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## *Language and Borders Revisited Colonizing Language, Deporting Voice and Seeking Discomfort in Spanish Class*

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### **Abstract**

*Spanish language education in the U.S. historically accommodates students who identify with English monolingualism and unmarked Whiteness as a normative cultural order. This distinctive practice relies on the imagination and maintenance of borders, including those realized as international geo-political divisions and discourse within Spanish classrooms themselves (Schwartz, 2014a). The present paper offers a theoretical discussion of language ideologies in three parts. Firstly, it reviews literature from diverse disciplinary perspectives that examines intersections between language and borders. Second, Whiteness, White supremacy and White settler colonialism are named explicitly as means by which Spanish language classrooms and curricula are organized in post-secondary educational contexts. Thirdly, in the interest of understanding how students and educators may collectively disrupt traditionally oppressive discourses of foreignness and language pedagogy, an exercise in “critical photography” is examined. Finally, the article considers how we might teach language through “pedagogies of discomfort” (Boler, 1999).*



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“Foreign language education” is an outdated phrase that deserves controversy, if not critical re-consideration. For instance, within the context of schooling within the United States, the term often evokes the teaching of a non-English language to an imagined group of students who are likely White, or align themselves with Whiteness. In the U.S., of course, so many non-English languages are *not* foreign. In fact, the existence of many predate the arrival of English to the Americas. In Oregon, where I live and teach, calling Spanish “foreign” may be downright insulting—a damaging, passive slur—to many of my students who identify as speakers of that language while having been raised as *chican@/x* or *latin@/x*<sup>1</sup>. Spanish has been spoken in the region for generations and persists as the second most commonly spoken language in Oregon, not to mention the U.S.

Thirty years ago, Gloria Anzaldúa published *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987). Now heralded as a literary classic across both academic and non-academic audiences alike, *Borderlands* speaks eloquently of the necessarily painful intersections between—and the ‘one-ness’ of—language and identity. In the essay “How to Tame a Wild Tongue,” she writes,

So, if you want to really hurt me, talk badly about my language. Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity—I am my language. Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself. Until I can accept as legitimate Chicano Texas Spanish, Tex-Mex, and all the other languages I speak, I cannot accept the legitimacy of myself. Until I am free to write bilingually and to switch codes without having always to translate, while I still have to speak English or Spanish when I would rather speak Spanglish, and as long as I have to accommodate the English speakers rather than having them accommodate me, my tongue will be illegitimate. (p. 80)

If in the tradition of Gloria Anzaldúa (1987/1999), bodies, voices and tongues locate themselves on, along and in relation to *la frontera*, then we are the language(s) we speak. This is particularly the case if the ways in which we speak and express ourselves resist dominant conventions of Standard, “Anglophone” English grammar, phonology (accent) and vocabulary. Linguistic anthropology names this resistance as an alignment with *language ideologies*. As Ahearn (2012) argues, individuals subscribe to ideologies—beliefs, feelings and orientations “about much more than just language” (p. 12). From its sounds, syntax, and semantics to the named entirety of a language itself (“English,” “Spanish,” “Diné,” etc.), languages are invested with ideology by speakers and non-speakers because they provide “a space in which attitudes and judgments about people that are imagined to speak the language in question are mapped and projected” (Schwartz & Boovy, 2017, p. 9).

Conversely, these ideologies also organize the very institutions that produce Spanish language education in the U.S. Also focusing on departments of Spanish in the university

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<sup>1</sup> The terms by which members of Spanish-speaking communities in the US self-identify are extremely varied. In this chapter I rely respectfully on *chican@/x* and *latin@/x*, marking those terms plural when appropriate. These terms are not capitalized in Spanish, although they are regularly capitalized when used in written English. Both of these styles are included here, accordingly. I also note that the terms are not necessarily used interchangeably for their users, nor can they exhaust the range of possibilities. I am aware that many individuals in the US who speak Spanish do not identify with either of these, and for reasons that are political and personal. However, I utilize these terms throughout the chapter as a humble nod to inclusive, fluid identification that reflects the intersectionality of gender, ethnicity, identity and language.

context, Valdés, González, López García & Márquez (2003) contend that an idealized “native speaker norm”—that is, proficiency modeled after the speech of those who learned a language as a mother tongue—organizes dominant ideologies about what sort of Spanish gets taught to whom and how. While not necessarily causal, norms and ideologies are tied up in the production of each other. For instance, this “native speaker” norm is also measured against patriarchies and class identities bound up in national identities away from local contexts. Kramsch (1997) maintains that “the native speaker norm that has been recognized by foreign language departments in this country is, in fact, that of ‘the middle class-, ethnically dominant male citizenry of nation-states’” (p. 363, as cited in Valdés, González, López García & Márquez, 2003, p. 8). To this end, a norm is made foreign. Further, while ideologically speaking, native speakership collapses with these “good” ways of speaking and teaching Spanish in academic spaces, such norms are also regulated on the level of spoken and written language. “Much attention is given in many foreign language departments to protecting [Spanish] from contamination from [English]... and to providing a model of a standard... free of vulgar colloquialisms and popular jargon” (Valdés, González, López García & Márquez, 2003, p. 8). Once again, “Language practices in such departments are colored by a nationalist aesthetic (Thomas, 1991) that is concerned with the characteristic features of the original national language and culture” (Valdés, González, López García & Márquez, 2003, p. 9).

Within this arrangement, *chican@/x* or *latin@/x* bodies, languages, accents and voices find themselves unwelcome in classrooms where Spanish is made foreign. Who benefits and gets rewarded in this education? And, are White learners and educators of Spanish (myself included) paying attention?

This paper is inspired by these concerns and questions. To narrow our focus, however, I’d like to examine how two of the aforementioned terms—language and borders—intersect in the context of university Spanish classrooms. The present paper is not an empirical study, but instead offers a theoretical discussion of language ideologies in three parts. Firstly, it reviews literature from diverse disciplinary perspectives that examines intersections between language and borders. Second, Whiteness and White supremacy are named explicitly as means by which Spanish language classrooms and curricula are organized in post-secondary educational contexts. Thirdly, as a teacher of basic-level Spanish, I reflect on my own classroom and pedagogical efforts. An exercise in “*fotografía crítica/critical photography*” (Schwartz & Terry, 2016) was given with intentions of disrupting traditionally oppressive discourses built into students’ previous experiences with foreign language pedagogy/curricula, and Spanish-English bilingualisms locally and regionally. I recall my students’ own work—and their conversations about that work—as hopeful examples to showcase where and how this type of disruption and discomfort (cf. Boler, 1999; Faulkner, 2012) is pedagogically valuable, as well as socially and historically responsive.

