

2-20-2020

Where Language is Beside the Point: English Language Testing for Mexicano Students in the Southwestern US

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The Sociopolitics of English Language Testing

Edited by
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and Peter I. De Costa

BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC
LONDON • NEW YORK • OXFORD • NEW DELHI • SYDNEY

BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC
Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
50 Bedford Square, London, WC1B 3DP, UK
1385 Broadway, New York, NY 10018, USA
29 Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2, Ireland

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First published in Great Britain 2020
This paperback edition published in 2022

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A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN: HB: 978-1-3500-7134-6
PB: 978-1-3502-7794-6
ePDF: 978-1-3500-7135-3
eBook: 978-1-3500-7136-0

Typeset by Deanta Global Publishing Service, Chennai, India

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Where Language is Beside the Point: English Language Testing for Mexicano Students in the Southwestern United States

Luis E. Poza and Sheila M. Shannon

Introduction

While the United States has always been a multilingual territory and nation (Wiley, 2014), its popular and official predilections for English are well documented, with Spanish being particularly marginalized (García, 2009; Macías, 2014). The vast majority of students labeled English learners (EL) (and thus subject to English language testing) in the United States use Spanish as a primary or heritage language (NCES, 2018), and a majority of these live in the Southwest. Thus, while noting the local particularities of different policy and sociolinguistic backdrops in other US regions and around the world, we focus our analysis on the contexts, history, and impacts of federal education policy and language testing on this subset, arguing that testing (like its preceding policies) consistently infantilizes and punishes bilingual students and disciplines their educators. We make our theoretical case through genealogy, a method of historiography and cultural critique that considers current circumstances not merely through chronology but rather thematically “to understand how various independently existing vectors of practice managed to contingently intersect in the past so as to give rise to the present” (Koopman, 2013, p. 107). Following Foucault (1975), our genealogy eyes mechanisms of power and considers how changes in policy and practice in the education of immigrant and bilingual youth correspond to enduring social relations between these students and dominant groups.

As such, this work begins with an overview of the linguistic ideological underpinnings of language testing in the United States, contending that it is an instrument of hegemonic English as a raciolinguistic project (Shannon, 1995). Bowing to it, educators adapt to the testing-related requirements rather than questioning and resisting them (Freire, 2005/1974) and in so doing cement language hierarchies rooted in ethnoculturalist (racist) constructions of an American identity that prizes whiteness, Christianity, and English proficiency (Schildkraut, 2003). We argue that testing regimes in this manner have made language a locus of discrimination and marginalization in lieu of previous characteristics such as race, ethnicity, and national origin. To demonstrate this evolution, we follow with a genealogical analysis of the relationship between Mexicans in the Southwest and the American government to show consistent political, economic, and linguistic hegemony and then connect these points to the testing regime of bilinguals in the United States today with further genealogical analysis of federal education policy. We close our theoretical argument including references to our empirical work in classrooms in California and Colorado offering pedagogical frameworks of resistance that disrupt US raciolinguistic hierarchies.

Language Ideologies and English Language Testing in the United States

We argue with a twofold theoretical framework that English language testing in the United States is an extension of the historical discrimination that we will describe in our subsequent genealogical analysis. First and foremost, we consider raciolinguistic perspectives (Alim, Rickford, and Ball, 2016; Flores and Rosa, 2015) and the broader field of language ideologies (Irvine, 1989; Kroskrity, 2004; Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994) to address how language is implicated in race-constructing projects (and vice versa), and how racial and linguistic—*raciolinguistic*—narratives underlie notions of national identity. Second, we consider language testing specifically as a mechanism of language planning (Shohamy, 2006, 2014) that sorts and punishes minoritized language users and coerces teachers into adaptation to unjust conditions (Freire, 2005). Regarding language testing in the United States, these two perspectives suggest that ideologies about *what*, *how*, and *by whom* language should be learned and often undergird current accountability regimes with assimilationist impulses toward a white, English-monolingual paradigm.

