2014)
• Raciolinguistic ideologies (Flores & Rosa, 2015)
• “Discourses of appropriateness” (Flores & Rosa, 2015)
• Language awareness (Alim, 2005)
• “Gifted (socio)linguists” (Rymes, 2014; Flores, 2015)
• Conflating race and language
• “Talking white”
• On Spanish (and “Spanglish”)
• On “AAVE”

• Teachers and language
• Metacommentary (Rymes, 2014)
• Translanguaging (García, 2009)
• Translingual literacies and writing (Horner et al., 2011; Canagarajah, 2012)
• Linguistic exploration and linguistic architecture (Flores, 2015)
• “Gifted (socio)linguists” (Rymes, 2014; Flores, 2015)
• Language awareness/metalinguistic awareness (Alim, 2005)
• “Arts of the contact zone” (Pratt, 1991)
• Identity performances
• Linguistic risk-taking
• “It’s still school”
• Translingual sensibility
• Complicating ‘home’ and ‘school’ language
• “We know”
• Making choices about translanguaging in writing

Chapter 5:
“They look at us like, ‘what are you saying?’”: Struggling at the intersections of race and language

Chapter 6:
“I would never share out my story”: Writing choices as identity choices in the translingual writing process
• “Creative and critical” languaging (Li Wei, 2014)
• Third Space (Gutiérrez, Rymes & Larson, 1995; Gutiérrez, 2008; Moje et al., 2004)
• Linguistic exploration and linguistic architecture (Flores, 2015)
• “Translanguaging stance” (García, Johnson & Seltzer, 2017)
• Resistance and transgression
• “Setting the stage”
• Difficulty talking about language
• “Caught off guard”
• Teachers and language
• Translingual sensibility

Chapter 7:
“No, must continue engaging”: A teacher’s experience of Third Space moments in a critical translingual classroom
Appendix 3.4
List of Interview Questions: Lauren and Students

For Lauren (Exit interview)
• Has what we read at the beginning of the year/discussed throughout the year made you think differently about your instruction? In what ways?
• Has what we read at the beginning of the year/discussed throughout the year made you think differently about your own language practices and/or experiences with language in your life? In what ways?
• Can you talk about something a student said to you/something you overheard a student say/something a student wrote that you found interesting? What about this moment was noteworthy to you?
• What do you notice about students’ engagement/behavior/ways of expressing themselves in class? Is it any different from what you’ve seen in the past?
• Can you think of a moment that occurred in the classroom that made you uncomfortable or uneasy? A time when you didn’t know how to proceed? What was the moment and why was it uncomfortable for you?
• Did any particular student’s writing surprise you? In what ways?
• Has this year impacted your own pedagogy? In what ways?
• Has this year impacted your relationship with your students? In what ways?
• How, if at all, will you approach your instruction and curriculum next year? Has your approach been influenced by our work together this year?

For students (Interview on college essay writing)
• Can you point out a moment when you included a different language practice in your writing? Why did you include it?
• Do you think there’s a difference between using a language like Spanish in your writing vs. using a different form of English? Why or why not?
• Has the process of writing this text been different from past writing you have done? In what ways?
• What is the difference between using different language practices when you talk vs. when you write?
• Was it difficult to include different language practices in a piece of writing? Why or why not?
• Do you think you’ll submit this college essay next year? Why or why not?
Appendix 4.1
“My Spanish” by Melissa Lozada-Oliva

If you ask me if I am fluent in Spanish I will tell you
My Spanish is an itchy phantom limb: it is reaching for a word and only finding air
My Spanish is my third birthday party: half of it is memory, the other half is that photograph on
the fridge is what my family has told me
My Spanish is a puzzle left in the rain
Too soggy to make its parts fit so that it can look just like the picture on the box.

