CULTURALLY SUSTAINING SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS (CS SFL): A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF LANGUAGING AND LITERACIES *FOR/WITH/BY* YOUTH

by

JASON D. MIZELL

(Under the Direction of RUTH HARMAN)

ABSTRACT

This dissertation strives to bring two areas together that often are separate, the world of applied linguistics and the world of culturally sustaining pedagogies (CSP). Through the cross-pollination of CSP (Paris & Alim, 2017), youth participatory action research (Cammarota & Fine, 2010), and systemic functional linguistics/critical systemic functional linguistics praxis (SFL) (Harman, 2018; Halliday, 1978)), this dissertation brings these world views together to create a figurative and a literal third space (Gutiérrez, 2008). This third space aims to serve several different purposes:

1. Nourish, sustain, and value the languaging, literacies and multimodal knowledges of racialized children for itself not as a bridge to whiteness
2. Provide a framework from which iterative and culturally sustaining languaging and literacies curriculum can be developed
3. Promote intergenerational participatory action research
4. Apprentice racialized youth and their adult allies into the use of explicit languaging and literacies tools that they can use to advocate for equity.

Throughout this dissertation, I bring together the work of civil rights activists, scholars, and activist-scholars whose work has laid a foundation for mine. Conceptually, my work lays out that by infusing CSP into SFL, it contributes an explicitly anti-racist and anti-colonial lens. It also shows how SFL's tools of genre and register among many more (i.e., expanded mode continuum, embodied teaching learning cycle) can be used to purposively design a curriculum to apprentice youth and teachers into learning to critically examine dominant and community-generated texts and various modalities. Lastly, this dissertation shows that when youth and pre-and in-service teachers jointly create and inhabit a third space that was purposively constructed as a space for them to learn from and with each other, they are able to begin the process of constructing a more equitable society.

INDEX WORDS: Culturally sustaining systemic functional linguistics, culturally sustaining pedagogies, systemic functional linguistics, register, genre pedagogy, mode continuum, teaching learning cycle, translanguaging, humanizing research, teacher education, reflection literacy

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2020

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August 2020

# DEDICATION

To my son, Dylan, who pushes and motivates me to make this world a better place for him and other racialized and multilingual youth.

To Mama, who was there for me as a little boy and whose counterstories gave me the strength and the permission to dream of a life outside of my small southern town!

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is not a solo project. It is shared with everyone who has touched my life since I was a little boy growing up in rural North Georgia and to those who helped me to grow into my own in Ecuador.

Ruth Harman, yes, I'm on the bus. Thank you for believing in me and pushing me to think deeper and to dream. You helped me to see and value how important the body is in learning.

Kevin Burke, thank you for pushing me and encouraging me to become a critical activist-scholar. After reading one of my first papers you asked, who's going to care about this and why. It hurt to hear that, but your question has pushed me to make sure that my work is impactful and important for my communities.

Denise Dávila, I will forever value your wisdom and selflessness! Writing with you showed me what true collaboration looks like.

To my UGA SFLers, Nicole Siffrinn (thanks for being my thinking partner); Lourdes Cardozo Gaibisso (thanks for being my cyber writing partner); Khanh Bui (thanks for teaching me about multimodalities).

To my youth co-knowledge architects, thank you for sharing your testimonios y pláticas conmigo…..No puedo decir sus nombres pero ya saben quiénes son…E.C; S.G; L.H; J.E. and many, many more.

Sharon D. Smith, thank you for always being willing to read my work and ask me, is it who or that?

Lastly, to my family: you have been there for me every step of the way! I could not have done this without your support. ¡Los quiero un montón!

Funding and support provided by SREB-State Doctoral Scholars Program, Atlanta, Georgia.

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# CHAPTER 1

# SETTING THE BACKGROUND AND IMPETUS FOR CULTURALLY SUSTAINING SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS

"Our very existence consists in our imagination of ourselves. The greatest tragedy that can befall us is to go unimagined." (Momaday, 1978, p. vi)

Most critically oriented educational researchers assert that US educational institutions devalue or outright reject the lived experiences and knowledges that are generated in communities of color (Du Bois, 1903/2015; González, Moll, & Amanti, 2006; Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2016; Yancy, 2008). Quite often, this marginalization or deficit framing has been perpetuated through what those from the majority claim to be objective educational research or what critical race scholars term as "majoritarian storytelling" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Majoritarian storytelling is the recounting of "facts" from a white[1] upper- or middle-class perspective or what Kubota (2019) calls "West-based [...] knowledge and academic practices" (p. 2). In other words, these are epistemologies "based on the social history and culture of the dominant race [that] has produced scholarship which portrays people of color as deficient and judges the scholarship produced by Scholars of Color as biased and non-rigorous" (Delgado-Bernal & Villalpando, 2002, p. 169). These ways of knowing silence and invalidate minoritized narratives.

[1] In the tradition of many Critical Race Theory scholars/researcher (e.g., Crenshaw, 1988; Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2016), I have purposefully chosen to not capitalize white as a way of decentering whiteness and thus centering the lives and experiences of people of color broadly speaking.

When the stories or narratives of minoritized groups are silenced/erased, youth of color are in danger of not being able to imagine themselves and their communities outside of a deficit framework imposed by the majority (Cahill, Rios-Moore, & Threats, 2010; Tuck, Allen, Bacha, Morales, & Quinter, 2010). Thus, as Momaday (1978) lamented, they are at risk of suffering the greatest possible tragedy, they may "go unimagined" (p.vi). This potential erasure by those in power begs the question of what can we, equity-minded activist scholars, do to make sure that racialized youth's dreams don't go unimaged. This dissertation examines the impact(s) that a critical resource pedagogy and theoretical framework, Culturally Sustaining Systemic Functional Linguistics (CS SFL), had on the development of antiracist and anti-colonial critical literacies and languaging skills of multi/bilingual youth[2].