## **1. On Language and Borders: Revisiting some Classics Across Disciplines**

Insights on language and borders are multiple and varied. As a language educator and practitioner-researcher, I’ve enjoyed drawing heavily from different research traditions, particularly because my students themselves come to my classroom as new scholars and critical consumers of vastly diverse academic fields. In this vein, concepts from cultural studies (“third borders” via Davis, 2000), linguistic anthropology (projection and “mapping” of borders, via

Urciuoli, 1995; 1996) and legal studies (“symbolic deportation” across borders, via Perea, 1995), respectively inform my discussion here. Each of these works has made a foundational impact on how I think about Spanish language teaching, and how students themselves have considered their own relationship with and to Spanish in the United States. I’ve shared selections of each with students in my own teaching, and they regularly inspire in-class exercises and discussions, including critical photography curricula.

Though not originally written with language instruction in mind, Davis’s theory of the third border offers a way to understand how students of college-level Spanish make and claim race and linguistic identities within and outside classrooms. I have been proposing this connection for some time (Schwartz, 2011, 2014a), in light of Davis’s original text. Davis introduces the third border initially as a physical example, pointing to the case of a walled barrier built in the middle of a road traversing the wealthy, largely White town of South Pasadena, California and a neighboring corner of Los Angeles, a working-class district called El Sereno, historically populated by Spanish-speaking, *chican@/x* and *latin@/x* communities. In short, a seemingly harmless wall physicalizes an ideological barrier, the unspoken message that spaces between race and language must be made separate. Davis (2000) writes, “The third border polices daily intercourse between two citizen communities: its outrageousness is redoubled by the hypocrisy... used to justify its existence. Invisible to most Anglos, it slaps Latinos across the face.” (pp. 70-1). This is different from the physical realization of the “first” geo-political border that separates the U.S. and México, or “second” borders: Homeland Security-managed checkpoints that constellate highway landscapes just north of this line. Third borders are regularly invisible to White individuals that have historically learned Spanish as a “foreign” language (Schwartz, 2014a). A wall may be as seemingly harmless as a Spanish foreign language textbook, depending on perspective and perception. While walls and textbooks may benefit one public, others may be effectively erased. Just as the *Los Angeles Times* once reported that a/the “predominantly [W]hite city is trying to wall its mostly Latino neighbors out” (DiMassa, 2002, p. 1 as cited in Schwartz, 2014a), I invite readers here to entertain the idea that foreign language curricula have historically erased the linguistic and cultural worth of Spanish-English bilingualism within the United States.

These invisible divisions—this erasure—can take multiple forms. Although, this invisibility is relative. For instance, *chican@/xs* and *latin@/xs* who find themselves in Spanish foreign language classrooms are often acutely aware of feeling simultaneously tokenized as an expert and a deficiency in these spaces (Potowski, 2002). Divisions and erasure can manifest as attitudes and ideologies about how Spanish should be spoken. More covertly racist language in textbooks and course assignments is not unusual, even when these texts are tailored toward native speakers of Spanish (Leeman & Martínez, 2007). And, since language is “indexically grounded in human relations, and [...] frequently” represents peoples and cultures in iconic ways, borders are also projected onto bodies<sup>2</sup> and voices imagined to speak Spanish (Urciuoli,

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<sup>2</sup>The term ‘body,’ and its plural ‘bodies,’ repeats itself throughout this manuscript. While, for the sake of space and focus, this word doesn’t presently undergo the critical ethnography it certainly deserves, I’m indebted to the wisdom of Alexander’s (1994) historically situated discussion of “black bodies in pain for public consumption” and how this history of spectacle prizes “black bodies and their attendant dramas [which are] publicly consumed by the larger populace” (p. 79), primarily staged by White men. I suspect that these legacies of bodily staging (and their connected White gaze) for entertainment and study, particularly within the context of settler colonialism, guide the ways in which White listeners and learners of non-White languages in the U.S. (in this case, Spanish) perceive and imagine the bodies and voices of their speakers in racialized ways (see Flores & Rosa, 2015).

1996, p. 533). This projection—or “mapping”—is the symbolic act of marking those racially, nationally, and/or ethnically different from White learners of Spanish. To this point, Urciuoli (1995) argues,

...Border-making elements take on their social reality as ‘languages,’ ‘accents,’ ‘mixing,’ or ‘words.’ These terms emerge among the people to whom language identities matter, in relations shaped by the politics of ethnicity, race, and class within the nation and by the politics of ethnic nationalism.

White, *chican@/x* and *latin@/x* identities are made—they become—mutually exclusive upon such borders and differences. This “becoming” naturalizes both the oppressing and oppressed subjects as such. Urciuoli (1995) continues:

People act in ways that are taken as ‘having’ a language, which is equated to ‘belong’ to an origin group. Borders emerge in specific contexts as a metonymy of a person, language and origin category. This metonymy can be fleeting or quite rigid and in varying degrees politicized (p. 525).

Consider a conversation I had with Danny, a self-identified White student of Spanish enrolled in a language course at a public university in the Southwestern U.S. (Schwartz, 2014a, p. 167). I observed Danny’s basic-level Spanish courses weekly, and had the opportunity to interview him (and others) semi-regularly about their experiences with Spanish in and outside the foreign language classroom. I asked Danny what inspired him to enroll in Spanish coursework, and he cited his recent time spent living and working in Colorado.