My Spanish is possessive adjectives.
It is proper nouns dressed in pearls and bracelets.
It is are you up yet? It is there is a lot to do today
My Spanish is on my resume as a skill.
My Spanish is on my toothbrush in red mouth marks
My Spanish is so hungry
My Spanish reaches for words at the top of a shelf with no stepping stool
is hit in the head with all of the old words that have been hiding up there
My Spanish wonders how bad is it to eat something that’s expired
My Spanish wonders if it has an expiration date

My Spanish asks you why it’s always being compared to food
Spicy, hot, sizzle
My Spanish wants to let you know it’s not something to be eaten and then shit out
But does not really believe it

My Spanish

My Spanish

If you ask me if I am fluent in Spanish I’ll tell you my Spanish sits in the corner of a classroom,
chews on a pencil, does not raise its hand
My Spanish is my sister’s sore smile at her only beauty pageant
My Spanish is a made up story about a parent who never came home
My Spanish is a made up story about a parent who never came home and traveled to beautiful
countries and sent me post cards from all of them
My Spanish is me, tracing every letter they were able to fit in
My Spanish is the true story of my parent’s divorce
Chaotic, broken, something I have to choose to remember correctly
My Spanish is asking me if my parents are
asking me if I’m white yet

My Spanish

My Spanish
If you ask me if I am fluent in Spanish I will try to tell you a story
of how my parents met in an ESL class
How it was when they trained their mouths to say
I love you in a different language, I hate you with their mouths shut
I will tell you how my father’s accent makes him sound like Zorro
how my mother tried to tie her tongue to a post with an English language leash
how the tongue always ran stubbornly back to the language it had always been in love with
Even when she tried to tame it
it always turned loose

My Spanish

My Spanish

My Spanish is understanding that there are stories that will always be out of my reach
there are people who will never fit together the way that I wanted them to
there are letters that will always stay silent
there are words that will always escape me.
Appendix 4.2
Student poetry, “My English”/“My Spanish”

Lucia, “My English”

My English is Creative
My English is Mixed
My English is Mine
If you ask if my English is perfect
My English would scream out
No!
It is proud of being imperfect
My English has all the colors of
a Rainbow
Splattered on a blank canvas
My English runs
Then trips and Stumbles
and Slows down
My English can have a Straight face and make Faces
My English can dance Bachata with
Spanish
My English is all over the place
Bouncing off the walls
There are different Versions to
My English
My English is Original
My English is mine
"My English"

My English your English
Is my English good enough?
I can tell you something though.
My English is the way "it" looks at you.
You love with hate love hate with desire...
Good enough?
My English can pick you up like an
abundance to fix you
but, my English can also grab the knife
and tear you apart.
My English is good enough yet...
My English covers sexual morbidity,
it's okay, you'll get idea. No es
muy complicado. Understand? No... oh.
Doesn't matter!
My English is the dark chocolate
everyone hates, but I love.

Is it good enough? I mean
My English is a contemporary dance
shows you how it feels without
letting the words run.
My English wakes up in the morning
It says "Fuck School Again"
My English holds my Spanish
If I don't know the word
My English dances with my Spanish
From time to time
My English plays NBA 2k
My English may be broken to you
I'm proud of my English
I'm proud because it's who I am
My English is me
My English rides or die
My English lies
My English slowly kills my Spanish
My English would be confused
and say "What the Fuck you mean"
My English is lost in space
My English may be broken to you
I'm proud of my English
I'm proud of because it's who I am
My English is me
If you ask me if my English is perfect, I will tell you to stop asking me so many god damn questions.

My English is a little kid at an amusement park.
My English is a little girl begging for cotton candy at the fair.
My English runs around the house annoying her parents.
My English is a reflection of me.

My English is a speech being delivered in front of a big crowd.
My English is shouting for the wrong team at a basketball game.
My English is the hand that constantly goes up in class.

My English is the red x's on the test.
But it's also the lessons learned from a mistake.
My English is like a track star anxious to cross over the finish line.
My English had an internship at McGraw Hill this summer.
It advised and organized conference meetings.

If you ask me if my English is perfect, I will tell you my English is constantly progressing.
My English is unique
My English is go different color on an on out my face.
My English is as diverse as new York city
My English has a lot of ingredients like that of a cake
It sometimes is as fast and loud as an upset sing
It sometimes is as low and calm as a lullaby
Sometimes it trips if it's running on the street
My English has sties from all over the world
My English can adapt to where it is at
My English is smart as a scientist
My English changes everyday
It's alive just as your alive
It grow like an infant
It has a temper like a teenager
My English is funnier than a comedian
My English can't be defined by people
Cause it's ever growing
My English can't be measured like a ruler
Cause it grows to much to measure
My English is unique
So it is fine
What is your English like?
Is it also as unique as mine?
My English

My English is like a long bus ride, making lots of stops before reaching its destination.