This chapter provides an overview of the factors that led me to initiate this study and situates me as a participant-observer (Glesne, 2011) and co-creator of the approach. First, I describe the personal and professional reasons and circumstances that led me to want to investigate if and how a culturally sustaining linguistic framework could apprentice middle school students and pre-and in-service teachers into becoming critical, active and engaged civic agents who could examine, deconstruct, and when needed remix various literacies to meet their needs. Then, I explore the significance of the problem by discussing how dominant state actors (i.e. school superintendents, principals, teachers, etc.) perceive the educational attainment of Latiné[3] and Black students in the American southeast. I then examine recent demographic shifts

[2] I have chosen to use the term multi/bi-lingual youth to include young people who a) speak a language other than Dominant American English (DAE) (i.e. Spanish, Zulu, Hindi) and b) speak a non-dominant variety of English (i.e. African American English (AAE), Uglish (Ugandan English) , Patois (Jamaican English) that some may not consider to be its own separate language..

[3] The term Latiné is used in this dissertation as one way of breaking down the binary that may be produced by using the term, Latino. Latino generally implies that one is either male (Latino) or female (Latina). Latiné is used to express that within the community of those who identify culturally, linguistically, or otherwise with those who reside in Latin America, there exist numerous ways of identifying other than as simply male or female. Some

in the Latiné population and how Dominant American-English (DAE) (Kinloch, 2017) only and other monolingual languaging practices, ideologies, and immigration policies impact the educational attainment of Latiné students and other students of color. This chapter also explores the interconnected theoretical frameworks and methodologies that inform the three chapters that comprise this dissertation.

## Personal Background

Although the research to be discussed in the coming chapters was carried out between 2016 and 2018, the ideas, feelings, and understandings that were used as a lens to design and filter it have been developing over the course of my life. I grew up in a small rural town in the northeastern Georgia mountains. The community was largely white and very segregated. Most Blacks that resided in my hometown lived on what many whites called the hill or Niggertown. In elementary school, most classes were segregated because they were based on teacher recommendations. Students who were considered gifted or "highflyers" were placed in almost exclusively white classes, while students who were minoritized were generally placed in general or special education classes. Even within the general education classroom, students from different racial or cultural groups generally did not sit or work together. This pattern of educational segregation followed me throughout K-12 and even into college (Irizarry & Cohen, 2019; Nunn, 2011) and a study aboard opportunity to Ecuador.

Although Ecuador was different than the US in many aspects, it did not free me from being the racial and linguistic other in the eyes of those with societal power. As the only American Black student in the exchange program, I was a constant outsider. Although my outsider status, even among my fellow Americans was hard, it also allowed me to have greater

Spanish speakers in Latin America now use this term instead of Latinx as it pronounceable in Spanish whereas Latinx isn't in most Latin American countries.

insight into why different ethnic groups (e.g. Afro-Ecuadorians, Shuar, Achuar, Tsáchila, and Quichua) protested and worked to make their fellow Ecuadorians cognizant of racist policies.

Having the opportunity to live in Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela for over 18 years, I grew to understand on a lived and very personal level the damage that is inflicted on racialized groups such as Afro-Ecuadorians, Afro-Venezuelans, Afro-Peruvians, and various indigenous groups. Due to their languaging practices (perceived or otherwise (Flores & Rosa, 2017)), outward racial identity and perceived social class they are denied equity in housing, health care, education and the labor market (Martínez Novo & de la Torre, 2010; Perreira & Telles, 2014). One example of this othering occurred when I was invited to speak at La Universidad San Francisco de Quito (USFQ). USFQ is an elite and primarily white university located in the valley of Cumbaya outside of Quito, Ecuador. When a group of white American students and I arrived at the gate leading onto USFQ's campus, we were approached by several security guards. They asked about the nature of our visit. After we explained that we had been invited to speak at the university, the guards invited us to enter. As all the white students entered, I was stopped and asked why I was there. I explained that I was also part of the American group. Of everyone in the group, I was the only one whom the guards insisted present their passport. It was only after I began to complain in English that I was allowed to enter, and then only after I left my passport with the guards. This was one of many times that something of this sort happened to me. The racialization that happened to me is something that most Afro-Ecuadorians and others who are easily identifiable as the racial other constantly face.

Unlike many racialized Ecuadorians, at other times what "saved" me was my conscious decision and ability to speak only English and to be part of a white American social group. My Americanness at times trumped or at least softened the blow of my Blackness. I learned that

one's language/language variety in conjunction with one's perceived racial or ethnic grouping could be used either to provide or deny access in certain contexts. My understanding of language ideologies was formed through praxis.

These personal experiences in addition to the interactions that I have witnessed over the course of my 18-year P-16 teaching career have led me to search for ways of supporting students who have been minoritized based on their languages, race/ethnicity, and citizenship/immigration status among various other intersectionalities. My tacit awareness of the ideologies behind linguicism or languagism has been converted over recent years to an explicit awareness. The readings that have informed this transformation come from Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2016), Latiné Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) (Stefancic, 1997), LangCrit (Crump, 2014), Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Halliday, 1978), and culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) (Paris, 2012). This explicit awareness has awoken within me a desire to engage in collaborative research initiatives where racialized students working within multigenerational groups are apprenticed into becoming active critical civic agents who use and remix varieties of literacies and languages in order to meet their present and future needs.

With the above in mind, the next section explores the impact of the current U.S. educational system on the lives of minoritized students in order to demonstrate why there is a need to search for ways of creating equity. I also highlight why there is a need to fight to change hegemonic languaging norms.