There aren’t a lot of *Hispanic people* there, so I was actually very surprised how much I ran into *it*, you know, either on the job or even at restaurant, things like that. I mean, you don’t really . . . *it* doesn’t really come up, like *speaking Spanish*, but you just . . . you overhear them talking. Yeah, and I mean, anytime you’re on a public . . . the public bus and elevators, any like public area basically, you’ll always hear *it*. (emphasis adjusted here from original)

Danny’s response is fascinating on multiple levels (for fuller analysis see Schwartz, 2014a), although we see borders constructed metonymically and away from an imagined physical territory (Urciuoli, 1995). I note here that I’m a White-identified individual who also presents phenotypically as such. Speaking only in my company, Danny is comfortable to collapse “Hispanic people” with “it” and “speaking Spanish” as semantically conflated concepts. In other words—they’re all meant to “mean” the same thing in the context of our conversation. Here I use “our” because he assumes that I—in his company as a fellow White native speaker of English—will align with him ideologically, and “get it.” This alignment cements a White privilege protected by borders that keep non-White, and assumed non-English speaking Others out and away from our conversation about a “foreign” language. He can collapse these terms and expect them to be understood as interchangeable ideas about an imagined foreign, Spanish-speaking Other. And, based on his assumption of and about how I look, he feels confident that he will not be challenged in this assertion. And of course, this is and was Urciuoli’s point, even upon its publication over twenty years ago:

When languages take on sharp edges, i.e. borders, they are mapped onto people and therefore onto ethnic nationality (which may or may not map onto a nation-state). Given that ethnicity has become nonlocalized as people move into “global ethnoscapes,” much of what the “border” represents is in effect deterritorialized, as is, for example, the case with foreign languages, especially Spanish in the United States. (Urciuoli, 1995, p. 533)

Finally, there is the notion of “symbolic deportation” across borders. In the same year Urciuoli spoke from linguistic anthropology, Perea (1995) wrote about about *chican@/x* and *latin@/x* erasure and visibility through this process in the *New York University Law Review*. Symbolic deportation happens precisely through the manipulation of language and discourse, on the grounds that perceptible markers such as “language, surname, skin color, and physical features, among other traits” (p. 11) make *chican@/x* and *latin@/x* identity visible and markedly un-American. With this making of visibility, desirable traits of ethnic Americanness too are visible, and are embodied in the “national origin” concept as born in historical and legal discussions in US history:

Today the statutory phrase “national origin” appears most prominently in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination in employment because of national origin. At first glance... the concept appears to be meant to include and protect ethnically different Americans. I believe, however, that true to its origins in immigration laws, today’s “national origin” concept operates to exclude ethnically different Americans in a way similar to the way in which the national origin quotas (Immigration Act of 1924) excluded undesirable immigrants. (Perea, 1995, p. 11)

This exclusion is, as Perea writes, an effort to symbolically deport those constructed as ethnically different, or un-American “outside the borders of the United States” (p. 15). To focus on the language element of Perea’s description, the teaching and/or ignoring of Spanish-English bilingualisms in classrooms is to project a larger, segregated social order. These are curricular treatments of Spanish-speaking voices and histories within the US. Languages and varieties are ethnicized, racialized and silenced (“deported”) as non-White and therefore are rendered to be ill-fitting as a model for speaking Spanish for global citizenship or capitalist gain. In short, ethnically marked ways of Speaking Spanish are symbolically deported from curriculum in the same ways that identities are in public American discourses.

In sum, (in)visible third borders can themselves manifest as ways of speaking (or not) speaking Spanish. They can run right through classrooms, textbooks and course assignments. Borders are also mapped onto bodies who speak and are imagined to speak Spanish, marking them racially, nationally, or ethnically different. “American” (Read: “non-Ethnically different” Whiteness) identities and *chican@/x* and *latin@/x* identities are manufactured upon these borders and differences, and therefore language (Spanish and Spanish-English bilingualisms) can be deported symbolically, just like other perceptible markers like surname, skin color, and physical features.

## 2. Jason on Whiteness—Breaking down “Cultural Normalcy” and its role in Spanish Language Classrooms

Whiteness is at the core of understanding the nature of Perea’s discussion on how race, ethnicity and national identity are socially and historically constructed. Whiteness is also a term that is rarely used in discussions of language education, although its connection here is necessary, as the term is so regularly collapsed with hegemonic ways of being—identifying as, sounding like—an “American.”

Bucholtz (2011) explains that Whiteness and *being* White are concepts relating as much to embodied physicality as to social and political constructions. I share four of her theses here. First, Bucholtz argues, Whiteness is historically “always endowed with structural or institutional power at some level, and as [a racial category located and attached to human bodies] it is always instantiated and negotiated by individual social actors in specific contexts” (Bucholtz, 2011, p. 15). Second, Whiteness also takes its power in its ability to be hegemonic and unmarked. Whiteness normalizes under cover of claims to “just the way things are.” To speak in a way that performs Whiteness, for instance, is to do so without an “accent” that is noticeable, strange, or associated with ethnic or racial difference. Third, Whiteness is concretely “situated and situational.” It is meaningful according to a specific time, place and person who may “enact” or perform Whiteness in ways that replicate or disrupt dominant ideologies. Finally, Whiteness is also multiple and unstable. So, there is no “single way of being White... [Whiteness] accrues a range of different cultural meanings in... diverse contexts,” (Bucholtz, 2011, p. 15) and each of these may vary according to place and history.

With rare, recent exception (see Flores & Rosa, 2015; Flores, 2016), language education and second language acquisition (SLA) scholarship<sup>3</sup> has historically skirted discussions of Whiteness. In such discussions, issues of race and racial privilege are, at best, discomfiting and “don’t belong in the discipline.” At worst, they’re deemed simply “irrelevant.” Terms such as “Anglophone,” “L2 learners” and “traditional foreign language learners” enjoy commonplace usage as substitutes for “speakers of English.” These words function to isolate and measure objects of study: Phonological or grammatical features, or behavioral patterns in language learning, for instance. This focus fails to recognize that Whiteness organizes curricula by which non-English languages are conventionally learned in the U.S. It is what silently undergirds its normalizing discourse. A term like “*Anglophone*” normalizes the historical binding of Whiteness with the sounds (‘-phone’) of standard English. Similarly, “*foreign language*” operates as “non-white” in this context.