Language Ideologies and Raciolinguistic Perspectives

Language ideologies refer to the individual and societal beliefs and attitudes about language as a construct (what it is, how it is learned, how it should be used) and about the relative statuses among different languages and varieties (Irvine, 1989; Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994). Kroskrity (2004), meanwhile, cautions against monolithic understandings of language ideology by noting that language ideologies “are usually multiple, context-bound, and necessarily constructed from the sociocultural context of the speaker” (p. 496). That is, language ideologies are best understood as multitudinous, dynamic, situated, and at times contradictory.

This is plainly evident in US educational policy and jurisprudence underlying English language testing. On the one hand, it claims to protect the civil rights of minoritized linguistic communities by ensuring attention to their academic progress (or lack thereof) and, at times, advancing bilingualism as an asset. On the other hand, policy and court opinions often refer to these students as deficient and at risk because of their linguistic profiles. The contradiction is furthered by the reliance of these intended rights-protecting measures on high-stakes tests reflecting monolingual paradigms of language and language learning that, in fact, coercively incentivize English monolingualism (Menken and Solorza, 2014) while penalizing schools serving large populations of minoritized language users (Escamilla et al., 2003).

We argue that these impacts emerge from hegemonic English as a raciolinguistic American identity project. Scholars of *raciolinguistics* advance the term as a way to call attention to the intertwined constructions of race and language under colonial and postcolonial regimes. In the introduction of an edited volume by Alim, Rickford, and Ball (2016), Alim positions raciolinguistics as a commingling of linguistic and anthropological thought regarding “racialization as a process of socialization, in and through language, as a continuous process of becoming as opposed to being,” that, in turn, necessitates “theorizing language and race together, paying particular attention to how both social processes mutually mediate and constitute each other” (pp. 2–3). Flores and Rosa (Flores and Rosa, 2015; Rosa and Flores, 2017), meanwhile, examine the role of whiteness in linguistic paradigms, beginning with the dehumanization of indigenous peoples and their languages through to current preoccupations with the inadequacy of minoritized vernaculars and languages other than English for academic achievement. The authors point to a continuous strand of Eurocentric surveillance and judgment of the communicative practices of people of color. Thus, they advance a “raciolinguistic perspective”

to understand how the white 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 positioning in society as opposed to any objective characteristics of their language use. (Flores and Rosa, 2015, p. 151)

Certainly this perspective is relevant anywhere that European colonialism imposed white supremacist racial hierarchy upon all facets of society, including language. In the US context, this linguistic coloniality (Mignolo, 1996; Quijano, 2000a) elevates English stylings of the white middle and upper classes and inscribes racialized deficiency upon other languages and varieties through overt repression and symbolic violence (García, 2009; Macías, 2014; Wiley, 2014). English language testing serves as one such coercive mechanism.

Testing as Language Planning

We argue that testing as currently constituted in the United States—atop a mountain of standards for academic content, teacher preparation, and teacher practice that minimally engage with the sociopolitical realities of immigrant and bilingual children—cements language hierarchies rooted in what Schildkraut (2003) calls *ethnoculturalist* constructions of US identity, which prize whiteness, Christianity, and English proficiency. It does so by instilling “a surveillance that makes it possible to quantify, classify, and punish” (Foucault, 1975, p. 18) those acquiring English in schools through panopticism, the ever-present gaze of the powerful (not as a group of people, per se, but as particular ways of being and knowing discursively inscribed as normal and desirable within a society) through observation, sorting, and discipline (Foucault, 1975). Drawing on this early framework, various scholars have argued that mechanisms such as high-stakes tests, teacher observations, and rigid curriculum pacing guides serve to mechanize and standardize teacher practice as means of such surveillance (Bushnell, 2003; Webb, Briscoe, and Mussman, 2009). With respect to the education of immigrant and bilingual learners in the United States, language testing and its subsequent regimentation of curriculum and teacher practice serves as a means by which to surveil and constrain teachers and students from questioning and resisting hegemonic English and its affiliated racist and linguistic ideologies.

The notion of testing as a language planning instrument is neither new nor unique to the United States, even though this is where we devote our focus. Shohamy (2006) notes that language testing links language ideologies and the

societal linguistic realities they wish to foster, stating that testing “acts as a most powerful mechanism for manipulating language behaviors and the use of students, teachers, parents, and society as a whole” (p. 93). Shohamy adds that testing reinforces status hierarchies among languages and language varieties, perpetuates and legitimizes regimes of language standardization, and suppresses linguistic diversity and dynamism (p. 95). In separate work, Shohamy (2014) evokes Foucault’s observations about testing as a sorting and punishing tool.

