



Journal of Critical Study of Communication and Disability

Volume 1

Issue 1

Spring 2023

Published
by

ADELPHI
UNIVERSITY

University Libraries



DOI: [10.48516/jcscd_2023vol1iss1](https://doi.org/10.48516/jcscd_2023vol1iss1)

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Editorial Introduction to the Inaugural Issue

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Article Information

Article type: Editorial

Review type: Editorial

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DOI: [10.48516/jcscd_2023vol1iss1.22](https://doi.org/10.48516/jcscd_2023vol1iss1.22)

Published by: Adelphi University Libraries
(<https://www.adelphi.edu/libraries/open-access/digital-publishing/>)



Citation: Khamis, R., Hyter, Y. D., Yu, B.,
Abrahams, K., Cioè-Peña, M., Erevelles, N.,
Henner, J., Horton, R., Kathard, H., Lester, J. N.,
Munson, B., Newkirk-Turner, B. L., Pillay, M.,
Johnson, V. E. (2023). Editorial introduction to the
inaugural issue. *Journal of Critical Study of
Communication and Disability*, 1(1), 1-6.
https://doi.org/10.48516/jcscd_2023vol1iss1.22

Abstract

This article introduces the inaugural issue of the *Journal of Critical Study of Communication and Disability* (JCSCD) by explaining its origins in the Speech, Language, Hearing Scientists Equity Action Collective. The editors describe the vision behind the journal, its mission, and the six articles comprising the first issue of JCSCD.

Keywords

Communication and disability; criticality; social justice;
pathologized languaging; open access



The *Journal of Critical Study of Communication and Disability* (JCSCD) is a scholar-initiated project that was conceived from a collective desire to create a space that brings together scholars, educators, clinicians, and community members interested in promoting transformative research,

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policy, and practices related to critical examinations of communication and disability as they intersect with race, gender, class and other sociopolitical constructions. This project has transcended the publication of a journal. It is a movement committed to a stance against the pathologization of languagers and their languaging practices. Acknowledging the constraints and biases of our own disciplinary socialization, we aspire as a community to dismantle all forms of “isms” – racism, ableism, heteronormativity, sexism, classism, and Eurocentrism that are perpetuated through claims about people and the ways they communicate. The journal is a mechanism for emerging knowledge production built on principles of equity, justice, inclusivity, and decoloniality, hosting interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary dialogue that center marginalized perspectives.

JCSCD grew out of the *Speech, Language, Hearing Scientists Equity Action Collective*. This group was formed in 2020 for the purpose of challenging ideologies, values, structures, policies and practices that perpetuate racism in the field of *Speech, Language, Hearing Sciences (SLHS)* which includes the subfields of speech-language pathology and audiology. Our political and professional activism was informed by our intimate familiarity of and dissatisfaction with approaches to communication rooted in white, monolingual, Eurocentric, ableist, cissexist/heteronormative ideologies. The initial motivations for creating a new journal were discipline-specific, including: (1) to establish a forum for disseminating research related to social justice in SLHS; (2) to build community among researchers and clinicians dedicated to social justice work in the profession; (3) stimulating continuous publication of scholarly works in the area of social justice and SLHS; and (4) promoting transformative scholarly engagement. The work soon became about much more than fixing a discipline. We began to see that the solutions did not lie in the improvement of

fundamentally flawed systems, but in imagining and forging an alternative. We invested in building an interdisciplinary scholarly community with a shared interest and investment in creating an alternative space. The journal is a manifestation of this communal work, representing perspectives across and at the intersections of disability studies, critical race theory, linguistics, psychology, ethnomethodology, critical feminist theory, literature, education, cultural studies, and language teaching.

In the yearlong effort to launch the JCSCD, the editorial board engaged in ongoing conversations about the work we wished to see in the journal. There were several shared aims that came out of these conversations even though the editorial members represented quite different backgrounds, expertise, perspectives, and experiences. First, we wanted this journal not only to bring together scholars who already had a body of work in critical inquiry, but also to provide an inviting space for scholars interested in exploring what it means to adopt a critical stance toward the study of (pathologized) communication and disability. This is not just a space for accumulating knowledge, but also a community of practice where we can be supported through peer dialogue and feedback to engage in collective and self-inquiry. These inquiries are meant to disturb deeply entrenched ideological, epistemological, institutional, and praxeological bases underlying the disordering of marginalized communicators, the construction and commodification of pathologies, and the maintenance of discriminatory standards. Our goal is to develop new ways of knowing that center disabled perspectives, that promote liberatory languaging, and that illuminates how different axes of oppression work collusively to devalue people through the denigration of their language practices.

With these aims in mind, JCSCD encourages scholars to move beyond inclusionism and performative diversity to

address systemic inequities that lead to linguistic discrimination. The journal itself, the form it has taken, and the processes involved in its production are manifestations of this commitment. The journal title suggests a disruption of *Communication Sciences and Disorders* (CSD), a discipline that has dominated the discourse on communication disabilities. JCSCD emphasizes *criticality* as an integral part of communication scholarship, questioning the ways in which science is weaponized to justify disablement. We do not conceptualize a *scholar* as only someone with academic credentials, but value knowledge production from diverse forms of expertise, including but not limited to the lived experiences of disabled communicators, practitioners, community organizers, and activists.

JCSCD is an open access journal in which scholars maintain full ownership of their works and are charged no article processing charges (APCs) in the process. This is made possible by funding from our publisher, the Adelphi University Libraries, and our partnership with a librarian scholar with expertise in open access scholarship, Dr. Christopher Barnes. He serves as the production editor for the journal and has been instrumental in ensuring it is a high-quality publication which operates according to best practices and in ways that align with our values.

Authors and reviewers are both asked to provide positionality statements during the review process. Author positionality statements accompany each article in the journal. This self-reflexive exercise helps to locate the authors in a world shaped by social, cultural and political forces that affect, explicitly and implicitly, the types of research questions they ask, the research design they choose, and the interpretations they make of findings, especially in relation to constructions of knowledge about marginalized people (Boveda & Annamma, 2023; Holmes, 2020; Milner, 2007).

It is our hope that JCSCD continues to mature in both form and process, as we aspire to

expand our publication modalities beyond printed text and to include translinguistic repertoires. The factors that we consider impactful are not represented by numbers but are encapsulated by our ability to meet the need for scholarship that promotes intersectional linguistic justice. We believe that the collection of articles in this inaugural issue represent scholarship that creates such an impact.

“Unsettling Languages, Unruly Bodyminds: A Crip Linguistics Manifesto” by Henner and Robinson introduces readers to Crip Linguistics as a theoretical and abolitionist framework that critiques language scholarship through the lens of disability. It asks, “what is disability if not the interaction of language, the bodymind, and the environment as something done in a particular time and place?” (p. 6). Informed by disability justice, Crip Linguistics prompts us to envision linguistic care work as an investment in collective access and belonging. “Crip linguistics is therefore about putting the people back in languaging” (p. 20). It invites theoretical and applied language scholars to use Crip Linguistics to think with disability and to build coalition through a conscious joining of minoritized forces, that is, being among rather than by or behind each other. In Crip Linguistics, we find a provocative and thoughtful framework for theory and praxis that thoroughly upends the medical approach to communication and disability.

“Let’s Get Political: The Challenges of Teaching a Multicultural Course in Communication Sciences and Disorders” by Farrugia is a reflection essay about being accused of being “political” while teaching a course on multiculturalism in the Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences. Farrugia considers how this experience finds convergence with the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association’s apolitical influence, white interests, and the tenets of color evasiveness. The author argues that teaching multiculturalism within an

antiracist framework necessitates getting into the political and personal, even in the face of pressure from students to erase these contexts.

In “Have We Learned Anything? Raciolinguistic Ideologies in Remote Learning Discourses,” Bauler illuminates how raciolinguistic ideologies shaped public discourse in the first year of remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. This article shows how the racialization of language has had the effect of reinforcing normative expectations for school participation that “reproduc[e] inequalities ... embedded in long-standing classroom routines” (p. 51). It urges us to use the occasion to arrive at alternative conceptualizations of school and learning that “foster creativity, multimodality and diversity” (p. 64).

Working together over several years, the Speech, Language, Hearing Scientists Equity Action Collective found shared experiences as BIPOC scholars committed to dismantling the oppressive systems in their discipline. In “‘Outsider Within’: Lessons Learned about SLHS and Race Scholarship,” Horton et al. critique the peer review process common to SLHS journals by investigating it through Neville et al.’s. (2012) psychosocial model of racism. The article highlights problems with journals’ superficial engagement with diversity and representation that ignore the entrenchment of racism and other forms of systemic exclusion in the production and dissemination of knowledge in the speech, language, and hearing sciences. It investigates the ways in which racialized and marginalized faculty are simultaneously commodified and marginalized through these types of diversity endeavors. The authors offer recommendations for addressing barriers in the peer review process that hinder critical scholarship in SLHS.

In “Speech Impairment and Yiddish Literature, or: An Essay on the Obligation to Communicate and the Responsibility to Listen,” Elhannan demonstrates the importance of literature in challenging language pathologization

by examining the perceptions and representations of language use in Yiddish literature. He shows how three Yiddish novelists from the 19th century contradict the idealized alignment of citizenship, language and identity through the portrayal of characters who are perceived as speech impaired. All three authors assert the culpability of listeners and invite the reader to experience “the reward of listening...as well as the price of being too busy to do so” (p. 102).

In “Accent Modification as a Raciolinguistic Ideology: A Commentary in Response to Burda et al. (2022),” Nair et al. offer a critical response to a research article by Burda et al. (2022) titled “Effectiveness of Intense Accent Modification Training with Refugees from Burma,” published in the *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology* (AJSPLP). This commentary argues that the study raises ethical concerns not only for its methodological flaws, but also for its grounding in colonial logic and racist and ableist ideologies.

As a space for new ways of thinking about and living out communication and disability, JCSCD features authors who problematize and use concepts that may not yet be readily familiar to some readers. We encourage and welcome readers to stretch their thinking with us. JCSCD is not only *about* languaging, but fundamentally *of* languaging. We hope to foster forms of negotiated literacy, in which understanding is seen as work distributed between authors and the readers. Conceptual development is valued and taken as the foundation for knowledge creation and the building blocks of theory development (Giddons et al., 2020; Hyter, 2021). In the inaugural issue you will find usage and definitions of concepts – such as crip, languaging, bodymind, and raciolinguistics – that foreground or center identity and other critical frames of reference. These usages may not be familiar to readers whose orientations to communication and disability have primarily been influenced by clinical and medical perspectives. This is not

meant to alienate but to draw in. JCSCD is a learning space in which we recognize that all of us, without exception, are caught in our limited discourses. In that spirit, we remain vigilant and open to critique.

The JCSCD logo features a fire icon designed by a family member. The image of fire conveys our wish to ignite ideas, to illuminate

paths, to fuel activism, and to burn down barriers. It is about building a movement, about walking the change together, about being for each other, and about disturbing the boundaries that maintain outsiders and insiders. The JCSCD is an experience we are grateful to be part of. We hope you will enjoy reading the first issue and contribute to its evolution and growth.

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https://doi.org/10.48516/jcscd_2023vol1iss1.21

Unsettling Languages, Unruly Bodyminds: A Crip Linguistics Manifesto

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Article Information

Article editor: Jessica Nina Lester

Article type: Research article

Review type: Double anonymized

Submitted: 20 June 2022

Revised: 28 November 2022

Accepted: 9 January 2023

Published: 17 April 2023

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DOI: [10.48516/jcsd_2023vol1iss1.4](https://doi.org/10.48516/jcsd_2023vol1iss1.4)

Published by:

Adelphi University Libraries

(<https://www.adelphi.edu/libraries/open-access/digital-publishing/>)



Citation: Henner, J. & Robinson, O. (2023). Unsettling languages, unruly bodyminds: A crip linguistics manifesto. *Journal of Critical Study of Communication and Disability*, 1(1), 7-37.

https://doi.org/10.48516/jcsd_2023vol1iss1.4

Abstract

We introduce Crip Linguistics as a theoretical and abolitionist framework. People use languages in different ways. Some people use language to help find other people like themselves. Many people use language in specific ways because of how their body and mind work. Sometimes a person's material conditions, and environment forces them to use language in a certain way. When someone languages outside of what people think is normal, others can think they are bad with language, or are not as smart as someone else. No one is actually 'bad with language.' We want to help people understand that no language is bad. It is okay to want to change your language use if it will make you feel better. No one should make you feel badly about your language. We need a bigger and more flexible understanding of what language is.

Keywords

Crip Linguistics, disability, languaging, multi-modality

Positionality Statements

Positionality statements can be found at the end of the article.

Authors' Note

The linearity of written English determines the order of authorship that suggests that someone must come first to be listed either from left to right or from top to bottom, which belies the collaborative nature and processes of knowledge production. Cite us in whichever order you wish. In the spirit of this paper, we point out that publishing in signed languages or multimodal mediums affords us opportunities to elide underlying unspoken hegemonies, reinforced by the print medium that one person must be recognized above others in terms of either intellectual and/or financial contributions.

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This article/manifesto is an attempt to create a mandate for change in linguistics and related fields such as specialized education and speech and language therapies. This mandate requires that we deploy a Crip Linguistics lens on how we approach the study of languaging (i.e., meaning making). In short, we argue that no way of languaging is bad; it is okay to change your own use of language but no way of using language should be described as atypical, disordered, or defective. We need a more expansive attitude about what involves language and what our attitudes about languaging communicates about a person's capacity. *Crip Linguistics* means to *critique* language and language scholarship through the lens of disability, *include* disabled perspectives, *elevate* disabled scholars, *center* disabled voices in conversations about disabled languaging, *dismantle* the use of disorder and deficit rhetorics, and finally, *welcome* disabled languaging as a celebration of the infinite potential of the bodymind. The Crip in Crip Linguistics is used in a variety of ways. For some, it is a slur. For us and in disability activism, and in activist-oriented disability studies, *crip* is a verb (Sandahl, 2003). To crip is to disrupt the stable, transform the familiar, subvert the order of things, unsettle entrenched beliefs, and to make anew. In action, crippling linguistics is to uncloak "mainstream representations or practices to reveal able-bodied assumptions and exclusionary effects" and "expose the arbitrary delineation between normal and defective and the negative social ramifications of attempts to homogenize humanity" (Sandahl, p. 37). The goal is not to study language and disability but analyze how disability or perceptions of embodied deficits cause people to make assumptions about languaging, and to also focus on how people

prioritize speech at the expense of everything else. This is evident in Speech Language Therapy for example: *Speech* and Language. Why that and not just language? The articulation is given focus because it is the ideal articulation of language—other articulations are not considered.

To be clear, we do not separate ideas like language and communication into separate categories. Language is communication; communication is language. Binning, or separating language and communication creates hierarchies of languaging wherein specific kinds of languaging is devalued because they are seen as communication rather than languaging. Speech and language therapy emphasizes speech as the ideal mode of languaging. Other modes are disordered. The speech-sign hierarchy emerged with the development of speech pathology as discipline under the experimentation by Dr. Jean Marc Itard at the Institut National de Jeunes Sourds de Paris. Itard classified deaf children based on language use, marking those who signed as more deficient than those who could partially hear and emulate speech (Lane, 1976). Part of this tendency to view non-speech languages as disordered is reflected in introductory linguistic textbooks such as Berko-Gleason (and later Ratner)'s long revised book, *The Development of Language* (2017). Deaf people, in *The Development of Language*, are discussed in the contexts of "atypical" language acquisition (p. 5), primate language (more specifically that primate language studies had to fail for abled researchers to be interested in studying signed languages) (p. 12), deaf voices sounding "funny" (p. 54), and "low" print literacy rates (p. 42). So signed languages are positioned as unnatural, disabled ways of languaging with no intrinsic

merit for study; and, moreover, voices marked by accents or speech dysfluency are sources of humor and further marginalization, and low print literacy rates do not merit interrogation of the reasons for the low rates. Further, while the book provides details about deaf people and signed language structures, phonology of language is defined as “all the important speech sounds it uses...” (p. 7). Language, then, is reduced to speech sounds and written systems representing speech sounds. Limited thinking about what language is and is not often excludes different ways of languaging such as touch, drawing, and gesture. Hodge and Ferrara (2022) expand on the idea of language as infinitely flexible by focusing on the concept of biosemiotics, or how meaning is enmeshed in the body and how the body interacts with the world to create iconic symbols. Language as iconic, and language as interaction with the physical world and those that inhabit it both living and not are embedded concepts in Crippled Linguistics. Such variation in languaging exists, in part, because of disability.

In this paper, we use definitions of disability used by Annamma et al. (2013), wherein disability is a state of existence where the possession of a trait is interpreted as a deficit that needs fixing or elimination. Deafness is a disability because abled and hearing people wish for the deaf to be hearing. Speech dysfluency is a disability because abled people want everyone to talk with the same degree of fluency unmarked by difference. Sometimes this difference is marked by race and ethnicity, which is then interpreted as disabled. Annamma et al. describe negative racialization as a disability in some contexts because of the desire of white supremacy to fix or eliminate Blackness. Understanding disability logics and their relationship with racist logics reveals ableism is, as Talila TL Lewis (in Schalk, 2022)

describes, a system rooted in eugenics, anti-Blackness, misogyny, colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism. The mutually constitutive relationship between ableism and racism, and in particular anti-blackness, means that an anti-ableist framework is not possible without an anti-racist stance. Their entanglements means that Crip Linguistics and raciolinguistics must be close partners in unpacking deficit attitudes about languaging because of embodied difference. Language has long been tied to judgments of a person’s capacity and intelligence, and by extension their humanity (Bauman 2004; Berger 2014; Clare 2017; Edwards 2012; St. Pierre 2015). Language is also interpreted through a racialized lens to measure people’s intelligence (Flores & Rosa 2015; Leonardo & Broderick 2011; Rosa & Flores 2017), which uses rhetorics of disability, such as diminished capacities, to rationalize such framing. But as Flores and Rosa’s combined research demonstrates, language itself is racialized and through those racialized lenses, the people who use racialized language are viewed as lesser. For example, Rosa (2019) focuses on how people with Spanish repertoires are viewed as less intelligent. As he writes, “Earlier that year, a self-identified White, monolingual English-speaking teacher explained to me that, among other signs of her stupidity, Dr. Baez’s English language skills are ‘horrible, and from what I hear, her Spanish isn’t that good either’” (p. 126). The Dr. Baez mentioned in that passage had multiple degrees and was the principal of a bilingual school. Signed languages, as languages, are also racialized by who uses them, much in the same way that spoken languages are racialized (Hill, 2012). Crip Linguistics has long been present across multiple disciplines, explicit conversations about those entanglements across disciplines and between Crip and raciolinguistics will enrich other areas of linguistics.

We argue that the field of linguistics and its subfields (e.g., applied linguistics) requires broadening to account for how typically marginalized groups use language through a critical disability lens. This does not mean simply studying how bodies marked as impaired use language (e.g. the entirety of signed language linguistics or applied linguistics via deaf education), but also understanding how linguists deploy the category of disability as a domain of power to *mark* bodies as *disabled* through the ways those bodies produce language or to mark bodies as languageless because their ways of languaging is not recognized as language (e.g., Moriarty Harrelson, 2017). The relationship between disability and language also contributes to the institutionalization of deaf and disabled people, markedly impacting non-white deaf and disabled people. Institutionalization also locked away disabled people in institutes and prisons, often for life, as was the case for Junius Wilson, a black deaf man (Burch & Joyner, 2007). Given his prior education at a segregated school for the deaf, it is likely that Wilson used a form of Black ASL (review Hill, 2017, for a description). When Wilson was brought in for questioning and criminal proceedings, he was found incompetent to stand trial because he was perceived as a languageless person. One of his interviewers was the jailer Carl Cook who claimed he knew sign language; the problem was that he did not know Black ASL or even that such a dialect existed. He then read Wilson's black and deaf body as languageless, or in his words, incapable of *coherent* or *intelligent* answers. This determination led to a series of events that included sterilization and seven decades in an institution; his imprisonment continued even after social workers discerned he was able to communicate in what would later be called Black ASL.

Kusters and Hou (2020) point out that the overall [problematic] pattern in linguistics is for linguists to treat language as separate from the people that produce language. This is the core argument of Charity-Hudley's essay, "The Lung" (in press). In that essay, Charity-Hudley examines how losing a portion of her lung to cancer forced her to examine the role of *bodies* in languaging and perception of languaging. The expansive linguistic potential of the human body and mind ("bodymind") is best understood through a critical disability lens. The term bodymind marks the inseparable relationship between the body and mind. Although the body and mind are interconnected, different effects may emerge depending upon how people's disabilities interact with their other identities and social categories (Schalk, 2018). Recognizing the bodymind is pivotal to understanding human linguistic potential because language is an embodied action or an expression of the interconnected relationship between mind and body (Bergen, 2012).

Our goals with this missive are twofold:

1. Provide a unified framework for researchers, scholars, and activists across linguistics and language related fields who work on languaging through a critical disability lens (e.g., We are *crippled linguists*, we do *crippled linguistics*); and
2. Provide a theoretical framework for researchers, scholars, and activists to recognize ableism in their field and identify ways to envision liberatory languaging from a disability standpoint, which recognizes the relationship between racism and ableism. Simply put, linguistic and communicative differences are not deficient.

