



# Have We Learned Anything? Raciolinguistic Ideologies in Remote Learning Public Discourses

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## Abstract

Using critical discourse analysis as a method of inquiry, this study unveils raciolinguistic ideologies that have shaped public discourse in the first year of remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Findings reveal that fundamental ideas about how we organize, do and think about schools might not have been essentially challenged, even when alternatives could have been introduced or explored. In particular, the analysis of discourse demonstrated the pervasiveness of raciolinguistic ideologies in reproducing or enforcing normative ways of being, knowing, and doing based on the idealized linguistic practices of whiteness. For example, school routines prioritized monitoring and managing students' bodies and behavior, problems of access were equated with technical support, and the design of online environments rarely took into account negotiating, partnering, and listening to students and families. These views seemed to have shaped much public opinion about remote learning during a time marked by social turmoil and the realities of a health crisis.

## Keywords

Remote learning; raciolinguistic ideologies; grammar of schooling; COVID-19 pandemic

## Positionality Statement

My identities and languaging stories are shaped by an urge to resist assimilation. I grew up in a mixed-heritage family, which always made me feel "not from here and not from there." I inherited my father's tanned, brown skin, my mother's Judaism, and Brazilian Portuguese. I was born in the US, but grew up in Rio, Brazil. Although my mother's family never

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hid our ancestry from us, it was seen as shameful, so they suppressed it, nullified their Yiddish and Jewish languaging and cultural practices. We were never baptized, so that was also a source of shame in my father's Catholic family. Because I was born in the US, I could go and do my PhD there, which is a privilege. I also grew up middle class in Brazil, which is also a privilege. I am now grappling between my privileges and minoritization status in the US as an educator with a perceived "foreign accent." Racialization happens in relations and in contexts, so it is crucial to unveil these relations and contexts through positionalities and critical approaches to discourse and education, especially by adopting a raciolinguistic perspective.



Schools and educators have always struggled to integrate technology meaningfully (Goodson et al., 2002; Goodson & Schostak, 2021; Lankshear & Knobel, 2011). Current arrangements in formal schooling are at least in part to blame. The larger and institutional characteristics of K-12 schools have long endured societal changes (Tyack & Tobin, 1994; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). K-12 school routines, especially involving literacy practices, are highly regularized and institutionalized, defying many forms of creative thoughts, choices, and endeavors. These forms of persistent conventional thinking and routines have been called by some scholars the "grammar of schooling" (Tyack & Tobin, 1994; Lankshear & Knobel, 2011), which has been marked by:

[D]ispositions towards experiencing time as compartmentalized and "chunked"; valuing propositional knowledge (knowing what) over procedural or performative knowledge (knowing how to); accepting unequal distributions of goods and differential outcomes of personal or group effort as normal and legitimate; seeing hierarchical social relations as natural; a willingness to defer to expertise; accepting and complying with institutionalized authority; and so on. (Goodson et al., 2002, p. 6)

As a result, K-12 school relations tend to produce and reproduce social positions and ways to understand the world that are controlled, categorized, and unequally distributed. In this view, the teacher is the one who possesses all the knowledge, which, in turn, will be transmitted to the students, who are often erroneously considered empty vases (Freire, 1974). Furthermore, the grammar of schooling enforces raciolinguistic ideologies about race, intelligence, ability, and language practices that position non-conforming groups of students at the margins. Students whose language practices are considered non-standard or "not appropriate" are racialized and often required to model their linguistic practices after mainstream white, middle-class, or elite, able-bodied, cis-het male speaking subjects (Baker-Bell, 2020; Cioè-Peña, 2021; Flores & Rosa, 2015; Henner & Robinson, 2023).

With the lockdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic, these problems intensified, often revealing the lack of readiness and equity in using technology purposefully and deliberately to support and involve students in a time of crisis. The quick changes imposed by "emergency remote learning" during the first year of the pandemic drove the surge of a variety of technologically-mediated ideas, especially in K-12 education. Sudden decisions about school closures aligned with the lack of time for school leaders' as well as teachers'

preparation led to the replication of typical and usually unsuitable face-to-face school routines and a frequent decrease of quality in K-12 instructional practices (Labonte et al., 2020). In particular, norms and rules regulating body movement, camera positioning, muting and unmuting voices, and enforced uses of academic language abounded in popular K-12 education discourses on the web.

Free and available K-12 materials on the internet provided many examples of language policing via *netiquette*, that is, norms that discipline and enforce surveillance mechanisms in the online classroom, including cameras on, the ability for the teacher to control settings such as muting/unmuting or restricting chatting during synchronous video conferences (Bauler, 2021). Remote learning schedules frequently outlined what to do, at what time at home during asynchronous and synchronous learning. In much K-12 education public discourse, the grammar of schooling, that is, long-standing classroom routines and rigid ways of organizing the educational experience, tended to persist even when technology could have afforded alternatives to relating to others and the world, giving us tools to reimagine education especially considering multimodality for all students (Goodson & Shostak, 2021; Lankshear & Knobel, 2011; Tyack and Cuban, 1995).