The uses of test results have detrimental effects for test takers since such uses can create winners and losers, successes and failures, rejections and acceptances. Test scores are often the sole indicators for placing people in class levels, for granting certificates and prizes, for determining whether a person will be able to continue in future studies, for deciding on a profession, for entering special education classes, for participating in honour classes, for getting accepted to higher education and for obtaining jobs. (pp. 15–16)

Indeed, insofar as English language testing in the United States is instrumental in classifying students as EL and reifying this label, it is implicated in the tracking of EL-classified students into academic pathways with less engaging curriculum or college preparatory content (Callahan, Wilkinson, and Muller, 2010; Kanno and Kangas, 2014; Thompson, 2015; Umansky, 2016) and the inculcation of low self-efficacy among students who persist in this category (Dabach, 2014; Thompson, 2015). Moreover, high-stakes English testing has constricted access to bilingual education programs for EL-classified students as schools feel compelled to accelerate students to English proficiency at the expense of sustaining and developing their home languages (Menken, 2006, 2008; Menken and Solorza, 2014).

Beyond ethnocentric ideologies, testing also represents misguided ideologies about what language is and how it is learned. English language proficiency tests in the United States¹ examine language as segmented skills such as phonics, word knowledge, reading fluency, and grammatical conventions assessed against an orthographic norm, without account for the variations and communicative competencies of oral language. In addition, such skills are usually assessed in incremental and highly sequenced ways, presuming a uniform and linear trajectory of language development (see Leung and Scarino, 2016; Valdés and Figueroa, 1994; Valdés, Poza, and Brooks, 2014, for an in-depth critique of how language is conceptualized in assessment). Such a supposition runs counter to the burgeoning literature on sociocultural perspectives of second language acquisition, which highlights that language learning is nonlinear,

never-ending, situated within the language user's interactional needs and experiences, and interwoven with the full linguistic repertoire rather than distinct monolingualisms (Atkinson, 2011; Cumming, 2008).

Thus, the underlying assumptions upon which assessments are written reflect ideologies rooted in Eurocentric and monolingual paradigms about how language is learned and how such learning can be demonstrated. To wit, reviews of the California English Language Development Test administered in the state to measure progress toward English proficiency found not only that most test items did not align with prescribed language standards (California Department of Education, 2013) but also that the test overidentified students as EL as even students who had grown up speaking only English would have been classified as EL based on their score on the exam (García Bedolla and Rodriguez, 2011). Conversely, the Arizona state Department of Education was compelled to a settlement with the federal Office of Civil Rights for using English language tests as a means to underidentify students as EL and to prematurely reclassify such students as proficient in English (leaving them to fend for themselves in mainstream classes taught in English without adequate linguistic supports) in order to avoid provision of language support services to thousands of children (OCR, 2016). While capturing opposite outcomes (overidentification and protracted EL classification on the one hand, underidentification and fugacious support provision on the other), both states demonstrate the injurious results of classifying and tracking students based on tests that reify faulty ideologies about language and language learning.

These fallacious beliefs about language learning and how to assess it are doubly true in the case of bilinguals. Prior work notes that it is erroneous to presume that bilinguals should conform to native-speaker paradigms of either language, and that to assess students' knowledge, even linguistic knowledge, in a single language misses important information that students hold bilingually in their communicative repertoires as well as cognitive processes and abilities that result from their bilingualism (Valdés and Figueroa, 1994). Building from these important foundations, numerous scholars have proposed methods of assessment that invite bilingual ways of knowing and demonstrating knowledge (García, 2009b; Shohamy, 2011; López, Turkan, and Guzmán-Orth, 2017). Such innovations in assessment, and the courage and leadership that teachers must exert to implement them in the face of high-stakes tests elsewhere in the curriculum, lead us to a third and final facet of our theoretical argument that we will examine at the close of this work: critical consciousness. However, we must first establish the savage and exploitative history informing the social order that we call upon educators to resist.