My English is way shorter than Kevin Hart

My English is very jumpy at times

My English is a comedian who gets paid to make you laugh.

My English stuck up a lot

My English chokes on food every time it tries to eat

My English is hard to maintain

My English is hard to swallow but soften when it reaches down your stomach.

My English does not follow rules of pronunciation

My English is its own rule

My English is its own world

My English is sour but when sweet like sour patch

My English is also known as accent
My English has labels and a different price to each
My English is a new concept ready to be taught and learned
My English asks for sympathy and forgiveness
My English asks for help and appreciates it
My English is never ashamed of its appearance
My English is kind and love feedbacks
My English feels broken sometimes but does not let go of itself
My English is like the love of a mother to her child
My English is left out at times but still reaches out and try fitting in
My English is its own English in its own way
Robert, “My English”

MY English grew up at home
But it roams the street.
MY English picks up what it hears.
MY English has its own mind.
It’s a colorful person learning modern things.
MY English comes from different cultures.

MY English does not know what is right
Confused by what a perfect English looks like.
MY English is a bored kid in class.
It wants to feed off knowledge.
Wants to learn more.
MY English feels like it could do better.

MY English understands appropriate times.
MY English is the wacka-moove arcade game.
It pops up and goes back down.
Always switching lanes.
It comes when needed.
Leaves when it decides.
"My English"

My English is mixed with Spanish
which makes me hispanic.
My English is a healthy meal full
of vegetables.
My English is quick like a tornado
and a 4 train express.
My English is different depending
on whom I'm speaking to, like a movie.
    My English, my English.

My English is like Newington heights in
New York where the lights never go off.
    My English is like fatty nap
    or future on stage.
My English is like a board game
    with instructions, understandable.
My English is Bro, why you acting up?
    My English is from W Fordham Rd
    where I was raised at.
    My English, my English.
My English is the bomb that might
explode while having a convo.
    My English, my English.
"My English"

If someone was to ask me if my English was good, I would tell them that. My English is like a double sided coin with 2 different faces, 

AAVE and Standard English. My English is like a super modified game that could adapt to any environment on the block. My English could be offered with a lot of slang and in school the order would be switched in seconds.

If someone was to ask me if my English was good, I would tell them that. My English has been顺畅ed from alot of code and is still not "correct". My English grammar may be a little.
Ricardo, “My English”

“My English”

My English wakes up in the morning and
does not eat breakfast.
At school my English stay still waiting until
the bell rings so he can walk out from school.
My English is like a book in other language
that no body understand.
My English have a lot of dreams that fell down.
My English is like a character who needs to reach new levels in
order to learn new skills and get more strong.

Nadia, “My Spanish”

If you ask me if I’m good at Spanish,
I’ll tell you that
My Spanish went on vacation and never came back
It sometimes embarrasses itself but laughs
My Spanish trips many times but keeps going
My Spanish sometimes refuses to come out to help

If you ask me if I’m good at Spanish,
I’ll tell you that
My Spanish is bruised up pretty badly
but its heart keeps going
My Spanish plays hide and seek
and sometimes I can’t find it
My Spanish is glued to me like a post it to a paper
but soon will fall off if it is not renewed
But keeps going...
Over the years it became very forgetful and confused
But keeps going...
My Spanish will soon win a most improved medal
Till then my Spanish is only beautiful to me.
If you ask me if I'm good at English, I'll tell you that my English walks inside me 24/7. My English gets in the way of things. And when it's time to go home, my English is relieved to go into the diesel and change into Spanish. And when my English speaks at home it is not understood.

If you ask me if I'm good at English, I'll tell you that my English goes on vacation to Mexico where it doesn't speak again until it gets back in New York. My English makes people laugh when it speaks and the accent is mocking it, but my English trips with itself and that doesn't stop it from making people laugh. It keeps walking, my English is excited to keep meeting other Englishes. My English is ready to improve and become better.
Appendix 6.1
Questions, SBHS’s 11th Grade Panel Presentations

Questions for Panelists: 11th Grade English Panel Presentations
Thursday, May 19th

FYI: “Language practices” refers to the diverse ways people use language and how they work together to build a person’s linguistic repertoire. This might include words or phrases that originate in a certain part of the country, adjusting your language depending on the context you’re in, speaking multiple languages, or speaking more than one variety of a language.

