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Teaching language is an inherently political act; systemic hierarchies shape the roles of and interactions between practitioners and learners. Teachers who reflect on their own experiences and identities as language learners and users can develop the awareness needed to effectively disrupt such hierarchies. Such reflection ideally includes recognition of how intersectional social locations inform their access to English as embodied cultural capital. This article offers insights into the formative language learning experiences of two practitioners from Sri Lanka and Canada developed from a duoethnographic study. The aim is to explore how these experiences connect to their current language instruction practices. Four semi-structured dialogues uncovered understandings related to bilingualism, ethnicity, and language policy that challenge misconceptions related to each country's inner and outer circle status.

言語を教えることは、本質的に政治的な行為である。体系的なヒエラルキーが、教育者と学習者の役割や相互作用を形作っている。言語学習者や言語使用者である自分自身の経験やアイデンティティを振り返る教師は、そのようなヒエラルキーを効果的に崩壊させるために必要な意識を育むことができる。このような振り返りには、交差する社会的位置が、英語という「具現化された文化資本」へのアクセスにどのような影響を与えるかを認識することが理想的である。本稿は、スリランカとカナダ出身の2人の実践者の形成的言語学習経験に関するデュオエスノグラフィック研究から得られた洞察を提供する。その目的は、これらの経験が現在の言語指導の実践にどのように結びついているかを探ることである。4回の半構造化対話により、バイリンガリズム、エスニシティ、言語政策に関連する理解が明らかになり、内輪と外輪の地位に関連する誤解が覆された。

The sustained expansion of World Englishes continues to increase the diversity of the field of English language teaching (Sadeghpour & D'Angelo, 2022). Kachru's three concentric circles of English provides a hierarchical, state-based understanding of this propagation as informed by speech communities, patterns of spread, and distinct language practices (1986). Mediated by sociopolitical dynamics, inner circle countries such as Canada and the UK are regarded as the bastions of the English language, utilizing it as a vernacular, whereas in outer circle countries like Sri Lanka and Nigeria, colonization served as the vehicle for the entrenchment of English. In the latter, its influence endures either formally as an official language or informally as an important lingua franca among intra-national elites (Mufwene, 2010). In expanding circle countries such as Japan, English is perceived as a foreign language or foreign lingua franca primarily employed for communication with non-nationals (Mufwene, 2010). While it is now common to assert that

English language teaching is not the domain of the inner circle, native-speakerism (Holliday, 2006) endures. These shifts come with a parallel increase in research on language teacher identity and self-efficacy (Kaez & Faras, 2021). Considering our diversity along with the dynamic nature of power, our relationships to the cultural capital of English are in constant flux. As such, identity has an inherent impact on practice, making it a critical area of study in need of greater attention. Student and teacher positionality being relational and dependent on the broader context (Kayi-Aydar, 2019), reflecting on teacher identity must be an integral part of pre-service education and professional development (Kanno & Stuart, 2011; Lawrence & Nagashima, 2020). Reflective practice is one way of giving overt attention to identity construction, growing from the notion that identity is "a discursive and performative phenomenon" (Aktekin & Celebi, 2020, p. 113). As a tool in practice-based learning settings, reflective practice emphasizes wisdom gathered through experience rather than formal

learning (Mathew et al., 2017, p. 126). Despite this, it is not necessarily embedded in pre-service programs.

This research juxtaposes our divergent experiences as English language instructors and researchers to understand how our formative experiences as language learners shape our sociolinguistic identities and current practice. We have engaged in dialogue delving into the commonalities and divergences between our formative contexts, current practices, and the ways in which the former informs the latter. Our interest in examining early sociolinguistic and language learning experiences through duoethnography was initially informed by the overlaps between our two settings: Sri Lanka and Canada. Both countries are officially bilingual, with educational practices that reflect the highly contested landscape of language policies heavy with the weight of colonial history. We grew up as speakers and learners of multiple languages and have spent our adult lives as practitioners in these countries as well as in Japan.

Sri Lanka is a small island state with a centrally administered education system, so we take the whole country into consideration. For Canada, the provincially mandated nature of the curriculum makes geographic specificity important. While the two contexts might seem difficult to set side by side, comparing them highlights the dynamic nature of linguistic identity and implications for practitioner reflexivity. One is an outer circle country, the other an inner circle one, and we now collaborate in an expanding circle context.