Consider Jason, who traveled to Oregon (where I teach) from his native Los Angeles to work on his masters’ degree in Ethnic Studies. He grew up in multilingual neighborhoods (Venice, East Los Angeles) and claims origins just as diverse. Ethnically he identifies as Tohono O’Odham (Native American), Hawai’ian and Chicano. However, he has been racialized by others in countless ways. His physical appearance, skin color, use of language, hyphenated surname and dress are subjects—or rather, symbols, sign systems—by which race-making

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<sup>3</sup> This is not the case in fields outside of education that take language as its focus, like linguistic anthropology or sociolinguistics. See, for instance, the work of Jane Hill (2008, among many others). Alim, Rickford and Ball’s *Raciolinguistics: How Language Shapes our Ideas about Race* (2016) is a more contemporary example. Others are cited throughout this paper. It should be clarified that Whiteness has been named extensively in educational research, but seldom in work that focuses on second and foreign language education.

assignments are projected<sup>4</sup>. Simultaneously, this physical and linguistic presentation constitutes a collection of socially and culturally situated signs that point to his looking, acting, and sounding—*being*—non-white. When Whiteness is understood as being culturally normal (Bucholtz, 2011), difference is measured along racial lines. These lines, most certainly, double as the third borders to which Davis (2000) refers. Echoing Anzaldúa (1986/1999), Urciuoli comments, “people who embody the border consistently find themselves socially invisible except as stereotypes” (1995:538).

Jason exemplified this embodiment of borders beautifully in an original poem he read aloud during the final meeting of a class I taught in Spring term 2016, *Language, Race and Racism in the United States*. I share the first portion here, as written by Jason verbatim and unedited. It is titled “Fuck your index,” to borrow a term used in linguistic anthropology (*indexicality*, or the means by which symbols and sign systems connect to socially-constructed meanings).

Resistance  
 The refusal to accept or comply with something...  
 Fuck your index  
 Fuck what you think you know about me  
 I see you, I hear you, but I sure in the hell don't feel you  
 I see you trying to place layer after layer of your appraisals onto my body  
 I hear your language ideology trying to peck away at my non-standard colonial tongue  
 Fuck your lies  
 Fuck your attempts at painting your stereotypes onto my canvas  
 I refuse to let your lead filled paint stain my soul  
 See, I see you...  
 I see you a mile away  
 I smell your infection spread through the ears, mouths, and minds of everyone around me  
 But don't trip, I got the antibiotics for that that shit  
 I have my truth  
 A truth you were never able to strip away  
 I am not your spicy “Latino”  
 I am a proud and not to be fucked with Chicano  
 I am not your stoic Native man  
 I am O'odham and the survivor of genocide  
 I am not your mixed mutt of Hawai'i  
 I am Hawai'i  
 Fuck your language test to prove I am certifiably bilingual  
 Shit I speak Spanglish, pigeon, and am an expert at cursing  
 To whom ever you are and where every you come from  
 I am not who you think I am, and I will not be who you want me to be

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<sup>4</sup>Jason (and his poetry that follows) underscores Bucholtz and Hall's (2016) profound call for the study of ‘embodied sociocultural linguistics,’ given the foundational truth that “bodies and embodiment are central to the production, perception, and social interpretation of language” (p. 173). Just as bodies produce language, as in Jason's case, “language is primary means by which the body enters the sociocultural realm as a site of semiosis, through cultural discourses about bodies as well as linguistic practices of bodily regulation and management.” (p. 173).



Jason not only refers to the embodiment of racialization against white normalcy (“I see you trying to place layer after layer of your appraisals onto my body”), but talks about the process of colonization by which Whiteness and normalcy are imposed upon non-White others. This non-White othering is inflicted onto language (“I hear your language ideology trying to peck away at my non-standard colonial tongue”) as much as skin color. Jason, of course, testifies that his “truth”—perhaps his security in/of his own unique identity—combats colonization. In particular, he targets the colonizing practices of education (“Fuck your language test to prove I am certifiably bilingual/ Shit I speak Spanglish, [pidgin], and am an expert at cursing”) that undermine or reduce the literacy practice of bilingual and multilingual latin@/xs and chican@/xs.

While this piece isn’t about colonization, Whiteness or white privilege *per se*, talking about Spanish as a “foreign language” implies Whiteness as a metric for normalcy. To recall my introduction, teaching toward a monolingual Spanish “native speaker norm” simultaneously protects and elevates monolingual standard English in orderly White society (Schwartz & Boovy, 2017). Bucholtz (2011) elaborates, “Understanding whiteness requires attention to two different aspects of this racial category: its power to authorize the subordination of other racialized groups, and its variability and even instability in specific cultural contexts” (p. 15). More specifically I return to her claim to the latter, that Whiteness is hegemonic, unmarked, and cultural absence, as it is these three characteristics that normalize the power dynamics that subordinate non-White Others, those marked as such through language practices. Flores (2016) speaks to this as well, naming “bilingual hegemonic Whiteness” as a socially acceptable, liberal multicultural approach to linguistic awareness where students are “expected to become bilingual in Standardized American English and another standardized language” (Flores, 2016, p. 14). Although this is language education that may feel politically safe and socially inclusive, it simultaneously reinforces dominant language ideologies that marginalize racialized communities where non-foreign Spanish and bilingual Spanish-English is spoken.

Perhaps there is power in naming what Whiteness is or isn’t, in the same way that Jason can claim belonging or not belonging to Whiteness in a variety of contexts. In so doing, perhaps we can see Whiteness as a broader social project (Omi & Winant, 1986/1994/2014) that actively *deports* a language to make it “foreign.” In this sense, a language like Spanish is safely contained and taught in spaces in ways that don’t threaten Whiteness as cultural and social power. In other words, if language education does not upset the hegemonic, unmarked and cultural absence that keeps social order White and “right,” symbolic deportation has been successful. This said, Whiteness is a cultural practice that not only organizes—but colonizes—basic-level Spanish language education. Spanish, despite a shared connection with English to White, colonial, European history, simultaneously associates with less flattering language ideologies projected onto darker skinned bodies:

The visibility of the language [in public spaces] itself becomes a proxy for a racialized population that is perceived as threatening, and anti-Spanish sentiment in the United States has been translated into anti-immigrant and English-only legislation. Ironically, studying Spanish is as popular a choice as ever. . . [B]oth in and outside classrooms, Spanish can be a source for mockery and jocular imitation—particularly in public and private spaces where native speakers are notably absent. (Schwartz, 2011, p. 646)

Flores and Rosa (2015) articulate this as a linguistically-informed white gaze upon racialized subjects, that too finds itself in classroom spaces:

[W]hite gaze is attached both to a speaking subject who engages in 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 position in society as opposed to any objective characteristics in their language use. (p. 151)

