

Do You Hear What I Hear?

Raciolinguistic Ideologies and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies

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Scholars calling for the development of culturally sustaining pedagogies often point to the need for new educational approaches in response to dramatic demographic shifts that have transformed the nation's ethnoracial makeup (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014). Now that students of color predominate within U.S. public schools, the marginalization of the linguistic and cultural practices of these students can no longer be attributed to their "minority" status. The rapidly rising U.S. Latinx¹ population is central to this changing cultural, linguistic, and ethnoracial terrain. In this chapter, we focus on the ways that culturally sustaining pedagogies can reframe our thinking about language learning among Latinx students—"heritage Spanish learners" and "English language learners" alike. Specifically, we show how "asset-based pedagogies," which seek to position Latinx students' linguistic practices as resources rather than deficits by building on them to facilitate standardized language learning, can inadvertently contribute to the reproduction of the very forms of stigmatization that they seek to overcome. By embracing Latinx students' cultural and linguistic practices only insofar as they contribute to the learning of "academic language," asset-based pedagogies are often rooted in the notion that "home languages" and "academic languages" are empirically discrete categories rather than ideological constructions. These asset-based pedagogies are based on the presumption that students of color will become academically successful when they learn to produce the appropriate academic codes. However, we demonstrate the ways that the linguistic practices of students of color are systematically misheard and devalued regardless of the extent to which they might seem to correspond to standardized academic language. These mishearings and devaluations are linked to forms of linguistic

profiling (Alim, 2004; Baugh, 2007; Zentella, 2014) that people of color face when communicating in “White public space” (Hill, 1998).² Jane Hill defines “White public space” as “a morally significant set of contexts that are the most important sites of the practices of a racializing hegemony, in which Whites are invisibly normal, and in which racialized populations are visibly marginal and the objects of monitoring ranging from individual judgment to Official English legislation” (1998, p. 682). Building on these analyses of race and language, we suggest that perceptions of different populations’ language use as “academic” or “unacademic” should be understood in relation to “raciolinguistic ideologies,” which conflate certain racialized bodies with linguistic deficiency unrelated to any objective linguistic practices, and highlight the ways in which culturally sustaining pedagogies can challenge the educational inequalities that these ideologies (re)produce.

In this chapter we seek to contribute to the emergent literature on culturally sustaining pedagogies by entering into critical dialogue with advocates of asset-based approaches to language education. We stand in solidarity with the view that deficit-based approaches to language diversity are stigmatizing and contribute to the reproduction of educational inequality. However, we question some of the underlying assumptions in many asset-based approaches—specifically, the discourses of “appropriateness” that lie at their core, and the ways that such discourses devalue Latinx students’ linguistic practices. Discourses of appropriateness are tied to respectability politics. For people of color, respectability politics often frame racial inequality as the product of individual behaviors rather than structural processes (Harris, 2014). The implication is that if marginalized populations would engage in adequately respectable or appropriate behaviors, they would avoid stigmatization. However, as we have seen with countless cases, including President Barack Obama (Alim & Smitherman, 2012), racialized populations can be stigmatized regardless of their behavior. When it comes to language, these discourses of appropriateness, we argue, involve the conceptualization of standardized linguistic practices as a discrete set of linguistic forms that are understood to be appropriate for academic settings. Examples of discourses of linguistic appropriateness include the notion that for students of color, the goal of language education is the mastery of mainstream spoken and written language norms. This is one of the ways in which the thinking that students of color “should conform to White, middle-class social norms and identity representations persists” (Ladson-Billings, 1999, p. 196). Such “one-way” or “assimilate into Whiteness” thinking continually places the onus on students of color to modify their behavior so that they embody appropriateness (Paris, 2016, p. 5).