Some will wonder how Crip Linguistics goes beyond Critical Applied Linguistics

(Pennycook, 2021). In the chapter that focuses on the politics of difference, Pennycook writes, "... forms of difference— typically along lines of class, race, gender, and sexuality— and why they matter for any critical applied linguistics project" (p. 84). However, no frame of disability is used. Similarly, Pillar's (2020) recommendations on overcoming linguistic injustice does not consider multimodality, nor how disability alters our concepts of language justice. We argue that there can be *no* Critical Applied Linguistics, nor linguistic justice, or any sort of linguistics, without analysis of disability. As Pennycook (2010) himself wrote, "...we cannot take language, the body, the environment, space as given entities with evident meanings...all these emerging orientations locate language as something done in a particular time and space" (p. 168). What is disability if not the interaction of language, the bodymind, and the environment as something done in a particular time and space?

Beyond providing lenses to study how disability shapes language use, the theoretical framework of Crip Linguistics directly challenges stigmas surrounding language that rely on deficit views of embodied difference. The crippled linguist highlights the linguistic adaptations used by disabled people, including their relations and world-making, and illuminates structures of ableism that govern how we perceive *language*. As Hudley (2008) reminds us, activism is embedded in the field of linguistics. Without critical interrogation, linguists will continue to reify existing structures of ableism and with it, other structures of oppression by reinforcing modality (and by extension, other forms of linguistic) chauvinism. Disability justice, an expansive concept that recognizes the interrelationships of structural oppression with disability requiring collective solidarity, demands linguistic justice. Disability justice

asks us to "bring flexibility and creative nuance... to be in community with each other" (Berne, 2018, p. 228). A Crip Linguistics requires flexibility and creativity about how we define, describe, and discuss language and the bodies that use it.

The contours of our paper are as follows. After setting the groundwork for understanding the chauvinism in linguistics that privileges some modes of languaging above others, we then explain the importance of and the critical framework for addressing this chauvinism. In order to disrupt linguistic chauvinism, we offer brief explanations as to the roots of such chauvinism grounded in race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and disability. Then we explain what we might understand as language if we abandoned modality chauvinism by embracing the multimodal nature of languaging. Finally, we draw connections to Critical Disability Studies to help us understand linguistic phenomena.

Modality Chauvinism

Modality chauvinism, or beliefs and actions that support the superiority of one modality over others, is embedded in scholarly and practitioner fields that support the study, teaching, and remediation of language.

For example, at the time of writing, the Linguistic Society of America (LSA), the pre-eminent professional organization of linguists in the United States, describes linguistics as, "In a nutshell: Linguistics is the scientific study of language. Linguists apply the scientific method to conduct formal studies of speech sounds, grammatical structures, and meaning across the world's 6,000+ languages" (LSA 2021, p1). If the LSA cannot identify that linguistics is the study of language, and not

necessarily speech, then what does that say about linguists themselves and the status of non-spoken languaging in the *science of language*? While there are linguistic anthropologists who have contributed to understanding disability and language, revealing remarkable discoveries about cognition and human nature, this information has been siloed from the work of many theoretical and applied linguists.

The artificial limitation of linguistics to speech is an extension of the cultural belief that the most or only valid languaging is speech. This belief shows up in many linguistics-based media. For example, see the below meme (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Tuxedo Winnie the Pooh Meme



Note: The “Tuxedo Winnie the Pooh” meme is used to illustrate the difference in sophistication between “linguistics” and “tongueology.” Imgflip “Tuxedo Winnie the Pooh” meme generator available at <https://imgflip.com/memegenerator/Tuxedo-Winnie-The-Pooh>.

The Tuxedo Pooh structure meme progresses through multiple layers of sophistication, where the associated sophistication is matched with an equally sophisticated Pooh. The t-shirt Pooh represents the less sophisticated idea, and the tuxedo represents the more sophisticated idea. The idea associated with the Tuxedo Pooh may not appear more sophisticated on the surface (e.g., the sophistication of linguistics is not tongueology), but can be abstracted in ways where the surface humor provides layered meaning a-la semiotics (Merrell, 2016). For example, if one believes that languages can only come from the tongue, then linguistics would be the study of tongues (e.g., mother tongues, or here, tongueology).

Limited thinking about the expansive possibilities of languages also limits the linguist by imagining that languages in other modalities (e.g., signed languages) only exist in opposition to spoken languages—that is, people use one or the other, rather than a combination of semiotic tools; that languaging can exist outside of conventional spoken and signed languages (e.g., using interaction and language games to co-construct meaning). Limited approaches to language suggest people either have language or do not have language and thus are languageless (see Moriarty Harrelson, 2017, for a discussion).

We have previously argued that part of the reason that scholars tend to avoid talking about signed languages, gestures, and other non-speech languaging is that the communities that use them as a primary form of languaging are *disabled* (Henner & Robinson, 2021) or that individuals are deficient, removing them from their environments and interlocutors (Goodwin, 2004). Ignorance of and erasure of such forms of languaging is ableism, as is ignoring how some forms of languaging become marginalized. This disabling effect is also observed in how people separate language users from their semiotic matrixes: their environments, their interlocutors, and the linguistic resources available (Goodwin, 2004). The social and relational models of languaging (e.g., Goodwin, 1995; Goodwin, 2004; Kusters, 2015) suggest instead that signed languages and other forms of languaging across modalities and the semiotic matrix are influenced by our environments and

material conditions, as well as social attitudes and relationships. Languaging cannot be decontextualized from local understandings of disability and debility/impairment (Grech & Solidatic, 2015; Livingston, 2006). So, language is either modeled as deficient through pathologized views of the body, negative racialized views of the body (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Rosa & Flores, 2017), or viewed as a relational act, influenced by semiotic matrixes.

Coming to Claim Crip Linguistics

The clear relationship between language, linguistics, and disability necessitated the introduction of a disabled lens through which languaging can be analyzed. To do this, we claim *Crip* Linguistics and propose a framework of Crip Linguistics. Crip Linguistics is not novel nor new. Disability has long been a part of linguistic analysis. But a Crip Linguistics intervenes in mainstream linguistics discussions to destigmatize, yet center, disability in conversation.

As for disabled ways of languaging, we seek not only extraordinary examples of the normative, like signed languages, but also the more quotidian and local forms of disability, such as stuttering (e.g., Dumas, 2012), lisping, and as Friedner and Block (2017) highlight, “attend[ing] to other forms of communication and meaning making that are not linguistic” (p. 290). We heed Friedner and Block’s caution that foregrounding signed languages need not result in not engaging with other ranges of communicative repertoires or the more daily forms of

disabled languaging. Friedner and Block posited questions about disability frameworks of languaging at the intersections of Deaf and Autism Studies, encouraging us to expand definitions and understandings of human language as well as how our discourses surrounding disabled languaging contributes to hierarchies of disability (e.g., the speaking deaf person who can perform hearingness, see Henner & Robinson, 2021) and the verbose autistic person (Friedner & Block, 2017). How might a disability framework of language teach us about ways of dismantling toward more just relations? That is, disabled languaging is not just about the individual but also their linguistic ecologies and semiotic matrixes. One illumination of this is Moriarty and Kusters (2021) who wrote about the morality infused translingual practices among deaf people who come together using different signed languages and possessing different semiotic repertoires.

To promote Crip Linguistics, we offer some grounding statements that guide our discussion and the framework itself. They are:

1. A Crip Linguistics is necessary for analyzing human languaging, lest we reproduce inequities.
2. A Crip Linguistics recognizes that languaging is multimodal.
3. A Crip Linguistics embraces disabled ways of being in producing language, including: sensory orientations, interdependence, mutual-aid and world-building, care work, and the ways that time

interacts with the bodymind and language.

We next discuss those grounding statements in further detail.

A Crip Linguistics is Necessary for Analyzing Human Languaging

An Introduction and Some Caveats

A Crip Linguistics holds three essential truths: a) language is not inherently disordered although impairments may exist, b) social perceptions on disability disorders language use, and c) disability in languaging cannot be separated from normative expectations of language use. Crip Linguistics is a natural extension of the idea that *all* language variation is acceptable (e.g., Labov, 1972). We expect that most readers will take easily to the second and third stipulations of Crip Linguistics. The first may be a bit more difficult to digest because the idea that language as disordered is fundamental to many fields (e.g., specialized education). One thing we want to stress is that no theory is perfect, including ours. For example, what of deaf children who are deprived of language either through malice, or through ignorance (as described in Hall et al., 2020) Is their resulting language not disordered? Here is where threading the needle on this very real question could have consequences. Their language was *impaired by their material conditions and environmental factors*, but their language is *not* disordered because they are deaf children that would naturally gravitate to signed language and

multimodal avenues of communication. Language deprivation results in language that then must be accommodated to encounter the ableist structures that generated such conditions in the first place.

If people misunderstand our argument that the language manifested from language deprivation or other inequities generated by material conditions is not inherently disordered, then there is a non-zero chance that schools and early intervention specialists attempting to save money would use our theories as justifications for not providing support. We exist in a world where identification of disabilities for educational support services is fraught with bias, and racial and gender-based discrimination (see Fisher et al., 2020, for further discussion). Yet, in the United States, identification is necessary to acquire the support that many disabled children need to manage the ableist, racist, and sexist institution that is the American school system (Annamma & Morrison, 2018).

Also, there is a possibility that people opposed to non-spoken modalities would use our theories as justifications for enforcing their monomodal frameworks. This has happened before when advocates of fluent signed language environments for deaf children found that monomodal opponents were using those arguments to claim that since hearing parents of deaf children could never be fluent in signed languages, they should just use monomodal approaches to education (e.g., Geers et al., 2017). Although the difficulty of learning ASL has been refuted in peer

reviewed publications (e.g., Lieberman et al., 2022), the myths persist and have been used to attempt to overcome parental choice legislation (Sharp, 2022).

Because of disabling legal and cultural systems, disabled languages often exist in the borderlands between disordered and non-disordered. The dichotomy between disordered and non-disordered is rendered in Moriarty Harrelson (2017). The deaf Cambodians described in her research are classically language-disordered (i.e., no language is inherently disordered) in that they are deprived of language by their environment. However, via competence they create systems of languaging that “expand as they enter new spaces, resulting in the flexible accumulation of languaging practices and modalities” (p. 1). Moriarty Harrelson concludes her point by reminding us that we cannot dismiss how deaf Cambodians language just because they do not use a formally recognized Cambodian signed language.

We also explicitly reject those people who would use our arguments to confer harm upon disabled children via language deprivation. Crip Linguistics is fundamentally a resistance against monomodal, spoken language only policies, and the belief that there is one *right* way to language. As Goodwin (1995) urged with Rob, an aphasic man, “deal with his talk and gesture as an effort to say something meaningful, rather than the random movements of” a disabled man (p. 24-25). Rob’s capacity to communicate demonstrates the importance of assuming all people are competent co-participants in

constructing meaning (see Goodwin, 1995, for a more detailed discussion). However, just because deaf children can build a communicative repertoire using systems, cues, and incomplete access to spoken language does not mean that we should argue that deaf people should not have access to natural signed languages. Part of this is because non-deaf children automatically have access to natural languages whereas for most deaf children (i.e., approximately 95%) this choice must be made, and the reasons for these choices are often rooted in ableist, anti-signed language rhetoric (Scott & Henner, 2020).

We also reject the use of Crip Linguistics to discriminate against or to diminish the desires of people who want their language to be identified as disordered. We acknowledge that our world is constructed as such that sometimes pathologizing language as disordered is the only way that one can receive the accommodations and legal protections one requires as a non-normative language user. This stance does present an odd contradiction to our point that language cannot be disordered. Yet, like with language deprivation, recognizing the complexities between environmental disordering of language, justifying that all languaging is valid, and self-perception of languaging is valid! On this point, we recognize that Crip Linguistics is not universal across all contexts. As Robert McRuer (2010) explains, disabled people experience uneven biopolitical incorporation. What that means is that disabled people and by extension,

disabled ways of languaging, are not treated the same socially or politically across the globe. Disability, as a category, is fluid, dependent upon context and material conditions (Schalk, 2013; Livingston, 2006; Grech & Soldatic, 2015). However, a critical disability lens on language offers important insights on how we judge capacity, humanity, and belonging (or the worthiness of belonging) and how those logics support the logics of exclusion, disempowerment, and violence. To Crip Linguistics is to examine practices, attitudes, and rhetorics surrounding language through a critical disability lens to reveal ableist assumptions and its exclusionary effects.

There are certainly cases where the application of Crip Linguistics is fundamentally flawed. We also go back to our assertion that no theory is perfect and cannot be pertinent in every single case. People are intricate beings with desires and thoughts that vary from minute to minute, and these thoughts often contradict each other! As Whitman (1892) writes in *Songs of Myself*, “Do I contradict myself? / Very well then I contradict myself, / (I am large, I contain multitudes.)” (Section 51). Understanding how these contradictions can exist but also not invalidate our claims requires that we use both disability studies and trans studies. The former is evidenced in both Liz Crow’s (1996) work and also Margaret Price’s (2015) work on pain disorders, and the latter in work from trans theorists such as Florence Ashley (2020). We do not spend a lot of time on them in this paper. Suffice to say, the desire to have release from pain

does not negate disability theories; the desire to transform one's body to align with gender identity does not negate queer theories. Similarly, the desire to work on one's languaging to make it feel less disordered does not negate Crip Linguistics.

With these caveats in place, we next explain both the stipulations of Crip Linguistics, that language cannot be disordered and that the environment disorders language.

Language Use Cannot be Disordered

The idea that language use cannot be disordered is admittedly an unusual one in the world of speech and language pathologists, specialized education teachers, among others who have worked their entire lives on the question of how to un-disorder language. For us, to accept that some kinds of languages are disordered, we need to accept that there are ways of languaging that are wrong. Disordered language has multiple definitions depending on the field. Such language can be defined via expressive language (i.e., difficulties communicating in ways that others can understand), receptive language (i.e., difficulties understanding other peoples' communication), or even developmental (i.e., difficulty acquiring language) (Paul et al., 2018). We accept that deciding that a kind of languaging is wrong has many different perspectives. First, people do feel that languaging is wrong when the languager uses dialectical variations that vary from what privileged groups decided is the best possible way to language (e.g.,

raciolinguistics) (e.g., Cioe–Pena, 2020). Second, people feel that languaging is wrong when a child languages in different ways to the people in the house that they live in (e.g., deaf children in hearing families) (Hall et al., 2016). While language is not disordered, language is disordered by people with investments in maintaining structures of power such as white supremacy and racism.

Racism in Language Disordering and Pathologizing Language

Pathological perspectives of expressive and receptive language are often wrapped up in racist assumptions about what the appropriate way to express and receive language is. As many researchers and community activists point out, Black children are often identified as having deficits in their expressive and receptive languaging related to the fact that racist systems are integrated into the educational experience (e.g., Baker–Bell 2019). Here is where we identify that ableist systems are anti-Black and anti-negatively racialized minorities, thereby demonstrating how racism and ableism are twined. Some of this is demonstrated in the political fracas of the late 20th century Oakland, California Ebonics controversy. The controversy demonstrated that people are willing to discard evidence-based research when the evidence does not match their agenda (Wolfram, 1998). At the time, the Oakland school board had passed a resolution allowing the use of Ebonics as a language of instruction and assessment. The school board later discarded the resolution and its possibly

revolutionary changes in pedagogy after sustained protest from various people because they felt that the Ebonics based curriculum would reduce the intelligence of the Black children studying it.

Understanding the Ebonics controversy is critical because children whose home language may differ from the school language are often assumed to be language disordered (Yamasaki & Luk, 2018; Cioe–Pena, 2020). As Yamasaki and Luk point out, multilingual and multimodal children are often assessed using language assessments that do not consider the myriad ways that they language. Depressed scores on these assessments, coupled with racist and ableist biases of the assessors, means that multilingual and multimodal children are often considered language disordered.

Pathologizing Accentism and Language

As mentioned before, our definition of *disordered* is broad and refers to any languaging that is believed as in need of correction or fixing through various therapies. The association of disordered language with racism means that *accents* need to be discussed via the Crip Linguistics lens. Therefore, if there is a goal of accent reduction, then this is understood as disordering language because the accent does not sound appropriate for *non-disordered* listeners. Ramjattan (2020) interviewed seven international Engineering teaching assistants in Ontario, Canada to detail their experiences being perceived as disordered speakers because of their accents. This population was chosen because, as

Ramjattan points out, accented international teaching assistants are considered to be deficient. Deficient, of course, can be interpreted as *disabled*. While Ramjattan analyzes the data using a prism of racism, the language used to describe the accents and interpretation of the accents by “native” speakers requires a disability analysis. And that includes signed language research. DeafBlind and DeafDisabled people who use signed languages may be subjected to accentism on the basis of how their language is impacted by bodymind differences (e.g., those with cerebral palsy and those who use pro/tactile sign languages, see Burke, 2018). Accented people are marked as deviants, deficient, and require therapy and adjusting to fit into the expected norms of presumed *native* (abled) speakers. Ramjattan’s participants, for example, spoke about being laughed at (abled gaze), about people and their students and peers refusing to understand what they were saying (refusing accommodations). Divergent ways of speaking challenges linguistic homogeneity and by extension, social homogeneity. Social homogeneity might be well understood as an aspect of McRuer’s (2010) compulsory (hetero)normativity. Often subject to such compulsory normativity is the performance of gender. Perception of gendered language is like perception of racialized accented language because how people interpret your gender also extends to how they interpret your language. People expect others to language as their perceived gender and respond violently if this is not the case.

Pathologizing Gender in Language

Perceptions of disordered language can also be attributed to rigidly enforced gender roles. In the United States at least, language from people who are perceived to be femmes is often policed by both masculine and feminine people. This often manifests in the form of negative feedback from audience members about structures that are perceived as feminine, such as tag questions, or quotative like, or vocal fry. Like Figueroa and Gillion (2018) explain in the *Vocal Fries* podcast, once a structure is identified as femme, it does not matter that people who are masc also use it, the structure is considered deficient. Some readers may be confused about why we are including this in the concept of disordered language. We assume that if language is interpreted as being wrongly produced, then it is in the mind of the perceiver fundamentally disordered and in need of fixing. Indeed, fixing femme identifying language is a commercial product in the United States where individuals can pay money to train out of using these language elements. Accordingly, femme identifying languaging is also a good example of how the environment disorders language because feminist spaces do not disorder femme identifying language.

The expectation that gender sounds a specific way extends to the pathologization of trans identifying people. McNeill (2006), for example, writes that gender euphoria comes when trans women sound like what they believe women should sound like, and trans men

sound like what they believe men should sound like. Yet, under a Crip Linguistics framework, there should be no obligation to sound a certain way to present gender(s).

Disordering Sexuality and Language

In 2009, van Borsel et al. (2009) published a study that indicated that gay men were more likely to be identified as lisping. While van Borsel et al. explain that lisping, or “a speech pattern in which alveolar consonants are pronounced with the tongue either on or between the front teeth” (p. 100) is not necessarily perceived as disordered speech in young children, it is recognized as one in adults. Notably, van Borsel et al. argued that lisping was likely acquired in childhood to identify with femininity. The adults who lisped; however, did not view their lisping as a deficiency, but rather, a marker of identification with a community. Although the population in van Borsel et al. found their lisp to be a positive identification with a marginalized group of people, Holmes (2019) seems to argue that in the hetero gaze, that while the lisp is used to identify with femininity, the user attracts fetishization and infantilization which means that people outside marginalized groups may use this positive identification in negative ways. The emphasis on infantilization mirrors van Borstel et al.’s assertion that lisping is seen as fine for children, but not much for adults. More recently, Calder (2020) points out that how we perceive sounds (or signing) cannot be entirely separated from how we perceive the person. More specifically, if we assume someone to be

feminine, then we are more likely to assume that they are lisping too. That is, disability, infantilization, and queer femininity are intractably linked.

Crip Speech

The focus on speech as the modality means an unnecessary focus on the aesthetics of so-called proper speech. This of course is a driver of racism and sexism in languaging, as discussed previously. A pre-natural focus on aesthetics also allows for business models for those who sell products that masculine-up or reduce accents in speech with the goal of making *pleasing to the ear*. Pleasing to the ear is intertwined with layers of gendered expectations—beautiful voices, sexually attractive voices, and binary notions of masculine and feminine voices. Pleasing to the ear also is racialized, with sexy accents often regulated to specific European accents (e.g., Irish) or white colonizers in non-European countries (e.g., Australian) (Moore, 2002). Pleasing to the ear is often described as *natural* or imagined as what *should be natural*. For example, people perceived as women are expected to sound a particular way; to have masculine or rough speech (e.g., creaky voice) would be described as unnatural, ergo, and/or abnormal. Notions of naturalness extend to the sound of what one expects human speech to sound like.

What happens when speech sounds different because of disability? Stuttering, lisping, mumbling, stammering, slurring, or non-speaking are all markers of difference. Those markers signify not only disability

but are also interpreted as lack of intelligence, capacity, and agency. Those markers are subsequently used as a rationale for exclusion. As QuietBob, a participant in Marshall's (2014) study, who uses alaryngeal technology to speak says, his speech is not disabled; yet, people who have normative hearing interpret it as disabled. Assumptions that a speaker is competent only if fully endowed with abilities is *disabling* and more so in a society where the cognitive life of the individual is its primary focus. In a society that values intelligence and ties that with linguistic competence, assumptions about a speaker's competence takes on significance (Goodwin, 2004).

The subordination of divergent languages works toward compulsory ablebodiedness, described by McRuer (2006) as expectations for people to assimilate to standard ways of being. To sum, the emphasis on speech and speaking as the sole language modality perpetuates not only ableism, but sexism, racism, and cisheteronormative ideologies. To move past these ideologies, an emphasis on linguistic multimodality is not only needed, but essential.