## Statement of the Problem: Educational Impact of Being Brown or Black

Throughout this section, I examine national and state testing and evaluation data. This data is used to highlight how ineffectual the current educational system is in meeting the needs of racialized youth, in particular students who have been labeled as English Language Learners

(ELLS) and Black students. According to the U.S. Department of Education, U.S. schools served 4.9 million ELLs during the 2013-2014 academic year, representing nearly 10 percent of the total population of school-age students (Soto, A. G. Hooker, & Batalova, 2015). As of 2015, 71% of ELLs were Spanish speakers (Soto, A. G. Hooker, & Batalova, 2015). During this same period of time, nearly 14% of all students in US public schools were Black and 25% were classified as Hispanic (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2017). Over the last 16 years, there has only been a slight reduction in the educational debt[4] owed to students of color (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2017). It can be extrapolated from the 2013 data provided by The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) report that due to a lack of rigorous and meaningful instruction by teachers, ELLs were scored[5] 23 to 30 percentage points lower than their white monolingual English peers. Additionally, the National Education Association (NEA) also reported that only 3 to 4 percent of ELLs classified as eighth-graders were scored as proficient in math and/or reading (NEA, 2015; (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). These scores demonstrate that racialized students have not been provided with equitable, rigorous, and high-quality education nationally.

**Black and Brown student outcomes in Georgia**

For over 10 years, I worked as a K-12 paraprofessional and certified teacher in the state of Georgia. During that time, I witnessed how Latiné and Black students were consistently given harsher punishments and regulated to lower-tier classes than their white peers. I also witnessed how their humanity was constantly challenged when white peers would use racial slurs and

[4] Ladson-Billings (2012) advocated for a change in terminology from achievement gap to education debt in order to refocus the conversation in regard to educational attainment from one in which students are centered as the problem to one in which institutions and policies are recognized as being historically responsible for failing to provide generations of racialized students with the needed resources, support, and opportunities to be successful.

[5] I purposively position students as being scored instead of as scoring because of the problematic way in which student of color's scores are based on "privileged epistemologies" or "ways of knowing" steeped in Eurocentric paradigms of knowledge (Smith, Kumi-Yeboah, Chang, Lee, & Frazier, 2019, p. 533) or what Kubota (2019) refers to as "epistemological racism".

receive minimal consequences if any. Even as a parent, I have had to advocate for my son when he was called a nigger, told that he was not allowed to speak Spanish (by a teacher and several students) and that he should get back on the Wall, a reference to President Donald Trump's infamous border wall between the United States and Mexico. All of these incidents took place in schools in Chestnut County, where this research was carried out, or in neighboring school districts.

The inequities that are seen at the national level are very similar to those here in Georgia in many if not all of our school districts (GADOE, 2018). In Georgia, school districts are awarded an annual College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI) score (Georgia Department of Education, 2019). The CCRPI was established as a "comprehensive school improvement, accountability, and communication platform for all educational stakeholders that [would] … promote college and career readiness for all Georgia public school students" (Georgia Department of Education, 2019). Part of the CCRPI score that is awarded to school districts is called "Closing Gaps". This indicator is used to indicate whether a school district has provided marginalized groups of students with a quality educational experience that will allow them to perform at or above the average score of white upper or middle-class students[6]. For a district to demonstrate progress, it must close the gap year to year by at least 3% (GA DOE, 2018).

In 2017 in Chestnut County[7], as reported on the 2018 CCRPI, Black and English learners[8] only made adequate yearly progress in Science. Latinés or Hispanics, the term used by

[6] The measuring of minoritized students in comparison to white students it problematic as it establishes white ways of being as normal. Even though I recognize the problematic nature of this metric, I will use it as it is the only data made available by the state.
[7] All names of places and people are pseudonyms.
[8] This term includes any student whose parents/guardians listed their home language as not English. This group does not only include Spanish speakers.

the state of Georgia, were reported to have only made adequate yearly progress in Social studies at the district level (GA DOE, 2018). These results are very similar to the 2017 CCRPI scores. In 2017, at the high school level, Blacks were the only subgroup judged to have met the participation rate (i.e., enough of them took the test to have their scores counted) and performance target at the district level and the state level in physical science. Latinés were judged to have not met the state graduation target. State officials decided that ELLs did not meet state or subgroup performance targets. It is evident when the state's data is analyzed that racialized students were not provided with equitable and quality educational experiences (GA DOE, 2017). The official statistics clearly show that the educational debt to minoritized students in the state of Georgia and Chestnut County has not been paid in full.

## Selective Literature Review

In this section, I discuss Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and how different scholars have taken it up to address the problems of inequity within educational institutions. I reach back in time to briefly discuss the roots of SFL and then concentrate on three outgrowths of it, genre theory (Martin & Rose, 2008), the mode continuum (Gibbons, 2006) and the fairly recent introduction of Harman's (2018) and Harman's and Khote's (2018) introduction of a critical SFL praxis. The literature in this section directly informed my uptake of SFL in my work with racialized youth. Lastly, I delve into Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy, revisiting the words and ideas of Du Bois (1903/2015) and his dream of not bleaching but respecting the Black soul while also providing equity of opportunity. I follow his thoughts and work to map how explicitly in the 1970s and today educational scholars have worked to deconstruct deficient framings of the cultures of racialized students. The focus has changed from blaming children of color for failing

in schools to examining the detrimental role that trying to whitewash their souls has had on learning.

SFL was originally developed according to Halliday (1961) "to suggest what seem[ed] to [him] … to be the fundamental categories of that part of General Linguistic theory which is concerned with how language works at the level of grammar, with brief reference to the relations between grammar and lexis and between grammar and phonology" (p. 242). Years later, he expanded on his conceptualization of language as a social semantic (Halliday, 1978); as a way of explaining what he meant, he posited that "language arises in the life of the individual through an ongoing exchange of meanings with significant others" (Halliday, 1978, p. 1). This is to say that language is not an idealized structure, it is *functional*. It is an object and tool, an ever-evolving construct that creates social realities as it is also formed through the interactions of social beings in numerous social situations. Additionally, SFL is understood as a way of helping applied linguists to realize that language is a social means of "exchanging meaning, and the exchange of meanings is a creative process in which language is one [of many] symbolic resources—perhaps the principal one …but still one among others" (Halliday, 1978, p. 4). That creative process is understood to be part of a *system* and as such, had predictable yet flexible patterns that were inscribed with meaning due to the shared experiences of a particular group of languages users.