In contrast, we seek to highlight the racialized ideas about language through which different racialized persons come to be constructed as engaging in appropriately academic linguistic practices. Specifically, we suggest that the ideological construction and value of standardized linguistic

practices are anchored in what we term *raciolinguistic ideologies*—ideologies that conflate certain racialized persons with linguistic deficiency irrespective of their empirical linguistic practices. That is, raciolinguistic ideologies produce racialized language users who are constructed as linguistically deviant even when engaging in linguistic practices positioned as normative or innovative when produced by privileged White language users.³

This raciolinguistic perspective builds on the critique of the White gaze—a perspective that privileges dominant White perspectives on the linguistic and cultural practices of racialized communities—that is central to calls for enacting culturally sustaining pedagogies (Paris & Alim, 2014). We, too, seek to reframe racialized populations outside of this White gaze and hope to answer the question of what pedagogical innovations are possible if “the goal of teaching and learning with youth of color was not ultimately to see how closely students could perform White middle-class norms but to explore, honor, extend, and problematize their heritage and community practices” (Paris & Alim, 2014, p. 86). The framework of raciolinguistic ideologies allows us to examine not only the “eyes” of Whiteness but also its “mouth” and “ears.” Specifically, a raciolinguistic perspective seeks 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 Latinx students as deviant. This “deviance” is based on the racial positioning of Latinxs in society as opposed to empirical characteristics of their language use.⁴ As with the White gaze, the White speaking and listening subject should be understood not as a biographical individual but rather as an ideological position and mode of perception that shapes our racialized society. In this sense, White listening subjectivities are inhabited and enacted not simply by individual White people, but also potentially people of color, as well as seemingly inanimate objects such as institutions and assessments. Thus, it is crucial to analyze the ways that a range of actors and entities privilege hegemonic Whiteness as it pertains to language and other social practices.

Here we explore the ways that raciolinguistic ideologies affect the education of Latinx students designated as long-term English learners (i.e., students who have been designated as English language learners for 7 or more years) and heritage Spanish language learners (i.e., students who have learned Spanish primarily at home or in other settings outside of school). These educational categories are typically thought to classify distinct populations and linguistic practices and are thus conventionally analyzed separately. However, by theorizing raciolinguistic ideologies, we offer a perspective from which long-term English learners and heritage Spanish language learners can be understood to inhabit a shared position as raciolinguistic Others vis-à-vis the White listening subject. Throughout the chapter, we illustrate how asset-based approaches to language education, which might appear to embrace Latinx students’ linguistic practices

as valuable resources rather than handicaps, in fact reproduce inequality by positioning their linguistic practices as less “appropriate” for academic settings than others. These asset-based pedagogies are particularly deceptive because they appear to value linguistic diversity, yet they are ultimately anchored in the notion that only particular groups need to change their linguistic practices in order to experience educational achievement. Asset-based pedagogies often require Latinx students to model their linguistic practices after the White speaking subject despite the fact that the White listening subject continues to perceive these students’ language use in stigmatizing ways. In contrast, culturally sustaining pedagogies can help us to reimagine the linguistic practices of Latinx students not simply as starting points from which to learn appropriate academic language, but as legitimate practices in their own right.

RACIOLINGUISTIC IDEOLOGIES AND LONG-TERM ENGLISH LEARNERS

Long-term English learners have been defined in the literature as students designated as English learners for 7 or more years (Menken & Kleyn, 2010). Scholars have argued that subtractive language education that has failed to build on the home linguistic practices of long-term English learners has led to a situation in which their “native languages have not been fully developed in school and instead have been largely replaced by English” (Menken & Kleyn, 2010, pp. 399–400). Based on this framing, Menken and Kleyn (2010) argue that “the education of these students must be additive, particularly in the area of academic literacy, so that we provide students with a strong foundation as they move to higher grades” (p. 414).

This exemplifies a typical asset-based approach, which attempts to value minoritized linguistic practices as starting points to build on, as opposed to a culturally sustaining pedagogies approach, which attempts to reimagine minoritized linguistic practices not simply as starting points but rather as central components of all stages of learning across contexts. We understand from personal experience the appealing nature of such an asset-based approach to working with this population of students, as Nelson worked closely with Menken and Kleyn in developing the original asset-based framework in response to deficit framings of this student population. Yet, as the work was taken up in ways that will be examined below, we began to identify limitations to the framework. Though we continue to support the idea of building on, rather than replacing, the home linguistic practices of students who are categorized as long-term English learners, we realized that such framing places the brunt of the responsibility on these students to mimic the linguistic practices of the White speaking subject while reifying the White listening subject’s racialization of these students’ linguistic practices (Flores, Kleyn, & Menken, 2015).