A Crip Linguistics Recognizes that Languaging is Multimodal

Friedner and Block (2017) once asked, "how might current research on multimodality and the use of expansive communicative repertoires in language and communication create new pathways for understanding deaf and autistic peoples' language and communication practices?" (p. 295). They ask us to perceive more

creatively. We extend this question to more broadly ask this of linguistics and all relevant fields: How does research on disabled languaging and critical disability studies work toward better understanding language at large and its relationship to structural exclusions? Perhaps we begin with language being multimodal. The resistance to multimodal languaging may be located in nineteenth century racist and anti-indigenous attitudes that perceived gestures, signs, and non-European ways of languaging to be inferior and therefore not-language (Baynton, 1996).

Suppression of signed languages also took place as a form of imperial control amid attitudes of local languages being inferior to European colonial languages (Nair, 2020).

That language is multimodal is not a new idea in linguistics. Bolinger, in 1946, wrote:

For some reason, the very insistence upon language as a spoken phenomenon, i.e., as behavior, has been accompanied by a close concentration upon a limited number of behavior patterns, the latter suggestively reminiscent, in their selection for ease of recordability of the 'written forms; from which we were supposed to have been emancipated. It is only by a return once more to the whole of communicative-behaviors with energies of linguists more evenly distributed, that we shall avoid the over-growth and premature refinement of one or two component parts. (p.92)

Here, Bolinger suggests the focus on language as unimodal, or speech alone, was done because it is convenient. Most linguists use spoken language. Many linguists use languages that use spoken phonemes as the basis for coding into written modalities. Bolinger correctly recognized that this limited linguistic analysis to what can be recorded and analyzed via "written forms". However, Bolinger's suggestion ignores the underlying racial and ability logics of compulsory normativity that drive such ideas about convenience.

The challenge of reliance on written forms and written modalities for linguistic analysis means that 1) languages without easily accessible or standardized written forms tend to be left out of linguistic analysis (e.g., signed languages), and 2) the bulk of language analysis is done on languages and language materials from dominant languages and cultures (see Bender et al., 2021, for an explanation). An example of point one can be found in Thompson et al. (2020) description of cultural influences on word meanings. Thompson et al. sought to find to what extent word meanings in spoken languages are aligned. As they explain it, words that reflect common, everyday experiences outside of the boundaries of geography and culture (e.g., eat) should be aligned, or used similarly, in similar contexts. In the fields of deaf education or signed language interpreting, we would claim that semantically aligned terms would have one-to-one mapping. However, the data they used came from the NorthEuraLex dataset (Delbert et al., 2012)

which has no signed languages contained in it. That means the Thompson et al. claim that they have data from 41 languages is not entirely accurate. They have data from 41 *spoken* languages, and accordingly, their conclusions about semantic alignment says nothing about language specifically. Rather their conclusions can only be applied to spoken language.

The limitations of NorthEuraLex are due to the lack of a standardized printed form for many signed languages (Grushkin, 2017). No printed form, means no inclusion in the database and no analysis that can be generalized to languages per se, and the field remains focused on spoken languages alone because spoken languages via orthographies are easier to analyze.

That languages need written forms to be analyzed is a recursive problem. To analyze languages abstracted from the speaker, they need to be written. If a language is not written, it cannot be abstracted from the speaker. Historically, the response to this recursive problem has been to develop written forms for these languages (Grushkin, 2017). In the case of deaf children and signed languages, this requires that schools who teach those children pick and use a written form. But that will not happen because there are many competing systems, and the usual complaints about teaching a written language that is not the printed form of the spoken language will arise. But also, it encourages the belief that the only way for a language to be valid, is for it to have a written language.

In this section, we briefly examine three aspects of multi-modal language that linguists need to consider when analyzing language. Although linguistic ethnographers and theorists like Pennycook (2010) have included expansive modes of languaging in their work, we believe that theoretical linguistics continues to ignore the semiotic repertoire (Kusters et al., 2017) in its stubborn adherence to modality chauvinism. Here, we outline a few aspects of languaging that theoretical linguists should include in their work. They are: a) visual language (e.g., signed languages, gestures), b) graphemic languages (e.g., sequential art, iconicity, and alternative and augmentative communication (AAC)), and c) tactile languages. We recognize more modalities exist (e.g., written). Our exclusion of them is not meant to marginalize. We have selected these three as possible areas of focus, but if more can be done then it should be done.

Visual Language

Of the three aspects of multimodality discussed in this article, the visual language modality has had the most focus by linguists. Our discussion therefore is not on what parts of visual language can be analyzed by linguists, but rather, to what extent should focus on visual language be embedded in all linguistic analyses and in the linguistics teaching curriculum. In visual language, we do not distinguish signed languages and gestures, except to point out that previous essentialism on what is gesture and what is signed language was necessary to

promote the idea that signed languages are true languages. Even today, researchers conflate gesture and signed languages to make the claim that signed languages are inferior or not real languages compared to speech (see Crowe et al., 2017, for examples). Our perspective is very clear. At no point in the curriculum should spoken languages be mentioned without visual languages.

More to the point, all human languaging is multimodal (Perniss, 2018). Any teaching or analysis of language which does not consider multimodality therefore does not compose language itself, but rather a specific modality in languaging. To be clear, if an analysis of a language only considers the spoken modality, then it is not an analysis of language; rather, it is an analysis of speech.

Even signed language researchers are not immune to challenges in discussing how disabled people use language. As Hou and Kusters (2020) point out, signed language researchers tend to classify visual languages among gesture-homesign-communal-village-national-urban groupings. These groupings can divide users among disability and racial lines. Whose language is gesture? Whose is homesign? Whose is urban? These categories need to be analyzed within a Crip Linguistic framework. Lillo–Martin and Hochgesang (2022) explain that studying more varieties of signed language use has the capacity to expand our understanding of languaging in the visual modality. They point to Lina Hou and Kristian Ali's work on signed language inclusion as a good

starting point for the field. Hou and Ali at the time of this writing were seeking out discourses exploring signed language research in the Global South.

Graphemic Language

Graphemic languages as used here includes a wide range of pictorial based communication, such as icons, signs, drawings, computer graphics, memes, emojis, and sequential art. Semiotic analysis is not unknown among linguists (e.g., Merrell 2016), and recent internet linguists such as McCulloch (2020) have brought analysis of graphemic language to general populations. However, linguistic analysis of how people use graphemic languages as a primary form of languaging seems limited, except in domains of specialized education (e.g., Soto & Olmstead, 1993). Works such as von Tetzchner (2015) demonstrate the semiotic potential of Assistive and Alternative Communication (AAC). Many kinds of AAC exist (see, Ganz, 2015). The most recognizable forms are icons that are used via technology (e.g., an iPad) or a communication board. AAC users point to or press the icons. Some complex AAC device will associate a sentence with an icon such that the AAC user can press an icon and the device will speak or write the associated sentence. Although ableist perceptions of AAC as inferior to speech and even signed languages mean that many young, disabled children do not have access to a workable AAC system for years (see Moorcraft et al., 2020, for a discussion), adult AAC users show the same love for their AAC as many

marginalized users of a language. TuttleTurtle (2020) for example, points out that AAC is a necessary part of their gender presentation, evidencing that as a language, AAC has the same indexicality of disability, gender, race, and sexuality, among others as other kinds of languaging. People who follow AAC users on social media, such as @semispeaking, can witness the immense intertextual knowledge required amongst AAC users for using and developing new iconicity. However, even von Tetzchner frames AAC users as being deficient; the users have “failed” to develop speech.

Sequential art can also be linguistic (Cohn, 2020). Cohn shows that sequential art can be broken down into constituent parts, much like other languages. For example, a series of sequential images can be clustered into an Arc. The Arc is broken into Establisher, Initial, Prolongation, Peak, and Release sections. Each section can add complexity via clauses. Cohn’s theories have repeatedly been supported by analyses of brain waves via Event Related Potential (ERP) (2019), which provide evidence that the brain sees and processes sequential art linguistically. The sequential art as linguistic is further supported by the research which indicates that seeing sequential art as linguistic requires exposure and training (Cohn, 2020). Yet, once a skill is viewed as normative, people apply normative expectations to having the skill and children who do not conform to these normative expectations are labeled as deviant. Manfredi et al. (2020) studied the visual narrative processing of autistic

children and compared them to abled children. They found differences in how the autistic children perceived the visual narratives. This, according to Manfredi et al., was a deficit. In explaining the results, Manfredi et al. point to the lower IQs of the autistic children as one explanation for the differences in perceiving narratives, thus contributing to the idea of language, intelligence, and disability being linked.

Tactile Language

DeafBlind people have recently introduced the notion of ProTactile, a philosophy of communication that embraces the use of touch as a sensory pathway to language and cognition (Bradbury, et al. 2019; Clark & Nucci, 2020; Edwards, 2018). During conversation, DeafBlind people use the senses of touch, movement, heaviness and lightness to receive language from interlocutors. The interlocutors lend their hands, arms, bodies to the DeafBlind signer, allowing their bodies to be manipulated to co-construct meaning. Touch can be used to communicate environmental information, not only what is uttered, but to also give the DeafBlind person a sense of space, surroundings, and audience responses. In a show of the expansive potentiality of crip language, John Lee Clark, a DeafBlind poet and artist, prepared a presentation where he co-created content in clusters with attendees. Each group experienced and understood the message in different ways, depending on shared knowledge and with the expectation to respond in collaborative ways. Clark rejects the premise that it is

possible for audience members to get the same message. Instead, the audience co-constructs the speech, inserting their perceptions and worked toward mutual understanding. The attendees did not experience the speech in the same order, they received the speech in different parts at different times with meanings that shifted with each group.

Adaption of Critical Disability Studies to Theoretical and Applied Linguistics

In disability studies, there are conversations about how disability shapes our relationship with time. As Disability Studies scholar Ellen Samuels (2017) outlines in “Six Ways of Looking at Crip Time,” disability stretches, bends, contracts, and explodes time. Crip Linguistics exists within Crip Time. We recognize time as a factor that generates deficit perspectives about language and contributes to the disordering of language through attitudes and expectations. What happens when we have *crip departures* from normative time?

Abled people expect language acquisition to take place on a very specific timeline, with limited investment from themselves. Children are expected to achieve linguistic benchmarks by certain ages (e.g., critical periods), and often these benchmarks are facilitated by co-development of physical traits among similar checkpoints. For example, Walle and Campos (2014) argue that language development is related to the acquisition of walking. Does that mean children who do not walk do not acquire language or that

their language is in deficit? They do not study non-walking children. However, children who use mobility augmentation and technologies such as wheelchairs can and do learn language.

Any failure to meet benchmarks on time reinforces deficit views of the language produced by disabled children. The normal timeline is determined by ideals and averages as imagined by academics, medical professionals, and educators. This does not take into account how different bodyminds take time to process and acquire language. Then when those children fail to meet those temporal linguistic benchmarks, they are labeled with disordered language. For example, Hoff et al. (2021) seem to imply that children who are not English dominant bilinguals by 5 years of age may be intellectually disabled. A raciolinguistic analysis of Hoff et al. recognizes that the children studied were Spanish speakers. In the United States, the relationship between Spanish speaking and racialized bodies is problematic (Rosa, 2019). The Crip Linguistics perspective identifies how racialized bodies are seen as disabled because their English language development is perceived as disordered. Those timelines create and reinforce deficit ideas about children’s intelligence and agency. Criticisms of temporal linguistic benchmarks do exist (e.g., Burman, 2016), but these appear to be the exception rather than commonplace. Crip Linguistics urges us to think about the fluidity of time and the capacity of the bodymind to develop language, achieve understanding and communication.

Abled people expect communication to be quick, efficient, and spoken. As Samuels and Freeman (2021) point out:

What is nearly always true, however, is that using a different form of technology for access reasons means everything takes longer. And this is true not just for users of complex technologies like screen readers: differences such as having only limited fingers available for typing, or using one's mouth to hold a pen, or being able to look at screens for only an hour per day, or processing written information better than aural or the other way around— all of those differences from the presumed norm mean that...the work is done in different temporalities. (p. 247)

A common complaint is that those using AAC wished for more time in conversations so that the discourse could accommodate their voices (Ashby & Causton-Theoharis, 2012).

Abled people do not realize nor do they consider what normative expectations cost people in terms of language learning, building relationships, and self-actualization amongst disabled people. Disabled people manifest this loss as collective grief. They grieve language they did not have access to and could not learn or struggled with people's impatience with us and reluctance to go slow, to repeat, to gesture, and the costs of impatience with communications (Brueggemann, 1997).

What expansive potentialities might we discover in the stretch of patience in languaging with each other? Like Kusters

(2017) demonstrates in her study of translanguaging in India, people invested in mutual understanding (e.g., through gesture-based conversation) would be willing to repeat their utterances or the other person's utterances. Several repetitions might be required to achieve understanding. Sometimes repetition is accompanied by guesswork, search sequences, language games, and listening for multimodal cues, which can stretch out seemingly brief language exchanges (Goodwin, 1995). And, as artist Christine Sun Kim (2020) puts it, crip time and language is "punctuated by writing/scrawling questions, in reading, and the creativity in ad-lib responding," (p. 280). But the labor in co-constructing meaning, in listening actively, through waiting for interpreters or scrawled words, impatience and instance upon normative language time imposes limits on an interlocutor's agency. Crip language *insists* that crip time in languaging is vital for a person's agency, be it through interpretation, translation, delayed speech, repetition, gesture, movements in gaze, and prosodic changes. Language is multimodal, interdependent, and both the user and the listener cannot be separated from the semiotic environment (Goodwin, 2004).

Some forms of crip languaging, like signed languages, can convey multiple layers of information at the same time, bending and contracting time simultaneously, able to communicate information about the past and the future reaching both backward and forward in time. Here crip time relies on the intrinsic

multimodality of languaging, which goes beyond what is possible via speech alone. This simultaneous bending and contraction and explosion of time is best observed in signed language literature (Bauman et al., 2006; Bauman & Murray, 2014). This investment of time, the stretching of time to accommodate communication and understanding, and the ability to transcend national and linguistic boundaries in translanguaging across multiple modalities (Moriarty & Kusters 2021) offers only small glimpses of the potency of crip languaging.

But as some scholars have reminded us, crip time can also be full of potential, joy, resistance, and agency. The ways disability interacts with time and language can reveal the potency of communication. For example, the benefits of text-based or solely text-based communications, as demonstrated by DeafBlind people, shows that written language can serve as a stand-alone modality for some while offering a full range of benefits. Among those benefits are greater flexibility in how and when to communicate and the ability to slow the speed of communication in real time, which offers opportunities to reflect on what is being said.

Crip Linguistics shows us what is possible in language brokering and mutual meaning making. One aspect of language brokering is the emphasis on relationship building as a part of the languaging process between disabled people. Like Kusters (2017) writes, once acquaintance was made, “the time and effort communication required diminished: they

know what they can expect and a certain schema is in place” (p.299).

One lesson from *crip languaging* is the idea of interdependence and forms of access intimacy through the discourse process. And, there is evidence that deaf people’s communication is driven by an intrinsic moral value to actively understand and be understood using a wide range of semiotic tools across languages (Moriarty & Kusters, 2021).

What is care work in languaging? Care work in languaging is not similar to traditional caregiving but visioned through the framework developed by disability justice activist and author Leah Piepzna-Samarasinha (2018). Linguistic care work is the time taken in being patient, in supporting and providing semiotic resources, in seeking, expanding, and claiming our own semiotic resources, in calibrating to each other in seeking mutual understanding. This is not only language work but care work through languaging in being invested in collective access and belonging (e.g., Conrod 2022 on pronoun usage for trans belonging). Linguistic care work in the context of disability justice is to work together to create and provide optimal environments and material conditions for language (and mutual understanding) to take place.

Crip Linguistics is therefore about putting the *people* back in languaging and recognizing that analyzing languaging without considering the languages separates the language from the work that people put into producing them, especially via disabled bodies. Relationships, as an extension of interdependence, emphasizes

that crip languaging is more valued by disabled people because of the effort and work involved (Green, 2014). This is also a form of access intimacy. Mia Mingus in Hamraie and Fritsch (2019) describe access intimacy as a “crip relational practice produced when interdependence informs the making of access” (p.14). As such, interdependent ways of languaging, like augmented speech, do not appeal to many abled people. For example, as Mackay’s (2003) work with aphasia patients showed, the patients were viewed as incompetent because of their voicelessness. Given an acceptance of interdependence and care work in languaging via crip time, the patients would be viewed as competent (Rossetti et al., 2008).

Conclusion

Hamraie (2013) asks us to think about the politics of access through the framework of interdependence. Languaging, as an important site of access—to the world, to politics, to belonging, to citizenship—thus demands that we think about this through the lens of collective access and care. Rejecting monolingualism and mono-modality are two beginning steps. Embracing time, space, and material environments in meaning-making are also preliminary steps. Interdependence also asks us to think about our built environments and how that impacts access (Hamraie, 2013), and in our case, language. Hamraie (2017) also instigates us to consider how discrimination is built into the structures

around us, the buildings, the foundations, the frameworks, and theories, and so on. When in the process of crippling linguistics, we question how modality chauvinism has been built into the various language focused fields and the perspectives of what language is and what is *good* languaging. Hamraie and Fritsch’s (2019) practices of “interdependence, access intimacy, and collective access can be understood as alternative political technologies through Crip technoscience” (p.13). Crip technoscience is “critique, alteration, and reinvention” (p.2). It is how disabled people alter and reinvent the world in order to make access happen. The relationship between science, technology, and language is such that the dismissal of disabled ways of languaging has resulted in inaccessible technologies.

What’s next, then? We invite theoretical and applied linguists to use Crip Linguistics, in some cases, via disidentification.

Disidentification describes identifying with but not as a member of another marginalized group (Schalk, 2013). In identifying *with* but not as, one recognizes that they are “implicated by the culture and politics of another group and seek to better understand this link.” Schalk urges us to think of disidentification as a “careful, conscious joining—a standing/sitting among rather than by or behind a group.” We invite linguists across socio, queer, trans, and raciolinguistics to seek ways to identify with Crip Linguistics. What are our similarities and overlaps? What do we bring to each other in our interrogations and frameworks? In the

places where those disidentification occur across/between/among minoritized subjects, how might we develop coalitional theories that are attentive to a variety of marginalized groups? We want to think about how the logics that uphold ideas about disordered languaging is rooted in racism, accentism, in sounding a certain way, and in communicating and languaging in certain ways; and, how those logics are similar and overlapping. In disidentification within linguistics—as queer, trans, gendered, disabled, and racialized languaging—can we seek the ways in which they overlap in terms of being characterized as disordered; and, we thus seek to consider how languages characterized as disordered are marginalized, belittled, and disregarded.

Contemporary DeafBlind poet and essayist John Lee Clark's (personal correspondence with author, June 14, 2021) description of meetings of DeafBlind people reveals a world of co-constructed meaning and mutual misunderstanding as Pennycook (2018) describes. Meetings in ProTactile bent and stretched and manipulated time. They highlight sensory orientations and translanguaging, while grounded in the morality of language calibration and mutual understanding as care work for access. Crip languaging incorporates practices of access intimacy, adaptations of technology, and relationality. To sum up, disabled people do really cool things with language if people would pay attention.

Positionality Statements

Octavian Robinson

Octavian is a deafdisabled queer trans white man. His deafness is shaped by multiple forms of neurodivergence and nerve neuropathy. Despite not possessing speaking privilege, he possesses language capital and print literacy privileges.

Jon Henner

Jon is a deafdisabled, chronically ill, self-identified autistic person, and an Ashkenazi Jewish white man. He has speech and print literacy privileges, and benefits from being able to interact with hearing people using their ways of communicating.

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Let's Get Political: The Challenges of Teaching a Multicultural Course in Communication Sciences and Disorders

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Article Information

Article editor: Benjamin Munson
Article type: Critical reflection
Review type: Double anonymized

Submitted: 1 August 2022
Accepted: 20 October 2022
Published: 1 May 2023

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DOI: [10.48516/jcscd_2023vol1iss1.12](https://doi.org/10.48516/jcscd_2023vol1iss1.12)

Published by:
Adelphi University Libraries
(<https://www.adelphi.edu/libraries/open-access/digital-publishing/>)



Citation: Farrugia, A. (2023). Let's get political: The challenges of teaching a multicultural course in communication sciences and disorders. *Journal of Critical Study of Communication and Disability*, 1(1), 38-47.
https://doi.org/10.48516/jcscd_2023vol1iss1.12

Abstract

This essay reflects on the challenges of creating and teaching a multicultural course in a speech-language pathology program. Students pushed back on content, questioning the connection between politics and practice in the field. The vocabulary of motives theory was used to analyze comments like, "I'm conservative" and "This class is too political." The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association's apolitical influence was also examined. Despite student requests to erase political content, the choice was made to continue the antiracist framework and make it more personal.

Keywords

Scholarship of teaching and learning; diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice; antiracist framework; white privilege

Positionality Statement

I, Audrey Farrugia, am a speech-language pathologist and associate professor of speech-language pathology at Eastern Michigan University (EMU). My education has highly influenced my perspective. I received my Bachelor's degree in 2006 in elementary education. In this program I learned the fundamentals of pedagogy and the joy of working with children. I received my Master's degree in 2009 in speech-language pathology. It is here that I found my passion for working with individuals with communication disabilities. I received my doctoral degree in 2016 in educational studies with a concentration in urban education. Here, I honed my teaching and learning skills and became introduced to issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. I received all of my degrees from EMU, where I currently work. It is my home and my community. Prior to joining the faculty at EMU, I worked in the public school system. It was difficult

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for me as I found myself being a special educator that does not believe in special education. I made the decision to pursue my doctoral degree so that I could work with adults and affect change more quickly in the field. I mostly teach courses in child language but I also teach the undergraduate anatomy and physiology course. My research focuses on the scholarship of teaching and learning, social justice in the field of speech-language pathology, early intervention, and autism. I approach my all my work as a learner. I am married and a mother to four children. I identify as a White woman with an invisible disability and ally. I am committed to change.