According to Halliday (1978), "language is as it is because of the functions it has evolved to serve in people's lives" (p. 4). Language can be understood to be organized around three distinct, yet intertwined metafunctions. The first one is *ideational* or the need to represent experience. The second one is the need to set up and sustain interactions/relationships between people, *interpersonal*. *Textual* is the third metafunction of language. It is the need to create connections or linkages that create coherence within discourse (Unsworth, 2005; Halliday,

1978). These metafunctions are important because they help us to move from understanding language as simply encoding "'a behaviour potential' into a 'meaning potential'; that is as a means of expressing what the human organism 'can do' in interaction with other human organisms, by turning it into what he [sic] 'can mean'" (Halliday, 1978, p. 21). These interconnected metafunctions help us to understand the possible lexicogrammatical tools that are at the disposal of an individual as they interact with others.

As a system that creates and is created by social actors within different contexts, Halliday recognized that language was a system that had been used to stratify individuals into different socially constructed groups (Halliday, 1978). As a linguistic theory that recognizes power dynamics, it can be placed within the category of Critical Theory (Prasad, 2015). Indeed, Halliday's theory of language was influenced by Marxism (Thompson & Collins, 2001). In an interview in 1998 at the 25th International Systemic Functional Institute & Congress, Halliday stated that at one time he had worked with a group of Marxist linguists who were striving to develop a theory of language that would give "value to varieties of language that were traditionally neglected" (Thompson & Collins, 2013, p. 163). He continued by stating that after working with them his desire changed from wanting to see language as a "second-order phenomenon" to one in which it is seen "as a product of the dialectic between material processes and semiotic processes, so that the semiotic become constructive-constitutive" (p.163). As a linguistic theory that works to explicate and explicitly draw attention to power dynamics, SFL has been used and in some cases adapted by scholars in order to facilitate the learning of dominant educational discourses by students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

An example of the adaption of SFL to educational institutions is the work of Jim Martin and others in Australia in the 1980s. Martin and Rose (2008) state that they and various other

scholars, such as Suzanne Eggins, Guenter Plum, Fran Christie, Sally Humphrey, and Mary Macken-Horarik worked in order to examine, analyze and teach some of the most common genres that were/are taught in primary schools in Australia. Martin and Rose (2008) pointed out that quite often during the 1980s teachers referred to every piece of student writing as a story without drawing a clear distinction between the structural, processual or social purpose of different texts. Through their work, they sought to help students to gain explicit knowledge of how dominant school genres were constructed and to access dominant academic and cultural text. Through their involvement with the Disadvantaged Schools Project, they developed a methodology, *Learning to Read: Reading to Learn* (Rose & Martin, 2012). It was developed in response to the urgent needs of people who Rose (2005) referred to as "Indigenous and other marginalized learners" (p. 133) so that they could rapidly improve their reading and writing skills and thus gain access to dominant educational programs and success. They worked to analyze and to teach students to recognize and recreate the different components that are found in dominant educational genres.

One scholar who has used and expanded on the work of Martin and Rose is Sally Humphrey. Humphrey's (2009) work is of importance to this dissertation because although she does engage in the application of genre pedagogy within schooled context, she was/is keenly aware that there are no clean or impenetrable boundaries between academic and personal domains. She stated,

> the identification of blurred rhetorical boundaries between the political and personal spheres of life in contemporary social movements opens the possibility for the voice of groups traditionally marginalised from the language of power to be heard in debates of political and social consequence. (p. 8)

The understanding of the permeability of the political and the personal and the mapping of dominant and generally accepted genres onto the work of minoritized youth in community/political settings is important as it helps to open the door to intentionally guiding youth into the use of various genres to meet their present and future political/personal needs. In particular, Humphrey's focus on the use of Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA) (Martin, 2004) is especially powerful as it foregrounds an active intent to change social conditions and not just to comment on texts that highlight the deficient framing of minoritized communities. As Martin (2004) stated,

> we do need to move beyond a preoccupation with demonology, beyond a singular focus on semiosis in the service of abusive power—and reconsider power communally as well, as it circulates through communities, as they re-align around values, and renovate discourses that enact a better world. (p. 197)

Humphrey's work was one of the first to use genre theory and the ideas behind PDA and map them onto the civic work that minoritized youth were doing in order to create a more equitable world. This dissertation works to not only recognize dominant genres that racialized youth may choose to use but also to recognize the inherent value and evolutionary and revolutionary work of racialized youth as they remix dominant and communal genres in order to meet their needs.

Another scholar whose work has informed this dissertation is Pauline Gibbons. Gibbons (2006) strove to directly link the dialogic languaging practices of classroom teachers with multilingual students as a bridge to help students to access various languaging structures along what she termed as the mode continuum. Gibbons (2002/2012) defines the mode continuum as the progression from more spoken-like to more written-liken language. Although Gibbons

stressed that there are opposites on the continuum, she also acknowledged that there are no truly pure modes. She stated,

> While spoken and written language obviously have distinctive characteristics, this continuum of texts illustrates that there is no absolute boundary between them. Technology increases this blurring.[..] And texting, too, has further blurred the distinction between spoken and written language, for example, by introducing visual emoticons and ideographs that "fill in" the writer's emotions that would normally be part of the context of face-to-face spoken language. (p. 81-82)

Gibbons' scholarship draws a direct correlation between students being able to talk about firsthand experiences and how over time they learn to reflect and share abstract knowledge with others who may not have shared a common experience. She relates the ability to share distinct and complex knowledges with what she terms as academic language or reflective language embedded within a subject teaching area. Although, Gibbons does not explicitly discuss multimodality and its relation to the mode continuum, as I take it up in this dissertation, she does allude to it. She posited that technology blurs the lines between what was traditionally thought of as oral and written modes. She also wrote about how the lack of gestures influences telephone conversations and how the inclusion of gifs and memes broaden how a text message is composed and understood. This work directly impacted the design of the curriculum modules in this dissertation. It informed the development and recursive progression of modules that were designed to apprentice youth and pre-and in-service teachers into the use of various semiotic repertoires.