Utilizing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 2003) and a raciolinguistic perspective (Flores & Rosa, 2015), this study explores ideologies in public K-12 educational discourses that have emerged in light of pressures imposed by remote learning during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. To do that, I examined remote learning discourses in texts in a variety of formats, including free and available K-12 materials, policies, news articles, and social media discussions on the internet. I especially focused on textual choices that

reveal ways traditionally marginalized and racialized students have been positioned as inferior in racial, cultural, and linguistic terms due to historical processes of colonization and domination (García et al., 2021). While CDA provided the methods to scrutinize discursive choices in selected texts, a raciolinguistic perspective inquired further into how ideologies embedded in the persistent routines and conventional thinking of the grammar of schooling can reproduce or enforce normative ways of being, knowing and doing based on the idealized linguistic practices of whiteness.

### **Situating the Inquiry**

During the first year of remote learning initiatives in the COVID-19 pandemic, we witnessed the promise of technological change in K-12 education (Goodson & Shostak, 2021). Due to the emergency circumstances imposed by lockdowns, K-12 teachers were forced to integrate new technological applications, platforms, and tools. However, the emergency nature of the implementation did not often afford teachers the necessary time or resources to develop expertise, reflect on the needs and assets of students, and, above all, address existing equity problems of access (Labonte et al., 2020; Trust & Whalen, 2021). Many K-12 educational systems and individual educators seemed confronted with challenges particularly involving time allocation or organization, technological access, and pedagogical choices. For example, full participation and inclusion in remote learning required at a minimum having internet access, at a maximum familiarity with new technologies, including knowing how to email to communicate with peers and teachers as well as engaging in course management systems to complete assignments. In this context, inequities intensified (Averett, 2021).

The rapid changes imposed by lockdowns and remote learning in K-12 education also inundated discourse on news

and social media, promoting ideas about what schools should or should not do and how students were affected, directly influencing and impacting public opinion (see McClain et al., 2021). As an example, a thematic analysis on 22,547 original tweets posted by 6,970 Twitter users during the first month of online distance education in Turkish K-12 schools revealed that the platform was used to share negative opinions about distance education while also serving as a means to provide support for families in need (Celik et al., 2022). Oliveira et al. (2022) conducted a large-scale analysis of social media comments to 61,532 news posts in Portuguese news media outlets on Facebook that revealed the audiences' emotional response to main educational concerns, especially parents supporting children in their first remote learning experiences. Polarizing opinions were also made visible in the September 1, 2021, Pew Research Center poll, where 62% of parents surveyed said online instruction had gone very or somewhat well, whereas 30% said they had a very or somewhat difficult time helping their children use technology and the internet for this purpose (McClain et al., 2021).

Bearing the challenges of remote learning during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic in mind, this study aims to engage readers in a deeper conversation about the discourses surrounding technology uses and applications in K-12 education. Examining free and available K-12 materials, policies, news articles, and social media discussions on the internet, I analyzed the central role raciolinguistic ideologies play in the discourses that reproduce inequalities embedded in long-standing classroom routines and rigid ways of organizing schools revealed in the grammar of schooling. Raciolinguistic ideologies position non-conforming groups of students at the margins as their language practices are considered deficient and in need of remediation

(Flores & Rosa, 2015).

Given my own positionalities as a critical scholar that seeks to dismantle the ways traditionally marginalized, pathologized, and racialized students have historically been framed from a deficit perspective in K-12 educational settings in the U.S., I adopted a raciolinguistic perspective to understand ways the grammar of schooling tends to reproduce and enforce normative ways of being, knowing and doing based on the "idealized linguistic practices of whiteness and to a listening subject who hears and interprets the linguistic practices of language-minoritized populations as deviant based on their racial positioning in society" (Flores & Rosa, 2015, p. 151). A raciolinguistic perspective helps shift the mode of perception from stigmatizing traditionally marginalized students due to their languaging or abilities to ideologies that construe what counts as schooling, including common sense assumptions of appropriateness, ability, achievement, and learning as quantified by arbitrary standardized measures (Cioè-Peña, 2021).

### ***Critical Discourse Analysis as Method of Inquiry***

Users of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) inquire into the role of texts in reproducing, replicating, perpetuating or changing ideas in the socially-mediated world. The use of CDA does not assume neutrality or impartiality. On the contrary, as a deeply critical qualitative methodology, one starts CDA from the researcher's ideological positionalities in examining discursive choices within the sociohistorical world. Below is the sequence of activities I engaged in when conducting CDA.

### ***Theme Selection***

In CDA, the choice of research theme is based on the researcher's motivation in

exploring a social concern, especially within contemporary socio-historical moments and movements (Fairclough, 2003). This study was motivated by educational issues that surfaced due to remote learning and lockdowns during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. I, as the researcher, decided to focus on ways public discourse made available via social media, news media and other materials reflected raciolinguistic ideologies in long-standing routines and rigid ways of organizing schools, that is, the grammar of schooling. The analysis focused on revealing assumptions, ideologies and implications for reinforcing the grammar of schooling in three ways it can manifest: Time, access, and pedagogy. In naming and focusing on these three manifestations of the grammar of schooling, it was my hope to demonstrate how difficult it is to foster systemic change in perceptions of traditionally marginalized students, even during times of historical transformation and pedagogical innovation.