When I became a faculty member seven years ago, I had my sights set on teaching the program's multicultural course. I was finishing up my dissertation (Farrugia-Bernard, 2016) for my Ph.D., which focused on the cultural competence of White speech-language pathologists (SLPs) practicing in urban schools with students of color. I thought the multicultural course would be a great fit for me to teach as it blended my degrees. As I researched best practice in multicultural teaching and learning in the field, I found there to be a paucity of resources. Two seminal articles had been published to guide multicultural coursework. Stockman et al. (2008) surveyed speech-language pathology programs across the country to gain information about multicultural instructional practices. Horton-Ikard et al. (2009) presented a framework for a foundational course in CSD meant to increase the cultural competency of students. The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) also had information for faculty, such as sample syllabi and a cultural competence curriculum guide (ASHA, n.d.). Since then, more research has come out (Bradshaw & Randolph, 2021; Franca & Harten, 2016; Horton & Munoz, 2021; Quach & Tsai, 2017), but at the time, the methods for incorporating multicultural content were left up to individual SLP programs, resulting in a large variety of preparatory practice.

I designed the class using tenants from my doctoral program and fused that with my knowledge of SLP and tried to create an environment in which all students felt safe sharing their identity and experiences. A diversity statement was crafted and read aloud on the first day of the course. The students and I collaboratively produced class and conversation norms which included:

- Assume positive intentions
- Allow everyone a chance to speak
- Listen respectfully and actively
- Criticize ideas and not individuals
- Commit to learning, not debating
- Avoid blame, speculation, and inflammatory language
- Avoid assumptions about others

I was so interested in multicultural teaching that I set up a scholarship of teaching and learning study with the course. I wanted to investigate CSD student perceptions of a foundational multicultural course in its ability to increase cultural competence and prepare students to work with culturally and linguistically diverse clients. In this study, reflective journals were analyzed and the students' blatantly racist statements shocked me. They said things like,

I honestly think that White English-speaking women are the majority of this field because we are the people who know about it and are willing to go the extra few years for a Master's degree.

For society to remain society some things must remain, such as qualified people performing jobs. A lot of people of color just aren't. I also feel, though an unpopular opinion, that in some situations the barriers created by society are needed. (Farrugia, 2020)

It was distressing to me to have the students think these things but also that they felt so comfortable openly sharing these views. I naively thought that racism would be in the shadows.

It is important to note the demographics of the field and my personal classroom. Students of color represent 25% of students enrolled in graduate level SLP programs (CAPCSD & ASHA, 2021). In my classroom, there are very few students of color, typically around 15%. As such, students from underrepresented groups may feel pressure to present in a certain way or feel hesitant to share their experiences (Rosen et al., 2017). hooks (1994) stated:

Even though students enter the "democratic" classroom believing they have the right to "free speech," most students are not comfortable exercising this right to "free speech." Most students are not comfortable exercising this right—especially if it means they must give voice to thoughts, ideas, feelings that go against the grain, that are unpopular. (p. 179)

Perhaps the racist comments I was hearing were because my White students felt comfort being in the majority with me, a White woman, as their instructor. I have questioned if they would have been as openly racist if there were more students of color or if their instructor identified with an underrepresented group.

While researching, I learned I was not the only educator dealing with this. There had been a documented increase in hate speech in

educational settings that scholars attributed in large part to President Trump's public use of hate speech throughout his candidacy and presidency (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Rogers et al., 2017; Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016). The hateful statements from the students were not just reserved for our classroom discussions; I also saw them in my teaching evaluations. Cotton and Pluskota (2016) found that students evaluate teachers of multicultural courses harshly. Despite the hurtful comments, I took the student feedback into account as I revised the course. With each subsequent teaching of the course (Farrugia, 2021), I tried to improve the structure and content, but I could not seem to reconcile two recurring comments: "I'm conservative" and "This class is too political."

There are dueling definitions of *politics*. In the narrower sense, politics deals only with the government and two-party system. By this definition, politics is confined to the voting booth. More broadly, politics deals with a power struggle between people and groups (Boswell, 2020). It exists to establish "who gets what, when, how" (Lasswell, 1950). What commonly happens is that people meld the two definitions and cultural issues get assigned opposing sides with liberal or conservative ideologies. So, when I talk in class about the cultural issue of healthcare disparity in the transgender community, instead of discussing it as a human rights issue, they argue it in conservative or liberal terms.

As I reflected on student conversations, journal entries, and evaluations, Mills' (1940) theory of vocabulary of motive kept coming to mind. Simply put, a vocabulary of motive is a person's explanation for their actions. Mills asserted that we are limited in the everyday language available to us and this will shape our actions. For example, the term *gaslighting*, meaning "to manipulate someone by psychological means into questioning their

own sanity," (Oxford University Press) is a term that recently gained popularity. Digging deeper into Mills' theory, he stated that individuals will take action based on whether or not they can talk themselves out of trouble if their motives are questioned. This is called *justification* (p.907). People may now choose not to engage in gaslighting behaviors because the understanding and widespread use of the term makes justification of the actions more difficult. Using Mills' theory, throughout the seven times I taught the multicultural course, I realized that most often students' racist comments were justified with "I'm conservative." One time a student shared, "Nine times out of ten I do not believe that what they [Black people] are complaining about is because of their race and is rather because of their actions that they do not want to take responsibility for (Farrugia, 2022). I set up a separate meeting with this student to discuss this overtly racist comment. They opened the meeting with concerns that I was targeting them because they openly identified as being conservative. They proceeded to justify every racist statement with the idea of conservative beliefs. However, it was not just racist comments that were being justified with, "I'm conservative." Women in one class were discussing their fear of being verbally, physically, sexually, or emotionally attacked by men when another woman chimed in to disparage that fear and emphasize her personal protection from God. She quickly quipped, "I'm a Republican and Christian. I don't worry." In another instance, a student was reflecting on where they fell on Cross et al.'s (1989) cultural competence continuum. They stated,

It would probably seem that I am on the cultural destructive side with issues such as LGBTQ. As a conservative Christian I cannot support a lifestyle that I believe is sinful and against God. While I would never be rude or mean to

a person who identifies as LGBTQ, I also cannot support them and get to a level of cultural proficiency where I encourage this culture because I do not support the choices that people in this group make. (Farrugia, 2022)

Today, being conservative is embodied by President Trump and his "not politically correct" rhetoric. When he can make prejudiced comments and say it is because of his conservative beliefs, others can too and use that as their justification. It seems it is far easier and more acceptable to ourselves and others to say "I'm conservative" instead of "I'm racist."

One commonly occurring comment from student evaluations was, "This course is too political," often followed by a questioning of the connection between politics and SLP practice. As one student stated, "I feel like this class talks a lot about cultural issues. How does that pertain to speech pathology and our practice?" (Farrugia, 2020). Each year I tried to find ways to make the connection between current events and our practice clearer but as the same comment continued to appear I found myself asking, was I letting my own political interests take over the class? I tried to envision a class where cultural issues were not covered and the focus was only on assessment and treatment strategies but I honestly could not find the separation the students thought existed. So, I brought back Mills's theory to mull over in this context. Perhaps, "This class is too political" was really code for this class is uncomfortable. It brings up different perspectives and requires students to articulate their views. It may be easier to say a course is too political than to say it is too hard. After all, we have been told there are two things you do not discuss—religion and politics—and I ask students to do just that.

I began to observe it was not just my students pushing away politics in the course;

my professional organization, ASHA, was doing the same thing. On June 1st 2020, ASHA issued a statement entitled *Response to Racially Motivated Violence*. It stated:

We stand with those who stand against violence of any kind, especially recent racially motivated violence. We stand in opposition to any actions that silence change and progress, as well as those actions that impede and interfere with mutual respect and dignity.

ASHA constituents heavily criticized the statement for its apolitical content with comments like, “It’s remarkable how many words they use to say nothing,” (Oppenheimer, 2020) and, “You don’t firmly position yourself against racism. You instead glide over the disease that is racism” (Kifle, 2020). The Instagram group SLPs of Color submitted a petition with over 53,000 signatures to ASHA to make a statement denouncing racism and create systems of accountability. On June 2nd 2020, ASHA posted a message which read,

Our statement fell short; it was not clear or strong enough, and for that we apologize. We missed the mark, and we let you down. We have heard from many members about the pain this message has caused, and we want to do better [...] The Board of Directors will be issuing a new statement in the near future, please stay tuned.

On June 5th 2020, a new statement was released entitled, *Response to Racism*. It stated, “ASHA explicitly condemns systemic racism and oppression, and the violent acts that took the lives most recently of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd—and so many before them.”

More recently, on June 24th 2022, ASHA issued a statement on the Supreme Court Decision in *Dobbs v Jackson Women’s Health Organization*, which stated:

We understand and respect many ASHA members may have strong feelings about the Supreme Court decision on *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* and want ASHA to take a position on the issue.

Undoubtedly, the Supreme Court’s decision is among a range of important issues under discussion or debate in the public discourse. Nonetheless, it is beyond the scope of ASHA’s mission and advocacy efforts to take a stand.

ASHA professionals criticized the statement with comments like,

“Not our scope” is an interesting stance to take considering the gun violence and Pride posts this month. I see ASHA is picking and choosing where to focus performative advocacy efforts, which comes as no surprise. I’d love to see a breakdown of how it’s “within scope” to speak about those issues but it’s not within our scope to speak about medical autonomy in a medical field. (Porter, 2022)

Another criticism voiced to ASHA’s statement read, “Our scope? More than 90% of SLPs are female and reproductive rights are human rights...and that affects us all (Faythe, 2022). While others agreed with ASHA’s stance saying,

Please continue to focus on speech, language, and hearing issues. This is the reason we pay our annual dues. Everyone has an opinion on this matter. Opinions differ. It’s not ASHA’s job to take a stance on this issue publicly. Please do not bow to the pressure to do so. (Skelly-Flores, 2022)

This time, ASHA disabled the comments which they claimed failed to adhere to established ASHA Facebook guidelines for respectful discourse. ASHA constituents continued to express criticism on every subsequent post,

regardless of the subject. For example, ASHA posted about new and improved evidence maps and Kuikka (2022) commented,

The American Physical Therapy Association issued a statement re the overturning of Roe, that included: "Our commitment to person-centered services establishes that APTA opposes efforts by government, institutions, and other entities that may threaten person-centeredness in the provision of physical therapist services." What side of history do you want to be on, ASHA? Because if you won't back women making healthcare decisions, you don't stand for anything at all.

It became clear to me that just as my students feel uncomfortable navigating discussions about issues of diversity and equity, so too does my professional organization. ASHA takes the melded definition of political, where broad cultural conflicts are ascribed narrow political sides, to justify their avoidance of discussion of certain events. By saying it is not within our scope of practice to comment on political issues, they have permission to abstain from cultural discussions that they find controversial and polarizing.

With all of this in mind, I still decided to stay true to my antiracist framework. Instead of erasing the political, I just made it more personal. Rather than turning to the news for stories of diversity and injustice, I drew from personal experiences. Over the years I had students and colleagues share stories and questions like:

- (1) How do I respond to a client that makes a racist comment during a session?
- (2) I had a patient refuse services from me because I wear a hijab. What options do I have?

- (3) On a job interview, I think administrators were trying to 'out' me by asking what plans my boyfriend and I had while I was being walked to the door.

- (4) Parents questioned the use of a picture book which featured a gay family in my school library.

I worked these scenarios into the class to demonstrate that the politics which felt far away and easily dismissible when discussed in news stories affect our clients and those of us practicing in the field. Applying the political to clinical situations removed the ability to disengage in topics. With this change there was a notable shift in student responses towards deeper reflection and discussion. Instead of reading a news story and moving on, they became more invested and curious. For example, I was teaching when the Buffalo supermarket shooting happened. In the past, I would have had the group watch or read the news together and react. There would be varying levels of engagement. Instead, a student in their clinical rotation told me before class that their client was so emotional over the shooting that they did not do anything they had planned for their session. Their client just wanted to talk about it but they felt it was awkward because they were White and the client was Black. We brought this up in class and it led to a rich exchange of how to navigate political discussions with clients, particularly ones with people from different cultures. The students walked away from that class with a clear connection to the field, having talked about the narrow, clinical approach to counseling and the larger political idea of racially motivated violence. I continued to have these hard, uncomfortable political conversations with my students that they were asking me to avoid. I continued to call out racism and all other forms of prejudice when I saw it, refusing to accept "I'm conservative" as

a justification. I believe I pushed my students to become not just SLPs but engaged citizens.

If the field of CSD is to champion diversity, equity, and inclusion, we have to create the space to have these political discussions in our academic programs, so that students can practice the skills needed to engage in this discourse. What they do in school, they are more likely to continue in their practice. To this end, perhaps when events happen what we need from ASHA is not merely a statement but time and space to have

dialogue and share our perspectives with our colleagues—to practice communicating with one another even when we disagree and when it is hard, much like what I am asking my students to do in the multicultural course.

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

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Article Information

Article editor: RaMonda Horton
Article type: Research article
Review type: Double anonymized

Submitted: 6 July 2022
Revised: 20 January 2023
Accepted: 9 March 2023
Published: 4 May 2023

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DOI: [10.48516/jcscd_2023vol1iss1.7](https://doi.org/10.48516/jcscd_2023vol1iss1.7)

Published by:
Adelphi University Libraries
(<https://www.adelphi.edu/libraries/open-access/digital-publishing/>)



Citation: Bauler, C. (2023). Have We Learned Anything? Raciolinguistic Ideologies in Remote Learning Public Discourses. *Journal of Critical Study of Communication and Disability*, 1(1), 48-68.
https://doi.org/10.48516/jcscd_2023vol1iss1.7

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 ~~so 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*

Actions	Research Focus
Theme Selection	Grammar of Schooling Manifestations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time • Access • Pedagogy
Textual Selection	Relevance to the Theme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Media • News Media • Pedagogical Materials • Educational Websites
Discursive Analysis	Raciolinguistic Ideologies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assumptions about teaching, learning, language, technology and students • Ideas about technology, language and social behavior that benefit or exclude specific groups of students • Possible social implications and consequences Meaning Making Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grammatical • Semantic • Semiotic
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*

NOTE: SEL will be embedded throughout the instructional day

*This time to vary by student

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

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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.

⁵ 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.⁵ 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 [...]

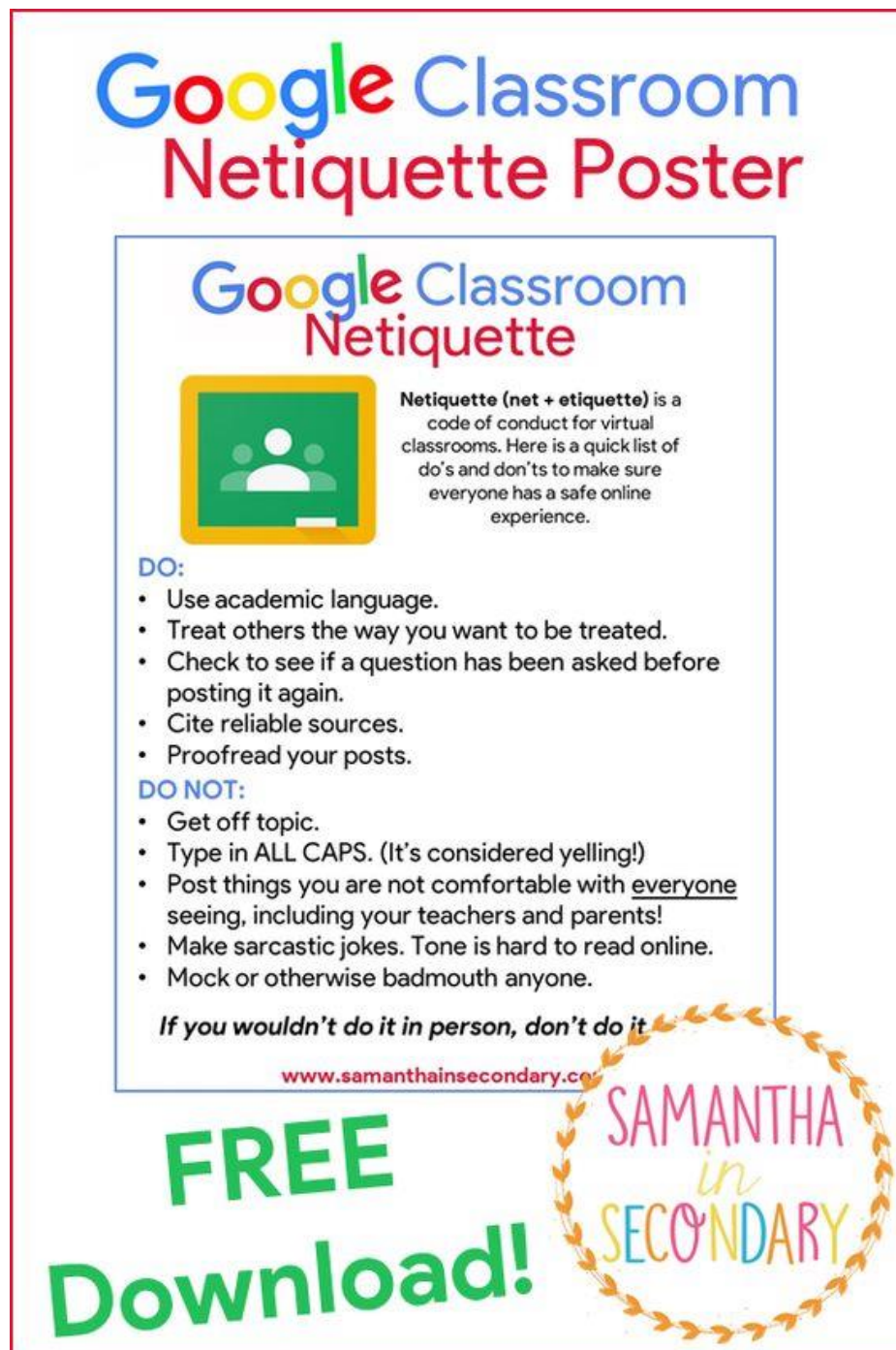
Students who don't have those things are the ones most keenly aware of those differences. (Johnson, 2020)

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



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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“Outsider Within”: Lessons Learned about SLHS and Race Scholarship

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Article Information

Article editor: Mershen Pillay

Article type: Research article

Review type: Double anonymized

Submitted: 1 August 2022

Accepted: 20 October 2022

Published: 1 May 2023

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DOI: [10.48516/jcscd_2023vol1iss1.14](https://doi.org/10.48516/jcscd_2023vol1iss1.14)

Published by:

Adelphi University Libraries

(<https://www.adelphi.edu/libraries/open-access/digital-publishing/>)



Citation: Horton, R., Muñoz, M. L., Khamis, R., Munson, B., Yu, B., Johnson, V. E., Hyter, Y. (2023). Outsider within: Lessons learned about SLHS and race scholarship. *Journal of Critical Study of Communication and Disability*, 1(1), 69-87.

https://doi.org/10.48516/jcscd_2023vol1iss1.14

4

Abstract

This paper describes how race and racism impact the production and dissemination of knowledge in the speech, language, and hearing sciences (SLHS). In order to explain the consequences of racialized practices on Black, Indigenous, and Other People of Color (BIPOC) scholarship, the peer review process is critiqued using the expanded psychosocial model of racism (Neville et al., 2012). We discuss the ways in which racism and white privilege operate hegemonically in the construction, distribution, and reproduction of knowledge by marginalizing the epistemological, theoretical, methodological, and interpretive frames of scholarship produced by BIPOC scholars. We provide specific recommendations for addressing barriers in the peer review process that hinder critical scholarship examining racism and other forms of marginalization.

Keywords

Racism, peer review, publication, higher education, speech-language-hearing sciences

Positionality Statements

Positionality statements can be found at the end of the article.

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The American Medical Association (2020) has officially recognized systemic racism as a public health threat. In the field of Education, it has long been recognized that educational inequities cannot be understood without investigations of the relationship between race and education (Lynn & Dixon, 2021). Research focused on critical studies of race and scholarship by Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) researchers is essential to the construction of knowledge. Such scholarship is particularly relevant to understanding the impact of racism on education and healthcare. These critical perspectives are especially urgent in fields that are predominantly white¹ and lacking in critical science paradigms, including critical race research. One such field of study is Speech-Language-Hearing Sciences (SLHS; Pillay & Kathard, 2015), the professional domain of the authors of this paper.

Across disciplines, scholars engaging in critical race scholarship face significant, persistent, and pervasive barriers to funding, conducting, sustaining, and publishing their work (Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Hendrix, 2005; Kubota, 2020). Challenges to disseminating scholarship that critically analyzes oppressive systems and structures are not a new phenomenon. In the late 1980s, Patricia Hill Collins, one of the leading Black feminists in the United States, wrote about the importance of *outsider within* perspectives in disciplines or areas of scholarship that seldom consider the priorities, needs, experiences, or viewpoints of BIPOC scholars. While she

wrote about this from the perspective of a Black woman producing scholarship in sociology, her discussions about the importance of “outsider within” perspectives are salient and relevant to the experiences of marginalized scholars in SLHS. Specifically, Collins (1986) wrote about the importance of advocating for the type of scholarship needed to expose, analyze, and transform systemic structures and ideologies that devalue communities of color. Unsurprisingly, these same systemic structures and ideologies make it challenging to disseminate works that seek to expose and confront them. As Stockman (1995; 2007) noted, the scientific community exerts its own socio-political constraints. In the SLHS, white scholars occupy positions or roles in which they possess significant power in deciding the following:

- what topics of scholarship are relevant and important,
- how research on cultural and linguistic diversity, equity, and justice should be discussed or investigated;
- when and how findings from such work should be disseminated, and
- what scholarly efforts merit recognition or funding.