This racialization of language can be found in deficit perspectives that are often used to describe the linguistic practices of students categorized as long-term English learners. In a widely circulated policy report on long-term English learners, Olsen (2010) describes these students as having “high functioning social language, very weak academic language, and significant deficits in reading and writing skills” (p. 2). She also describes them as lacking “rich oral language and literacy skills in scholastic English needed to participate and succeed in academic work” and exhibiting “little to no literacy skills in either language and often only a skeleton academic vocabulary in their home language” (p. 23). In short, long-term English learners are seen as deficient in the academic language that is appropriate for a school context and necessary for academic success.

The solutions Olsen (2010) offers for confronting the challenges faced by long-term English learners focus exclusively on changing their linguistic practices. One recommendation calls for long-term English learners to master the language deemed appropriate for school by placing them in “Academic Language Development” classes that focus “on powerful oral language, explicit literacy development, instruction in the academic uses of English, high quality writing, extensive reading of relevant texts, and an emphasis on academic language and complex vocabulary” (p. 33). Another calls for long-term English learners to receive additive instruction that develops their home language through placement in “native speakers classes” that are “designed for native speakers, and include explicit literacy instruction aligned to the literacy standards in English and designed for skill transfer across languages” (p. 35). In both of these recommendations, the solution to the problem posed by long-term English learners is squarely focused on molding them into White speaking subjects who have mastered the empirical linguistic practices deemed appropriate for a school context.

This appropriateness discourse overlooks the ways that the very construction of a linguistic category such as long-term English learner is produced by the White listening subject and is not based on discrete linguistic practices. In fact, if we look at their complete linguistic repertoires across languages and varieties, we find that these so-called long-term English learners are adept at using their bilingualism in strategic and innovative ways—indeed, in ways that might be considered quite appropriate and desirable were they animated by a privileged White student (Flores et al., 2015).

An example from an interview with Tamara,⁵ a Latina New York City high school student classified as a long-term English learner, illustrates this point (Menken & Kleyn, 2010). This interview was conducted as part of the aforementioned study examining the schooling experiences of long-term English learners in which Nelson participated (Menken & Kleyn, 2010). At the time of the interview Tamara was a sophomore who was classified as a long-term English learner because she had failed to pass the state English language proficiency exam throughout her schooling career. Her parents were both born in Mexico, but Tamara was born in the Bronx. Tamara and

her parents communicate primarily in Spanish, though Tamara claimed to sometimes “mix English with Spanish.” Like Tamara, her siblings are bilingual, and she reported frequently moving back and forth between the languages in her interactions with them. She also reported texting and emailing in both languages, depending on the person with whom she was communicating. During an interview, she described the ways she strategically uses her English and Spanish to communicate:

Researcher: So you mix English and Spanish a lot? A little?

Tamara: It depends, ‘cause some people they know English and Spanish, but not a lot of Spanish. And sometimes they don’t know Spanish at all. I’ll have to talk to them in English. Well everybody I know speaks English.

Researcher: Anyone you know who speaks Spanish, is there usually some mixing?

Tamara: Yeah, like I have these friends downstairs. There’s some that speak English, but it’s less than 50 percent that they speak English, so I have to speak Spanish. And there’s some that I speak English, English only.

Were Tamara a privileged White student engaging in English linguistic practices in the ways that she did in this interview, her linguistic practices would likely be perceived differently. In fact, were she a privileged White student who was able to engage in the bilingual language practices that she described, she might even be perceived as linguistically gifted and as a talented cultural broker more broadly. Tamara not only showed her competence in English during the interview (which was conducted entirely in English), but she also demonstrated her understanding of appropriateness—namely, that she should use English, Spanish, or a combination thereof in ways that accommodate her interlocutor. She understands the necessity of adapting her speech to the situation in which she finds herself. Yet the language proficiency exam continues to “hear” Tamara as an English language learner. In this sense, the state language proficiency exam operates as a particular form of the White listening subject by classifying students like Tamara as linguistically deficient despite evidence that illustrates their linguistic dexterity.