### **Text Selection**

From a CDA standpoint, the analysis of discourse encompasses genres, discourses, and styles, which are all represented by texts – considered here as social events (Fairclough, 2003). All these elements of discourse are always situated and enacted by people through the use of language in local situations, interactions, and relations. Because of that, texts have causal effects, being ideologically shaped and sustained in social practice (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). Following Fairclough (2003), textual analysis is selective to reflect the research themes carefully considered by the researcher. Texts are selected based on the relevance to the theme. In this study, seven sample resources were chosen ~~se-as~~ to provide a broad spectrum of genres: Three news articles, a Twitter post and discussion, a blog, a remote learning schedule posted on an educational website, and a

teaching resource in the form of a digital poster. The seven sample texts were carefully selected to reflect: 1) Examples of ways the grammar of schooling manifests in terms of time, access, and pedagogy; 2) Raciolinguistic ideologies that reproduce or enforce normative ways of being, knowing, and doing based on the idealized linguistic practices of whiteness.

### **Discursive Analysis**

One practical way of conducting CDA is examining the discursive choices made visible in grammatical, semantic, and semiotic meaning-making resources in a text (Fairclough, 2003). However, CDA does not consist of only examining linguistic features in a text. Discursive choices are always political and ideological, including the researcher's own interpretations. As such, CDA is never objective or complete, as the researcher, by their very own positionalities and situatedness, can never provide the totality of meanings a text can render (Fairclough, 2003). In this study, I conducted a detailed analysis of the many meaning-making resources utilized by the authors of the seven sample texts taking into consideration ways grammatical structures (e.g., words, phrases, sentences), as well as symbols, images, and layout were employed to convey raciolinguistic ideologies about students during remote learning in the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. These discursive choices can be implicit, explicit or assumed.

As discourse is an element of social life, there are social effects of texts in inculcating, sustaining, changing ideologies. One way the researcher can unveil these ideologies is by intentionally selecting critical questions to ask the texts (Fairclough, 2003). In this study, I critically inquired into raciolinguistic ideologies by scrutinizing assumptions and ideas about teaching, learning, language, technology, and students that could benefit or exclude specific groups of students. Through this inquiry, I

considered possible social implications of discursive choices and ideological messages in the formulation of the final research question: In what ways does the grammar of schooling reproduce or enforce normative ways of being, knowing, and doing based on the idealized linguistic practices of whiteness in public discourse during remote learning in the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic? Table 1 outlines the process of doing CDA as a method of inquiry in this study.

**Table 1***CDA as Method of Inquiry*

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Research Focus</b>
Theme Selection	Grammar of Schooling Manifestations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Time</li> <li>● Access</li> <li>● Pedagogy</li> </ul>
Textual Selection	Relevance to the Theme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Social Media</li> <li>● News Media</li> <li>● Pedagogical Materials</li> <li>● Educational Websites</li> </ul>
Discursive Analysis	Raciolinguistic Ideologies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Assumptions about teaching, learning, language, technology and students</li> <li>● Ideas about technology, language and social behavior that benefit or exclude specific groups of students</li> <li>● Possible social implications and consequences</li> </ul> Meaning Making Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Grammatical</li> <li>● Semantic</li> <li>● Semiotic</li> </ul>
Research Question	In what ways does the grammar of schooling reproduce or enforce normative ways of being, knowing and doing based on the idealized linguistic practices of whiteness in public discourse during remote learning in the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic?

## Analysis & Findings

### Time

Organizing environments for learning, especially entailing time, was challenging for educators, school administrators, and parents during remote learning. While concretely students and staff were pushed out of the physical building, forcing everyone to adapt to new arrangements and technological platforms, the grammar of schooling (Tyack & Toby, 1994) seems to have persisted even in light of inevitable changes. It was common for

educators, policymakers and administrators to rely on typical ways for organizing time that were similar to or approximated traditional schooling practices. Many remote learning schedules presented the days and periods as compartmentalized and “chunked.” Assignments, especially distance learning “packets,” valued propositional knowledge over procedural or performative knowledge. Figure 1 below shows a very common type of remote learning schedule with “periods,” “subjects” and “breaks” proposed by Seattle Public Schools (Mader, 2020).

Figure 1

Remote Learning Schedule Sample



High quality instruction and learning experiences

### K-3: Illustrative week in the life of a student

M/T/Th/F	
Time	Content
7:55-8:30	Check-in/ Community
8:30-9:20	ELA
9:20-9:50	Recess
9:50-10:40	Math
10:40-11:00	Independent Reading
11:00-11:30	Art/ Music/ PE/ Library
11:30-12:30	Lunch / Recess
12:30-1:00	Science / Social Studies / STI
1:00-2:25	Independent work / Family connection/ Small group*

Wed	
Time	Content
7:55-8:30	Check-in/ Community
8:30-9:20	ELA
9:20-9:50	Recess
9:50-10:30	Art/ Music/ PE/ Library
10:30-11:30	Independent work / Family connection/ Small group*
11:30-12:30	Lunch / Recess
12:30-1:10	Independent work / Family connection/ Small group*

Key: Live; offline

NOTE: SEL will be embedded throughout the instructional day

\*This time to vary by student

10

Note: © Seattle Public Schools



These types of remote learning schedules revealed a reliance on existing structures without taking into consideration or consulting families and communities on what would be the most beneficial way to partner in the name of students' experiences and learning. Above all, the grammar of schooling imposed itself in the homes, bodies, and lives of people. The body needed to be doing certain things at certain times. Mechanisms of surveillance were not only enforced via cameras in synchronous classes but also via strict schedules. As the quotes from parents in response to receiving their remote learning schedules published in an article on *The Hechinger Report* illustrate: "I feel so defeated," "Picturing this taking place in my house is both overwhelming and comical," "My main concern is the amount of time that lower elementary students are expected to be online" (Mader, 2020).