Tuck and Yang (2014) insist that colonialism and research-driven academic pursuits shed light on the notion of settler colonialism. As a conceptual pair, settler colonialism and Whiteness clearly define each other in understanding histories of linguistic and cultural domination in a present-day nation where the teaching of non-English languages are symbolically deported. Settler colonialism involves the elevation of White bodies and minds in conquests and territorial domination. More specifically, the “particular shape of colonial domination in the United States and elsewhere. . . .can be differentiated from what one might call exogenous colonialism in that the colonizers arrive at a place (‘discovering’ it) and make it a permanent home (claiming it)” (p. 224). Because the event of discovery holds permanent ramifications, Tuck and Yang clarify (citing Wolfe, 1999) that this type of colonialism is definitively structural, and not a one-time historical event. Settler colonialism involves a

...triad relationship, between the White settler (who is valued for his leadership and innovative mind), the disappeared Indigenous peoples (whose land is valued, so they and their claims to it must be extinguished), and the chattel slaves (whose bodies are valuable but ownable, abusable, and murderable). We believe that this triad is the basis of the formation of Whiteness in settler colonial nation-states, and the interplay of erasure, bodies, land, and violence is characteristic of the permanence of settler colonial structures. (Tuck & Yang, 2014, p. 224)

Later in their paper, Tuck and Yang charge that settler colonialism finds its place in the design and implementation of the social sciences, both in research and teaching. To return to my earlier debate in the first section of this paper, I propose that perhaps the structure of settler colonialism finds its place through and along first, second and third borders (Davis, 2000). Third borders in particular manifest in and outside of Spanish language classrooms (Schwartz, 2014a; 2014b), across which voices framed as non-White or un-American are symbolically deported (Perea, 1995).

All things considered in the present discussion so far, I might ask: Could Spanish language education in the United States, as we know it—an educational enterprise historically designed for White learners of Spanish as a foreign language—be itself an act of structural settler colonialism? This question must come with the caveat that Spanish itself is a language not native to the region now named the United States of America. As mentioned above, Spanish pre-dates English as violent, colonizing force in the Americas. But, in an attempt to understand the “making” of Spanish as a foreign language, and in an attempt to disrupt what settler colonialism does in its effort to erase and re-write indigenous and non-White knowledge, I ask a second question. That is: How does, and can Spanish language education in day-to-day classroom practice make a difference? Further, does learning Spanish include or deserve having access to narratives like that of Jason’s? In the final section that follows, I share the complicating,

complicated, but hopeful work of my students, who perhaps may provide some answers to these questions.

### **3. Critical Photography to Disrupt Traditionally Oppressive Discourses of Foreignness and Language Pedagogy**

Whether or not we make the claim that Spanish language education is itself an act of settler colonialism, what is clear is that colonization itself extends to our classrooms. Its legacies map onto the bodies and voices that pass through classroom doors; they form the contours of the dominant language we students and teachers speak, or are told we must speak (Anzaldúa, 1987). Legacies of colonialism and imperialism have systematically dictated what both students and educators qualify as learning, schooling or “education.” (Carnoy, 1974; Shor & Freire, 1987). To that end, curriculum too is regulated by similarly oppressive traditions (Apple, 2004; 2013). As inspired by the innovative work of my own former graduate student, I have for a few years now invited my basic-level students of Spanish here at Oregon State University to engage in an exercise we call *fotografía crítica* (“critical photography,” or *FC*), which extends throughout the length of our 10-week course together. In content and organization, *fotografía crítica* (*FC*) critiques conventional ideas of “culture” education that find their place within foreign language teaching models. Inspired methodologically and theoretically from photovoice, a participatory research technique (Booth & Booth, 2003; Graziano & Litton, 2007), this work has the potential to engage all sorts of diverse identities that find themselves within the traditionally rigid spaces of a Spanish language classroom. These include those in particular for whom that classroom isn’t designed, such as native speakers of Spanish. Those individuals, also commonly categorized as ‘heritage speakers’ of Spanish, may have been raised in Spanish-speaking homes, for instance.

Personally, I’ve invested in the possibility that *FC* may facilitate rich discussion on and about the nature of language, power and oppression. In previous work authored with my colleague and former student (Schwartz & Terry, 2016), we’ve claimed that *FC* engages all learners (including those not institutionally welcomed in Spanish foreign language courses) in considering the socially-constructed hierarchies of language use in their daily lives. We also make the case for why and how *FC* challenges students to acknowledge familial and community voices (often bi- and multi-lingual ways of speaking and knowing) as culturally and historically authoritative. This acknowledgement begins to support an alternative transcript to traditionally designed Spanish foreign language textbooks, which historically elevate Eurocentric linguistic and cultural practices in Spanish-speaking nation-states (Leeman, 2014; Leeman & King, 2015)

If the voices of Spanish speakers in the US have been colonized and reorganized in efforts to maintain a non-English language “foreign,” and done in the interest of students who are historically intended to benefit from schooling as a settler colonial structures, might the voices of Spanish speakers be re-located and re-centered through *FC*? Can students in a basic language course slowly but surely upset legacies of symbolic deportation that commonly<sup>5</sup> erase Spanish-

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<sup>5</sup> “Commonly” is a key term here. Younger learners arguably challenge this historical model in K-12 English-Spanish dual immersion programs, for which Oregon and my university town can claim recent success. Valdés (1997) and Flores (2016), among others, warn that ultimately the dual immersion model prizes interests of “White middle- and upper-class students and their families,” those stakeholders for whom “a society with hierarchies created by hegemonic Whiteness” is designed to benefit (Flores, 2016, p. 31).

English bilingualism as a local resource? FC took place on a campus like so many in the U.S. where Spanish is learned in classroom spaces—where few chicanx/@ and latin@/x bodies and voices are present and accounted for in local histories and history-making. Here I consider critical photography as a suggestion for hopeful pedagogical practice that can begin to address that question.