Tamara faces stigmatization based on ideological perspectives from which students designated as long-term English learners may be recognized as engaging in English language practices that are appropriate outside of an academic context, yet are unable to master English language practices that are necessary for success in school. Indeed, Olsen (2010) articulates a dichotomous framing of home and school linguistic practices when she describes the home language of long-term English learners “as commonly referred to with terms such as ‘Spanglish’ or ‘Chinglish,’ and while it is expressive and functional in many social situations, it is not a strong foundation for

the language demands of academic work in Standard English” (p. 23). In other words, the home linguistic practices of long-term English learners are seen as appropriate outside of school but inappropriate inside school. In addition, their home linguistic practices are seen as contributing little to the development of the linguistic practices deemed appropriate in a school context. Valdés (2015) argues that these strict distinctions between home and school linguistic practices inform mainstream educational approaches to language learning that undermine and stigmatize Latinxs’ bilingual “multicompetencies” across generations.

Another excerpt from the interview with Tamara also complicates this dichotomous framing of home and school language proficiencies. This is best illustrated by her response to a question about how she felt taking a “Spanish for Native Speakers” class that was explicitly designed to teach her and other long-term English learners the Spanish deemed appropriate for school:

I felt like it was good. I thought that I was actually learning more about my original language that I have at home, and I think it was very helpful because I had to do some speech in church, so actually working in this class actually helped me with that speech. It was good.

In contrast to Olsen’s assertion that the home linguistic practices of long-term English learners are not a strong foundation for academic work, Tamara articulated the ways that the linguistic practices in which she engages at church and at school complement one another. Tamara is able to build bidirectional relationships between home and school that transcend the crude dichotomy of academic versus nonacademic that lies at the core of the long-term English learner label. Tamara’s case dovetails with Brooks’s (2016) analysis of long-term English learners’ literacy practices, which highlights the ways in which these students’ English language abilities are systematically overlooked or erased by researchers, policymakers, and educators. Were Tamara a privileged White student, questions would never be raised as to whether her home linguistic practices provide a strong foundation for what she does in school. Instead, these connections would be seen as a natural outcome of the education process—a natural outcome denied to Tamara because of her racial positioning in U.S. society.

Tamara’s experiences demonstrate how asset-based pedagogies that seek to build on the home linguistic practices of Latinx students designated as long-term English learners are fundamentally limited in that they reproduce the notion that only particular practices are legitimate or appropriate for academic settings. A culturally sustaining pedagogies approach would allow us to see how Tamara’s home linguistic practices are not simply starting points from which to learn academic language, but rather how Tamara is already engaging in similar linguistic practices at home and in school despite

how raciolinguistic ideologies make it difficult to hear her in this way. The next section explores the ways in which Latinx students designated as heritage Spanish learners are faced with similar raciolinguistic ideologies that continually mishear their linguistic practices as inappropriate, incorrect, or inadequate.

RACIOLINGUISTIC IDEOLOGIES AND HERITAGE LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Heritage language learning is often framed as addressing issues of language loss and/or recovery, or of language shift away from one's "native language" to state-sponsored languages. Indeed, there are "problems of definition" (Valdés, 2005, p. 411) in determining what constitutes a heritage language and its speakers. Definitions range in focus from membership in a particular community and personal connection through family background, on the one hand, to particular kinds of linguistic proficiency, on the other (Carreira, 2004). Fishman (2001) notes that based on this range of definitions, "heritage language" can be used in the United States to alternately refer to languages of peoples indigenous to the Americas (e.g., Navajo), languages used by the European groups that colonized the Americas (e.g., German), and languages used by immigrants arriving in the United States after it became a nation-state (e.g., Korean). Many languages fit into more than one of these groups (e.g., Spanish, which was a colonial heritage language before it was an immigrant heritage language). Focusing on applied perspectives, Valdés (2001) points out that "foreign language educators use the term [heritage language learner] to refer to a language student who is raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken, who speaks or at least understands the language, and who is to some degree bilingual in that language and in English" (p. 38).

Similar to the interventions proposed for long-term English learners, many heritage language programs distinguish between the acquisition of language skills that are relevant only to restricted domains outside of school settings (e.g., homes and communities) and skills that are associated with success in mainstream educational institutions. From these perspectives, the goal of heritage language learning is to build academic language proficiency in one's "native language." These programs seek to value the skills students bring to the classroom while expanding their "academic" language repertoires in their "native" language. At the same time, they often reproduce standard language ideologies that draw rigid distinctions between appropriate "academic" and "social" language use. This constructed distinction between appropriate academic and social language obscures the ways that academic language is effectively used outside of formal school contexts and social language is effectively used in conventional classroom settings. Despite the constructed nature of this distinction, only some groups are stigmatized

for using so-called social practices in academic settings. As with the case of long-term English learners, the discourse of appropriateness here serves as a vehicle for the White listening subject to position heritage learners as deficient for engaging in practices that would likely be seen as dexterous for privileged White students.