Many of the remote learning schedules were mostly based on ideologies and cultural values of white, elite, monolingual families. It assumed an ideal of family involvement and student participation where families devote their time to "monitor" student engagement in a timely manner while also engaging in family activities hosted by the school. The burden of involvement is placed on the individual student and their family who has the responsibility to change, adapt, and assimilate to arbitrary times. This view of family involvement or engagement tends to be one-sided, disregarding ways cultural norms, racial tensions, and beliefs in and about time and education are socially constructed.

In this vein, migrant, racialized families of minoritized students might teach and transmit values that often clash with dominant white mainstream discourses and monolingual ideologies about what counts as "good" in education (Choi, 2017). Not to mention, time organization and management differs significantly across families' circumstances, beliefs, and priorities. During the pandemic,

specifically, many parents of children who were bullied or did not conform to typical schooling rigid norms, schedules and routines saw an alternative for their children to engage in learning in school. Ms. Daniel, a Black mother and the executive director and co-founder of Parents of Black Children, an advocacy group that supports families and seeks to counter anti-Black racism in schools in Canada, expressed:

Educators may have good intentions, Ms. Daniel said, but online learning meant "our kids didn't have to go to school and watch their behaviour, watch their tone, watch how they sit, watch where they're standing, watch their hand movements." "For my son, she added, it was freedom. It was an immense shift." (Alphonso, 2022)

In much public discourse, there was an underlying assumption that "normal" schooling or approximation to regularized, typical schooling practices and schedules were best for all students, regardless of each individual experience. The January 4, 2022, New York Times newsletter headline on school closures due to Covid-19 surges illustrates this assumption vividly: "For the past two years, Americans have accepted more harm to children in exchange for less harm to adults" (Leonhardt, 2022).

Culturally-responsive and sustaining approaches to education firmly advocate for partnering with families and communities, listening to their counter-stories, affirming their multifaceted identities, and leveraging their cultural, intellectual and experiential funds of knowledge (Paris & Alim, 2017; Snyder & Fenner, 2021). While remote learning provided concrete new ways of being, knowing and doing in school, typical schooling practices continued to persist without carefully considering what worked and for whom. In particular, this type of rigid and chunked remote learning schedule seemed to ignore, minimize, or plainly correct

disabled and non-confirming ways of knowing, being and doing (Henner & Robinson, 2023). Willingness to listen to parents and families, especially of traditionally racialized, disabled and minoritized children, could have significantly impacted and changed educational practices and mediatic discourses, centering cultural responsiveness, inclusiveness and educational justice.

## Access

Though not new, problems of access were intensified during the pandemic. Media discourses and several reports urged districts to take action in providing affordable or free broadband internet access for all students as well as functioning devices, such as laptops or tablets. The lack of home internet access impeded many students from engaging in most school-related activities during the pandemic. Black, Hispanic and lower income households were most impacted, having no broadband services, access to a reliable computer device, or resources to complete schoolwork at home (Auxier & Anderson, 2020). Several reports conducted on traditionally marginalized and racialized groups of students and families recommended a focus on equity above all to address access challenges (Blagg et al., 2020; Peterson et al., 2020; Reich et al., 2020). Nevertheless, the majority of reports evidenced a sensationalist discourse about inequality of access without really questioning or addressing how and for what purposes access and technology could be used meaningfully to impact the lives of students, especially students who have been traditionally marginalized and racialized due to their cultural and racial backgrounds and language practices (Trust, 2020).

The New York Times was among the media outlets that emphasized the accessibility problem for students who have been traditionally labeled English Learners (ELs) during the

pandemic. One example can be seen below in Figure 2, which is a headline from a news article published on December 29, 2020 (Kim, 2020).

## Figure 2

*New York Times Article on English Learners*

### ***With Remote Learning, a 12-Year-Old Knows Her English Is Slipping Away***

In New York City, 142,000 children are learning English in school. Online classes are especially challenging for them.

The article focused on the experiences of three students, especially Taniya Ria, a 12-year-old girl who had recently migrated from Bangladesh. The article highlighted the challenges Taniya faced when completing homework, attending synchronous classes using a smartphone, and, above all, what the article considered the lost opportunities she was experiencing in learning English. The problems of accessibility Taniya and her family faced were narrated through a series of assumptions and deficit-based discourses that positioned Taniya and her family as victims of a villainous remote learning scheme. For example, the article starts with the following quote:

When Taniya Ria moved to the Bronx from Bangladesh in 2019, she didn't know a word of English. Within months, Taniya, now 12, was translating for her mother, making American friends in class and getting good grades. Then the pandemic arrived. (Kim, 2020)

The article continues, "While the disruptions of 2020 have threatened learning loss for nearly all students across the country, the toll has been especially severe for students who come from immigrant homes where English is rarely if ever spoken" (Kim, 2020).