This power also means that white scholars decide who get to be the narrators and experts in their discipline. They determine how the behaviors and practices of those from marginalized communities should be observed and interpreted.

¹ The authors utilize lowercase spelling for *white* based on work by Charity Hudley et al. (2022) who note that “white doesn’t represent a shared culture and history the way Black does, and also has long been capitalized by hate groups.” In short, the

terms Black and white are not parallel in their social, cultural, and historical context, development, or use; the difference in capitalization highlights this reality.

When faced with these realities, many marginalized scholars in our discipline, including the authors of this paper, have found themselves experiencing psychological stress, burnout, and mental exhaustion resulting from having to deal with racialized practices, ableism, and cis- and heteronormativity in personal and professional interactions (Muñoz et al., 2022; Smith, 2008). For BIPOC and other marginalized scholars, this type of stress is a pathway to career dissatisfaction that can chip away at our desire to interrogate those marginalizing institutions, structures, and practices (Corbin et al., 2018). However, as Collins (1986) notes, those who are "in touch with their marginality in academic settings" can use their *outsider within* status to produce "distinctive analyses of race, class, and gender" and other social markers (p.15).

We know that there is a community of BIPOC professionals whose experiences in our discipline have been painful. Their experiences with language, communication, literacy, disability, and/or healthcare do not match the narratives about communication and difference that the SLHS discipline has become very comfortable in upholding (Duchan & Hewitt, 2023; Horton et al., 2021; Yu et al., 2021). For our field to be capable of promoting justice and equity, we believe that there needs to be a space for scholastic paradigms and orientations that center the knowledge and perspectives of those who have been marginalized. By doing so, we can discover new knowledge about communication and disability and generate implications for the development of social and political systems that promote the interest of communicators with disabilities in ways that are socially just. Scholarship for clinical decision-making that is centered on marginalized communities affects the practices provided. For example, when practitioners use evidence-based practices

grounded in white ways of knowing, services can further harm already marginalized communities (Khamis-Dakwar & Randazzo, 2021).

The authors of this paper are using our *outsider within* status, and scholarship outside the field of SLHS to discuss issues relevant to researching systemic forms of oppression and exclusion within SLHS. We aim to understand how oppression, defined as unequal power and exclusion and social negation serve as cultural-political barriers to critical scholarship production by researchers from BIPOC and other marginalized communities.

In this paper, we focus on race by providing an overview of racism as ideology and practice, and by discussing the ways in which racism and white privilege operate hegemonically in the construction, distribution, and reproduction of knowledge. There is a specific focus on how racism in scholarship dissemination may obstruct opportunities for professional growth by marginalizing the epistemological, theoretical, methodological, and interpretive frames of scholarship produced by BIPOC scholars. Finally, we will offer recommendations for addressing racism in scholarship dissemination (specifically as related to peer review) that can facilitate the implementation and maintenance of necessary and relevant paradigms capable of addressing systemic inequities.

Race and Racism as Ideology

Racism has been described as a "complex and historicized global system of domination" (Menashy & Zakharia, 2022 p. 467). As many scholars have noted, existing social structures have been formed and shaped by colonialism and imperialism, mechanisms of domination undergirded by white supremacy (Mills, 1997; 2015). In order to eradicate racism and its impact on our

everyday lives, it is important to understand its nuances, complexities, and roles in marginalization and inequity.

The expanded psychosocial model of racism described by Neville et al. (2012) is a useful framework for understanding how structures and ideology maintain systems of privilege for white racial groups while upholding systems of oppression and exclusion for those from BIPOC communities. They specifically stress the importance of recognizing and understanding *white privilege*, i.e., social stratification along ethnic/racial identity markers that has created a system that noticeably disadvantages BIPOC individuals while providing unacknowledged privileges and advantages to whites. As noted by Neville et al., white privilege differentially benefits whites, occurs at macro and micro levels, affords protection from racial discrimination and positions whiteness as the norm for guiding values, beliefs, and behaviors in society. Therefore, solutions to ameliorating the consequences of white privilege and racism will likely have an impact on other forms of oppression due to the intersectional nature of “isms” (Liu et al., 2021).

Within the Neville et al. (2012) model, white privilege and the oppression and exclusion of BIPOC communities are carried out and expressed via five types of racism: cultural, institutional, individual, interpersonal, and color-evasiveness.² The authors describe *cultural racism* as the underlying assumptions informing the development of society or how individuals are socialized within that society, particularly as related to assumptions regarding the racial superiority of whites (i.e., white supremacy). Cultural racism is the broadest expression of racism and guides

ideals of beauty, intelligence, and morality, and exerts its influence on knowledge discovery and production (i.e., epistemological racism). *Institutional racism* is defined as race-based mechanisms or racialized practices that operate within social institutions to maintain white privilege and systemically oppress and exclude BIPOC communities (i.e., redlining practices, admissions testing, tracking in K-12 schools). *Individual racism* is described as attitudes and beliefs about people of color rooted in stereotypes, generalizations, and white superiority. Individual racism can be overt, aversive, symbolic, or internalized. *Interpersonal racism* is the act or expression of individual racist attitudes and beliefs that occur when a BIPOC individual and a white person interact with one another. Finally, *color-evasive racism* is a belief system in which members of society or institutions actively ignore, purposely avoid, or fail to acknowledge the role of race and racism in shaping inequitable outcomes of those who identify as BIPOC.

These various types of racism are used to reinforce white supremacy and maintain white privilege. Operationalizing racism in this fashion may allow scholars to see how racism can impact the climate in which scholars of color engage in the process of research. To counter its impact, the scientific community needs to engage in actions that seek to make visible the impact of racism on scholarship produced by researchers of color. Table 1 provides a summary of the various types of racism identified by Neville et al. (2012). In the proceeding sections, we elaborate on how each of these types of racism can silence and devalue the work of BIPOC scholars in the SLHS.

² Terminology differs from Neville et al. (2012), who used the term *color-blind racism*. The term *evasive*

emphasizes agency associated with this type of racism and removes the ableism inherent in co-opting the word *blind* (Annamama et al., 2017).

Table 1

Summary of Racism Types

Type	Description
Cultural	Race-based assumptions
Institutional	Racialized practices that perpetuate white privilege
Individual	Overt: blatant, direct, and observable attitudes, beliefs, and practices Aversive: subconscious negative attitudes and beliefs about BIPOC Symbolic: stereotyped ideas about BIPOC rooted in white supremacy Internalized: negative beliefs and attitudes about one’s own BIPOC group, while idealizing the practices and belief of mainstream white society.
Interpersonal	Covert and overt racist acts or expressions in interactions between people from different racial backgrounds
Color-evasiveness	Overlooking the role of race and racism as an underlying factor in accounting for differential outcomes for BIPOC community members

Note. This table was created to represent information found in Neville et al. (2012).

Cultural Racism and Epistemology

Cultural racism, as the broadest expression of racism, bestows economic, political, and social power along the lines of racial identity (Hyter, 2022; Neville et al., 2012). It is bidimensional in that it relies on cultural ethnocentrism of the racialized group with power, and cultural imposition of the racialized group with the least amount of power (Scott, 2007). Because cultural racism has served as the foundation of societal formation and development in the United States, it is implicitly transmitted in our historical and daily discourse, contexts, and

activities. Cultural racism is the tool which maintains white privilege and produces a dynamic of exclusion for BIPOC individuals who center the values, beliefs, and practices of their own cultural communities.

Cultural racism within the context of knowledge discovery and production is epistemological racism, which poses a significant barrier to race scholarship and scholarship produced by researchers of color. Epistemology is concerned with how and why one acquires knowledge and how one determines or operationalize what is valid knowledge. Epistemologies evolve from the

social history of communities and groups. Across the globe, the historical practices of colonialism, imperialism, racism, and white supremacy have shaped science (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). Such influences have resulted in a skewed perspective of what constitutes “legitimate forms of knowledge.” The normalization of racism and white supremacy during knowledge discovery and production results in the persistent exclusion, devaluation, and marginalization of scholarship by BIPOC scholars, and the reduction of BIPOC scholarship as being simply personal experiences (Almeida, 2015).

Although there was an earlier clarion call (see Stockman, 1995; 2007), in our discipline to consider the influence of sociopolitical contexts on scholarship production, scholars have only recently begun to acknowledge that the speech, language and hearing sciences is oriented towards a preference for white Eurocentric frameworks and models of inquiry that limit our ways of knowing (Abrahams et al., 2019; Hyter & Salas-Provence, 2023; Pillay & Kathard, 2015). In other fields, scholars have expounded on the shortcomings of white Eurocentric frameworks and models (Kubota, 2020). There has been a recognition that such frameworks and models prioritize individualism, universalism, dichotomous thinking, and the false belief that scientific endeavors are neutral (Collins, 1986; Zuberi & Bonilla-Silva, 2008). These frameworks operate in tandem to ensure that alternative, collaborative, and collectivist approaches to knowledge construction are viewed with suspicion (Tuhiwai Smith, 2021). They also serve as hegemonic tools that reinforce orientations that position difference as negative or aberrational, and intersectional dynamics as the type of variability that complicates and confounds scientific discovery

(Collins, 1986; Kubota, 2020; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012; Zuberi & Bonilla-Silva, 2008).

Institutional Racism and Educational Hegemony

Institutional racism creates marginalizing contexts for carrying out scholarship on racism in many disciplines (Flores 2016; 2018). The practices and policies within many of our social institutions create or contribute to inequitable outcomes for individuals and communities of color (Neville et al., 2012); nowhere is this more salient than in the United States educational systems. Higher education, a critical context for the construction and dissemination of scholarship, is wholly influenced by historical and current social structures. A recent example is the adoption in several states of legislation that links performance funding for state universities to laws designed to curtail college level instruction and teaching about white privilege, and racial and gender oppression (Flaherty, 2022). Clearly, the practice of knowing and knowledge construction are not free of social influences making academic and research contexts fertile soil for hegemony.

In almost every definition of hegemony, three primary concepts are used to operationalize the term: dominance, power, and inequality. Hegemony has been described as the ways in which a dominant perspective or ideology is upheld by those in power (Fairclough, 2010; Gramsci & Buttigieg, 2011; Gramsci, et al., 1971; Racine, 2021). Hegemony facilitates the establishment of expected and acceptable norms for a society while also suppressing alternative ideologies (Guziec, 2016).

Higher education systems are rooted in classist ideologies of Eurocentric frameworks for teaching and learning (hooks, 1994) that reinforce assumptions of white superiority,

while devaluing the identity, beliefs, and practices of those from BIPOC groups (Henao, 2017). Eurocentricity is seen in the content of the curriculum, desired classroom dynamics, and orientation to work and learning (Ladson-Billings, 2013; Zaidi et al., 2016). As such, from the very earliest entry into higher education, scholars of color receive the first of many lessons on expected and acceptable norms for experiencing success in the academy. These expected and acceptable norms for how to think, write, talk, and act have been based on the behaviors and practices of white Eurocentric culture. For scholars of color and those carrying out work on racism or other forms of systemic inequity, these norms can create a negative climate for developing scholarship that critiques race, diverges from white Eurocentricity, and focuses on topics in the margin of the established canon.

Critical scholars in education (Freire, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1998; 2013; 2016; Zaidi et al., 2016) have described how educational contexts replicate cultural hegemony through instructional practices that embody underlying assumptions about the world and one's place in the world. In K-12 and higher education contexts, the curriculum and the history of the curriculum has been primarily Eurocentric (Ladson-Billings, 1998; 2016; Privette, 2021).

Educational hegemony and institutional racism are not endemic issues to the United States. International scholars have a long history of acknowledging the nature of race in critiques of colonialism and the limitations of Western epistemologies for the construction of knowledge that can benefit the global majority and all of humanity (Nyoni, 2019). As such, there has been an increased focus on decolonizing research processes and knowledge production in SLHS. Decolonization is necessary for establishing a pluralistic network of researchers who seek to develop

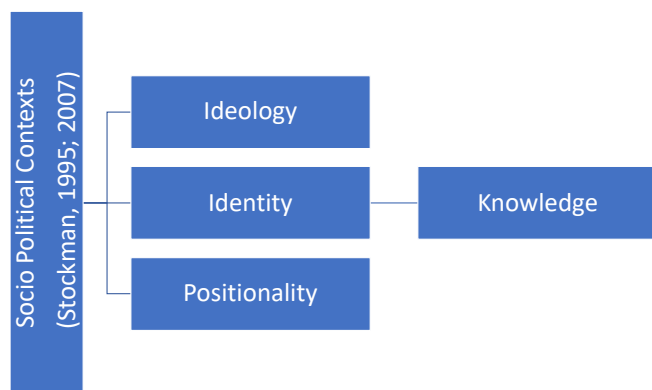
and sustain practices and policies that eliminate inequities in systems that serve and support individuals with communication disabilities (Mbembe, 2016; Pillay & Kathard, 2015; Wylie et al., 2013).

Individual Racism, Identity, Positionality, and Barriers to BIPOC Scholarly Productivity

Stockman (1995; 2007) notes that the construction of knowledge develops from external and internal sociopolitical contexts of the scientific community. Figure 1 (below) depicts how the external sociopolitical context, such as white supremacy, informs ideology the United States culture, practices, and beliefs). Racism as ideology exerts its influence on the construction of knowledge and development of scholarship through an individual's racial identity and positionality. Identity and positionality underlie one's observations, experiences, and interpretation of experiences within broader society and micro-communities. As such, a researcher's identity and positionality are relevant since they impact choice of topic to be studied, questions formulated, methodological approach, analyses, and interpretation of results. SLHS professionals have not interrogated or critiqued how *individual racism* might inform these processes and what it means for white scholars to do and carry out research on communities of color. Nor have SLHS professionals acknowledged the role that race, and individual racism plays in shaping the experiences and perspectives of scholars and how they approach their research.

Figure 1

Schematic of Sociopolitical Contexts on Knowledge Discovery and Dissemination



To address challenges faced by scholars of color or others from marginalized backgrounds who attempt to carry out race scholarship, it is also important to highlight the relationship between identity, sociopolitical contexts, ideology, and positionality in the construction of knowledge. Sociopolitical contexts of relevance are overt or explicit practices of white supremacy and discrimination that can create psychosocial stressors and career roadblocks for BIPOC in academic contexts but are less likely to occur given current social norms (Neville et al., 2012). However, other contemporary forms of individual racism continue to impact the lives of BIPOC scholars. Symbolic racism, or the stereotypes that people have regarding different BIPOC communities may inform how researchers study the communication and language behaviors of racial/ethnic groups. For example, at the individual level if a researcher buys into negative stereotypes regarding the parenting practices and parental involvement of poor African American families, then it is highly likely that some aspect of their research design examining the relationship between environment and communication outcomes will be deficit oriented. This may occur for white researchers, as well as BIPOC researchers who have internalized racism, or hold similarly negative beliefs and attitudes about their own cultural community. Aversive racism can prove to be even more damaging

since individuals can outwardly state their belief in racial equity yet remain unaware of their subconscious or implicit biases towards BIPOC individuals and their scholarly endeavors and accomplishments.

We suspect that individual racism may explain why there have been few opportunities for scholars of color to produce scholarship that offers an alternative to hegemony, white supremacy culture, and false or incomplete narratives about the capabilities of BIPOC communities as it relates to communication and learning. We are also concerned that the absence of race scholarship in SLHS and the erasure of BIPOC voices and contributions will continue despite the ostensible “racial reckoning” that began following the George Floyd murder in May 2020 (Chang et al., 2020; Daugherty, 2020). The internal community of SLHS must acknowledge that race matters and is an important consideration in understanding scholarship production of researchers of color.

From a critical perspective, one’s racial identity is not necessarily internally or self-defined (Zuberi & Bonilla-Silva, 2008). Racial identity is a socially and historically constructed concept that has been used to stratify persons and determine how various groups or communities are humanized (or dehumanized) and afforded privileges (or disadvantages) within a society (Ladson-Billings, 2013; Pierce, 2014). As a result of this racial stratification, BIPOC individuals are often situated within the context of otherness. In contrast, white people do not need to be racially identified, nor are their values, beliefs, or practices explicitly defined (Zuberi & Bonilla-Silva, 2008). For individuals from BIPOC communities, this means that one’s personal and professional accomplishments are usually defined and evaluated within the context of whiteness. The questions that BIPOC scholars ask, the way that they go about answering

those questions, and how they interpret and write up the findings of their research may be disregarded, co-opted yet infrequently cited, or considered less rigorous when the work does not align with white, Eurocentric, frameworks of positivism, or when the work offers up an alternative to white supremacy notions of how communication, literacy, and thinking are acquired and practiced. Unlike their white peers, scholars of color will have to utilize additional socio-emotional resources to process and respond to *individual racism* in their personal and professional lives (Horton et al., 2021; Yu et al., 2022).

Interpersonal Racism and Color Evasiveness as Barriers in Dissemination of Race Scholarship and BIPOC Endeavors

Sociopolitical context also exerts its influence on the internal scientific community and plays a role in the dissemination of research in academic journals. Reviewers and editors in SLHS, who are predominantly white, have perspectives on content and scholarship influenced by their own identity and positionality. This means that their perspectives on the content, frameworks, methodology, and interpretation of findings is not wholly objective but rather is mired in epistemological racism and operates hegemonically to reinforce white norms of scholarship production. Hence, though rarely visible, race matters for white scholars. It plays a role in shaping the experiences and perspectives of white scholars about what is important, relevant, and rigorous scholarship. As such the way that scholars review research is informed by interpersonal racism and persistent color evasive racism.

Recall that interpersonal racism occurs in the daily interactions between two or more people from different racialized backgrounds

and is usually expressed as racial microaggressions (Neville et al., 2012; Sue & Spanierman, 2020). These racial microaggressions can appear during the peer-review process and can take the form of microassaults, insults, or invalidations. Furthermore, color-evasive racism as practiced by those who believe that race is no longer a factor in the differential outcomes of people of color (Annamma et al., 2017; Bonilla-Silva, 2018) can have a significant impact on the dissemination of race scholarship and dissemination of work by BIPOC scholars. Both types of racism are expressed in a preference for passive writing voice, and a coagulation of paternalism and calls for "civility" when BIPOC scholars explicitly discuss racism in their scholarship (Castagno, 2018).

Racism in Peer Review

The dissemination of scholarship is reliant on the peer-review process to assure theoretical and scientific rigor. Though the specifics may vary, peer review is expected to be "confidential, objective, and thorough" (ASHA, n.d.) However, the peer-review process, conducted by human beings who exist in a social world, is inherently shaped by the same ideologies guiding our institutions. Those who serve as reviewers enter the process not as neutral individuals removed from the racialized practices of society but as scholars with their own positionality. As such, the various types of racism discussed earlier may influence the acceptance or rejection of scholarship. Ethics, copyright, and expectations of confidentiality inherent in the peer review process create obstacles to directly addressing historical bias experienced by BIPOC scholars. With Table 2 we exemplify in general terms how racism may occur in scholarly engagement and production.

Recommendations For Addressing Racism in Peer Review

To minimize or eliminate racial bias and inequities in scholarship dissemination, journal administrators and editorial boards cannot ignore how racism informs the peer review process. Addressing inequities requires specific countermeasures to subvert the systemic nature of racism inherent in the traditional peer review process. In this section, we provide recommendations that could be used to support revolutionary changes to publications for all scholars but particularly for BIPOC scholars.

Editor and Reviewer Positionality Statements

Positionality statements clearly identify the perspectives that writers and reviewers bring to their work as a researcher/author and reviewer (Holmes, 2020). To write a positionality statement one needs to engage in critical self-reflection and recognize and identify their own biases and how those biases may reflect in their writing or review.

Prioritize Increasing Diversity of Editors and Reviewers and Interdisciplinary Peer Review

Diversity of racial and ethnic representation among journal editors and reviewers should be a priority. By diversification, we do not mean primarily what Ahmed (2012) refers to as the “feel good” variety in which racial and ethnic affiliations act as aesthetic stand-ins for substantive widening of perspectives. Rather, it is necessary to identify reviewers and editors with critical and diverse ways of constructing and reporting knowledge to move away from an entrenched Eurocentric definition of scholarly rigor.