It is clear that advocates and theorists of appropriateness-based models of heritage language education seek to value the linguistic and cultural practices of language-minoritized students. For example, Valdés (2001) calls into question the notion of the “mythical” bilingual with equal proficiencies in two languages. She also emphasizes the arbitrary nature of characterizing “prestige” varieties of linguistic practice as inherently more sophisticated than “nonprestige” varieties. This distinction is based on the sociolinguistic concept of diglossia (Fishman, 1967), which refers to the ways that language varieties are positioned as formal or “high” (i.e., prestige) and informal or “low” (i.e., nonprestige). Highlighting the ideological nature of this distinction, Valdés (2001) notes that there are features of language that are familiar to nonprestige speakers yet unfamiliar to prestige speakers and vice versa. In this formulation, the problem is not that nonprestige speakers possess “a somewhat narrower range of lexical and syntactic alternatives” (p. 46), but that they do not use the prestige variety. We extend this argument to suggest that the notion of prestige language reflects a form of linguistic normativity anchored in raciolinguistic ideologies and serves as a coded way of describing racialized populations that is unrelated to empirical linguistic practices. We suggest that people are positioned as speakers of prestige or nonprestige language varieties based not on what they actually do with language but, rather, how they are heard by the White listening subject.

Valdés and Geoffrion-Vinci (1998) provide us with a point of entry into illustrating this claim through their description of Estela, a second-generation Chicana from Texas who grew up speaking English and Spanish, has a BA in Spanish, and is a “doctoral student in a Spanish literature department at a prestigious university” (p. 473). Despite these bilingual experiences and academic credentials, some of Estela’s professors described her Spanish as “limited” and questioned the legitimacy of her admission to the doctoral program. Meanwhile, some of her fellow students laughed when she spoke Spanish in class. Valdés and Geoffrion-Vinci face significant difficulty when they seek to identify the specific linguistic issues involved in the stigmatization of Estela’s Spanish:

When pressed to describe what they perceive to be her limitations, Estela’s professors can give few details. . . . Most of the faculty agree that Estela’s written work . . . is quite competent. Still, there is something about her speech that strikes members of the Spanish department faculty as not quite adequate and causes them to rank her competence even below that of Anglophones who have acquired Spanish as a second language. (p. 473)

Estela has clearly enjoyed a great deal of academic success, and yet her professors continue to “hear” her as having linguistic deficits that they cannot quite identify. Taking a raciolinguistic perspective allows us to situate this hearing within the racial hierarchies of U.S. society. As a second-generation Chicana, Estela’s Spanish language use is stigmatized vis-à-vis European and Latin American varieties of Spanish, which are privileged in mainstream Spanish language learning at the university level in the United States. This stigmatization is based on the notion that U.S. Latinxs are not socialized to correct Spanish or English linguistic practices by their families and communities. This reflects the deficit-based perspectives from which their bilingualism is viewed as a problem rather than a strength (Rosa, 2014; Zentella, 2005). What if the problem is not Estela’s limited communicative repertoire but the racialization of her language use and the inability of the White listening subject to hear her racialized body speaking appropriately? The notion that there is something unidentifiable, yet inferior, about Estela’s speech—so much so that it is viewed as less proficient than that of students who learned Spanish as a second language—suggests that raciolinguistic ideologies are at play in shaping perceptions of her language use as somehow insufficiently academic. These ideologies lead to situations in which racialized students such as Estela, whose lived experiences of bilingualism could be interpreted as significantly more sociolinguistically dexterous than her classmates and even many of her professors, are perceived as linguistically inferior and in need of remediation.