In both excerpts, assumptions about language learning based on ideals of total immersion and assimilation are evident. According to the article, remote learning negatively impacted Taniya's learning because she could not make or meet "American friends." She "lost" English as it was "rarely" spoken at her "immigrant home." As placing remote learning and the pandemic as the main obstacle to Taniya's learning and success in school, the narrative perpetuates harmful ideologies about Taniya's learning experiences, which are characterized by "absences" via the imposition of a knowledge-system of white monolingual middle-class groups (Flores & Rosa, 2015; García, 2020). The grammar of schooling persists via the valorization of propositional knowledge (knowing standard English) over procedural knowledge (knowing how to access schooling practices while leveraging existing linguistic resources and funds of knowledge).

"Learning loss" can also be a very detrimental ideology to our collective understanding of dynamic ways students engage in language learning. A focus on English language development only disregards the fact that many families were able to maintain and enhance their heritage languaging practices during the COVID-19 lockdowns (Serratrice, 2020). Interestingly enough, the *New York Times* also published another article entitled, "In quarantine, kids pick up parents' mother tongues: For some families, the pandemic has meant a return to their native languages" (Hardach, 2020) a few months before the article about Taniya's story came out. Differently from claims made about Taniya's "learning loss," this other article emphasized the importance of heritage language maintenance:

All over the world, Covid-19 has forced children to stay inside. In some homes where different languages coexist, this is changing how they speak. With schools and day cares closed, previously

dominant languages — such as English in Britain and the United States — are no longer as overpowering. Instead, children are hearing more of their parents' mother tongues. (Hardach, 2020)

Why weren't these evident gains in mother tongue acquisition also highlighted in the story about Taniya's experiences during the pandemic? Migrant students labeled ELs have been marginalized, racialized and minoritized in US schools (García, 2020; Flores & Rosa, 2015; Valdés, 2001). Their language practices, linguistic assets, resources, and knowledge have rarely been affirmed and utilized in schools. In particular, students who are officially labeled as EL and disabled are especially impacted by monolingual school placements that reveal deep misunderstanding and bias regarding their home language practices, academic experiences and abilities (Cioè-Peña, 2021). While remote learning has intensified issues of technological access for minoritized students, having access to technology and attending classes face-to-face would not solve the harm raciolinguistic ideologies and stereotypes about migrant students do in stigmatizing students who are labeled ELs in US schools. It is a systemic problem, not an individual problem. Reducing Taniya's and all students' realities and identities to a matter of access to better technology and face-to-face classes can be a harmful discourse that renders traditionally marginalized students deficient unless they adhere to norms of language use of white monolingual elites.

Although many traditionally marginalized and racialized students need access to better technology and Internet connection, access should be understood in a broader sense to include social inclusion. In other words, access should entail pedagogical practices that can grant students an entry point to being fully included and valued in US schools and classrooms. Students who have been positioned as inferior in racial, ability, cultural and linguistic

terms due to historical processes of colonization and domination need to be supported while also being afforded spaces where their ways of knowing, their dynamic, complex and hybridized languaging practices and their socioemotional development and identities are leveraged, affirmed and welcomed (Annamma, 2017; García, Ibarra, & Seltzer, 2017). Mere technological access is not enough to transform students' experiences in US schools. For that to happen, there needs to be a significant shift from dominant discourses, beliefs and practices of English only theories and pedagogies to normalization of linguistic diversity where traditionally marginalized students are seen through a more humane and just lens.