Researcher Positionality

Lasni

A multicultural and multi-ethnic country in South Asia, Sri Lanka is a conflict-ridden society. Colonized by the Portuguese, Dutch, and finally the British, its 26-year civil war ended in 2009. Sinhalese people comprise approximately 74.9% of the total population, while 11.2% are Sri Lankan Tamils, 4.1% Indian Tamils, and 9.3% Sri Lankan Moors (Department of Census and Statistics, 2012). Its two official languages are Sinhalese and Tamil; Sinhala is the language of the Sinhalese people, while Tamil is spoken by Tamils and most Moors/Muslims. Though the status of English is not recognized on paper, it functions as a de facto official language in commerce and higher education.

I am Sinhala by birth, with Sinhalese as my mother tongue. Throughout my studies, Sinhala was the medium of instruction, English was mandatory, and Tamil was an elective. Living in the ethnically and linguistically diverse central region, I was exposed to various ethnic and social groups. Attending three different schools, I experienced how language can be instrumentalized according to urban/rural, class, religious, and ethnic disparities. I shifted to English medium higher education after my Advanced-Level

exams and subsequently became a teacher of English. I have taught English for 8 years while pursuing graduate studies, currently working on a PhD.

Yaya

The state of Canada rests uneasily in the north of Turtle Island, an indigenous name for North America. Canada's official languages are English and French, with the Inuit languages of Inuinnaqtun and Inuktitut also considered official in the northern territory of Nunavut. The province of Québec is French dominant, New Brunswick is extremely English-French bilingual, and the remaining provinces and territories are English dominant. The state has historically taken a race-based, essentialist stance to language (Leeman, 2019), stipulating that "mother tongue is one's native language, the language of his race", rather than the language one "speaks most fluently, or uses chiefly in conversation" (Canadian Census Office, 1901, p. 17).

I was born and raised in Tkaronto (colonially Toronto, Canada), the capital of Ontario, on ceded and unceded lands traditionally stewarded by the Mississaugas of the Anishinaabe, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and the Wendat peoples. More than half of Tkaronto's population was born outside of Canada (Statistics Canada, 2023). My parents came from Hong Kong as international students in the 1960s, and my first language was Mandarin, followed by Cantonese. From K-12, I attended programs in public schools: French Immersion, bilingual, and one French medium program administered by one of Ontario's 12 French-language school boards. My English is now dominant, and while my French reading skills are at a secondary school level, my verbal skills are now elementary. As a practitioner, I have spent 12 years in arts-based and social justice education in Canada and Hong Kong, and 10 years teaching English language and literature in secondary and university settings in Japan and Thailand.

Key Concepts

Our dialogic reflection is rooted in two concepts: the Freirean notion of praxis and Bordieu's cultural capital. Praxis argues for an equitable regard for practice and theory. The articulation of an intertwined, dynamic process through which theory grows from practice and vice versa reflects a radical commitment to social transformation (Freire, 1970). Engaging in "education as the practice of freedom" (hooks, 1991, p. 54) means in part the critical interrogation of our own lenses as informed by our particular social locations, which are shaped by systems of power and privilege. All practice is informed by theoretical constructs that can be made visible through critical reflexivity. The underpinnings of much practice are shaped by the hidden curriculum (Jackson, 1960): the unwritten rules, values, beliefs, and expectations shaped by sociopolitical dynamics

that uphold the status quo. Delving into teacher identities is a key way to unpack this implicitly hegemonic curriculum.

Related to this concept is cultural capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). It is regarded in three states: the embodied state (the behaviors that represent ruling class ideals of sophistication), the institutionalized state (which reifies those ideals through academic qualifications and job titles), and the objectified state, (possessions and property that hold symbolic power). As a manifestation of embodied cultural capital, or lack thereof, language is animated by underlying systems of power. The degree to which a language can be leveraged on the linguistic market as a tradable commodity is informed by the extent it is validated by the state, for example through official language status (Bourdieu, 1991).

Methodology

Duoethnography is an emerging form of study in which two or more researchers come together to interrogate the cultural contexts of autobiographical experiences to dialogically critique issues related to personal and professional life (Sawyer & Norris, 2012). Rooted in autoethnography, which is informed by feminist theories that challenge the notion of academic objectivity, it enables researchers to gain insight into the questions at hand through the exploration of lived experience. The researchers involved are the site of the inquiry, not the subjects of it (Breault, 2016). Given the nature of our positionalities from inner and outer circle contexts, the duoethnographic approach serves to highlight the complexities of the differing levels of cultural capital each researcher holds in the linguistic market.