Another eminent linguistic scholar whose work informed this dissertation is that of Ruqaiya Hasan. Hasan (2011) advocated for what she termed "reflection literacy" (p. 242).

Applied in educational settings, reflection literacy entails an approach that calls for a realization of meaning beyond the surface meaning of a text. This would mean that we need to seek out and recognize that every text is based on underlying ideologies or assumptions that are based on the "textual and social environment of the discourse under focus: instead of looking at formal construals of meaning unit by unit, it takes the paradigmatic and syntagmatic aspects of the whole discourse into account" (p. 242). She further stated that the

> three basic principles of reflection literacy: (i) the study of the meaning-making potential of language should never be divorced from literacy pedagogy: this potential is also a potential for linguistic variation; (ii) all instances of meaning making should be subject to interrogation: e.g., 'what meaning construed how', 'why' and 'why here'; and (iii) the significance of what language refers to, what meanings it makes, should never be divorced from the social context from where the pressures for meaning making arises. (p. 243)

Hasan's reflection literacy in effect artfully considers and validates yet at the same time critiques Martin's and Rose's idea of genre or the learning of dominant sanctioned reading and writing forms. She stated,

> The most extensive programme for the pedagogy of action literacy was developed by Martin (e.g., 1986) and his colleagues. Known as "genre-based pedagogy', it turned the concept of literacy in education from an aspect of the usual instructional discourse on language to 'instruction in language across the curriculum'. (p. 241)

Even as she recognized the benefits of Martin's and Roses's genre-pedagogy and the work of others who took up their framework in subsequent years (e.g., Gebhard, 2019; Brisk, 2015; Fang & Schleppegrell, 2008; Schleppegrell, 2004; Derewianka, 1990), she criticized it. Hasan stated,

> genre-based literacy has been, on the one hand, selective in the genres that it chooses to bring to the students' attention – these happen to be privileged and privileging in the context of educational success; and on the other hand, the reception of discourse types had until recently been limited to identifying the structural composition, i.e., generic stages". (p. 241)

Hasan criticized genre theory for uncritically reifying dominant genres without "confronting the texts with the wider contexts of communal existence" or without putting them into critical conversations with text produced by those minoritized by dominant institutions. In a similar vein, Allan Luke (2018) stated in regard to dominant text types or genres,

> without a sociological theory of power, conflict and difference, such models fail to provide an account for why and how some discourses, knowledges and texts count more than others. While appearing to 'empower' students by reconceptualising them as social agents and speaking/writing subjects in the production of knowledge, these approaches stop short of providing empirical or normative grounds for deciding which knowledges, which texts and which discourses should and will count for which consequences in larger social and institutional settings.

Luke like Hasan recognized that although pedagogies that had grown out of SFL were useful, he also knew that if they were uncritically adopted, they had the potential to uncritically normalize dominant genres.

SFL and the pedagogies that have developed from it had their origin in an attempt to provide a clear way of providing equity for speakers who were not part of dominant societal groups (Halliday, 1978). Harman and Khote (2018) and Harman (2018) put a new spin on the SFL praxis, in regard to how they went about supporting minoritized youth. They added in a

specific focus on the role that racialized language practices have on the lives and educational experiences of Latiné youth. As they stated, their work was implemented to "conceptualize and implement pedagogical interventions that actively incorporate the multisemiotic and cultural repertories of [racialized] students while co-constructing disciplinary knowledge through explicit and carefully crafted scaffolding." (Harman & Khote, 2018, p. 64). Their work in some ways took up Martin's call for a positive discourse analysis. They not only pointed out how language was used against un(der) documented youth (Pérez Rhym, 2017) but they also spoke to the power of encouraging youth to use their home languages in dominant educational spaces and advocating for their communities. They spoke of valuing the "vast experience of language brokering [of racialized youth] in their communities (e.g., translating, representing, negotiating) [and how it] provide[d] them with sophisticated cognitive strategies that can be leveraged to co-construct academic knowledge in school contexts" (p.65). They posited that by allowing youth to use all their linguistic recourses and experiences, they would be able to learn critically to use English in order to bring awareness to their lived experiences and to experience success in dominant K-12 settings.

In the tradition of Martin and Rose (2008), Humphrey (2009), Gibbons (2006), Hasan and Webster (2011), and Harman and Khote (2018), through this dissertation, I sought/seek to help racialized youth to examine critically dominant languaging and literacy practices. The difference in my work and what has come before it is that instead of only teaching racialized youth dominant genres or mapping dominant genres onto what they are doing, or valuing what students do as a bridge to dominant ways of understanding, I seek to value the inherent worth of

their practices in and of themselves. I also seek to help racialized youth learn to examine critically dominant and community[9] languaging and literacies practices.

**Equity of opportunity: From Du Bois to Paris and Alim**

In seeking to value and nourish the ever-evolving culture repertoires of racialized youth, I center my work firmly in culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2014; Paris, 2012). The roots of culturally sustaining pedagogy can be traced back to civil rights activists and scholars who advocated for the breaking of the white gaze (Yancy, 2008) or the idea that only the white man and his knowledges were valuable. During the early years of the 20th century, Du Bois (1903/2015), noted Black intellectual, sociologist, and civil rights activist, wrote at length about the need to develop, nourish, and sustain the intellectual brilliance of Black people. He envisioned education as the way to help Blacks push for and obtain their full civil rights. Du Bois (1903/2015) posited that the purpose of education should be one that sustains and nourishes the soul of the "Negro"[sic]. He wrote that the Negro [sic] did not and I would argue does not want to lose their souls as they deepen their knowledge about dominant educational discourses. Du Bois (1903/2015) stated concerning the education of Blacks:

> in this merging he [sic] wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro [sic] soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro [sic] and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face. (p.9)

[9] In the context of this dissertation, community language(ing)/literacies refer to practices that dominant institutional actors frame as non-standard. These are practices that have been racialized.