English Language Testing in the United States for Mexicans, Mexican Americans, and Chicanos: A Genealogy

Colonial Traces and the Coloniality of Power

English in the United States in the shape, form, and sound of a standard variety is perceived as a monolithic language. Its proliferation and ascent to hegemonic status was an important part of the colonial project extending into the present day within the coloniality of power. In writing about Latin America, Aníbal Quijano (2000b) shifts the notion of a postcolonial era to understanding that the colonial has become wherever power is continuously exerted over the colonized. This includes exploitation of labor, extraction and appropriation of natural resources, the dehumanization and exploitation of indigenous peoples, and the spread of capitalism that enriches the state. The coloniality of power includes Eurocentric capitalism and “the Eurocentric pretension to the exclusive producer and protagonist of modernity” (Quijano, 2000b, p. 544).

Walter Mignolo (2000) explores the role of national languages, particularly Spanish and English in the Americas, within the notion of the coloniality of power. He demonstrates that the insistence on monolithic national languages polices against the naturally occurring diversity of languaging practices that speakers use across and within imperialistically constructed borders.²

Recently, Fregoso Bailón and Shannon (2016, 2019) have extended the idea of the coloniality of power to transcoloniality—the particular case of Mexicans who immigrate to the United States. Applying this transcoloniality of power framework to US educational policy and practice, particularly language testing and accountability programs, sheds light on a regime of surveillance and discipline acting upon students and teachers alike.

We now turn to the historical construction of the speaker of languages other than English in the United States, in particular the Spanish speaker, as someone in need of detection, correction, and discipline (Foucault, 1975) through testing.

Mid-Nineteenth-Century United States

The coloniality of power of the United States in North America began in earnest with the westward expansion in the mid-nineteenth century dramatically ignited by the US war against Mexico from 1845 to 1848. Prior to this conflict, the United States had formed twenty-eight states from the east coast to mid-continent. In 1845, the large northern territory of Mexico was added as the State

of Texas.³ The annexation of Texas and machinations of politicians, provocateurs, and entrepreneurs on both sides led to the war with Mexico (Conway, 2010). The Treaty of Guadalupe de Hidalgo ended the war, ceding Mexico's northern territory to the United States (comprising current states New Mexico, Arizona, California, Utah, Nevada, and Colorado) but also providing for the Mexicans who inhabited that territory to become US citizens and protect their land holdings (Griswold del Castillo, 1990). Del Castillo estimates that one hundred thousand Mexicans remained in the territory.⁴ Many of those in those communities spoke Spanish. And as San Miguel, Jr., and Valencia (1998) point out, the treaty insured that the Mexicans would have "the enjoyment of all the rights of citizens of the United States, including the right to maintain their language" (original text from the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Art. 9, excerpted from Miller, 1937, p. 362).

As the educational system developed in the southwestern United States from Texas west to California and north to Colorado and into New Mexico, it increasingly shifted toward a public system that shunned and eliminated any use of Spanish in the schools (San Miguel, Jr. and Valencia, 1998). This move was a clear violation of the treaty and a solid example of the coloniality of power. No longer colonized by the Spanish crown, Mexicans in the US Southwest were recolonized by the United States and subjected to coloniality and the erasure of their language.

United States in the Nineteenth Century and Beyond

The border between the United States and Mexico, with a wall running through it or not, is an invention of the political economy that capitalism demands. The Mexicans were already in what was to be the United States in 1848 and continue to come north as the US economy relies on the cheap labor that unauthorized entry provides. This example of the transcoloniality of power involves welcoming labor across borders without guaranteeing citizenship and the rights and dignity it affords. Labor unions pressured legislators to curtail the flow of unauthorized workers, while businesses, on the other hand, desired a way to retain a "legal" workforce relying heavily on Mexican workers (Fregoso Bailón and Shannon, 2016).

In response to this conflict of interests and the increasing numbers of unauthorized persons, upward of 3 million at the time, the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) was passed.⁵ Of most importance, however, the legislation would provide amnesty to certain qualified immigrants.

Nearly 3 million unauthorized persons applied for amnesty and over 2 million were granted temporary resident status. Once approved, recipients

began the process of naturalization with the application for legal residency and taking steps toward citizenship. English language testing emerges as an issue. As White, Bean, and Espenshade (1990) point out, the applicants could “later adjust to permanent resident alien status provided they [could] demonstrate a minimal understanding of English and a basic knowledge of U.S. civics and history” (p. 94).