With this evolving qualitative method, we first discussed our experiences and contexts in an open-ended way. Next, four in-depth dialogues totalling eight hours were recorded following an interview guide prepared in the first session. Discussions were transcribed and themes were identified collaboratively. We then selected two excerpts addressing key themes in a dialogue format to capture the polyvocal nature of the process. Narrative can play a powerful role in distilling insights. Informed by narrative inquiry's understanding of how the granular illustrates the whole and the need for a fine balance between the two (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), excerpts were refined to enhance accessibility and clarity. The research questions emerging from the initial dialogue are:

1. What were our experiences of conflicts between dominant and family language practices?
2. How was bilingualism conceptualized and represented to us as language learners, growing up?

3. How do our formative language learning experiences (as shaped by marginalization and lingualism) influence our practices as language teachers?

Below, we share the two excerpts to highlight two key moments as connected to the questions above. Each excerpt is followed by an in-depth discussion from the standpoint of one of the authors.

Dialogue A: Conflicts between Dominant and Family Language Practices

YY When did you switch from a Sinhala medium school to a bilingual, English dominant school?

LB That was when I went from more semi-urban school to urban school so it is more like from less competitive school to more competitive school I would say

YY So when did the “break” between your school language and your home language happen—between which grades?

LB There were two transitions. First, I went from a semi-urban school in which Sinhala was the medium of instruction to an urban school in which English was widely used, in Grade 8. The break, or rupture, was cultural as well. In the semi-urban school, my classmates and I listened to Sinhala music, were interested in Sri Lankan pop culture and so on. But as I went through secondary school, especially when I scored well enough to enter an elite high school in the same neighborhood, most of the students were into US and UK pop culture, so it was a huge transition not only in terms of language but in terms of culture. Although the medium of instruction was still Sinhala, all of the announcements and extracurricular activities, all of the life outside of formal lessons was informed by English and oriented to the West.

YY That must have been jarring.

LB Yes, and the class dynamics were really in-your-face. Almost all the students who got into Student Council (prefect board) had a powerful parent, a doctor, an engineer or such.

YY Hearing about your experience, I feel envious of the amount of education you received in your mother tongue. For me, that break between home and school cultures was automatic, from when I entered school. My home languages were Mandarin and Cantonese, and school languages were English and French. They were culturally different worlds, and I inhabited them in completely different ways. To oversimplify a bit, I was assertive at home, but at school I struggled a lot with expressing myself, because of how racism, sexism,

and homophobia affected my self-esteem. I hid my Mandarin and Cantonese selves in public, so they languished. They were markers of difference that I knew to hide to fit in. The way I spoke had to be “perfect” – as “Anglo Canadian” – sounding as possible.

- LB It's essential to think about how our students might be experiencing this kind of fragmentation when they enter the classroom. The classroom is a microcosm of society, so a certain degree of racism and lingualism is inevitable, but how can we help students understand and question those dynamics, or at least cast some doubt at these norms and assumptions.

Discussion of Dialogue A (Lasni)

The identity politics related to language in our contexts seem complex and divergent. I consider my transition from a Sinhala-speaking home environment to an English dominant elite school relatively smooth, as I attended another urban school in between, which prepared me for the culture shock. My willingness to deal with the English dominant linguistic landscape of the new school paved the way for me to benefit from the increased access to embodied cultural capital (Bordieu, 1986). Nevertheless, despite the transition from a Sinhala to English dominant environment, my mother tongue remained the medium of instruction. This allowed me to maintain my proficiency in my mother tongue through additive bilingualism (Lambert, 1981).

In contrast, Yaya's language transition from home to school environment is more jarring. She too benefited from increased embodied cultural capital, acquiring and becoming fluent in the dominant languages, all the more so given the inner circle accent, yet she experienced subtractive bilingualism (Lambert, 1981) as her English came at the cost of the mother tongue (Natolo and Matas, 2014). This realization leads me to believe that in the context of inner circle countries, there is a higher tendency to overlook the support for maintaining the home languages of immigrants. In contrast, outer circle countries which cast English as a second language, tend to appreciate the importance of preserving language diversity.

Dialogue B: Representations of Bilingualism

- LB When I think about how my experiences as a language learner shape my teaching, class is a key theme for me. It really informed my experience as a student, and as a teacher in Sri Lanka, I am trying to support my students to more confidently wield English as a form of embodied cultural capital. In Sri Lanka, we have a word that we use to refer to the English language: *Kaduwa*. It means sword. It refers to the aggressive power of English in society,

and educators and linguists in Sri Lanka often talk about “*Kaduwa* vs. *Manne*” – sword or machete? The machete is a tool that is commonly used in Sri Lankan households. Hence, is English a weapon or a tool?