Questions about language and your language practices:

1. What is linguistic prejudice and how does it apply to you?
2. How would you describe your language practices?
3. How do the language practices you use connect to your identity?
4. Is using Standard Academic English the only way a person can be successful in a school setting or a job?

Questions about Your Author Study Unit:

1. Tell me about your author's background.
2. Describe your writer's voice - what language practices does he/she use in their writing?
3. How does this make your writer an example of a risk taker?
4. What is your writer’s stance on audience? How does this manifest in his or her writing?
5. Why does your author defy mainstream conventions and take these risks? What is the purpose?

Questions about your College Essay:

1. What big idea from your English class did you choose for your essay?
2. What risks did you take in your college essay? Please point one out from your first draft.
3. What was your rationale for each risk?

9 Created by L. Ardizzone.
4. Did you prepare your reader? If so, how? If not, why not?
5. Did you accommodate your reader? If so, how? If not, why not?
6. What reaction are you anticipating from a college admissions officer?
7. Has this year changed the way you think about language? How?
8. Has it changed how you feel about your own language practices? How?
9. What recommendations can you make to English teachers based on what you've learned this year about language?
Yessica, College Essay

"Main aapakee Madad Kaise Kar sakata hoon"

Said a woman, dressed in a white sari with a handful of colorful bangles, speaking in Hindi.

"I am sorry. I don’t understand," I replied. Although I loved the sound of the words she had just spoken.

That is when I thought to myself, maybe I should learn Hindi. I already utilize four different language practices in my daily life, why not learn another.

Since I was little, languages or language practices have been a huge part of my life. I came to New York when I was six years old from the Dominican Republic, only speaking, reading, and writing in Spanish. In New York, I felt like I was obligated to learn English, and I did.

After I started having a different perspective view of languages, I would not criticize anyone who could not speak English because I knew how it felt to not understand or speak in a different language, therefore I would feel a need to help those people by translating, and if I did not know more language, I would find another way to help them out.

By doing this, I became more open-minded, of which now I just want to learn different languages and help people out in the best way that I can.

Languages or language practices have become a huge part of my identity and who I am.
It is not fair that many people in society judge anyone that does not use only standard academic English. Many people judge others based on their language practices which can be a wrong judgment on that person. There are lots of language practices. Everyone has different ways of speaking. A person’s ways of speaking reflect who they are as a person and how they grew up.

I have different language practices and these language practices affect my daily life. I do not always use standard academic English which is required as to be perfect English. However, standard academic English is one of my language practices, but I do not use it very much like my other language practices. In my daily life, I mostly use AAVE/slang a lot. I use these language practices more because I feel very comfortable with it and I am mostly surrounded with people who speaks AAVE/slang. Another language practice I have are French and Malinese which are my native languages I grew up speaking. I experience linguistic prejudice most of the time. It is unfair that people including myself get judged because of their language practices. For
example, when people hear **AAVE/sleng** speakers, they think that they are 
ghetto, unprofessional, lack of education, 
and is less likely to be successful.
This is wrong because there is no 
right way of speaking. This is why 
style shifting come in use. Lots of 
people uses style shifting in their 
daily lives because they know they 
would be judge. Therefore they 
style shift in between their language 
practices, knowing when an when not to use AAVE/sleng or standard 
Academic English. For example, in 
school I style shift my language 
practices when I come to class, especia 
ly when I go to my English class. I 
style shift my language practices when 
I am in school because I know I 
would be corrected if I spoke sleng.

While writing my college essay, I must 
want to make sure that the college 
admission officers know that I have 
different language practices. Also that 
I know when to styleshift my 
language practices based on who or 
what the situation is. In addition 
judging people based on their language 
practices is wrong because there is 
no right or wrong way of speaking. We 
all have our own way of speaking and 
expressing ourselves, therefore no one 
should be judged upon that.
"Ms. can I ask you a question?" Lucinda asked breaking the awkward silence in our English class.