Valdés (2001) analyzes these contradictions, noting that heritage learners often possess the ability to “carry out conversations on everyday topics with ease and confidence and may even be able to understand rapidly spoken language that includes the subtle use of humor” and goes on to state that “in comparison to students who have acquired the language exclusively in the classroom, the heritage language student may seem quite superior in some respects and quite limited in others” (p. 47). For many heritage language education advocates, the solution to this contradiction is to embrace an asset-based approach where heritage language learners must build from proficiencies developed outside of the classroom in order to master the language that is appropriate in an academic setting. However, from a raciolinguistic perspective, heritage language learners’ linguistic practices are devalued not because they fail to meet a particular linguistic standard, but because they are spoken by racialized bodies and thus heard as illegitimate by the White listening subject. That heritage speakers with highly nuanced language skills are positioned as less skillful than their counterparts “who have acquired the language exclusively in the classroom” is precisely the power of raciolinguistic ideologies as they apply to conceptions of heritage language issues. More recently, Valdés (2015) has shown how the “curricularization of language” stems from and contributes to problematic language ideologies that arbitrarily associate some language practices with school

uses and others with social uses. This insight is connected to our critique of asset-based approaches to heritage language education, which are often rooted in arbitrary distinctions between linguistic practices that are appropriate for academic and social uses. These asset-based approaches do not sufficiently address the ways that the language practices of students of color are systematically heard as nonacademic based on raciolinguistic ideologies enacted by White listening subjects.

By approaching heritage language learning with the understanding that the social positions of different language users, rather than simply their linguistic repertoires, impact how their linguistic practices are heard, we can move beyond the idea that establishing the legitimacy of all linguistic practices will somehow lead to the eradication of linguistic stigmatization. This involves shifting the focus of both research and practice in language education from analyzing linguistic forms to analyzing positions of enunciation and reception; such a shift makes it possible to see how different linguistic practices can be stigmatized in strikingly similar ways based on marginalized speakers' shared, racialized positions of enunciation and particular listeners' hegemonic positions of reception. Conversely, similar linguistic practices can be valued in strikingly different ways based on raciolinguistic ideologies. For example, Hill's (2008) analysis of "Mock Spanish" practices (e.g., "no problemo," "el cheap-o," etc.) shows how "language mixing" can be celebrated for White monolingual English speakers and yet stigmatized for Latinxs positioned as heritage speakers. When U.S. Latinxs engage in similar practices, such as using *rufo* instead of *techo* for "roof" or *parqueando* instead of *estacionando* for "parking," they are often chastised for using inferior Spanglish forms as opposed to "pure" Spanish. In fact, heritage language learning is often regarded as an effort toward cleansing particular populations of these so-called impurities. Linguistic purity—like racial purity—is a powerful ideological construct. We should seek to understand the perspectives from which such forms of purity and impurity are constructed and perceived rather than focusing on the forms themselves. Thus, we must redirect attention away from empirical linguistic practices and toward raciolinguistic ideologies that overdetermine people as particular kinds of language users.

For Latinx heritage language learners such as Estela, culturally sustaining pedagogies present the possibility of a radically different set of educational experiences from those described above. How might Estela's language be heard differently by a Chicana professor or a professor well versed in the ways that Chicana Spanish has been used across a range of spoken and written contexts, encompassing the so-called academic Spanish language skills embraced in university classrooms? What if culturally specific Spanish language use in everyday Latinx communities were incorporated into all aspects of the curriculum? These shifts would allow us to reimagine the Spanish language skills Estela learned at home and in the community as

central to her educational success rather than as starting points from which to learn “legitimate” Spanish.

NEW WAYS OF HEARING IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

In this chapter we have sought to contribute to efforts toward imagining culturally sustaining pedagogies by introducing a critical raciolinguistic perspective. We use this perspective to examine the ways that discourses of appropriateness, which permeate asset-based approaches to language education, are complicit in normalizing the reproduction of the White gaze by marginalizing the linguistic practices of language-minoritized populations in U.S. society. Specifically, we analyze the raciolinguistic ideologies that connect asset-based educational approaches to teaching Latinx students designated as long-term English learners and heritage Spanish learners. We argue that what links members of these different (though often overlapping) groups is not their lack of linguistic proficiency but their racial positioning in society and how this position affects the ways their linguistic practices are heard.

Therefore, the solution to the marginalization of language-minoritized students cannot be to add linguistic practices to their repertoires—as many asset-based approaches to language education suggest—but instead to engage with, confront, and ultimately dismantle the racialized hierarchy of U.S. society. This effort, we argue, must be central to the vision for and implementation of culturally sustaining pedagogies. Simply adding “appropriate” forms of language to the linguistic repertoires of language-minoritized students will not lead to social transformation. As our examples show, even when Latinx long-term English learners and heritage Spanish learners adopt idealized linguistic practices, they are still heard as deficient language users. Attempting to teach Latinx students to engage in the idealized linguistic practices of the White speaking subject does nothing to challenge the underlying racism of the White listening subject. Asset-based approaches to language education inadvertently legitimate and strengthen, rather than challenge, the marginalization of language-minoritized Latinx students.