- YY If we're thinking about it as embodied cultural capital, something that is vested with power because of hegemony, there might not be much of a difference between the two.
- LB I always teach my students to use it as a tool. It doesn't make you better than someone else that you speak better English, I mean in theory. Using it to disrespect, divide or punish another would be using it as a weapon. But in material terms, in Sri Lanka, it will give you access to better job opportunities, and people will certainly treat you better if you use it in public situations. It's like what we talked about earlier, “Language is power.”
- YY That's true. Power doesn't necessarily mean “power over.”
- LB Yes, use of power may not always put others down but can be used to lift yourself up instead. This makes me think of our earlier discussion about accents. It sounds like an accent is very crucial when it comes to the Canadian situation. Can you elaborate more on that, and how you deal with it in the classroom?
- YY There is a lot of ethnic diversity in Canada, but still a lot of racism, and a lot of discrimination based on accent. As a child, I consciously put effort into developing a “Canadian accent” because everyone knows we'll get more respect if we speak with a dominant, Anglo Canadian accent. Generally, people don't discriminate against those with Western European or dominant US accents, though. And then a French-accented English would be respected, especially because I was in French Immersion. Thinking about this in relation to your experience of bilingual education, which involved Sinhala, Tamil, and English, I'm realizing that French-English was the gold standard. Growing up, I didn't even really consider myself bilingual, because to me, being bilingual meant that you spoke English and French fluently. The other languages I spoke were not invited into the regular classroom, weren't legitimized by school.
- LB This is interesting. Do you encourage your students to acquire a certain accent?
- YY I focus on stress patterns and emphasis rather than accent. Of course, we need phonic awareness, but try to focus on intelligibility rather than sounding like a certain kind of speaker. My experience as a “non-native speaker” among mostly Anglo students shapes this. It also means I don't enjoy being prescriptive, so although it's a necessary evil, I try to do so in a way that shares the role of “the

knower,” something that can be hard for us as teachers.

Discussion of Dialogue B (Yaya)

In learning about how Lasni's outer circle school experience led to additive bilingualism, I became more aware of how the casting of English and French as the “gold standard” of bilingualism in my inner circle context fed into my experience of subtractive bilingualism. This is also connected to the raciolinguistic class reality in Ontario, where the median income for English-French bilinguals is 20% higher than English monolinguals, 40% higher than French speakers, and well over double of those who speak neither (Statistics Canada, 2023). In the bilingual public school, I attended from age 4 to 11, my classmates were almost entirely from white, upper-middle class liberal families. I still feel that I “failed” at French, far from fluent despite years of study. I hadn't reflected on how that “failure” might be informed by how my linguistic ideals were shaped by white, upper-middle class culture. While access to embodied cultural capital motivated my parents to enroll me in the program, such capital seemed unattainable. This perception is one so many of my Japanese students relate to as educational institutions privilege white “native speaker” instructors from inner circle countries.

Lasni learned English in the first two schools as a subject less connected to an ethnic group in her immediate context. This might have facilitated a more practical, instrumental attitude towards the embodied cultural capital of English as *Manne* (machete/tool) instead of *Kaduwa* (sword/weapon) (Medawattegedara, 2015). Her experience at the third school could be considered an experience of English as *Kaduwa* given the elitist, Western-oriented nature of the school culture. In a post-colonial society like Sri Lanka, conceptualizing English as an instrument rather than a tool of oppression can be understood as an attempt to mitigate the power of English on the linguistic market. Nevertheless, teachers play a key role in supporting students to gain better access to cultural capital while facilitating critical thinking that mitigates the weaponizing of this capital.

Conclusion: Embracing reflective practice

This article captured understandings that have emerged in an ongoing, iterative process of inquiry. The study highlights the situated nature of our practices as teachers from outer circle and inner circle contexts, highlighting commonalities and divergences in our identities as learners and instructors. Cast as buyers and sellers on the linguistic market, the research process allowed us to challenge these interpellations in a productive way. This type of collaborative critical

reflexivity inherently confronts the concept of the omniscient teacher. Speaking from our particular intersectional (Crenshaw, 1989) social locations across our differences allowed us to question our assumptions and furthered our understanding of reflexivity as an inherently relational endeavor.

As such, our main recommendation is related to language teacher training and in-service professional development. Engaging in duoethnographic and self-reflexive studies to critically understand the connections between formative language learning experiences, teaching practice, and relationships to inner, outer, and expanding circle political dynamics can deepen practice at any stage of one's career. Duoethnography lends itself especially to professional development because of the relational and emerging nature of the methodology, which invites practitioners to embark on the process with a great sense of autonomy, creativity, and partnership. In the realm of language teacher education, the journey of assisting emerging educators in honing the skills of rigorous self-reflexivity begins with us.

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