Du Bois advocated for an education that would nourish and sustain every aspect of the Black[10] soul. He dreamt of an education that would respect, cultivate, and sustain knowledges that were emic to Black communities while also providing access to knowledges that were valued by the white majority. This type of education would not hold white knowledge as superior to Black knowledge. It would simply allow for the "doors of opportunity" not to be closed in the face of Blacks.

Unfortunately, an educational system that would not require people of color to bleach their souls and has truly opened its doors to provide equity of opportunity still has not come into existence. For the last 40 years, various scholars have worked to explain and refute the deficient framing of students of color by the dominant society. One such example is that of Susan Philips. Philips (1974) observed a first and sixth-grade classroom on the Warm Springs First Nation reservation and a first grade and sixth-grade non-reservation class. Her research led her to the conclusion that "cultural differences in language use [by white teachers] were contributing to the difficulties the Indian [sic] children were having in school" (p. 14). Similar to Philips's findings, Cazden and Leggett (1976) after a thorough review of the literature concerning interactional patterns and learning styles of various racialized groups (i.e. First Nation, Mexican, Mexican-American, and Black) found that there were what they termed cultural differences [or interactional patterns carried out by white teachers] that impacted the learning of racialized students in dominant educational spaces. They posited that teachers needed to become culturally responsive. This would require teachers and by extension educational institutions to adopt a

[10] Throughout this dissertation, I have chosen to capitalize Black when it refers to those who I identify as part of the diaspora of peoples stolen from Africa and enslaved by white Europeans. In order to break the white gaze or belief that only whites are enlightened, I have chosen as is customary within Critical Race Theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995) to capitalize Black when it refers to enslaved peoples stolen from Africa.

multisensory approach to instruction and to carry out a detailed ethnographic study of "incompatibilities between the interactional styles of [minoritized] communit[ies] and [predominantly white teachers and administrators in] school[s] (p. 32). Additionally, they pushed for institutions to seek out, hire, and promote skilled cultural insiders to work within educational spaces.

Building on the work of Philips (1974), Au and Mason (1983) used the term culturally congruent or non-congruent as they explored the impact that interactions between Hawaiian and non-Hawaiian teachers had on Hawaiian student reading success. They posited that culturally (in)congruent education is one in which the cultural ways of knowing and being of students and teachers are aligned or misaligned. They concluded that when teachers were not knowledgeable/cognizant of how students learn it made it harder for students to learn to read. Their work was in line with the research published in a 1981 edited volume, *Culture and the bilingual classroom: Studies in classroom ethnography* (Trueba, Guthrie, & Au, 1981). The research of the authors in the edited volume also found that in a variety of situations, the cultural ways of interacting of racialized communities were generally not valued by dominant institutions and their gatekeepers. The lack of acknowledgment and valuing correlated with lower student achievement.

In 1990, in contrast to previous research projects, Ladson-Billings, instead of researching what was going wrong in the education of Black students, concentrated on what teachers who were successfully educating Black students were doing well (Ladson□Billings, 1990). This was a starkly different approach to examining the impact of schooling on racialized students. Additionally, Ladson-Billings wrote at length about the need to redefine success. Success for many at that time and still today means that Black students, and I would argue other racialized

students, have to approximate the cultural and behavioral patterns of middle-class white students. Ladson-Billings, the teachers that she observed, and their students sought to redefine this conceptualization of success. They did not want Black students to feel as if they had to "act white" or as Du Bois would have framed it, bleach their souls "in a flood of white Americanism" (Du Bois, 1903/2015, p. 9). Ladson-Billing documented how teachers and students chose "academic excellence without losing a sense of personal and cultural identity." (Ladson Billings, 1990, p. 337). She refocused the conversation from what students could not do to one that centered what successful teachers were during to provide equity of opportunity to Black students.

Five years later in 1995, Ladson-Billings built on her article, "Like lightning in a bottle: Attempting to capture the pedagogical excellence of successful teachers of black students" (1990). She outlined three essential characteristics for what she termed culturally relevant pedagogy. Ladson-Billings (1995) stated that CRP must "develop students academically, … nurture and support cultural competence, and …develop sociopolitical or critical consciousness" (p. 483). The purpose of CRP was to provide equity of educational opportunity to Black students not by focusing on what they were perceived as not being able to do but by focusing on what successful teachers were doing to provide equity of opportunity.

Scholars such as Kris Gutierrez (DiGiacomo & Gutiérrez, 2017) have taken on the work of Ladson-Billings in order to leverage

> what is known about how people learn across everyday settings, [and] …. to contribute to scholarly conversations that center around how to create teacher-learning environments where equity remains both a design principle and an outcome of the adult–youth interactions in practice. (p.41)

In order to design a learning and interactional environment in which minoritized youth and the adults who work with them center their humanizing relationships, DiGiacomo and Gutiérrez focus on "sociocultural views of learning and culture, and equity-oriented design principles" (p. 42). They specifically draw upon Ladson-Billings's work that documents "how culturally relevant pedagogical strategies and practices can work to provide more equitable learning opportunities for low-income youth and youth of color" (p. 42).

In particular, their work centered or created an afterschool "playful learning environment [that]…privilege[d] hybrid language practices – that is, practices that value, make use of, and support the expansion of youths' complete linguistic toolkit – by foregrounding the benefits of multilingualism and heterogeneous and multi-voiced learning environments that support the creation of "third spaces" (p.43). This is of particular importance in this dissertation as this idea of creating a "third space" in an afterschool environment was pivotal in working to create a truly translingual environment for all students. It also provided a basis for the idea of "flattening" (Siffrinn, 2019) or disrupting what is generally taken as the power dynamics between pre- and in-service teachers and youth. Additionally, they called for teacher programs to support teachers in the "development of expansive theories of culture, as well as to engage in pedagogical practices that extend students thinking, engagement, and repertories" (p. 51) and acknowledges their dynamic and ever-evolving linguistic practices. This would entail researchers and pre- and in-service teachers recognizing that cultural and languaging practices are fluid. For example, teachers would need to recognize that just because a student is Black does not mean that they speak Black English or that because a student hails from a Latiné family that they speak Spanish. This realization means that we must all come to understand that students and their languaging and literacy practices are dynamic constructs because communities and cultural practices are

dynamic. Black students may speak Spanish because of the cultural context in which they have grown up just like Latiné students may speak a variety of Black English due to their cultural context.