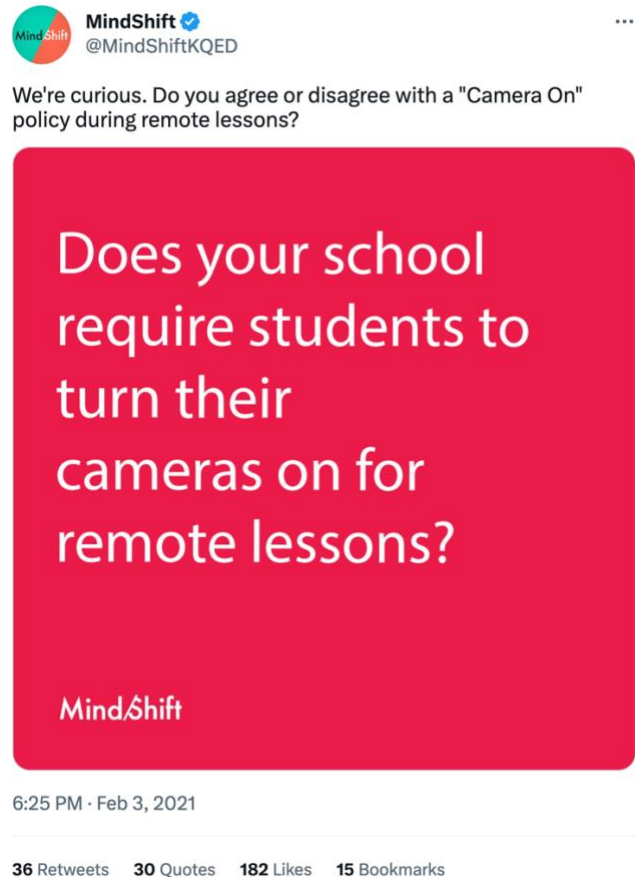
## Pedagogy

Without a doubt, discussions on whether students should keep their cameras on or off during synchronous online classes via Zoom or Google Meets dominated public discourse about remote learning during the pandemic. According to an online survey by *Education Week* with 790 K-12 educators in the U.S., 77% of teachers, principals, and district leaders responded that they required students to keep cameras on during class. Out of the 77%, 42% said they made exceptions, 17% reported stricter rules, and 18% enforced cameras on with no exceptions allowed (Will, 2020). The hot debate took the social media spheres revealing stark positions between the ones who advocated for cameras on and the ones who fought for flexibility and choice. Figure 3 exemplifies a Twitter thread initiated by the organization MindShift on February 3, 2021. The tweet received 182 likes, was retweeted 66 times and got 152 responses, demonstrating the popularity of the debate.

<sup>5</sup> Comments can be found on the original tweet at <https://twitter.com/MindShiftKQED/status/1357107864452612096?s=20>

**Figure 3**

*Cameras on or off Twitter discussion*



Many comments in favor of keeping cameras on justified the pedagogical decision by equating showing on camera with engagement. The comments pro cameras on reported concerns with holding students accountable, verifying attendance and identity, and monitoring participation. Many comments, on the other hand, cited respect, home environment and mental health as legitimate reasons to keep cameras off.<sup>5</sup> To add to the debate, the following blog post claimed that:

In our school, we require all scholars to be on camera. The purpose is while students are on camera, the teacher and the teacher support on the zoom call can monitor whether or not students are actively participating and engaged. When their cameras are on, we can see if they are nodding off or doing other things that can distract and disrupt their learning. We laid out the expectations early in the process to students and parents. We are encouraging parents to create workspaces within the home that will be conducive to the students learning. (McGuire, 2020)

The problem with this view is that by assessing the quality of student participation with being “on camera,” the burden of engagement is on the individual’s choice of turning on and displaying their bodies publicly, not on pedagogical practices that could afford students the opportunity to participate. The grammar of schooling is evident via the placement of value on compliance and deference to authority.

Traditionally marginalized students whose language or disability practices have been marginalized, racialized and inferiorized benefit from pedagogies that leverage their whole linguistic repertoires, including their varied and multimodal language practices, semiotic resources and digital literacies (Vogel et al., 2020). Technology has the advantage of providing students with multiple “entry points” which allow expression and engagement via drawing, texting, voicing, using images and encoding speech to text (Ascenzi-Moreno et al., 2020). Technology has the potential to provide engagement opportunities that do not depend on showing and displaying bodies on camera while naturalizing multimodalities. Such an approach can support and affirm the linguistic adaptations enacted by disabled students’ meaning making and languaging (Henner & Robinson, 2023).

The grammar of schooling also manifested itself through a naturalization of hierarchy and obedience. Arguments for requiring cameras on were imbued with ideologies of body surveillance and discipline. As the quote from the blog above illustrates, by having students keep their cameras on, teachers were able to see and monitor student behavior, whether students were “nodding off” or doing something “disruptive.” The cameras on requirement during remote learning functioned as a de facto policy replicating ‘panoptic’ correctional practices that supervise, discipline and punish individual bodies that conform or resist remaining visible on camera in fixed spaces at all times (Foucault, 1975). Teachers were positioned as policy enforcers and makers who worked within a system of coercion and control via mechanisms of surveillance (Cushing, 2021).

The quote from the blog post makes visible assumptions about students’ homes and what is appropriate as a workspace that is “conducive to learning,” a characteristic of the grammar of schooling which accepts different outcomes for different groups based on arbitrary measures of achievement. These assumptions nullify the experiences and the socio-emotional well-being of students, especially traditionally marginalized and racialized learners, who might not want to show their homes, their day-to-day activities or their faces on camera due to self-esteem or emotional state.

Students should not feel coerced or shamed into displaying parts of their homes or bodies if they do not want to. The following quote by a student who did not want to keep her camera on during remote learning published in an article on *EdSource* illustrates this dilemma:

I remember when I was 7 and having a very clear idea about what the differences were between myself and my peers. And those differences are very material, like what shoes you have on [...]