Up until IRCA of 1986, the requirements for citizenship did indeed include some testing of English and civics. However, as Kunnan (2009) concludes from his review about the testing requirements, the point of testing was not clear at all.

The crux of the matter regarding the English language and the history and government requirements for naturalization is whether these tests have in any way been able to promote “civic integration,” “political allegiance,” “social cohesion,” “social harmony” among immigrants or whether they have become an irritating formality or a real new barrier to citizenship. (pp. 46–7)

The real test came with the amnesty applicants who became permanent residents and could then apply for citizenship. Presumably, they too would have to pass the English and civics tests whatever the point was. Though amnesty recipients (mostly Mexican) had worked and lived in the United States for an extended period of time, they had mostly done so in segregated conditions. Speaking English was not among the things that a migrant worker and an unauthorized person living in the United States required. Keeping safely on the margins with others in one’s same situation could be done entirely in Spanish. This linguistic segregation for Mexican immigrant adults in the workplace is commonplace and documented in studies about agricultural workers (Holmes, 2013; Stephen, 2007) and domestic workers (Hognadeau-Sotelo, 2007).

In 1988, Shannon (the second author of this chapter) had taken an assistant professor position at the University of Colorado Denver when the permanent residency applications began. Teaching Adult English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers in the MA program, she discovered that ESL classes were instituted with the provision that the amnesty recipient had to receive eighty hours of instruction in lieu of the civics test.⁶ The federal government had redesigned the testing of English and civics requirement for the particular group of applicants when it was clear that many of the applicants would have failed, making the entire amnesty program a failure. The federal government allotted funds to individual states to remedy the situation. In the case of Colorado, that resulted in the requirement of a certificate that the applicant had taken

eighty hours of ESL. Shannon discovered this program by observing in her MA students' classrooms who, several at the time, were teaching in one of these certificate programs.

In the case of one of her students, Shannon found that as a part of the state-funded program he taught a small group of applicants in a church with no pedagogical training nor was he provided with any material beyond a chalkboard. The ages and Spanish literacy levels of the applicants ranged greatly, which made planning and teaching challenging. Most of the students in this small group ended the eighty hours of instruction knowing little more English than when they had begun.⁷ The literature on testing and amnesty has no mention of this special program. Shannon, in her advocacy work in the community, had observed individuals and groups prepare for the "regular" test by memorizing a list of one hundred questions about US history and government in English and practicing among themselves. She also accompanied one amnesty applicant to her "interview" for citizenship. The only requirement was the certificate of eighty hours of ESL.

This egregious example of the transcoloniality of power where a whole system of exploitation of workers leads to making a sham of the naturalization process is illustrative of how language became beside the point in testing when the US economy needed workers regardless of language.⁸ But it did grant permanent residency and citizenship to thousands of people. And these people were men and women providing for their families including their own children. It is to the children that we now turn.

Transcoloniality and Language in US Schools

The indignities put upon Mexican and Chicano⁹ laborers have been ideologically replicated in the schooling of their children. Due in no small part to their linguistic background, these students have been racialized and segregated in American public schools as their parents have been exploited in American fields and factories. Identified by phenotype, surname, and linguistic profile, these students were relegated to *Mexican schools*, marked by inferior facilities and curriculum where students received, at best, "the illusion of schooling" (Donato, 2003; Donato and Hanson, 2012). Various legal victories put an end to the segregation of Mexican and Chicano students by ethnicity¹⁰ but left in place the potential to isolate these students away from a real education due to policies and practices around the education of bilingual students.