Below are not reproductions of photographs from an FC exercise itself, but instead selections from students' written captions in Spanish (marked as 'C') and reflections in English ('R') complementing the four photographic contributions required. What follows the captions and reflections are conversations between the students that resulted thereafter. Two conversations in particular are initiated by the posts of Andrea and Kristin, two White-identified female students. Everything featured here was captured on an online discussion board designed by our university for the course. These posted conversations and photos were also “unpacked” in an in-class workshop, wherein our class would identify common themes, challenges, as well as successes and failures with the process. These workshops concluded with suggestions for a prompt for the next FC submissions. I should note that FC was a mandatory yet ungraded element of the second class in a three-part first year sequence (Spanish '111,' '112,' '113'). Each student in our class (roughly 25 participated in each “round” of postings) was required to post a photograph, coupled with the caption and reflection. In addition, students were required to “respond to” at least two other classmates' posts. These responses fuel the back-and-forth nature of the conversation that grew from each original photograph.

Photographs in the present context answered the prompt, as cobbled together by student suggestions: *¿ Por qué estás tomando una clase de español? ¿Por qué hablas español? ¿Con quién estás hablando español?* (Why are you taking a Spanish class? Why do you speak Spanish? With whom are you speaking Spanish?) This prompt (and the required photo and text response) was the second in the required four FC exercises, and its creation was inspired by student input from the reflections that followed the first prompt (Question: *¿Dónde se habla español en tu comunidad?* / Where is Spanish spoken in your community?). It should be noted that the prompt itself (as well as the one that preceded it) doesn't explicitly ask students to frame how language, race and borders intersect. My hope was that students might begin to reveal insights on those themes slowly and steadily through answers to less explicit—and more open ended questions—like that of the second prompt. And, this is indeed what happened. More elevated, critical conversations would follow with the third and fourth prompts, when we tackled the topic of language and mockery, for instance. Note that bracketed italics indicate my translation of written captions. All bolded terms indicate my own emphasis, for analysis that follows. Other than these distinctions, all text is reproduced here (including errors, misspellings, etc.) as written by the students themselves.

I want to reiterate here that my intent below is not to offer an evaluation of student work following the methodological traditions of discourse analysis, be it multimodal or critical. I admit that I did not design this class to complement a research agenda. Instead, I decided late in the term to invite students to share their work for research purposes. As much as I would have appreciated interviewing students over time, recording their in-class conversations, or perhaps inviting them to keep a photographer's journal, I wasn't able to benefit from this advance planning. Instead, in the interest of showcasing some potential benefits, limitations and discomforts that FC affords, I highlight here a few themes taken up by White-identified students who began to wrestle with how race, language, and borders collide and map upon each other. At

times, the language below might strike a reader as superficial, if not innocuous. This is important evidence, however, of the educational trajectories that led to students to this space: For many of these students, this was a first attempt at critiquing dominant paradigms about language and culture in an academic setting, let alone in the context of their Spanish studies.

Andrea's photo was the first to post, and well before the deadline. An eager freshman, and a high-achieving student, Andrea's enthusiasm was on display as usual. As such, it took a while for other students (note timestamps of Kristin, David and Caden) to "catch up" with their responses. Andrea's caption was positive and simple, given her limited command of Spanish in the present tenses.

**Andrea's Photo, posted October 11, 2:34pm**

C: "Yo estoy tomando español porque me encanta la cultura. A mí me gusta hablar español porque es interesante. Yo hablo español con mi amiga Jenna."

*[I am taking Spanish because I love the culture. I like to speak Spanish because it is interesting. I speak Spanish with my friend Jenna.]*

Andrea's reflection qualified her caption in more detail, noting her choice to include a friend in her image. As she points out, our class had noticed that a previous week's FC submissions lacked the presence of bodies and faces. I personally hypothesized that students feared associating a visualization of 'Spanish' with individuals—and in particular 'strangers' out and about in public spaces—assumed to speak that language. After a group discussion, my suspicions appeared to be validated.

R: "The reason why I chose this picture this week is because when I need help with Spanish my friend/ roommate Jenna will always be there to help me study for a test or help me with my Spanish homework when I am having difficulty. Sometimes she will randomly start speaking in Spanish to me to help me understand the language. So, I decided it would be fun to take a picture of us with the book we use in class using our own hands, since this is the book I use to study with anyway. Haha! I really like Spanish and the reason why I am taking Spanish is because I really like **the culture** and the language is just super fun to learn about."

"Also, the reason why I chose to pick this picture with my friend was because last weeks photos had a lack of people in them because we all thought it would be weird to take a picture of a random stranger, right? So, I wanted to include a person in my picture just to change it up a little bit."

Andrea familiarizes her connection to Spanish by introducing a close friend, Jenna. Jenna is a roommate and fellow student who provides opportunities for Andrea to boost her confidence and competence with Spanish assignments. Curious is Andrea's use of "the culture;" While mentioned in the caption, and undefined in the reflection (and not made visible in the photograph, wherein Andrea and Jenna are posing with our course textbook), evokes a sort of concrete idea of a particular way of life inherently associated with the Spanish language.

(Response by Kristin) Oct 17 11:38am:  
“...That’s extremely convenient that your **own roommate** can speak Spanish! I’d imagine that is **extremely helpful**. In the future it would be cool if you guys could just have **full-on Spanish speaking conversations!**”

(Response by David) Oct 21 3:17pm:  
“...I also decided to take a similar picture with my friends who are helping me study Spanish. It’s really neat how just learning Spanish can **open up so many fun opportunities** learn more about **our community**.”

(Response by Caden) Oct 22 9:19pm:  
“**That is awesome to have someone that lives with you to be able to speak Spanish with and can ask them for help whenever needed.** If I were to still have roommates and one spoke Spanish **I would request them to only speak Spanish to me even if it meant** having to point and draw pictures to get the point across. You’re extremely lucky!

Kristin, David and Caden’s back-and-forth intensifies Andrea’s relatively innocuous post about enjoying camaraderie and support in speaking and learning Spanish and admiration for a culture to which the language is symbolically bounded, but in a way that resembles something concrete and physical. Kristin admires the convenience and utility of Andrea’s friendship and access to “full-on Spanish speaking conversations,” with which wouldn’t be made accessible otherwise. This notion of access is picked up by David in a way that re-introduces the boundedness of “culture” by extending it discursively to “so many fun opportunities” that can be “opened up” in order to “learn more about our community.”

David’s idea of “our community” seems to invite a progressive outlook on bilingual and multilingual life outside of the time he spends on a college campus. This was a space/place where, at the time of his writing, David both studied and worked. David is learning a language in a way that’s made familiar and accessibly by way of his “friends” who help him study. At the same time, I wonder if his reference to “our community” signifies more normalized discourse of settler colonialism, claiming a local presence of imagined Spanish speakers as ‘belonging’ to ‘us.’