"Yes," Ms. Arizone our English teacher replied back.

"I like—" before she can finish her sentence Ms. Gordon cut her off and says

"That's not how you start off a question."

"Okay Ms." said Lucinda to avoid her unnecessary comment and proceeded to finish her question for Ms. Arizone.

"Ms. like—"

Randy interrupted again Ms. Gordon.

She reprimanded "Lucinda speak English, I've known Lucinda well enough," she said blocking her mouth.

"Okay Ms." Lucinda said brushing her off still trying avoid her comments.

My English teacher and I exchanged a look, she knew what I was thinking.

In that moment not being able to stay quiet any longer, I blurted out "Ms. That's how she speaks in that second I thought about power and language, something strange..."
I've learned throughout the school year in English class.

This made me think about the emphasis about language and power. We've had discussions about this topic in my English class a few months back. As we talked about language and power, one thing that stood out to me was when Ms. Arzica gave an example of teachers and students. I took that specific topic personally because the language I utilize can give off a misperception teachers believe that Standard Academic English (SAE) is more superior than other language practices rather than honoring the other language practices students employ into their everyday life. By teachers in constraining students, teachers are denying students the ability to reveal their authentic identity.

One day me and my friends were at lunch in the English class and my friend Bianca asked me—well—a question about our (SATS) and I said "Ain't it's on the 4th of June" and my teacher mocked the word "ain't" and she said "Ain't? Ain't is not a word use proper grammar."

I responded, "The word 'ain't' is in the Webster's dictionary, and I employ different grammar into my language practices."

Scanned by CamScanner
Then she said, "you are not going to get into college speaking that way."

Holding my ground I replied back and said, "I utilize and manage my language practice depending on the context that I'm in."

I believe college is a environment where you don't hide your true self. You can be who you want to be without being discriminated by your professors and classmates. They won't anticipate for you to speak Academic English.

Throughout my highschool career I've encountered teachers telling me the way I speak is wrong, or incorrect. I believe I can actually teach my teachers the language practices I employ in my daily life. This also illustrates I can transition my language practices in which the context I'm in. This is the rationale why I would be good for your college."
Walking through those double doors was nerve-wracking, not knowing if I would make a good impression or blow my chances of getting the job. I went in the room and saw a tall white man with a black suit and tie sitting down. My chest was pounding with fear and nervousness.

"Why do you think you'll be good for this job?" he asked.

"I think because of my determined mentality and how fast and good I work, I will be good for this job and also I ain't no slacker to get the job done by any means." I replied.
Throughout the process of answering his questions, his eyebrows raised and I started to get an idea he did not think I was capable and intelligent for the job. He told me he would give me a call in about two weeks. If I had gotten the job and my phone never rang, knowing I did not get a job I started to question myself "what did I do wrong?" "what could I have done better?"

Sometimes I wonder why are my language practices so bad? I have seen those who speak my language practices succeed and yet our language is still considered inferior. We grow up in a society where the way white people speak is considered the "correct" way of speaking. What makes the way they speak so different than ours? Throughout our country's history the white population have been dominant and we, hispanics and african americans, have been struggling, struggling to make us all feel equal but things aren't. Our country is run by rich white men and women so people view the way they speak as the "correct" way of speaking and we get judged because we don't speak "proper" English like them. We get put in a category of unintelligent speakers.

My mom always told me just because
Just because yo hablo un poco de Español does not make me dumb! Just because I curse does not mean I am a criminal!

I am no different than those who speak standard academic English. English. I wake up and brush my teeth just like them. I use the bathroom just like them. I go to school just like them. I am applying to college just like them. I am no different than them just because I speak a certain way does not put me below them. I am human and so are they.
It was my first time in that type of professional environment and I was young and blissfully unaware of the fact that my language practices can affect how people view me and potentially deny me the opportunity. It was hard to understand how my language practices denied me this opportunity but I knew this was how the professional lifestyle worked. I knew I had to adapt and change in certain contexts that I am in but I did not know a misspoken word can affect an outcome. Now knowing this I'm more aware of the words I say to the people I am around and the places I am in.