In seeking to focus on what Wong and Peña (2017) refer to as literacies of joy and pleasure, my work also draws from the work of Marcelle Haddix (2009). Haddix just like Ladson-Billings advocated for a change in the framing of Black boys' academic attainment from what are they doing wrong to one in which we focus our attention on "disrupting deficit constructions of African American adolescent males and their prowess for intellectual performance" (p. 343). She wrote at length on the need to redirect the conversation and examine what they are doing well and what educators can do to open the doors of opportunity for them instead of closing them in their faces. Haddix (Sealy-Ruiz & Haddix, 2012) advocated for teachers to bring into academic spaces literacies practices that have been traditionally regulated to the margins or out-of-school spaces. These are practices that many youth may find to be culturally nourishing such as "critically reading of comic books, graphic novels, hip-hop music, and spoken-word poetry" (p. 189) along with the use of both digital and online tools. Haddix and Sealy-Ruiz advocated for the bringing in of digital tools into language and literacy spaces as one way of using "curricula and pedagogy as a framework for freedom…..as a way to empower … young men [and I would assert all young people of color] to rise above circumstances" (p. 191) and learn to become critical and creative linguistic architects and remixers. These can become emancipatory tools that can be used by students as they discuss what makes their communities strong and vibrant places. Additionally, they can also use those tools as they advocate for community-centered changes.

These applications and expansions of Ladson-Billings's work in addition to other asset-based pedagogies (see Garcia, 1993; González, Moll, & Amanti, 2006; Lee, 1995; Nieto, 1992) impacted the creation of what has come to be known as culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) (Paris & Alim, 2014; Paris, 2012). Paris (2012) stated that he credited the work of Ladson-Billings with laying the foundation for CSP. He went on to state that although he valued and respected her work that he did not feel that responsiveness explicitly centered the need to support and nurture an environment in which cultures and languages are nourished and critiqued. He went on to explain that CSP

> embodies some of the best past and present research and practice in the resource pedagogy tradition and as a term that supports the value of our multiethnic and multilingual present and future. The term culturally sustaining requires that our pedagogies be more than responsive of or relevant to the cultural experiences and practices of young people—it requires that they support young people in sustaining the cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence. Culturally sustaining pedagogy, then, has as its explicit goal supporting multilingualism and multiculturalism in practice and perspective for students and teachers. (p. 95)

Although culturally congruent, culturally relevant, culturally responsive, and other asset-based pedagogies (i.e., Funds of Knowledge (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2006), multicultural education (Nieto, 1992), cognitive apprenticeship (Lee, 1995)) are at their core ways of advocating for social justice, Paris posited that they do not go far enough. Paris and Alim (2014) lovingly critiqued previous asset-based pedagogies as not doing enough to explicitly decenter the

white gaze or to sustain the rich linguistic and cultural ways of racialized communities while also providing explicit access to dominate institutions.

As I position myself within the rich history of systemic functional linguistics and the pedagogies that have grown out of it and as I take up the mantle of CSP, to become an explicitly anti-racist and anti-colonial activist-scholar, I weave CSP within and on top of the tapestry of what is SFL. This weaving within and overlaying of has allowed me to explore how to sustain and nourish the pluricultural and translingual practices (García & Li, 2014) of racialized youth. The community bounded work of this dissertation has permitted me to examine how and why racialized students must be apprenticed into being critical examiners of dominant and community languaging and literacy practices.

The next section will examine the tapestry that is Culturally Sustaining Systemic Functional Linguistics (CS SFL). It explores how and if CS SFL provided a framework from which students and pre-and in-service teachers developed and utilized tools that helped them decide when to reject dominant knowledges, remix communal and dominant ways or develop new innovative ways of meeting their needs.

## Culturally Sustaining Systemic Functional Linguistics (CS SFL)

**Culturally sustaining pedagogy**. CS SFL combines Paris and Alim's (2017) belief that "culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) exists wherever education sustains the lifeways of communities who have been and continue to be damaged and erased through schooling" (p. 1) and Halliday's (1978) socially and functionally-oriented theory of language, Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Paris (2012) and then Paris and Alim (2017; 2014) conceptualized CSP as an approach where educators work to help students to not only nourish and sustain their languages and cultures but also to develop the ability to critically examine community and

academic practices. That critical examination would encourage them to "critically [attend and] contend with problematic elements expressed in some youth cultural practices" (2014, p. 86) and work to destroy the white gaze (Morrison, 1998; Yancy, 2013). Additionally, CSP would help to decenter a focus on comparing POC achievement with that of their white counterparts. In harkening back to the work of Ladson-Billings (2014), CSP works to make "schooling" explicitly transferable and applicable to the life of students outside of school (i.e. "sociopolitical consciousness" (p. 75)). In summation, CSP seeks to center and value the knowledges and ways of doing of POC communities without the need to use whiteness as a measuring stick. It also works to break the artificial dichotomy between everyday/community knowledge and specialized/school knowledge.

**Systemic functional linguistics.** Halliday through SFL conceptualized meaning-making as emerging from a pliable and remixable configuration of semiotic choices that are adapted for particular purposes and audiences. Additionally, this theory of language explicitly allows for a thorough and critical examination of languaging practices. It clearly allows for hidden ideologies expressed through language and other semiotic systems to be seen. As Feng (2013) asserted, SFL is particularly powerful because "it is very useful in showing how texts work beyond the level of the sentence, how different texts are structured, and how language varies to suit the social/ideological purpose(s) of the users" (p. 86). As such, SFL is both theory about language as a social process and a methodology and pedagogy which allows for the detailed and systemic learning/ teaching and analysis of language patterns (Eggins, 2004).