The social science discipline of sociology has a longer and stronger history of employing criticality, as well as racial literacy in their reviews. Enacting interdisciplinary review panels offers several benefits. First, it will encourage journals to recognize and value diverse forms of scholarship while also widening the pool of reviewers with the relevant expertise. An interdisciplinary peer review fosters a process that acknowledges

Table 2

Exemplification of Different Types of Racism in the Peer Review Process

Cultural	Institutional	Individual	Interpersonal	Color-Evasiveness
White Eurocentric based paradigms of knowledge discovery results in discipline specific preference for “scientific method” as the only legitimate process for knowledge discovery and assumptions that the statistical quantification of human behavior is objective and value-free	Guidelines and criteria for how to evaluate quality of a manuscript prioritizes white Eurocentric colonized frameworks of inquiry, resulting in the rejection of work informed by critical social theory or decolonization.	<p><i>Overt:</i> Reviewers and editors who desk reject a manuscript/proposal for methodological reasons because study lacks a white control group or the content of the manuscript critiques white privilege.</p> <p><i>Aversive:</i> Scholarship for, about, or by BIPOC researchers is “othered” when viewed through the subconscious lens of white supremacy leading to the devaluing of work by BIPOC.</p> <p><i>Symbolic:</i> Reviewers assume that BIPOC scholars are poor writers and researchers who are unable to engage in methodologically rigorous studies</p> <p><i>Internalized:</i> BIPOC reviewers with internalized racism may not value scholarship centered on racial ethnic communities and may demonstrate a preference for paradigms and methodology aligned with white orientations to knowledge discovery</p>	<p>Racial microaggressions at all stages of research inquiry (conference participation, peer review, etc.).</p> <p>Calls for “civility” when BIPOC scholars explicitly discuss race and racism in their scholarship (i.e., Angry Person of Color)</p> <p>Questioning the tone of manuscripts written about race and racism.</p> <p>Comments by reviewers invalidating the impact of racism.</p> <p>Negative comments by reviewers about inclusion of experiential data.</p>	<p>Editors selecting reviewers without expertise in topics about race, equity, and justice, or BIPOC communities to review a manuscript on those topics.</p> <p>Editors failing to consider the racial positionality of reviewers when selecting editorial board members of a journal.</p>

expertise in issues of diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice. The lack of diversity within SLHS means the burden for reviewing falls on already overtaxed scholars of color or scholars with a passing understanding of these issues. Second, an interdisciplinary cadre of reviewers might also eliminate the presumption of a universal paradigm for research. Third, inviting reviews from differing perspectives and areas of expertise allows for a fair critique of the totality of the paper.

Editor and Reviewer Training focused on Improving Racial and Decolonial Literacy and Decreasing Publication Inequities

Editorial boards should institute education for editors and reviewers focused on racial and decolonial literacy before these individuals have the responsibility for reviewing and ushering a manuscript through the editorial review process. Racial literacy is a critical practice of “reading, critiquing, and rewriting of race” (Croom et al., 2019; Croom, 2020, p. 24). Decolonial literacy is the practice of revealing and deconstructing institutions and systems that were established within the context of imperialism and continue to be maintained, regardless of gains made across the world for civil and human rights and the cultural and linguistic pluralism of the global majority (Nyoni, 2019). Improving editor and reviewer racial and decolonial literacy introduces race and social consciousness into the review process and can increase the likelihood that decision-makers can actively recognize and manage marginalizing practices. Editors should have the authority and responsibility to instruct authors to ignore biased feedback, reframe comments to focus on elements that improve the quality of the manuscript, or, when necessary, replace biased reviewers.

Additionally, barriers could be minimized if managing editors collected data to monitor publication inequities. Journal editors can monitor progress by collecting data on race, topics, and submission and publication rates. Finally, surveying authors about their experience with the review process can assist in identifying the impact of racialized practices that occur due to implicit and explicit racism.

Recognizing Scholarship on Equity, Racism, and Social Justice as Legitimate Areas of Inquiry and Discovery that Require Reviewers with Expertise

Equity and social justice are often conflated with diversity in SLHS; yet these concepts are not the same. A person’s work in *diversity* does not translate to expertise in *social justice* (Ahmed, 2012). It is essential that editorial boards identify reviewers and editors who possess the necessary knowledge, recognize these areas of expertise, and consider them when assigning manuscripts to review. Furthermore, because this is such a new and growing area in SLHS, it is imperative that reviewers be able to offer informed and constructive critiques that can strengthen a manuscript. When reviewers lack knowledge about the literature base or expertise on critical frameworks, the feedback provided may do more harm than good.

Conclusion

Scholars of color in SLHS experience several barriers to getting their work accepted for publication. Many of these obstacles are the result of deeply entrenched hegemonic practices that maintain white privilege and marginalize how BIPOC scholars frame and communicate their scholarship. In this article,

we offer specific examples of how race and racism influence the production and dissemination of scholarship in the SLHS. We believe that the above recommendations would be useful in facilitating an equitable peer review process and building systems and structures that support the development of a larger evidence-base on racism and other forms of oppression in the SLHS.

Positionality Statements

The authors of this paper believe it is important to acknowledge the positions from which they addressed the themes presented in this paper. They are members of the Equity Action Collective (EAC) of Speech Language and Hearing, a group which seeks to advance social justice and critical scholarship in speech, language and hearing sciences and clinical practice. The authors are academics who teach and publish on topics related to cultural and linguistic diversity and social justice. Individually we identify with groups and viewpoints that have been marginalized by systems of oppression in the United States and within academia. The authors' individual positionality statements are presented below.

RaMonda Horton

I am a Black cisgender woman, born and raised in the southeastern United States. My work is influenced by critical reflection and scholarship on how race, gender, ability, and class and their intersection are examined, explored, and experienced in academic contexts.

Yvette D. Hyter

I am a cisgender Black woman in my mid 60s who was raised by parents who took part in the great migration in the U. S. I witnessed the racism endured by my parents, and have experienced racism in my daily life and in my chosen discipline, speech-language-hearing sciences. This history has influenced my thinking, and approaches to research and clinical practice, which focuses on critical science and qualitative research. I recognize my privilege in the way society supports by gender identity and age, while at the same time I am often marginalized for being a Black woman in an overly white discipline, using critical science in a profession focused on positivism, and employing qualitative research and collaborative work in a field focused on individualized outcomes and quantitative research.

Valerie E. Johnson

I am an African American, cisgender woman who was raised in a middle-income household. I grew up in various parts of the world as the child of an Army officer. I recognize that I have experienced and witnessed various forms of racism which may influence my views on the intersection of language, race, and power. In my early childhood, I quickly learned that language could identify you as a member or nonmember of a community or region. I also learned that there were factors other than language that could situate to the margins, especially in predominantly white spaces. My scholarship has always been grounded in advocacy, social justice, and equity for the young Black voices that were silenced for the language that they spoke. I continue to be motivated to shine a floodlight on the systemic policies that continue to plague the discipline of speech, language, and hearing sciences in an effort to transform the discipline.

Reem Khamis

I am a Palestinian, cisgender, woman who grew up in Nazareth, and moved to the United States to pursue her education. My lived experiences as Palestinian within Israel are characterized by experiences underlined by systemic inequity and discrimination in housing, education, health care, political, and economic institutions along feelings of estrangement on the stolen land of our people. Through this experience, I learned the value of community based alternative institutions for the growth of the oppressed and as a resistance tool for state-controlled institutions.

Growing up, education and professional development were depicted as departures from my community. I was the only Arab student in my class in my bachelor's, Masters, and doctorate studies and most of my learning was focused on languages and cultures less relevant to my background. Now, I have become a professor teaching in one of the whitest professions in the U.S. With every interaction I have with a BIPOC student, I recall my own experience as the lone Arab student in my program. I reflect on the harmful ways that I was described, stereotyped, and excluded both explicitly and implicitly by professors and peers alike. I see the light and the innovation in these students and what they will bring to the profession given that they understand the professional and moral need to advocate for other BIPOC students and faculty. The solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement, for example, is consistent with my scholarly work in that it is informed by the work on African American English and studying the social status of linguistic variation within discriminatory supremacist systems. My experiences with education instilled in me the belief in community organizing alongside accomplices from all walks of life.

Maria L. Muñoz

I am the cisgender bilingual (Spanish/English) Mexican-American daughter of immigrants raised on the west coast of the United States. I have been educated in and worked in predominantly white spaces throughout my life. As such, I experienced at an early age being dismissed for being both bilingual and brown. My personal and professional experiences as a woman of color have influenced my pedagogy and my approach to research. My scholarship has focused on understanding and improving the experiences of students and faculty of color in communications and disorders and the clients who access clinic services. As an author, reviewer, and reader, I have experienced the bias and marginalization that can influence the dissemination of scholarly work.

Benjamin Munson

I am a Queer, masculine-presenting person who is 51 years old at the time of writing this. I have experienced the privileges of being White and masculine-presenting throughout my career in academia, and my life outside of academia. As of the writing of this paper, I serve as a department chair and as program director for clinical training programs in audiology and speech-language pathology, two professions in which SDP is pervasive and often unacknowledged. I am motivated by the responsibility to transform those disciplines to be more equitable and to actively combat linguistic discrimination.

Brandi L. Newkirk-Turner

I am a Black woman raised in the north U.S. and living in the south U.S. with an increasing need to speak out about racism, especially anti-Black racism. Years of having to ignore micro-aggressions (particularly in my doctoral program), navigate in unwelcoming spaces, and negotiate my beloved language (i.e., African American English) has unleashed a commitment to be a strong voice in every space in which I find myself for anti-racism and justice. I am currently a professor and administrator at a Historically Black University in the deep south. Recognizing the historic underrepresentation of Black students and students of color in graduate-level speech-language pathology and audiology programs, I have a commitment to address underrepresentation and unwelcoming learning spaces by calling out inequitable practices and dismantling the systems on which they are built.

Betty Yu

I am a cisgender, bilingual Taiwanese-American who immigrated to a small town in Iowa at nine years of age knowing only a few words in English. I spent most of my later childhood in a small town in the California Central Valley. I have been educated and employed in predominantly white spaces, with many racialized experiences from being seen as "the permanent foreigner," "the honorary white," and other complex and conflicting adopted and imposed racial identities. My scholarship focuses on the use of discourse and conversation analysis to examine the intersectional effects of race, disability and language statuses.

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Acknowledgements

The authors wish to thank Dr. Brandi Newkirk-Turner for careful review and feedback on multiple drafts of this manuscript.



Speech Impairment and Yiddish Literature, or: On the Obligation to Communicate and the Responsibility to Listen

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Article Information

Article editor: Betty Yu
Article type: Research article
Review type: Double anonymized

Submitted: 31 August 2022
Accepted: 12 January 2023
Published: 22 May 2023

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DOI: [10.48516/jcscd_2023vol1iss1.16](https://doi.org/10.48516/jcscd_2023vol1iss1.16)

Published by:
Adelphi University Libraries
(<https://www.adelphi.edu/libraries/open-access/digital-publishing/>)



Citation: Elhanan, E. (2023). Speech impairment and Yiddish literature, or: On the obligation to communicate and the responsibility to listen. *Journal of Critical Study of Communication and Disability*, 1(1), 88-104.
https://doi.org/10.48516/jcscd_2023vol1iss1.16

Abstract

This essay presents the reaction of major Yiddish authors to the pathologization and marginalization of their linguistic community. In the late 19th century, as authors and activists were seeking to create a Yiddish modern literature as a vehicle of modern artistic and political expression for the Yiddish speaking masses of Eastern Europe, the language came under attack from political opponents seeking to delegitimize it as a vehicle of national expression and even to delegitimize it as a language at all and to pathologize its speakers. This essay would look at a response to these attacks by three major Yiddish writers, SH. Y. Abramovitsh, I. L. Peretz and Sholem Aleichem, a response that did not try to disprove the slanders but rather embraced the languaging and ways of communicating that were pathologized and marginalized. They did that by creating dramatic characters who are marked by perceived speech impediments, characters who were revered by generations of readers as national heroes.

Keywords

Yiddish; minority languages; social justice; power imbalances; speech-language pathology

Positionality Statement

The author of the current article wishes to make known the position from which he offers his commentaries. The author in this article is an Israeli Jew of eastern European descent, living in New York. The author's past and present lived experience have contributed to

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his commitment toward interrogating linguistic assimilation, colonized monolingual ideologies, and raciolinguistic epistemologies. The very engagement with Yiddish, a minor language in Israel and elsewhere, forced the author to confront the distance between his position, as a citizen of a majority group in a sovereign occupying state, and these often-stateless Yiddish authors who were exposed to the effects of inequity, exclusion, and othering. This distance guides the author's research and teaching.



This article deals with perceptions and representations of language use in Yiddish literature. The field of comparative literature has a legacy of being a prescriptive, remedial discipline that engaged in the comparison and evaluation of national literatures vis-à-vis an abstract universal ideal of communication, an ideal which manifests itself in major national literatures and that peripheral ones aspired to imitate (Mufti, 2011). This practice relies on a wide-held belief: that the nation state is the fundamental unit of human organization and that in such a state there is (or ought to be) a congruence between the territory, the political unit, the ethnic group and the national language, or the mother tongue (Kamusella, 2001). This approach has been severely criticized. The definition of a strictly modern, and European condition - the congruence between the nation state and national language - as natural and universal entails the assumption that any divergence from this condition is unnatural and particular. This assumption marginalizes and/or pathologizes people and groups for their languaging and ways of communicating, as one form of communication - the standardized use of the

national language – is valorized and rendered canonical and all others are considered substandard and symptomatic.¹

In recent decades the wide-held scholarly opinion is that national identity is a modern political construct; a construct that is created as a political project, promoted by intellectual elites, which disseminate national myths through modern technologies of press - literature, newspapers etc. - across a given territory in a dominant idiom. The project attains its political viability as it is cemented through the apparatus of the state, its legal and education systems.² Numerous studies have equally demonstrated that the unique mother tongue is a modern myth and that monolingualism has never been and still is not the norm.³ These assumptions regarding language and nation are almost commonplace in many fields of the humanities, and yet the notion that the use of a standardized model of the national language is natural, beneficial and desired is embedded deeply in our thinking even as we know that our environment is composed of so many other forms of languaging. The notion of nation and national language is persistent because we have a

¹ For discussions of the system of literature and the relations between the canon (the officially sanctioned institution of Literature) and other forms of “sub-canonical” communication such as minor literature (literature written in a dominant language other than one's own), macaronic writing (the mixing of several languages with the dominant one), orality (ignoring literary conventions distinguishing between speaking and writing), etc.,

see Even-Zohar (1990), Gluzman (2003), Deleuze (1986), and Domínguez et al. (2014).

² These issues and others were elaborated in seminal studies such as Anderson (2006), Chatterjee (1986), Gellner (2008), Hobsbawm (1992), and Sand (2020).

³ See for example Gellner (2008, pp. 11-13) and Berman (1984, p. 13).

hard time imagining an alternative. The manner in which national identity and language ideology are integrated into every aspect of the state apparatus makes it very hard to imagine a reality in which multiple languages are heard, regardless of their relation to power.

Following scholars such as Daniel and Jonathan Boyarin and Amnon Raz-Karkotzkin, I would like to present a critique of this notion, a critique that can be found in works of minority literatures or diaspora literatures. Such literatures, which are written in complex conditions of multilingualism, cannot pretend to represent the aforementioned congruence as they contradict the coincidence of citizenship, language, and identity. Boyarin and Boyarin (2002) question the hegemonic logic of nationalism, which sees “the ethnic, territorial nation as the proper unit of polity and collective identity” (p. 10) and offer a different vision of space and human relations where diaspora, displacement, hybridity and plurality can be seen “[...] as a ‘normal’ situation rather than a negative symptom of disorder” (p. 5). The examples I will use come from modern Yiddish literature and articulate a clear position vis-à-vis the question of the pathologization of language and communication. Jewish authors who entertained a unique and critical relation to the major language/culture, “a position that exists in the given world but maintains a critical distance [from it]” (Raz-Krakotzkin, 2017, p. 389) had to be critical of hegemonic myths, even as they were moved by them and yearned for them. As we shall see, these central texts of Yiddish literature

articulate a radical position, which criticizes not the pathology of the speakers but rather the need of mainstream society to pathologize and other it.

Yiddish literature, or: “One language was never enough for us.” (Shmuel Niger)

Yiddish literature as a modern institution came into being in the second half of the 19th century (Krutikov, 2016). It was conceived as a vehicle of modern artistic and political expression for the Yiddish speaking masses of Eastern Europe, and as such found itself always on the defensive, vis-à-vis other cultural movements that denied its legitimacy as the language representing the Jews⁴ or even as a language at all. For instance, The Hebrew national poet, Hayyim Nahman Bialik, wrote this to a friend in 1898:

For finally, the zhargon [Yiddish] would be eradicated from under God’s skies. The tongue of the land would expel it from life, and our language [Hebrew] would drive him out of literature. May its end come swiftly and in our lifetime, amen! (H. N. Bialik to Y. H. Ravnitski, 8 August 1898, in: Bialik, 1935, pp. 126–27)⁵

The roots of the fight against Yiddish are to be found in the political changes taking place in Europe, as it was changing to suit a nationalist fantasy, according to which, “Since every people is a People, it has its own national culture expressed through its own language.”⁶ The Jewish diaspora, living as

⁴ Hayim Nahman Bialik (1873–1934) was the foremost modern Hebrew poet at the turn of the 20th C. He was born near the city of Zhitomir in Ukraine and passed away in Tel Aviv, Palestine. Even though the canonical corpus of Bialik’s Hebrew poetry contains only 130 poems, these works still form the foundation of modern Hebrew

poetry. He also wrote poetry in Yiddish (Holtzman, 2017).

⁵ For further discussion see Elhanan (2015, pp.1-2, 4-6).

⁶ Anderson uses Hedrer’s words in his history of nationalism, quoting him in the original German: “In blithe disregard of some obvious extra-European facts, the great Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-

minority communities, multilingual, multi-cultural and by definition uprooted from their homeland, came in direct confrontation with the nationalist discourse that defined them as aliens and foreigners in the countries where they had lived for centuries. In fact, the Jewish relation to language was seen by critics as a telling symptom for a deeply rooted pathology. Thus, racist and antisemitic authors claimed that Jewish inferiority is evident in their impaired vocal organs, which are capable of parroting other languages but always in a telling way, full of lisps and sighs (Gilman, 1993, p. 3-4). Others, who were more sympathetic of the Jews, proposed certain "reforms" needed so that the Jews would be tolerated, reforms that often dealt with Jewish multilingualism, which was seen, like circumcision, as another primitive marker of difference that Jews insist on clinging to (Gilman, 1993, p. 7).

Many Jewish intellectuals interiorized this definition as a valid explanation of their plight; for example, Lev Pinsker wrote of the Judeophobia plaguing Europe.⁷ His explanation was simple: who could tolerate the Jew, the Other, in their midst? According to Pinsker, at the heart of Jewish Auto-emancipation was the transformation of Jews

from Others into foreigners. The foreigner, as opposed to the Other, is identifiable by language and place of origin. The attitude toward the foreigner is governed by conventions of hospitality and agreements between nation-states. However, none of these things were true in regard to the Jews (Hertzberg, 1997, p. 180-183). Pinsker's positions aside, his text, written in German, serves as a wonderful illustration of the paradoxical situation this discourse produced: Individuals who are multilingual both internally (using Yiddish daily and Hebrew and Aramaic for scholarship and prayer) and externally (using local vernaculars and state languages), use that very multilingualism to define it as a pathology to be redressed.⁸

The question of the emancipation and modernization of Jews in Eastern Europe came to depend, to a large extent, on the resolution of what Bialik (1935) called "the plague of multiple tongues" (p. 226).⁹ Jewish reformers and activists argued for the transformation of the special *mélange* of languages used by East European Jews - Hebrew, Yiddish, the local language of Polish or Ukrainian, in addition to the state language of Russian or German - into a "normal" and "healthy" monolingualistic national existence.¹⁰

1803) had declared, towards the end of the eighteenth century, that: 'Denn jedes Volk ist Volk; es hat seine National Bildung wie seine Sprache.' This splendidly eng- European conception of nation-ness as linked to a private-property language, had wide influence in nineteenth-century Europe and, more narrowly, on subsequent theorizing about the nature of nationalism" (Anderson, 2006, pp. 67-68).

⁷ Lev Pinsker, a doctor and activist, was born in Tomaszów, Poland to Simḥah, a scholar of minority languages. He settled in Odessa in 1849. There he held a leading role of the reformist Society for the Promotion of Culture among the Jews (OPE), whose aim was to help Jews integrate into Russian society- mainly through language education. In 1882, following pogroms in southern Russia and the anti-Jewish attitude of the Russian state, he

published (in Vienna) a German-language brochure: *Autoemancipation. Mahnruf an seine Stammesgenossen von einem russischen Juden* (*Autoemancipation: A Call to His Brethren from a Russian Jew*) calling for the settlement of (some) Jews in a territory of their own. This brochure became very popular and made Pinsker famous as one of the forefathers of Zionist nationalism. The English translation can be found in Hertzberg (1997, pp. 179-198); for more discussion see also Shumsky (2011).

⁸ For a detailed discussion of the polyglot nature of Yiddish and its semiotics see Harshav (1990).

⁹ Unless otherwise noted all translations are by the author.

¹⁰ For a discussion of the special attention language received in the thought of Jewish

The political debates of the time proposed several paths toward this desired “normal” national existence. The most common one was assimilation into the local language, according to the western model of legal emancipation. On the radical fringes of the Jewish society, however, another path was discussed: enlisting to a nationalist movement that embraced a Jewish language. The issue was, of course, that due to the aforementioned “plague of multiple tongues” there was not one nationalist movement but two: Zionism, which championed Hebrew and the colonization of Palestine, and Yiddishism, who championed Yiddish and advocated for a cultural autonomy in Europe, a form of self-determination without territory or sovereignty (Fishman, 2005, p. 53).

Against this background a “language war” took place between the Hebraist Zionists and the Yiddishists. Hebrew was described by its champions as a model of classicist perfection. As the ancient language of the Hebrews, of religious scholarship and tradition, it was also the logical vehicle for Jewish self-determination (Anderson, 1999, p. 20). Yiddish underwent a process of de-legitimization, framed by the enlightened Jewish elite as “jargon,” a “bastardized” or even a corrupt idiom, as the language of women and simple folk, an expression of the ghetto psyche. Yiddish became the heart of an identity crisis, representing being Jewish, a signifier trailing a long list of other signifiers such as exile, passivity, smallness, femininity, mimicry, disorder, or traditionalism (Elhanan, 2015, p. 2). Thus, the conditions were set in order to marginalize and/or pathologize an entire people for their languaging and their ways of communicating. Zionist Hebraists or assimilated Jews conceptualized Yiddish

language, its culture, and manners of communication as that very thing that needed to disappear in order for the *Yid* – the word Jews used to designate themselves in Yiddish was terribly close to *Zhid*, the Russian antisemitic slur – to become an unlabeled modern citizen of the world (Fishman, 2005, p. 37-38).