The Bilingual Education Act

The Bilingual Education Act (BEA) of 1968 was the first federal legislation to specifically address the needs of students learning English in schools. While providing funding for educational supports and research into bilingual programming, the Act primarily defines emergent bilingual students by their presumed lack of English proficiency and casts their language background as a problem to be solved (Ruiz, 1984). The wording of the BEA makes this position clear:

One of the *most acute educational problems* in the United States is that which involves millions of children of limited English-speaking ability because they come from environments where the dominant language is other than English; that additional efforts should be made to supplement present attempts to *find adequate and constructive solutions to this unique and perplexing educational situation*; and that the urgent need is for comprehensive and cooperative action now on the local, State, and Federal levels to develop forward-looking approaches to meet the *serious learning difficulties faced by this substantial segment of the Nation's school-age population*. (BEA, 1968, Sec. 702, emphasis our own)

Wiese and García (1998) provide a comprehensive review of the BEA from its inception in 1968 to its final bow in 1994. They indicate how the legislative language moves between assimilationist remedies that replace the other language with English and multicultural approaches that recognize bilingualism as a national asset. This latter approach, however, emphasizes the economic and national security benefits of a multilingual society at the expense of arguments affirming students' cultures (Flores and García, 2017; Petrovic, 2005). This theme will be repeated in separate legislation.

The final reauthorization of the federal BEA came in 1994. At this final point, the act invokes a language-as-resource orientation (Ruiz, 1984) but persists in deficit orientations with reference to the challenges they face in education due to cultural differences, poverty, and issues related to immigration. Wiese and García (1998) point out that neither the original nor subsequent legislation outline what bilingual education would constitute but rather *the class of students* it would target.

While the federal-level legislation about the education of bilingual students was being debated, children of immigrants in US schools became a concern. The US Supreme Court decided *Plyler v. Doe* (1982), a decision that struck down a Texas statute that allowed public school districts to charge tuition or completely deny access to a free public education to children whose parents or who

themselves were unauthorized migrants. The court's majority opinion, however, noted that unauthorized residents did not constitute a protected class and that education was not a fundamental right of the students themselves, but rather that "public education has a pivotal role in maintaining the fabric of our society and in sustaining our political and cultural heritage" (Matamuro, 2014, p. 203). In plain terms, *Plyler* meant that children of unauthorized parents could attend school from kindergarten through high school without reproach, while the adults in their families could very well be working without authorization and in danger of being identified and deported. Again, we see how the transcoloniality of power acts upon Mexicans and Chicanos with legislation that protects the society in which the unauthorized are situated while not giving them rights. We would like to emphasize here that just as the BEA never construed language as a right (Ruiz, 1984), *Plyler* established that the education of undocumented children or of undocumented parents was a benefit for society, not a right that they deserved (Shannon, 1999).

Replacing Instruction with Testing

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 was federal legislation deciding the educational policies and practices for all children. This legislation did away with the BEA and simultaneously removed reference to "bilingual" in any official way. The Office for Bilingual Education and Language Minority Affairs (OBEMLA) became the Office for English Language Acquisition (OELA). In place of bilingual education, a rigorous testing regime in English was put into place to determine annual progress toward English proficiency. For bilingual students, that has meant testing for content standards and language development measured against an English-monolingual paradigm.

Grinberg and Saavedra (2000) observed during this time that

contemporary bilingual/ESL education has not advanced a cultural and political critique in a democratic and emancipatory way; instead, it prepares the students it serves to take their places on the lower rungs of the U.S. social hierarchy. (p. 419)

We argue, similarly, that the shift from bilingual education as a way to meet the needs of a special group of students to English-only, test-based approaches continues identifying the problem as residing in the students as the BEA had for twenty-six years and then puts in place testing that has the effect of disciplining and punishing them, a Foucauldian twist of fate.

Critical Consciousness, Teaching for Liberation, and English Language Testing

The final theoretical underpinning of this work is Freire's (2005/1974) notion of critical consciousness. Freire posits that humankind, unlike other species, is able not only to perceive the objective world in its present state but also to place the present into a temporal narrative that considers both causality and future outcomes. By viewing circumstances temporally, humankind is capable of perceiving critically, that is, with an inquisitive lens about the present state of affairs and with the potential to enact change upon present and future conditions. Freire here distinguishes between *adaptation* and *integration*, with the former consisting of human-as-object that is merely adjusted to its condition, while the latter posits a human-as-subject with the "critical capacity to make choices and to transform that reality" (p. 4). Teaching, Freire argues, must foster integration among students such that they are critically engaged with their realities and agentively seeking to improve conditions for themselves and others.