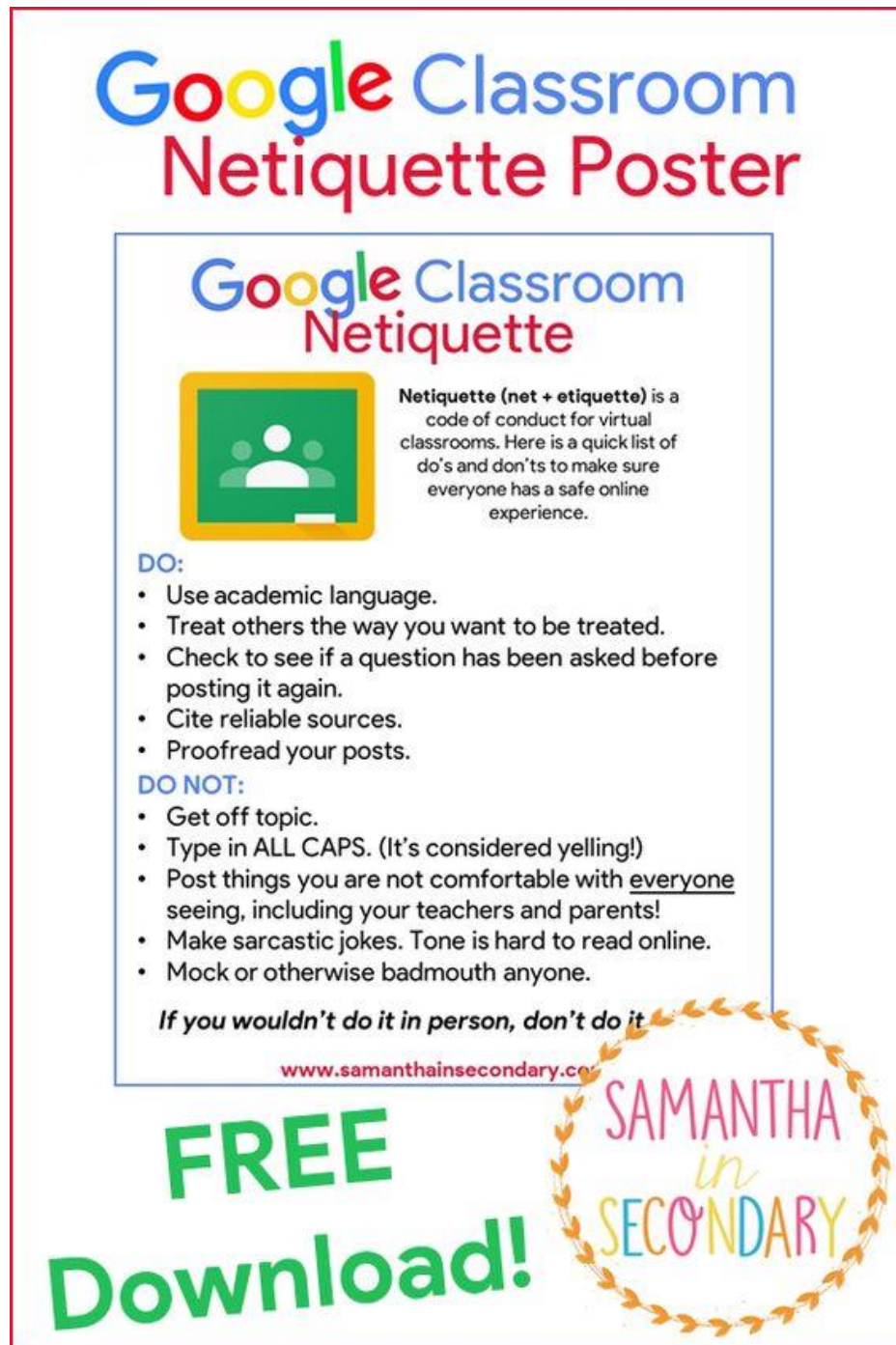
Students who don't have those things are the ones most keenly aware of those differences. (Johnson, 2020)

When engagement is equated with having cameras on, the focus is shifted away from the quality of instruction and the systemic issues of access, placing responsibility on the individual student to change themselves and their realities (Annamma, 2017; Cushing, 2020). Indeed, Trust and Whalen (2020) found out that most educators they surveyed during the first year of remote learning in the COVID-19 pandemic were able to cite several challenges and barriers they faced to make instruction more engaging in remote learning, including choice of tools, digital feedback, behavior management and assessment. However, none of the participants identified their own teaching practices as a possible reason for lack of student engagement. When it comes to students' diverse contexts, conditions and identities, intentional pedagogical decisions and practices are crucial for creating welcoming, challenging and supportive environments where students' funds of knowledge, linguistic repertoires and identities are affirmed, valued and leveraged, whether in remote or face-to-face learning.

In the absence of physical classrooms and resources, all activities needed to be quickly moved to learning management systems, such as Google Classroom. Under these circumstances, language use and discipline were conflated in the form of netiquette norms for online participation. Figure 4 below is an example of a code of conduct for Google Classroom spaces in the form of a poster of dos and don'ts posted to Pinterest (Samantha in Secondary).

Figure 4


Google Classroom Netiquette Rules of Conduct



The poster features the title "Google Classroom Netiquette Poster" at the top in a large, colorful font. Below it is a smaller version of the poster with the title "Google Classroom Netiquette" and a green icon of a person at a computer. The text explains that netiquette is a code of conduct for virtual classrooms and lists "DO" and "DO NOT" rules. At the bottom, it says "FREE Download!" and includes a circular logo for "SAMANTHA in SECONDARY" with the website "www.samanthainsecondary.com" below it.

# Google Classroom Netiquette Poster

## Google Classroom Netiquette



Netiquette (**net + etiquette**) is a code of conduct for virtual classrooms. Here is a quick list of do's and don'ts to make sure everyone has a safe online experience.

**DO:**

- Use academic language.
- Treat others the way you want to be treated.
- Check to see if a question has been asked before posting it again.
- Cite reliable sources.
- Proofread your posts.