In the reading that follows, I shall present three texts, authored by the “Klassikers,” the three founding authors of the modern literature in Yiddish: SH. Y. Abramovitsh (1835–1917), I.L. Peretz (1852 – 1915) and Sholem Aleichem (1859–1916). I would like to concentrate on the reaction of these writers to the pathologizing discourse, a reaction that did not try to disprove the slanders but rather embraced the languaging and the ways of communicating that were pathologized and marginalized. In all three texts the drama revolves around dramatic characters who are all portrayed as having speech impediments, and the readers are placed in a moral dilemma: to reform them or to accept them? I would like to think that it is because of the power of this drama that these characters were revered as national heroes by generations of Jewish readers.

SH. Y. Abramovitsh and *Fishke the lame* or: “Let Fishke go on with his story”

Fishke the lame, hero of the famous Yiddish classic novel of the same name, is such a character.¹¹ In this novel, two fellow book peddlers take an adventurous road trip across Ukraine: Mende - who also narrates the story - and Alter. They liberate a captive from a gang of criminals, and it turns out to be *Fishke the lame*, an old acquaintance from

modernizers in Eastern Europe see, for example, Barta (2005, pp. 90-101).

¹¹ *Fishke der Krumer* appeared in several versions between 1869 and 1888. This paper refers to the

1888 canonic version which appeared in volume one of *Mende Mokher Sefarim*, 1888. For the English translation see *Mende Mokher Sefarim* (1996).

their hometown: a disabled person whom they believed to be simpleminded, due to his manner of speaking. Fishke tells the two the story of his life and love in the Jewish underworld. At the outcome of the novel, the two men are of course transformed by Fishke's tale.

SH. Y. Abramovitsh (1823-1917) was a Jewish-Ukrainian author writing in Hebrew and in Yiddish. A genius wordsmith, he is acknowledged almost universally as the founder of modern artistic prose in Hebrew and Yiddish (Miron, 2017). Abramovitsh, who started out as a reformist author in Hebrew, embraced in this novel and others a radical position as a Yiddish author. This change in language also signaled a change in tone and in subject matter. In Hebrew, his interest was on the Jewish middle classes. In Yiddish he became focused on the lower depths of society and explored moral issues related to poverty. His tone, which in Hebrew was authorial, omniscient, objective, became something else in Yiddish. In Yiddish, the different stories were always presented as if they were found, edited, and prefaced by a fictional character, Mendeley the Book Peddler.¹² Mediated by Mendeley, Abramovitsh's authorial tone changed to a colloquial, monologic-dramatic, subjective one (Miron, 2017). It is this change in register that allowed Fishke to be heard. Now, the authorial voice, masked as Mendeley's but still marked by the mastery of language, is just one voice in a polyphonous environment with which it entertains complex relations. The objectivity of the author is thus undermined and his attempts

to redress Fishke's speech would appear as attempts to silence.

The reformist writers in Hebrew, Haskala authors in Eastern Europe like the young Abramovitsh, held a fervent belief that in order for Jews to be treated as equals they had to achieve self-realization through learning and aesthetization. In other words, they had to be educated in western settings and accept western norms of beauty and propriety in order to fit in the new capitalist order.¹³ In *Fishke the Lame*, Abramovitsh presents a strong critique of his past beliefs. Not only does he write in Yiddish, the hated 'jargon,' his hero is disabled and unappealing, poor and unambitious and worst of all, illiterate and unintelligible. But it is this character who stands out as a singular human being: not the only one with impediments but the only one capable of emotionally engaging with the world.

Fishke, who lisps and slurps as he talks, is ironically cast as a national symbol when he is presented here as a Jewish version of Tatyana - the female character from Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* (Pushkin & Mitchell, 2008).¹⁴ Tatyana is a teenage girl who writes a childish love letter in French to Onegin, which is then lovingly translated into Russian by the poet. Tatyana came to represent, with her broken tongue and wild desires, the soul of Russia. Abramovitsh seems to claim that Fishke and Mendeley can be the same: the yearning soul and its loving mediator. Throughout the story, whenever Fishke is talking, Mendeley translates his speech:

¹² It is worth noting that the ruse worked a bit too well. Publishers and readers identified the fictional persona of Mendeley with the author, making no distinction between him and Abramovitsh (Miron, 2017).

¹³ For a detailed description of this historical movement see Harshav (1993, pp. 3-27).

¹⁴ Aleksandr Pushkin (1799-1837), Russian poet, novelist, dramatist, and short-story writer; he has

often been considered his country's greatest poet and the founder of modern Russian literature. His masterpiece *Eugene Onegin* (1833) is a novel in verse, a panoramic picture of Russian life which depicted and immortalized different characters—among them Tatyana, a "precious ideal," in the poet's own words (Blagoy, 2022).

"MEMA WOIF WE 'uz hirifery po-pes, 'n' jewskin jest pitcheress, shuzh, owifJ ma crewtet pigs, a nabeam blime, d' bcifus inchlong, no fasten paya c-cr-r-rabs, siphon difense." - Well that is pretty much how Fishke resumed his telling, after his fashion. Which, with a bit of assistance on my part, may be construed: "Me'm my wife we was infan'ry paupers, and yous kin jus' pitcher us, sirs [...]" (Abramovitsh, 1996, p. 155)

Mendele claims to not completely reform Fishke's speech but rather to cultivate it, redress it. However, this benevolent position of the clinician is critically examined as we come to suspect that Mendele's desire is not to assist Fishke but to control him. His incessant interruptions and explanations disrupt the story rather than advance it, to the point where Mendele himself has to be redressed:

"Oh, foo, Reb Mend'le!" says Alter, though maybe a shade too indignantly for the occasion [...] Let Fishke go on with his story and don't be interruptin' all the time like you always do. It's all very well promptin' the lad now and then, when he's bitten off more of a word than he can chew [...] And I am sure none of us will mind when you improve his style in the way of language. But otherwise, well, just don't you be sticking your shovel in all that much . . ." (Abramovitsh, 1996, p. 153)

The redressing, correcting urge that is experienced in front of the unintelligible, which in essence stresses the obligation to communicate rather than the responsibility to listen, is called into question here as Mendele occasionally mistranslates Fishke, not due to a linguistic error or faulty pronunciation on Fishke's part but because he is not sensitive enough to understand the emotional depth of the situation. In the example below, Mendele

attempts to explain Fishke's emotional commitment yet, reverting to colloquial language he belittles and makes light of it. It is Fishke who sets the correct emotional register:

"Know what, Alter?" says I cheerily breaking in on the silence. "I think Fishke gone and fall head over heel for that hunchback young lady. I mean only look; for all the signs there by golly-" "WELL, SIRS, I shan't deny it," says Fishke. "No. Nor why ought I? For truly I come to love her [...]" (Abramovitsh, 1996, p. 188)

This novel presents a sharp turning over of the power dynamic, as Mendele, the educated reformer, is forced to listen to the disabled man and recognize the mutual need that binds them. Mendele, who is intellectual, bypasses his emotions by way of profound analyses and verbal outbursts. Alter, who is libidinal, escapes emotion and reflection by way of lust and violence. In any case, both men are emotionally impaired. Unlike them, Fishke is all heart and love, compassion, and bravery. He is, however, physically disabled, and speech-impaired, aspiring for great things but unable to liberate himself on his own. Through the mediation of Fishke's emotional soundness, an impossible, unattainable synthesis occurs, and the two other men grow. One attains reflection, the other action. It is Fishke's speech that moves the protagonists to radical steps: Alter would set out on a quest to save Fishke's true love from the criminals (in a surprising twist, she is also Alter's forsaken daughter) and Mendele would put his own story to words.

**I.L. Peretz's Bontshe Shvayg, or:
"In that world your silence went
unrewarded, but it is the world of
lies; here in the world of truth,
you'll receive your reward"**

I.L. Peretz (1852–1915) is another founding author of Yiddish literature, who used figures of unintelligibility and Speech impairment to convey sharp social criticism. Itzhok Leybush Peretz was a Yiddish and Hebrew poet, writer, essayist, dramatist, and cultural figurehead, in part because of his method of adapting Jewish ethnographic materials to a range of ideological and narrative ends, in support of socialism and Yiddish national culture (Wisse, 2010). Like Abramovitsh, Peretz was also a Hebrew reformist writer who turned to radical Yiddish writing. In his apartment in Warsaw, he created a literary salon, in which he entertained and instructed many writers. The form of ethnographic inquiry he practiced dictated a fine-tuned attentiveness to voices deemed as Others, in this case the popular culture of the impoverished Jewish masses.

The story "Bontshe the Silent" was first published in 1894 in NYC, and it remains one of the most known and translated works in Yiddish literature. It attained the familiarity of a folk story shortly after its publication, being included in curricula and being performed on stage in schools and later in Ghettos and concentration camps. It was staged in the US as a successful protest against senator McCarthy's committee by blacklisted actors and received a television adaptation (Mahalel, 2015, p. 205). It tells of Bontshe Shvayg (Bontshe the Silent) who: "was born in silence [...] lived in silence [...] died in silence. And he was buried in a silence greater yet." (Peretz, 2002, p. 146). Bontshe, a poor Jewish man dies, and no one knows or cares. Bontshe, who never said a word in his life, passes away unnoticed: "like a shadow [...] no one noticed

when the wind whirled him off and carried him to a far shore" (Peretz, 2002, p. 146).

In the heavens however his coming is celebrated, his soul is greeted by angels and the patriarch Abraham, and he is carried before the heavenly tribunal in a gilded chariot. In the trial his humility is hailed: "Not once in his whole life ... did he complain to God or to man. Not once did he feel a drop of anger or cast an accusing glance at heaven" (Peretz, 2002, p. 148). And he is rewarded: "All heaven belongs to you. Ask for anything you wish; you can choose what you like" (Peretz, 2002, p. 152). At which point Bontshe speaks, for the first time ever. He says: "Well, then, what I'd like most of all is a warm roll with fresh butter every morning." These are the story's last words: "The judges and angels hung their heads in shame. The prosecutor laughed" (Peretz, 2002, p. 152).

Over time this story was interpreted in a variety of diverging ways—as a story about disempowerment, persecution, or humility; either as a story of Jewish perseverance and saintliness which: "suggests possibilities of holiness and piety beyond even those sponsored by the official religion" or, quite on the contrary, as a condemnation of Jewish passivity: "Bontshe Shvayg, [...] is actually a socialist's exposure of the grotesquerie of suffering silence..." (Miller, 1974, p. 41).

I would suggest here that we can read this story not as an evaluation of Bontshe's character or actions but rather as an evaluation of those who would judge him, and through that reach a critical reflection of us, as a public. The story is a remarkable representation of the farce that takes place when those who are silenced, either by their social circumstances or by affliction, have to express themselves before power, in a language that only speaks of them, never with them. This is a farce that Peretz was familiar with. Once a radical lawyer, Peretz lost his

license to practice law after he was arrested by the Russian secret police for socialist activities. This story shows a deep mistrust of the legal system, the system that is supposed to redress wrongdoings. While the first part of the story condemns this world as cold and uncaring, the next world, described in the second part of the story as redemption and acceptance, is hardly better. The angels in heaven rejoice, not for Bontshe but for the entertainment his trial will provide:

In the other world [...] Bontshe's death was an occasion. A blast of the messiah horn sounded in all seven heavens: Bontshe Shvayg has passed away [...] Bontshe Shvayg – it doesn't happen everyday. (Peretz, 2002, p. 148)

It turns out that the Heavens are not more attentive than the earthly world. The almighty only becomes aware of Bontshe when the noise and din of the angels disturb him. It seems that what is going on is not really a due process. The saints in heaven, as they see the honors bestowed on Bontshe, ask with envy:

“What, before the heavenly court has even handed down its verdict?” “Ah!” answered the angels “everyone knows it is a mere formality.” (Peretz, 2002, p. 148)

The story highlights the linguistic difference experienced in relation to power. The complex, playful, multifaceted discourse of the angel-defender alienates Bontshe, and the court's disinterest in any aspect of his story terrifies him:

[The presiding angel:] “Read but keep it short [...] No similes! [...] No rhetoric!... Facts, dry facts!... Proceed! [...] No aspersions on third parties...Get to the

point! [...] Facts [...] No realism!” (Peretz, 2002, p. 150)

No one talks to Bontshe, and he doesn't understand what is going on. The Heavens, like Earth, are not a linguistically safe space, so Bontshe falls back on his familiar linguistic relations with the world. Like a predecessor of Kafka's Josef K.,¹⁵ he is convinced he stands accused, but is not sure of what. If he speaks, he will be condemned; or maybe this is a case of mistaken identity and if he speaks, he will be exposed. So, he opts for silence. As the court is not at all interested in conversing with Bontshe, in explaining to him the situation or in creating a safe space for him to speak, it is no wonder that when given the chance he would pronounce the most innocuous thing he could imagine, something that cannot be used against him: “a warm roll with fresh butter” (Peretz, 2002, p. 152)

“Bontshe Shvayg,” written some ten years after *Fishke the Lame*, presents a world that is darker and meaner. Fishke was rooted in the backward Jewish rural community, which was the object of criticism for Jewish reformers. Suffocating and brutal as it was in its struggle for survival, that community still offered some protection and warmth in the form of traditional institutions and through familiarity and intimacy. Fishke, in return, could offer the community a way to redemption. In Peretz's story, Bontshe is a part of modern times; not in the way Jewish reformers hoped but as could have been expected. The story is set in grim urban Dickensian settings that reflected the experience of many who were driven from their communities to the cities by violent processes of pauperization and urbanization. It is a critique of the naïve belief in progress and liberal institutions, which replaced the old oppressive structures with a

¹⁵ Joseph K., protagonist of the allegorical novel *The Trial* (1925) by Franz Kafka. A rather ordinary bank employee, he is arrested for unspecified

crimes and is unable to make sense of his trial (Kuiper, 2022).

reality of cynicism and greed, devoid of all grace. It would seem that Peretz, like Abramovitsh, is suggesting that the key to unlocking this situation passes through Bontshe and our willingness to learn from him. This story is an ethnographic test for the readers: in analyzing the situation, how do we treat Bontshe? Do we explain him, diagnose him, place him in a neat arrangement of phenomena, or are we attentive to his experience? that is a challenge, as hearing the message embedded in his form of communicating would mean, like in the case of Fishke, renouncing the status of experts and risk changing the social order that determines who can speak and how. Listened to in that manner, there is something edifying about Bontshe's manner of (mis)communicating. Like Fishke before him, what suffering that befell him in life is not due to his perceived or real disability. It is due to the manner he was treated, to a reality of poverty and exploitation, in which difficulties in communication are seen as a license to abuse. The prosecutor sees that. As an indignant Atticus Finch-like character, who is completely useless in this sham trial, the prosecutor adopts Bontshe's posture: "He kept silent. I will do the same" (Peretz, 2002, p. 151). His silence echoes that of Bontshe and his laughter at Bontshe's predictable minute request is a condemnation of the court, which is willing to reward Bontshe's silence but not to take responsibility for the circumstances that produced his suffering.

Sholem Aleichem and Kopel, or: "The crowd laughed and I wept"

Sholem Aleichem's short story, "The Flag,"¹⁶ presents another example of the use

of a speech impaired character as a critical figure, exposing faults in the Jewish modern national and social politics. This story is in a way the darkest of the bunch and takes as object of criticism the very idea found in the heart of these narratives. If the other texts promoted the idea that the impaired and unheard can be the vehicle for human and political redemption, Sholem Aleichem's story concentrates on the tragic price a person, in this case a boy, would pay for assuming such a role.

Sholem Aleichem was the pseudonym of Sholem Rabinowitz (1859-1916), a Ukrainian-born Yiddish writer. Together with Abramovitsh and Peretz, Sholem Aleichem is considered as one of the founding fathers of modern Yiddish literature and is mostly remembered as a supreme humorist (Miron, 2013). His stories are said to reflect the steadfast optimism of Jews in conditions of poverty and persecution, brightening their grim setting through humor, absurdity and revealing monologues. These qualities were enshrined in his public figure, via adaptations, such as the musical *Fiddler on the Roof*, and via an industry of Sholem Aleichem in translation. He is often presented as a simple "recorder" of Jewish life, who focused on the cheerfulness of the characters, on the practice of laughing through tears as a way of transcending life's endless adversity (Wiener, 1986, p. 41).

However, this view is partial and misleading. Unlike Abramovitsh and the socialist Peretz, who were both passionately humanistic, Sholem Aleichem was a profoundly existentialist writer, fascinated with the gap between human aspirations and the limited possibilities afforded by society, a gap he expressed through the very same absurd situations and humorist description. These

¹⁶ Originally published in 1900. There are numerous English translations, but most omit substantial chunks of the text. I used Aliza Shevrin's recent

unabridged translation, "The Simchas Torah Flag," in Aleichem (1996, pp. 1-17).

descriptions expose deep nihilist misgivings rather than fortitude or perseverance as their language betray a nihilist enjoyment derived from the fragmentation of life (Miron, 2003, p. 16). Sholem Aleichem's fame as the recorder of the "popular voice" of Ukrainian Jewry derived from his celebrated artistic practice, to present his characters in their own idiom with seemingly no intervention from a narrator. By his own admittance, Sholem Aleichem was attracted to the verbose "insanity" (*mishigas*) of the Yiddish language and felt compelled to capture it (Miron, 2013). However, this "insanity" was not the expression of a living vibrant language. Quite on the contrary, it was a record of an impossible human condition. The "insanity" of Yiddish was caused by the unique circumstances of Jewish life in Tzarist Russia: the Russian state expected the Jews to evolve and change, acquire better education and assimilate, an expectation shared by young Jewish reformers such as Sholem Aleichem. However, Jews had limited opportunities due to their language practices: while being literate in Hebrew and Yiddish, the vast majority did not read Russian well and did not have access to higher education. These limiting language practices, which, as the reformers claimed, were caused by irrelevant traditional Jewish education, were also held in place by the very same state that demanded Jews to change while enacting racist legislation that barred Jews from acquiring education or joining the workforce. Thus, Jews lived in an absurd situation in which they were expected to change their language practices so that they would fit in but were not allowed to do just that. In that contradictory reality that would render anyone a bit *mishigas*, Jews tried to mediate their reality in a number of

languages, without really knowing any of them all that well.

This reality, which is often described as "pathological," was also Sholem Aleichem's own: Sholem Rabinowitz, the Russian-speaking author, aspired to be a serious Russian novelist, or barring that, a respectable reformist Hebrew writer. Forced both by his passion and social circumstances, he was "stuck" with the Yiddish language, and in recording it he found great success (Sholem Aleichem, 2009, pp. ix–x). The "pathological" nature of the language was for him a treasure. He did agree that Yiddish was a hodgepodge language, a "bastardized" jargon, but therein lay its creativity, its beauty, its art. Jews developed a highly colloquial and idiosyncratic manner of relating their life stories, using freely and nearly obviously numerous linguistic and cultural troves - Hebrew, Yiddish, Russian, Ukrainian, rabbinical texts, folk wisdom, and current affairs. These bits of languages, uprooted and decontextualized, can very easily lend themselves in the hands of a modernist artist to the creation of dazzling tableaux, collages which generate meaning and beauty from their fragmentation and discontinuity. The laughter, derived from these linguistic creations, has a dark side, a tragic undertone; it displays doubt: it is akin to whistling in the dark - it helps a bit, making one feel fortified and silly at the same time, without in any way changing the situation (Wiener, 1986, p. 41). It is a laughter that betrays helplessness and even complicity, as we shall see.

In the story "The Flag," a poor boy, Kopel, who is tormented and ostracized because of a speech impairment, comes into a small fortune through hard work, resists temptation and spends it on a handsome Simkhas Torah flag,¹⁷ complete with apple and

¹⁷ Simkhes Toyre (Simchat Torah): "Rejoicing of the Torah," Jewish religious observance held when the yearly cycle of Torah reading is completed, and the

next cycle is begun. Torah scrolls are carried through the synagogue a joyful procession, sometimes followed by children waving flags. The

candle. A rich, jealous boy maliciously has it set on fire. This simple story is transformed into a chilling tale of symbolic castration, in which, via the mediation of laughter, the reader stands accused.

The setting of the story frames it as a monologue, a grown man telling children his story: "Children! let me tell you a story of a Simkhas Torah flag [...] that [...] brought me untold suffering!" (Sholem Aleichem, 1996, p. 1). As an introduction, the man tells of his childhood, when he experienced mockery and physical punishment because of his speech impairment: "Everyone under the sun thought it a good deed to beat me: my father, my mother, my sisters, my teacher, my classmates. They all tried to get me to talk properly." (Sholem Aleichem, 1996, p. 2). A deep discontinuity settles in on the text at this point as the narrator, who speaks with no impairment, recreates it when ventriloquizing the young boy:

When I was young... they called me
Topele Tootaritoo... because I had a
little thin voice like a half-grown rooster
...[and]... I couldn't pronounce "g" or
"k." (Sholem Aleichem, 1996, p. 2)

Much of the humor of the piece revolves around the manner in which the narrator makes young Kopel go through daring tongue twisters, in the tradition of vaudeville and slapstick. These tongue twisters in turn reveal how the simplest facts of life can be insurmountable challenges. The habit of attaching the father and mother's name to that of the child can be a nightmare for Kopel son of Gittl and Kalman:

"Little boy! What is your name?"
"Me? Topel Dittl Talman's" (Sholem
Aleichem, 1996, p. 2)

The special nature of the Yiddish language adds to the difficulty, being full of teeth-breaking words from different languages that no one understands, yet Kopel is mocked for mispronouncing. The name of Kopel's teacher is Gershon (Hebrew) Grogel (Adam's apple in Yiddish) Dardaki ("of the children" in Aramaic) from Galaganovka (Ukrainian town). But when asked, Kopel answers:

"With whom do I study? With Dershon
Drodel Dardati from Daladanovka!"
The crowd laughed.
The crowd laughed and I wept.
(Sholem Aleichem, 1996, p. 2)

The story of the speech impairment is only the introduction. We are swiftly told of several "healing" attempts, the last one by a carpenter, who pronounces Kopel a waste of time as nothing will help him. But the boy is far from a waste of time, and he can help himself. Much in the spirit of self-improvement professed by the reformers mentioned earlier, Kopel works hard, saves, and acts reasonably altogether, until he comes into a small fortune. He loves having money and dreams what to do with it. He resists temptation and hopes to use the money to better his social position. Paradoxically, this level-headedness is his undoing. Kopel's resistance to temptation angers Yoelik, the son of a local rich man, who attempts and fails to sell Kopel various goods. As they fight, Kopel decides to embarrass the rich kid and to out-donate him at an upcoming festival.