Scholars of bilingual education and ESL teaching have encouraged such a framework in contemporary practice. In work that documented the daily experiences of immigrant students and the "ESL ghetto" of segregated, insipid, and ultimately unhelpful curriculum to which they had been relegated, Valdés (1998, 2001) advances a notion for a critical pedagogy in ESL. Akin to Freirian notions of integration, Valdés advocates for a pedagogy that does more than just prepare students to succeed within current systems, but also to help students perceive the power relations in which their language and their very existences are embedded, and to offer them new ways to understand their lives and opportunities. Such a pedagogy would reject "intellectually impoverished materials" and the teaching "of syllabi based on irrelevant assumptions" (1998, p. 16).

In this vein, Gutiérrez (2008) discusses the pedagogical ecology of a precollegiate summer program for migrant students in Southern California in which students develop conventional academic literacy practices but with a sense of historicity and agency. Gutiérrez specifically describes the learning ecology as one in which "learning is supported and expanded in the language and social practices of the institute's lived curriculum—a curriculum that fuses social, critical, and sociocultural theory with the local, the historical, the present, and the future of migrant communities" (p. 153). Such an arrangement, Gutiérrez argues, creates a *collective Third Space* in which students draw upon their own experiences, histories, and knowledge along with the dialogic guidance of

the program's instructors to identify, express, and challenge the tensions and oppression in their lives and others' through joint activity. Analyzing the same summer program, Espinoza (2009) describes a series of inquiring, dialogic exchanges that he characterizes as *educational sanctuary*. Espinoza draws on various conceptualizations of "radical" spaces to frame his observations in the migrant program, characterizing these as "lived spaces in which vernacular collectivities actually breathe, speak, move, interact, make meaning, and critique" (p. 45). Thus, both *collective Third Space* and *educational sanctuary* capture these frameworks of liberation insofar as students' experiences and practices undergird a challenging curriculum that engages them in learning for their own sake and for that of a more just world.

Our own prior work has similarly highlighted opportunities for such counter-hegemonic moves. Shannon (1995, 1995b, 1999) provides insights from one bilingual classroom that disrupted hegemonic English by elevating the status of Spanish in general and students' language practices in particular within the curriculum. The teacher, Mrs. D, did so by positioning students as communicative experts and their linguistic resources as assets that helped them learn content, assist other students, and nurture respect and deeper relationships with family and community. Moreover, Mrs. D expressly rejected the social hierarchies that existed outside her classroom, insisting that equality was a central principle for students and their language practices. Meanwhile, Poza (2016, 2017, 2018) documents experiences for students and one teacher in a fifth-grade bilingual classroom in Northern California. Through ethnographic interviews with the teacher and classroom observations, the work describes a teacher, *Maestro*, mindful of the constraining impulse of tests insofar as the impetus to raise scores and rates of English proficiency reclassification results in students being removed from Spanish instruction for English remediation (Poza, 2016). Ultimately, however, *Maestro* is compelled to let students leverage their bilingual repertoires for purposeful and strategic uses across registers drawing on students' own communicative experiences and competencies (Poza, 2017, 2018). All of these cases exemplify Freire's notion of integration insofar as teachers and students engage dialogically, exalt and leverage familiar histories and language practices, and openly call into question the standards to which they are called to conform as well as the social hierarchies undergirding them.

The affordances of day-to-day classroom practice relative to highly structured standardized tests do not negate the potential for principles of critical consciousness to inform English language testing. Assessment itself can seek to understand English language development within the contexts of students' bi/

multilingualism. For instance, Gorter and Cenoz (2017) review literature on multilingualism in assessment and describe several approaches to the matter. One approach norms students' scores based on their linguistic profiles (Gathercole et al., 2013), and thus students' language development is evaluated relative to that of peers who share their exposure to the target language rather than relying exclusively on a monolingual paradigm. Another approach the authors highlight by Cenoz, Arocena, and Gorter (2013) evaluates students' skills in each of three languages (Spanish, English, and Basque) to obtain individual language scores as well as aggregate bilingual and multilingual scores. In noting that there were no significant differences in bilingual and multilingual scores despite notable difference in individual language scores for Spanish L1 and Basque L1 users, the researchers note that measurement of students' complete repertoires gives a much better view of their linguistic capabilities and affirms the value of their non-English languages. The authors also point to the Language Passport used as part of the European Language Portfolio wherein students self-assess their competencies across languages in their repertoire. Finally, the authors describe a series of works in which translanguaging perspectives (allowances for multilingualism within the assessment either in the prompts or responses) can improve English language testing through both the inclusion of multilingual tasks in assessments and in the production of tests more closely aligned to the actual language practices of multilinguals. This last approach, unlike the earlier strategies that still measure languages in isolation even if doing so at the same time as other languages in students' repertoires, better reflects the concept of a singular linguistic repertoire that proponents of translanguaging perspectives advance.