**DO NOT:**

- Get off topic.
- Type in ALL CAPS. (It's considered yelling!)
- Post things you are not comfortable with everyone seeing, including your teachers and parents!
- Make sarcastic jokes. Tone is hard to read online.
- Mock or otherwise badmouth anyone.

*If you wouldn't do it in person, don't do it*

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Note: © Samantha in Secondary

The Do column is spearheaded by the command to “use academic language,” which is informed by standard language ideologies of purism, superiority, and correctness (Lippi-Green, 2012). The command to “use academic language” is a form of de facto language policy operationalized and masked by norms for “school safety” and “netiquette” (Bauler, 2021). By enforcing academic language as a “code of conduct” for participation in the virtual space, a hierarchy is formed where other varieties of language are not deemed important or valuable for making meaning and expressing ideas (Flores & Rosa, 2015). In particular, students whose language practices have been marginalized and inferiorized have their dynamic, hybridized and creative uses of language rendered invisible or excluded. The only knowledge that counts is the one realized and modeled after white, monolingual, standardized ideals of “pure” and “uniform” academic language registers (Cushing, 2021; Flores, 2020; García, 2020).

Most of the items in the “code of conduct” exert discipline through language policing, “proof read” and do not “type ALL CAPS” and assume shared values for interacting with each other as “treat others the way you want to be treated,” do not “make sarcastic jokes” or “get off topic.” When not critically examined, dominant ideologies based on white, middle class or elite cultural practices are normalized and taken up without question or discussion (Cushing, 2020). The result can be, and often is, the exclusion and marginalization of perceived other ways of thinking, being and doing in the world (Choi, 2017). Students whose sounds, abilities and looks are racialized and marginalized are forced to communicate according to white, standardized norms that are not reflective or affirming of their culture, disability or linguistic backgrounds (Blum, 2017; Cushing 2021; Henner & Robinson, 2023).

Providing specific guidelines and concrete models of sentences and vocabulary students can use to complete assignments and post comments can be helpful, especially for students who are adding English features to their linguistic repertoires. However, the models provided should not constrain or perpetuate language ideologies that can impact students’ creativity, identities and diversity when posting their ideas in online spaces (Author, 2021). Challenging dominant language ideologies and body surveillance mechanisms is key for creating a welcoming, affirming and inclusive virtual classroom for all (Gerald et al., 2021).

## **Discussion: Where do we go from here?**

The examples analyzed in this study shed light on popular opinions and media discourses that reinforced potentially excluding and harmful raciolinguistic ideologies during the first year of remote learning in the COVID-19 pandemic. The grammar of schooling persisted in the ways time, access, and pedagogy were organized and conceived, even when technology afforded alternative new ways of relating to others and the world (Tyack and Cuban, 1994; Goodson et al., 2002). While technology played a central role in how we conducted education during lockdowns in the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, fundamental ways we think about schools might not have essentially been challenged. In particular, the analysis of discourse in the seven sample texts demonstrated the pervasiveness of raciolinguistic ideologies in reproducing or enforcing normative ways of being, knowing and doing based on the idealized linguistic practices of whiteness. These views seemed to have shaped much public opinion about remote learning during a time marked by social turmoil and the realities of a health crisis.



Do the discourse samples provided in this study represent the majority of the dominant views in mainstream public discourse? After this critical analysis, I wonder whether exceptions to the ever-persistent grammar of schooling ways of being, knowing and doing could ever survive and thrive. As critical readers, it is important that we keep asking questions to explore how we have typically responded in the face of historical and technological transformation: How frequently have remote learning schedules imposed assimilation into white, able-bodied, monolingual, elite cultural norms of participation, ability, language practices and behavior? Have mainstream news media outlets gone beyond treating problems of internet and computer access as only issues or challenges with technical support? In what ways have pedagogical practices prioritized monitoring and managing student behavior via surveillance mechanisms in synchronous meetings and asynchronous learning platforms? I hope this study has provided a perspective and tool for readers and critical scholars to denaturalize persistent conventional thinking and routines used to justify harmful ideologies about the use of technology in K-12 education.

In this vein, Ofelia García (2020) reflected deeply on when challenges of educating students are seen through the lens of absences at times of pandemics and beyond. She saw the crisis as an opportunity for us all to unlearn and relearn more just, caring and equitable practices. We need the courage to question and challenge the role that raciolinguistic ideologies in schools have played in the systemic and unjust suffering of traditionally marginalized and racialized children (García, 2020). We need to be able to break away from the grammar of schooling, denaturalizing dominant cultural and ideological forces that reduce learning to automatization

and transferring of knowledge, behavior management and discipline of the body, and uniform ways of using language.

Meaningful technology integration can be a way to reimagine and envision educational practices and stances that foster creativity, multimodality and diversity. To do that, we have to use technology to resist the grammar of schooling, relying upon digitally-mediated practices that necessarily involve more collaborative and participatory ways of producing, creating, and (re)negotiating knowledge and identities (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011). The essentially multimodal nature of digital environments invites hybridized and creative forms of communication that purposefully tap into an individual's whole linguistic, semiotic, experiential, ability and cultural repertoires. Through a pedagogy that uses technology to purposefully foster creativity, diversity and identity expression, we create opportunities to counteract dominant discourses on language, ability and body normativity in K-12 education

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