The rest of Kopel's fortune finds a symbolic, life-changing outlet in the form of the beautiful Simkhas Torah flag. It is an object of ritual and cultural importance, which appears parodically similar to a national flag, decorated with distorted national symbols, such as cats blowing whistles, who are meant to be lions

rejoicing is meant to express the joy of the observance of the words of the Torah (the "Law") (Zeidan, 2022).

blowing ram-horns. Kopel crafts it in an amusing quest-like process where he purchases and makes the different components. When he finishes, he takes this comically phallic construction to the synagogue with the express desire to make everyone envious:

For Simchas Torah I took my flag, stuck a red apple on the tip, put a lit candle atop the apple and set out for the shul [...] I imagined I was already in shul, sitting next to the eastern wall with all the rich children. The lights were kindled. My flag was the most beautiful. My apple redder than all the rest. My candle the biggest of all.

(Sholem Aleichem, 1996, p. 11)

This fantasy doesn't last long. Kopel's overstepping his station is met with anger and the rich Yoelik, whose flag is smaller than Kopel's, sends one of his cronies to touch a candle to the Kopel's flag, and that's that. With the loss of his flag Kopel is devastated and the episode ends with these words:

From deep down within me, I cried, "Woe is me, my flag, my flag, my flag." [...] Everything became dark. The stick, the apple, and the candle fell from my hand [...] And I asked God a question: "Is it fair? O Eternal Lord! Did I deserve this? Why did you do this to me?"

(Sholem Aleichem, 1996, p. 16)

Sholem Aleichem delivers here a powerful symbolic condemnation. In his vision, modern Jewish politics is carried on in conditions of dire hardship and poverty; unity is undermined by baseless hate and resentment and petty jealousies, born out of unbearable lives, and leading to internal strife and self-destructiveness (Dauber, 2013, pp. 232–233). Sholem Aleichem produces here, as the dramatic kernel of the story, the utopian opportunity for salvation, and more than that, the exact moment that this opportunity is

missed. It is an existential crisis that of course revolves around language. The utopian opportunity appears in the image of a savior. Kopel, like many of the child-heroes in Sholem Aleichem's stories, represents the living, impulsive, joyous, libidinal aspects of the nation, not yet crushed by life, not yet bridled by education. As such, all children are messiahs – they heed the call for change, they aspire beyond; they may yet live in a better tomorrow, as they might lift their families from poverty or bring about a revolution. Anything can happen to them. For the same token, if one casts children as saviors, then they are also martyrs. Taming their vivacious, potentially disruptive energy would be a mission all of society is set upon (Sholem Aleichem, 2009, pp. xxxii–xxxv).

Kopel's role as a national savior is comically underlined by his flag, stick apple and all. It is also tragically underscored by his speech impairment that connects him to the biblical Moses, the founder of the Hebrew nation, who delivered his people from Egypt and gave them the Law, the Torah, and was himself "slow of speech, and of a slow tongue" (*King James Bible*, 2018 exodus 4:10). This phrase was often interpreted as referring to a medical condition Moses had. Some interpreters went as far as identifying the exact consonants Moses had difficulty pronouncing. In the biblical story, Moses receives better aid and assistance with his communication difficulties than Kopel did. After expressing misgivings at the possibility that a man like him could lead, God replies:

Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say. (*King James Bible*, 2018, p. exodus 4:11)

However, later on, God disappoints. When Moses addresses the people of Israel, it seems that god's promise to aid him with his speech was not fulfilled:

And Moses spake before the Lord, saying, Behold, the children of Israel have not hearkened unto me; how then shall Pharaoh hear me, who am of uncircumcised lips? (*King James Bible*, 2018 exodus 4:16)

Scholars provided various explanations to this lapse in divine power, but one explanation rings true to me with regard to Kopel's story. According to the rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter,¹⁸ Moses experienced himself as having "uncircumcised lips", because he was not listened to. In a dialogue, interlocutors must be willing to hear the other, as they might speak. The children of Israel, hard at labor and crushed by life, did not find the way to hear him and rendered him maimed and muted.

Kopel, represents the road to salvation, as proposed by liberal reformers: hard work and levelheadedness, coupled with as national identity celebrated with the passion of youth. It is these qualities that produce disaster as his peers resent him and cut him back down to size, so to speak. Kopel, speech impaired, cannot address his anger to the public, he would be ridiculed. In his despair he turns his anger to God, but as we know even God cannot make the children of Israel listen.

Conclusion, or: Are you not entertained?

In the stories reviewed here, a special approach to the topic of speech disability can be seen. In all these stories the question is not

at all the recovery or correction of the impairment. Rather the core of the story is a critical inquiry, comic but still piercing, of the listening self. Thus, for example, the fact that Kopel did grow up and learned to talk properly takes up very little space in the story. In an epilogue, the narrator briefly describes his cure and recovery:

Children, [...] for the most part, Jewish stories have sad endings [...] When you grow up, you'll understand. But [...] since today is erev Simchat Torah we have to be merry and happy, and so I'd like to end this story on a happy note. First of all, thank heaven, as you can see, I recovered. Second of all, for your information, the following year my flag was even nicer, my stick more beautiful, my apple redder. (Sholem Aleichem, 1996, p. 17)

This "happy" ending does not ring quite genuine. We get a hint that maybe this is vain boasting and that Kopel didn't really recover in the fact that the festive scene he says took place the next year sounds more nightmarish than joyous:

Reb Melekh, [...] led the procession like a field marshal. His metallic voice quavered as he sang out: "Hel-per of the poor and weak, sa-a-ve us!" As endless streams of women and girls pressed forward to [...] shrill into his face, "Live and be well until next year at this time." And Melekh replied, "The same to you and yours." (Sholem Aleichem, 1996, p. 17)

The clearest marker that Kopel's recovery was more disastrous than healing is found in the manner in which the older Kopel recreates his transformative trauma in the

thorough discussion of his life and work see Alter (2020).

¹⁸ Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter (author of the famed *Sefat Emes, or True Language*, 1847–1905) was a Polish rabbi, Chassidic master, and head of the Gerer Chassidim of Góra Kalwaria, Poland. For a

telling of the story on its anniversary. This masterful example of the dark side of Sholem Aleichem's laughter is the core of the story: we assist here in a dark and strange scene as a grown man tells of his most painful moment. Whenever he speaks in the voice of young Kopel, he is compelled to reproduce, perhaps relive, the trauma of his childhood speech. The laughter inspired by the segments in which Kopel's tongue stumbles, places us in a very complicit and precarious position: we recreate the central trauma of the story. Kopel speaks, and we can't listen. We laugh and his calling is again not heard. Carelessly, we laugh, and a child weeps.

Maybe not with the dark intensity of Sholem Aleichem, but all three stories place

the reader in the position of those who listen and judge. All three stories stress the listener's reasonability, rather than the triumph of overcoming the impairment. In doing that they force the reader to consider the social circumstances that cause the difficulties in communication. Bontshe, Fishke and Kopel, three physically disabled and socially ostracized individuals, are, as they are, worthy of hearing out. For that we must understand the reality of their language. In these stories we are invited to experience the reward of listening to those whose speech was pathologized as well as the price of being too busy to do so.

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Accent Modification as a Raciolinguistic Ideology: A Commentary in Response to Burda et al. (2022)

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Article Information

Article editor: Valerie E. Johnson

Article type: Commentary

Review type: Double anonymized

Submitted: 19 April 2023

Revised: 4 May 2023

Accepted: 7 May 2023

Published: 22 May 2023

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DOI: [10.48516/jcsd_2023vol1iss1.21](https://doi.org/10.48516/jcsd_2023vol1iss1.21)

Published by:

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access/digital-publishing/](https://www.adelphi.edu/libraries/open-access/digital-publishing/))



Citation: Nair, V. et al. (2023). Accent
modification as a raciolinguistic ideology:
Commentary in response to Burda et al. (2022).
*Journal of Critical Study of Communication and
Disability*, 1(1), 105-112.

https://doi.org/10.48516/jcsd_2023vol1iss1.21

(Full citation at end of article)

Abstract

In this commentary, we collectively examine a recent article titled “Effectiveness of Intense Accent Modification Training with Refugees from Burma” by Burda et al. (2022). Whilst our response is aimed at revealing the theoretical and methodological shortcomings of Burda et al., it will also expose the raciolinguistic ideologies in accent modification and highlight the need for careful ethical considerations on vulnerable populations, such as refugees and asylum seekers.

Keywords

Accent modification; raciolinguistic ideology; refugees; native speakerism; culturally sustaining approaches; accent advocacy

Positionality Statement

The authors of this article collectively demonstrate a commitment to disrupting and decentering raciolinguistic ideologies and emphasize the importance of co-envisioning linguistic liberatory praxis focusing on sustaining racialized accents. This is crucial to withstanding the risk of linguistic endangerment posed by the spread of English monolingualism globally (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000).



Imagine one needs to suddenly leave one's beloved country due to unimaginable atrocities including war, famine, or other major crises. One is far away from the familiar, anguished, and weary about the future. But instead of receiving human-centered, trauma-informed care, you are told you need to fix the way you speak—not because you need to, but to make White ears more comfortable with your tongue.

In their article on “Effectiveness of Intense Accent Modification Training With Refugees From Burma,” Burda et al. (2022) argued that intense accent modification has resulted in beneficial gains for articulation and prosody. Their findings support evidence for multimodal accent modification and suggest replicating these findings in future studies including with other refugees from The Democratic Republic of Congo. In this commentary, we argue the evidence Burda et al. present and the suggestions they make are associated with a set of ideologies based on power, ability, and race rather than accent. Burda et al.'s construction of “accent” and presentations of findings are based on raciolinguistic ideologies, methodologically flawed, lack interrogation of accent modification practices through critical and culturally sustaining approaches and have ethical concerns. We briefly outline our arguments and assert that speech-language scholars and clinicians working on accent modification should move away from practices that force people to deviate from self-identities to approximate abled whiteness by changing their accent. Instead, we seek to promote a praxis that centers accent-affirming advocacy, listener education and linguistic justice.

Raciolinguistic Ideologies

Burda et al. (2022) argue that accent modification results in effective communication for non-native speakers of English. This statement underscores two ideologies: a) speakers who are “non-native English speakers” do not communicate effectively; and b) the ideal standard is to emulate “accent norms” to the one of a mythical “native speaker.” Burda et al.'s rationale for accent modification upholds raciolinguistic ideologies. Raciolinguistic ideologies perpetuate an idealized view of English monolingualism. The language of speakers of color who deviate from the idealized version is racialized and labelled as deviant although these individuals are engaging in linguistic practices normative to their community (Flores & Rosa, 2015). By associating effective communication with an idealized view of monolingualism, Burda et al. assume that their participants' linguistic practices require remediation and assimilation to the White English monolingual standards. Furthermore, the article problematically utilizes dichotomous categories of native vs non-native speakers.

Native speakerism is an ideology which upholds the belief that American or British (or other White “Western” forms of English such as Australian or Canadian) is the best variety for speaking, language learning and education (e.g., Holliday, 2017). Holliday (2017) argued that native speakerism is a racist myth that was perpetuated by the American and British agencies which provided global aid with an intention to ascertain the superiority of the English as a global language. The dichotomous categories of “native vs non-native speaker” are outdated because globalization gave rise to heterogeneous World Englishes with different grammatical, pragmatic systems and accents

(Canagarajah, 2006). This contradicts the idea of singularity in linguistic competence perpetuated through a standard norm or an idealized native speaker. The ideologies of a uniform accent or grammatical forms are decentered to a more complex view of languaging as speakers utilizing their heterogeneous language ability in accordance with their local values, expression and being (see Canagarajah, 2006, for a detail on this). Furthermore, the concept of a native speaker has been heavily critiqued for its harmful ideologies (e.g., Cheng et al., 2021). It is harmful because it is traditionally used to exclude participants from research studies and has cascading effects for communities who are linguistically minoritized. It is dangerous in its underlying assumption of the ideal native speaker as a linguistically objective category and oppresses people who are deemed non-ideal (Lippi-Green, 2012). Critically, it erases the linguistic resources and diversity of racialized speakers by suggesting that effective and intelligible English sounds are produced by the monolingual White speaking subject (Flores & Rosa, 2015). The White listening/speaking subject is an ideological position that reinforces language ideologies that are rooted in White supremacy and may be occupied by any person or technology that pathologizes the languaging practices of racialized others. In the US, for example, native speakerism is enacted through anti-black linguistic racism i.e., invisibilizing and erasing the vast linguistic diversity such as Black language and through ableism by specifying that there is a specific, correct way to articulate and language (e.g., Baker-Bell, 2020; Henner & Robinson, 2023). It is unclear why Burda et al. (2022) ignored this critical literature as well as literature focusing on the relationship between raciolinguistic ideologies and accent modification for immigrants in the context of labor migration in the Global North (e.g., Ramjattan, 2019; 2022).

It is reported that the participants in the study were noted as community leaders that needed to improve their communication. Once again, a problematic assumption of conflating accent with communication is used as a logic to justify accent modification. Moreover, these community leaders used English exclusively in their professional/academic contexts and interpreted/translated regularly for other community members. Their roles indicate they are already extremely effective in their communication. Thus, their perceived proficiency (or lack thereof) is more likely a result of their status as racialized refugees rather than their actual communicative practices.

Communication is bidirectional and power-coded. The “racialized refugee other” occupies a subordinate status in society. With such discrepancy in power, it is critical to ask to what extent the White listening subject pays attention to the languaging of the racialized speaker? When viewed through a White and abled lens, the linguistically and racially marginalized “refugee other” is problematized, assessed, and remediated because their languaging is denied of having the perception, clarity, intelligibility, power, and the status of the White, heteronormative, able-bodied languaging subject. Accent modification places the burden of communication on the racialized subject who is forced to meet the arbitrary, and ableist expectations of the imaginary White languaging subject. This is in conflict with our perspective that communication is a shared and collaborative effort between the speaking and the listening subject.

Methodological Flaws

The biggest methodological issue in the article is using articulation and prosody as a proxy for examining accent. Attempts to delink accent from power and ideological origins to a few phonetic drills measuring articulation,

prosody, or intelligibility needs to be critiqued and rejected. Such methodological approaches are further flawed by constituting imaginary accents (e.g., Burmese accent), whilst the speech patterns of those communities are in fact highly heterogeneous due to several socio-cultural factors such as class, religion, geographical location, and their forced movements due to the socio-political situation. There are other methodological issues that are too large to discuss in a commentary, however, Burda et al. (2022) preface their arguments by stating accent is not a speech disorder but a difference. The idea of “difference” is problematic because it assumes that accents of “White languaging subject” is the standard. Racialized speakers who deviate from it are positioned as “different.”

However, if accent is not a disorder, it is unclear why Assessment of Intelligibility of Dysarthric Speech (Yorkston & Beukelman, 1984) was utilized to measure participants’ intelligibility. Their rationale appears to be weak. For example, the test has phonetically balanced stimuli, or target sentences were developed based on items that had high probability. Based on the citation, the study on which the stimuli were based was published almost 80 years ago (i.e., in 1944). These stimuli are not suitable for “monolingual English speakers” of current times. Tripp and Munson (2021) argued that sentences measuring intelligibility are not objective even though they are phonetically balanced. It is not valid because they could reveal social information (e.g., race and gender) which would ultimately influence the intelligibility judgements of the participants. They cautioned against the use of stimuli measuring intelligibility without accounting for linguistic variation across different communities. It is unclear why this stimuli set was injudiciously applied to participants from another racial and cultural group. Critically, it also begs the question of

why an intelligibility scale developed for dysarthric individuals who have neurological impairments is applied to the current participants. Although Burda et al. (2022) assert that accent is not a disorder, their methodology reveals a contradictory notion where differences in accent are treated as disorders.

Lack of Critical and Culturally Sustaining Approaches

Yu et al. (2022) recently published a commentary discussing the importance of critical and culturally sustaining approaches with minoritized individuals in relation to accent modification. We will not reiterate Yu et al.’s (2022) arguments here but rather emphasize that the linguistic practices of minoritized speakers must be sustained instead of replacing them with the linguistic competencies of privileged populations. By suggesting that approximation of accents to White standards should be extended to other refugee groups (e.g., refugees from The Democratic Republic of Congo), the linguistic practices of the minoritized are devalued. It is unknown how this affects long-term mental health and wellbeing of the racialized subjects (e.g., Bhatia, 2018). It is especially concerning when such practices are carried out on vulnerable people, such as a 60-year-old refugee woman. It is important to understand that any repair in “communication breakdown” is a collective responsibility rather than an individual attempt to accomplish goal-oriented behavior (Fairclough, 2013). This perspective would recognize that accents are not primarily responsible for breakdown in communication. Instead, power, or social relationships built on power (e.g., refugee vs. a White state official) have a greater explanatory potential in revealing the reasons for any given breakdown. A socially and linguistically just approach would center accent advocacy by synthesizing

information based on critical theories of language and educating individuals and organizations regarding the dynamic, fluid, multidimensional and socially constructed nature of the accent.

Ethical Concerns

Burda et al. (2022) indicate that they were contacted by a “statewide refugee advocacy program” to implement an accent modification training. However, there is no discussion of the consent process. Due to the power of the state agency in governing the refugees’ access to resources, the assumption of informed consent - that their participation was voluntary rather than compulsory - must be questioned. That the intensive accent modification training was implemented in tandem with a health care interpreting course severely constrains the refugees’ agency - it becomes a forced choice. Further, the data collected does not include the refugees’ qualitative response to the training. Their voices are absent from the evaluation of the training overall. Thus, the impact of the training on the participants’ interpersonal communication and the affective consequence of the training is unknown. Given the enormous potential for harm in implementing an intensive accent modification training on an especially vulnerable population, these omissions are ethically significant.

In light of the growing colonized research engagement of speech language therapists with refugees and asylum seekers (see examples of such work with Arab refugees in Khamis-Dakwar & Marzouqa, 2023), there is

a need for ethical guidelines and oversight of professional engagement with refugees and asylum seekers that are based on human rights, dignity, and trauma-informed practice. This is especially critical given the history of trauma among refugees and asylum seekers (e.g., Im & Swan, 2021) and the reported spike in the number of refugees (since 117.2 million people are reported to be forcibly displaced or stateless in 2023, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2023). In the presence of such guidelines, this work with elderly female refugees from Burma on accent modification would be categorically excluded based on ethics alone. Maldonado-Torres (2010) in his seminal paper “on the colonality of being” argues that ethics was only regulated in interactions between Christian Europeans as part of the colonization system, in which it was normalized to exclude ethical considerations in interactions with Indigenous and Black people. He argues that this pattern was rooted in the assumption of “exceptionality” of the White man that underlined the treatment of Indigenous and Black enslaved people based on non-ethical guidelines of war engagement. As such, he suggested that “coloniality can be understood as a radicalization and naturalization of the non-ethics of war” (p. 247). We as professionals in the speech and language therapy discipline need to interrogate whether some of our work with refugees and asylum seekers is mainly guided by the reminiscence of this non-ethical war-like engagement, and whether there should be a mechanism to exclude such harmful studies from being implemented in this modern day.

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Citation

Nair, V., Khamis, R., Ali, S., Aveledo, F., Biedermann, B., Blake, O., Brea, M. R., Cheng, L., Chiou, H. S., Cruz, D., Cushing, I., de Diego-Lázaro, B., Eads, A., El Amin, M., Fabiano-Smith, L., Fagbemi, A. M., Gandhi, A. B. García, E. S., Hackett, A., Henner, J., Hsieh, L., Huang, T., Hussain, F. N., Hyter, Y. D., Imperial, R. A., Ito, N., Joseph, H., Kaščelan, D., Licata, G., Lin, C. C., MacLeod, A. A. N., Malik, M., Manalili, M. A. R., Matias, F. A., McMillen, S., Modayil, M., Mohamed, N., Mollaei, F., Monda, D., Moya-Galé, G., Munson, B., Nkomo, C., Padia, L., Perez, C., Privette, C., Risueño, R. J., Rodgers, L., Rodríguez-Guerra, M., Serratrice, L., Shannon, D. B., Soto-Boykin, X., Tan, G., Sun, L., Wylie, K., Yu, B., Yu, V., & Zisk, A. H. (2023). Accent modification as a raciolinguistic ideology: A commentary in response to Burda et al. (2022). *Journal of Critical Study of Communication and Disability* 1(1), 105-112. https://doi.org/10.48516/jcscd_2023vol1iss1.21