While the context of his entry is less clear, Caden expresses the idea that speakers of Spanish, as well as their abilities, are resources available for the taking/benefit of White students/learners. It should be said here that Andrea’s roommate’s relationship with Spanish mastery is unclear. It may be possible that Jenna is latin@/x or chican@/x (no mention is made of this identity, although her darker skin in the photograph may have been interpreted and racialized by Kristin, David and Caden in ways that went unspoken), or simply a proficient speaker or student of Spanish who conveniently comes to Andrea’s aide. But, Caden’s interpretation of this relationship aligns more with convenient opportunism: One has access to authentic proficiency, and the provider of that service is assumed to be ‘on call,’ “whenever needed,” at his request.

Kristin’s photo posted early as well. While also a freshman, Kristin differed from Andrea in disposition. Kristin wasn’t shy, but was often quietly deliberate, and focused. Also unlike Andrea, she was a relatively new visitor to Oregon. Kristin grew up on a rural island in the Alaska panhandle where Spanish and its racial/ethnic associations were quite literally unheard

and non-existent. As such, Kristin associated her need and motivation for speaking Spanish to be attached with tourism, to travel into foreign lands, like Mexico. Unlike Andrea's snapshot, Kristin's image featured no faces or bodies, but captured a banner greeting the entry to the Port of Pichilingue, in La Paz, Baja California. La Paz is a city adjacent to the more famed Cabo San Lucas; both cities regularly host cruise ship visitors and others seeking the luxury of local seaside resorts, for instance.

**Kristin's photo – October 12, 4:24pm**

C: "Este es un foto que yo tome en el pasado, una viaje a México. Estoy tomando una clase de español por que yo quiero ir en las viajes y hablar español con las personas de las países. Hablo español practicar para cuando yo voy a estés países, y cuando yo veo y quiero hablar a las personas que hablan español en mi comunidad. Hablo español con mis compañeros de clase."

*[This is a photo that I took in the past, a trip to Mexico. I am taking a Spanish class because I want to go on trips and speak Spanish with people from countries. I speak Spanish to practice for when I go to these countries, and when I see and I want to talk to people that speak Spanish in my community. I speak Spanish with my classmates.]*

Kristin captioned her photo with an attempt at more advanced Spanish grammar, and on topics ("...people that speak Spanish in my community" and "I speak Spanish with my classmates") that departed slightly from what the image itself captured, at first glance.

In her framing of Mexico as a destination that inspires her to speak Spanish, Kristin attempts to understand Mexicanness and therefore Spanish speakers in an otherwise non-local context: though travel to lands beyond national borders. This claim to a connection with "locals" in a distant tourist destination stands in stark opposition to the ways in which she, and her classmates hear non-English accents and languages in local public spaces in Oregon or Alaska. Her framing of discourse identifies the scope of another culture, as bounded by ways in which she imagines (Anderson, 1991) Mexico and Mexicans as existing naturally within the borders of a distant nation-state. Kristin is articulating an ideological orientation that is completely unsurprising, since she is a product of foreign language education that elevates a native speaker norm that binds one non-English language to one non-English speaking national identity (Kramsch, 1997).

Kristin easily naturalizes difference and fortifies ideological borders in line with Urciuoli's argument, mentioned previously, that "[p]eople act in ways that are taken as 'having' a language, which is equated to 'belong' to an origin group" (Urciuoli, 1995, p. 525). Following this logic, while Kristin identifies a culture that she doesn't associate locally with Oregon or Oregonians, she projects her imagination of Mexicans and Mexican culture back onto local contexts in a single statement: "I speak Spanish to practice for when I go to these countries, and when I see and I want to talk to people that speak Spanish in my community." She continues, in her reflection:

R: "This picture is actually from one I went to La Paz, Mexico 4 or 5 years ago. **We ran into a ton of situations** where we wished we knew how to speak Spanish, **to relate to some of the locals.** I'm taking Spanish so I can **travel to different countries** and be **able to relate to the locals, not be lost all the time,**

and **just fully experience another culture**. I speak Spanish now to practice, and be ready whenever I'm introduced to a situation where I can't understand someone- **whether I'm travelling in the future, or at a grocery store today and in the Spanish food aisle...**"

Kristin's desire to speak Spanish in a "ton of situations" in order to "relate to some of the locals" would prevent her from not feeling "lost all the time" in order to "just fully experience another culture." In many ways, this narrative reflects a somewhat universal, if not romanticized, trope of the foreign language learner desiring to travel or study abroad "because of her desire to imagine herself anew in a context where her social options are broadened" (Kinginger, 2004, p. 219). However, as in her caption, the reflection takes a turn back to the local, where the language becomes doubly useful and utilitarian: Spanish speakers exist even in countries or states not imagined to be Spanish-speaking (a "Spanish food aisle" beckons). However, their linguistic capabilities are not framed with great complexity, and will not be understood if not for Spanish language education on part of the English-speaking student. Fellow students Barbara and Beth chime in with their support:

(Response by Barbara) Oct 17 1:18pm:

"I totally know what you mean by wanting to travel and speak the **language of the country you're in!** Especially since Spanish is used in such a **big part of the world!** I have never been to **Mexico**, but I'm going to **Spain** this summer and **have the same aspirations**. Are you planning on going back to **La Paz, Mexico** soon?"

(Response by Beth) Oct 18 1:16pm:

"**I can totally relate to** what you're saying about just **wanting to be able to simply communicate with the locals** when you are travelling! Also, to **Spanish speakers in your local community**."

While Beth more or less restates Kristin's words, Barbara engages further, and simultaneously echoes discourses that attach ideas of a singular nation (Mexico, in this case) to a singular language (Spanish), while also claiming that Spanish is simultaneously global in its speakership. Through this discursive framing, Spanish is again symbolically deported as a foreign language in this discussion.

Of course, the power of this discourse is that my students are likely unaware that their words take such power, and that they serve to symbolically deport. And I must remind myself that, as in any work or curriculum committed to social justice, a single exercise, class university professor cannot liberate or emancipate on their own. One "round" of *fotografía crítica* in a single academic term cannot qualitatively guarantee that students will begin to see themselves or others as culturally or linguistically complex. The objective of my work here, I must insist, is not to critique an immaturity or lack of awareness on their part. That assessment would be futile, unfair and cheap. What's important here is re-examining what can count as Spanish language education, based on an understanding of what our inherited foreign language education model affords students ideologically.