Conclusion

The uplifting visions of education for Mexican and Chicano students described above, along with many others in that vein, point a way forward despite the raciolinguistic perspectives underlying omnipresent English language testing and its hegemonic push toward white, English-monolingual normativity. English language testing is likely a mainstay in American education for the foreseeable future, but teachers can resist its permeation into their curriculum and relationships with students through adoption of the instructional and assessment philosophies and practice described above. To do so, teachers must provide students access to meaningful yet challenging content rather than diluted

materials or extended language practice in isolation. They must affirm, nurture, and expand students' linguistic and academic repertoires rather than treat their prior knowledge and background as deficits to overcome or repertoires to be restricted. Finally, they must themselves call into question the prevalent power relations in language and in language teaching (Flores, 2013) to encourage their students to do so as well.

Notes

- 1 English proficiency testing in the United States is conducted primarily through two consortium-generated tests: the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 test developed by WIDA is used in thirty-nine states and territories, including most southwestern states except California and Arizona, which developed their own standards and tests. The ELPA 21 (English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century) consortium developed separate standards and tests in use in eleven states, mainly in the Southeast and Midwest. Both tests assess language by modality (listening, speaking, reading, writing) and using linear growth trajectories with monolingual paradigms of proficiency (for a more detailed examination of the WIDA ACCESS test in use, see King and Bigelow, 2018).
- 2 The notion of *linguaging* emerges in various literatures to take into account the encounters of languages through colonialization, slavery, and forced migration through the world in “modern” times. We acknowledge the important and extensive work that has been accomplished and is developing in the United States in particular with the related phenomenon of *translinguaging* that we turn to later in the chapter.
- 3 Mexico had gained its independence from Spain in 1821.
- 4 Griswold del Castillo (1990) points out that among this number were “a large number of Hispanicized and nomadic Indians” (p. 62).
- 5 Congress wanted the onus to be not only on the worker but also on business itself. Therefore, IRCA contained provisions that outlawed the hiring of unauthorized workers.
- 6 Kunnan (2009) reviews the evolution of the language and civics testing for citizenship and shows how it was never clear if the civics test was also a test of English. He cites Etzioni (2007) who concluded, “The test hinders those who do not speak English and favors immigrants from English-speaking countries and persons who can afford extensive English education prior to their arrival, or once they are in the U.S.” (p. 43).
- 7 Congress had to act in order to avoid rendering the whole amnesty program useless. An English as a Second Language (ESL) program was begun with federal dollars funneled to the state level.

- 8 In order to make a case for the how language is beside the point for testing in the United States, we are circumventing the political and economic forces that have determined how workers come to the United States, including the years in which men came on a seasonal basis (The Bracero Program 1942–64), to the dismantling of that program which did not stop the workers from coming but encouraged their families to join them as the border crossings were too risky and kept families separated for long periods of time. (See Galarza, 1978, for a detailed account.)
- 9 We refer to Mexicans in the US Southwest here as Mexicans and Chicanos for those who identify as such and to include anyone who resides in the US Southwest or has moved from there to other areas of the United States who are of Mexican origin. We do not intend to ignore other Latinx individuals or communities who are from other parts of Latin America. The cases and examples are about Mexicans and Chicanos specifically or as an example of indexicality (Bucholtz and Hall, 2004); that all Latinx-looking or sounding individuals are Mexican regardless of whether or not is the case.
- 10 See, for example, *Alvarez v. Lemon Grove*, 1931; *Delgado v. Bastrop*, 1948; *Gonzales v. Sheely*, 1951; and *Mendez v. Westminster*, 1946.

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