We are not suggesting that people from racialized or language-minoritized communities should not seek to engage in linguistic practices deemed appropriate by mainstream society. However, we contend that the question of whether members of racialized communities are accepted as appropriately engaging in these linguistic practices continues to be determined by the White listening subject, not by the speakers’ actual practices. Therefore, antiracist social transformation cannot be based solely on teaching Latinx students to engage in the linguistic practices of the White speaking subject, but must also work actively to dismantle the hierarchies that produce the White listening

subject. We are also not suggesting that advocates of asset-based approaches to language education should abandon all of their efforts to legitimize the linguistic practices of their language-minoritized Latinx students. Instead, we suggest that shifting the focus to scrutiny of the White listening subject may open up possibilities for reconceptualizing language education in ways that move beyond appropriateness-based approaches.

Culturally sustaining pedagogies that engage with the dynamic linguistic practices of language-minoritized Latinx students and raises questions about issues of language and power mark an important starting point for developing this alternative approach. We suggest that a careful consideration of raciolinguistic ideologies and the White listening subject that produces them adds an important element to this framework. Specifically, it allows for the development of pedagogies that move away from a sole focus on the speaking subject and examines the role of the listening subject in producing “competent” and “incompetent” language users. This shifts the conversation from trying to improve the linguistic practices of language-minoritized Latinx students toward challenging the ways that their linguistic practices are taken up and interpreted by the White listening subject.

Were this approach applied in the educational contexts analyzed in this chapter, the challenges faced by Latinx long-term English learners and heritage Spanish learners could be reconceptualized not as problems produced by linguistic deficits but as products of racial and linguistic hierarchies. This approach would also empower teachers to move beyond pedagogies geared toward responding to students’ purported linguistic deficiencies or “gaps” and to develop a more robust vision of how language-minoritized Latinx students’ educational experiences could combat raciolinguistic ideologies. These insights open up the possibility of theorizing the education of language-minoritized Latinx students as part of broader conflicts and struggles that provide these students with tools to challenge the forms of marginalization with which they are faced. This is a powerful shift from teaching students to follow rules of appropriateness to working with them as they struggle to imagine and enact alternative, more radically inclusive realities.

The critical perspectives discussed in this chapter point to the benefits of reframing language education from an asset-based approach embedded within a discourse of appropriateness toward a culturally sustaining pedagogies approach that seeks to denaturalize standardized linguistic categories. This offers the possibility of shifting language education from inadvertently perpetuating the racial status quo to participating in struggles against the ideological processes associated with the White speaking and White listening subject. While this approach to language education cannot singularly eradicate the forms of marginalization students of color face in mainstream schools, it can powerfully disrupt appropriateness-based approaches to language education in ways that might link to larger social movements that challenge the racial status quo.

NOTES

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1. We use “Latinx” as a gender nonbinary label for U.S.-based populations of Latin American descent. It serves as an alternative to “Latina/o” or “Latin@” as male/female gender-inclusive labels, as well as labels such as “Hispanic” and “Latino.” We use “Latina” or “Latino” when referring to self-identified females or males, respectively.

2. In Flores and Rosa (2015), we build on the work of Alim (2004) to compare the racialized ways in which Latinx and African American students’ language practices are systematically misheard in mainstream educational settings.

3. Importantly, the normative forms of Whiteness associated with these raciolinguistic ideologies intertwine race, class, and language. Thus, we are not claiming that all White people benefit from these ideologies in the same ways, nor that all people of color are stigmatized by them in the same ways. Instead, we seek to highlight how imagined, idealized forms of class-privileged Whiteness position particular linguistic and cultural practices as more or less educationally legitimate, and how these ideologies shape the ways that different groups’ practices are interpreted.

4. For an analysis of the ways that raciolinguistic ideologies stigmatize not just Latinx students, but racialized and language-minoritized populations in general, see Flores and Rosa (2015).

5. All participant names are pseudonyms.

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