With this experience it showed me how my language practices can affect certain situations I am in. This only made me realize how my language practices are not going to get me the type of jobs I want and careers I wish pursue. My language practices are a reflection of who I am but do not make me second I am unintelligent because I will prove you wrong.
Many people expect an Arabic person to speak Arabic.

Many Arabic people family, friends and others judge me by my race and where I come from. Many people can be a certain country and not speak the language.

I have different language practices, slang, AAVE, SAE and a little bit of Arabic. Many people talk to me in Arabic and when I tell them I don't understand Arabic they laugh at me. For example my uncle was having a conversation with me in my language practices and was telling me that I need to learn Arabic because it is my country's language and my nationality. And also they make fun of me when I call my family members "Nigga or yo".
In conclusion your identity does not have to do with your language practices. You can be born to a certain language practices and you could also learn a certain language practice. However there are many people that have different language practices or do not speak their ‘natural’ language. You also learn certain language practices based on the people you hang out with or a certain area you live in. I live in the Bronx, NY so I speak a lot of slang and AAUE.
Me and brother were debating and I stated “No, no, no it’s nothing like that show.”

My brother exclaimed “yes, it is it’s a copy of that show but for girls.”

I then recognized all the similarities and said “There not that similar”.

He saw my face and said “Ha, you see you know there exactly the same thing”.

I quickly said “No!”

Then my father chuckled and said “Americanos, ustedes son Americanos.” He interrupted the debate I was obviously winning.

“No Somos Americanos” I replied.

My father told us we were Americanos because we speak to much Ingles. I spoke with both Inglés and Español. I have Spanish speaking parents but in a country that dominantly speaks Ingles. Yo necesitaba aprender Ingles y Español because I spoke in Ingles outside.

1) Americanos = Americans 6) necesitaba = needed to
2) Ingles = English 3) yo and 7) aprender = learn
4) Español = Spanish 5) yo = I
and Spanish inside. However, I would watch American television and American shows instead of tele novellas\(^8\) like my mom and aunts would watch. Through television I was shown more phrases and terms in English than Spanish that caused me to use both of the languages at home. Then I started mixing my language practices and make Spanglish. Both of my parents really didn't like that. Spanglish they would say learn more Spanish when they would hear me speak like that.

Hearing comments like "learn more Spanish," "Ustedes son Americanos," made me think that Español and Ingles have a complicated relationship. One author that is familiar to the languages relationship is Gustavo Perez Firmat who was also born in a foreign country (Cuba) and raised in America. Gustavo Perez Firmat writes in both Español \(^9\) and Ingles, and believe that his language practices connect to his \textit{identidad} which I agree with because language makes you who you are. In one of his writings, Firmate states "My two languages compete rather than cohabit." This quote means

\(^8\) Tele novellas = \text{Soap opera} \\
\(^9\) Spanglish = \text{a mix of Spanish and English} \\
\(^{10}\) \textit{Identidad} = \text{Identity}
that out of the two languages he knows one is
more dominate than the other causing one to
intrude the other language's conversation like
so, I agree with Firmat's quote when yo habla en
uno de las dos languages one seems to interrupt
the other. It is just something that happens.

Hearing comments on my language practices helped
for the real world. When hearing criticism
I learn to take it and improve from it. Yo aprendi aceptar las críticas y
aprende de ellos. Learning from my criticism
will help me a lot in the future. Aprendiendo de mis
críticas vas ayudar me con muchas cosas en
la vida. These qualities help me learn from
my mistakes and improve on them. Estas
cualidades me ayudan a aprender de mis errores y mejorar en
eles.

My two languages connect to me it's part
of me and I can't change that. My identity
is linked to my language practices. Both
of my language practices expresan quien yo
Soy y donde yo Soy. I speak in Spanish because
of my birth place, La Republica Dominicana and
my parents who Spanish speaking parents.

"Conversacion = conversation 18) expresan = express
Hablo = talk 19) en = in 14) uno = one 17) quien = who
De = off 16) los = the 17) los = two 20) Soy = am 21) donde
where"
My parents only knowing Spanish helped me learn Spanish. I speak en Ingles because I grew up speaking that in schools watching Disney and Cartoon Network and other channels.

In conclusion, language is an important part of our lives. Language is gained and full of experience you have had. Language is universal it develops and changes just like your identidad.
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