For example, in the cases I've just reviewed, these learners of Spanish aren't prizing bilingualism or multilingualism as a goal or lived reality for themselves or others in their lived worlds, even if they know these individuals to exist (and are close with). Rather, the photographs



evaluate cases in which the world is organized by separate, “parallel” monolingualisms (Heller, 1999) performed by themselves or imagined others, in bounded and divided spaces. In the student discussions, these include distinct nation-states, or selective, marked local contexts where Spanish may be spoken: the supermarket, for instance.

What’s clear is that the students are discursively framing a linguistic world in which Jason, for instance—and the borderlands he inhabits culturally and linguistically—cannot exist. Consider the case of Andrea, where she speaks with roommate Jenna. Jenna, or her linguistic abilities, are never identified explicitly as bilingual (or multilingual). Instead, Jenna’s Spanish is framed as an alternate monolingualism that she can turn on and off to aid Andrea when completing homework or studying for an exam: “Sometimes she will randomly start speaking in Spanish to me to help me understand the language.”

Our classrooms can potentially serve as spaces where students realize that the privileged opportunity to travel (Kristin) or engage with a Spanish-speaking roommate (Andrea) might inspire more critical consciousness about language and its ideological power. We might also take a more central focus on the multiple ways in which we all identify and perform bilingualism across visible and invisible borders. In this tradition FC has the potential to help mediate students’ own recognition of their racial and linguistic privileges (Schwartz & Boovy, 2017) an awareness which may be used in service of educational transformation within and across various spheres of influence (Adams, Bell & Griffin, 2007).

### **A Final Note: Finding Hope in Discomfort**

While these two conversations are by no means representative of the entirety of student answers or dialogue within this *fotografía crítica* prompt, they are indeed genuine, true responses to a prompt that our classroom community helped create. And, in other classroom communities where I’ve introduced these discussions, students genuinely feel that they are being asked to “see” Spanish differently. I must insist that this is a hopeful outcome in itself; discussions of language, race and borders do not traditionally find their place in language classrooms. If students begin to connect those ideas in ways that are real and personal, we’ve made progress as a learning community that perhaps only anticipated to spend ten weeks on basic-level Spanish grammar, vocabulary and conversation. To revisit a question posed at the beginning of this section, what strikes me about the conversations students are having with and through photographs is that they’re not evidence enough that *fotografía crítica* alone can re-center or re-locate voices of Spanish speakers or Spanish-English bilinguals. Instead, I’m inclined to believe that that re-centering can only be done with the permission and desire of those who claim those voices. This reveals itself as a consideration of empowerment, wherein power is realized through one’s expression of their voice (Ruiz, 1997). If FC remains an exercise haplessly mediated by and for White monolinguals who intend to gain access to a second monolingual identity in, with and through Spanish, voices that fit outside this model will not be truly heard if they aren’t included in authentic and discomfoting (Boler, 1999) ways. To revisit Jason’s words, I consider that this discussion has everything and nothing to do with him all at once. That is unsettling, but unsurprising. And, I should say: Jason himself has never enrolled in a Spanish class in his 37 years of life. When I think about that, I think about how Jason’s poem might as well be addressed to my students directly, and for good reason.

Boler (1999) introduces the differences between “spectating” and “witnessing” as organizers to thinking about “a pedagogy of discomfort.” And, such a distinction might just

organize how language education organizes culture, both in teaching “culture” as an idea that is inherently linguistic, and vice versa. But, language education is also product of dominant culture: Namely, it is a product of settler colonialism and white supremacy in and of itself. In a Spanish class, although students might be eager to challenge their identity as language learners, they might simultaneously resist critical examinations of the self, others and larger systems that may challenge more hard-wired beliefs and ways of locating their privilege in the world. Boler writes that pedagogies of discomfort must emphasize “collective witnessing as opposed to individualized self-reflection” (p. 176), wherein self-reflection implies “a mutual responsibility to one another” (p. 180) given the realities and urgencies of what we inherit historically. Historically our identities are built upon legacies of power and oppression: They are situated racially, and located relative to visible and invisible borders.

Ironically, Boler’s definition of “spectating” helps to interrogate FC in relatively literal ways:

“Spectating signifies learned and chosen modes of visual omission and erasure. To spectate, to be a voyeur, takes many forms: pleasurable Hollywood experience, “cinematic diversion”, “carries” us into the narrative, and rather than critically analyze the images we permit ourselves easy identification with dominant representations of good and evil. Spectating permits a gaping distance between self and other” (Boler, 1999, p. 184)

This quote immediately reminds me of my students taking photographs. I read Boler’s words as a cautionary note, worrying that *fotografía crítica*, even when assigned with good *intentions*, has as *impact* that maintains gaping distances, and that the distances themselves are new realizations of third borders (Davis, 2000) that re-inscribe the ‘foreign’ in foreign language education. But, herein I simultaneously locate a bit more hope, together with my students: If we can actively identify how we physically *make* distance and difference, through the act of *spectating*—perhaps we can begin to collectively witness in ways that allows us to answer a question I posed earlier. That question: How have certain bodies, languages, accents and voices traditionally *not belonged*—been rendered unwelcome—in classrooms where language (standard varieties of English or Spanish, for example) teaches and is taught? *Fotografía crítica*—particularly as we see in the examples above, as well as the process of reflecting upon those—has the potential to remind us that language isn’t inherently bound to nation-state, or territory. Individuals have to actively export that language across boundaries and borders that that have been constructed and mapped onto bodies and *wild* tongues. In this sense, we must recall Anzaldúa as we do Boler: I take hope in the fact that students may realize this fact in ways that bring us all discomfort, and discomfort that inspires us to reconsider what “counts” as language education. If we educate ourselves to learn language in order to spectate our world, we oppress the human potential of both ourselves and an imagined other. If we educate ourselves to learn language in order to witness and listen, then our classroom loses the authoritative power it has historically inherited: It ceases to exist as the exclusive space by which to validate expertise and knowledge, by which to appraise community or non-White voices and bodies.

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