Taken together, I posit and explore in this dissertation if and how a cross-pollination of CSP and SFL can provide teachers and students with the means not only to examine and construct meaning within their communities but also across communities. The aim of my

conceptualization of CS SFL was to provide my co-researchers, youth, and pre-and in-service teachers, with the tools to critically and creatively examine both hegemonic and local ways of languaging and meaning-making across a continuum of different contexts.

**Development of CS SFL curriculum**

Instantiations of particular literacies are an outward expression of a group's cultural and ideological stance (Halliday, 1978). The realization that communities, both dominant and those that have been intentionally minoritized, are constantly involved in the creation of literacies that are important to them inspired me to work collaboratively with a variety of people in my community in order to develop CS SFL. This collaborative work brought together Black and Latiné youth, pre-and in-service teachers from various backgrounds (i.e., from mainland China, Hong Kong, Korea, various parts of the United States) plus university researchers in the co-construction of knowledge.

Paris and Alim's (2017; 2014) concept of CSP, like Ladson-Billings's idea of critical conscious (Ladson-Billings G., 2014; Ladson-Billings G., 1995), emphasizes the importance of sociopolitical consciousness. Ladson-Billings (2014) conceptualized sociopolitical consciousness as the "ability to take learning beyond the confines of the classroom using school knowledge and skills to identify, analyze, and solve real-world problems"(p.75). Building on the spirit of Ladson-Billings's (1995; 2014) and Paris and Alim's (2017; 2014) work, through the purposeful collaboration with various groups, I sought to broaden the idea of the sociopolitical to also include how POCs bring in and use their community-based knowledges and skills to identify, analyze, and solve school-based problems. In fact, what is needed is a breaking down of the artificial boundary that has been constructed between the everyday (community-based knowledges) and the specialized (school/Western-scientific knowledges). This reorientation to

knowledge was foremost in my mind as I sought to develop with my learning collective of youth, pre-and in-service teachers, and university researchers different recursive learning modules that would help my co-participants and me to (1) critically examine community and dominant ideologies and also to (2) reimage a way of measuring our self-worth based on how we move through our communities and not against white middle-class norms.

## Theoretical Framework—LatCrit

This study is informed predominately by Latiné Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) which grew out of Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2016; Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995). LatCrit calls for a critique of white supremacist heteronormative patriarchy. That critique brings into focus a historical/contextual focus on language practices (bilingualism or multilingualism), immigration status, experiential knowledge, in addition to the "intercentricity of racism with other forms of subordination (e.g., class, gender, language)" (Rodriguez, 2011, p. 241). Furthermore, LatCrit is intrinsically committed to social justice and examines ways to meet the specific educational needs of Latiné students (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Similar to how CRT uses counternarratives (Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2016) to center the voices of the subaltern (Orelus, 2018) (i.e., those who have been minoritized/racialized and framed as less than by those in power (Gramsci, 2005)) LatCrit uses *testimonios* and *pláticas* to allow them to be heard in spaces where racialized voices are generally not valued. Methodologically speaking, this research study uses testimonios and pláticas to provide a platform from which racialized youth can have their voices heard.

*Testimonio*

A "testimonio can be understood as, [the] verbal journey of a witness who speaks to reveal the racist, nativist, classist, and sexist injustices they have suffered as a means of healing, empowerment, and advocacy for a more humane present and future" (Pérez Huber, 2008). That is to say that t*estimonios* provide a platform from which a testimonalist can speak or use other modalities to inform others of their lived experiences, and that "speaking" can lead to advocacy and witness-bearing (Flores Carmona, 2014). Testimonios also help to morph the traditional roles of researcher and researched to co-researchers, where the researcher and participant become co-constructors of knowledge through a process of collaborative data collection, dialog, and analysis. They also decenter hegemonic ways of understanding how educational research should be carried out (Pérez-Huber, 2012; Alemán, 2017). For Latinés, *testimonios* are lived histories/personal truths. They not only reassure Latiné readers that they are not alone, they also offer counter-narratives to combat deficient stereotypes that cast Latinés as invaders or the other (Santa Ana, 1999; Santa Ana, 2002). Although they do decenter majoritarian stories or stories told from dominant perspectives, they serve another even more vital purpose. As Pérez Huber (2008) stated, they "humanize the struggles and injustices faced by People of Color […], calling attention to racist structures, policies, and practices in education" (p. 170). By bringing focus to the humanity of Latinés, testimonios provide a way for people inside of and outside of Latiné communities to come to understand how white supremacist dominant language ideologies impact the lives of Latinés.

This study explored how the CS SFL framework incorporated testimonios broadly speaking because with it, the voices, lived experiences, and testimonios of students were repositioned from being simply stories to ways of producing valued knowledge. The design and

implementation of the modules changed based on what knowledges, needs and desires students brought with them. In other words, we, the adults in the program, at times proposed a particular curriculum yet we were open to walk beside and if need be follow paths that were constructed by our youth co-architects of knowledge. The new paths at times came into being based on youth testimonios and/or our joint re-mixing of genres and other creative processes and products. The framework also drew on pláticas as another way of truly incorporating the dynamic languaging and literacy practices of youth and to help develop humanizing relationships between participants.

*Pláticas*

An important aspect of the work that we did with students was the building of humanizing relationships. Within LatCrit there is a focus on the individual as a center yet as an interconnected member of a community. Methodologically, pláticas provided a very effective way of examining the dialogic conversations that were a fundamental part of our work. Many scholars who are a part of and work within Latiné communities posit that pláticas are detailed dialogic interpersonal conversations (Flores Carmona, Hamzeh, Bejarano, & Hernández Sánchez, 2018; Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016; Guajardo & Guajardo, 2013). While people who are not emic to Latiné communities may consider them to be closely related to traditional structured and semi-structured interviews, they differ drastically in several significant ways. Fierros and Delgado Bernal (2016) stated that pláticas "allow us to witness shared memories, experiences, stories, ambiguities, and interpretations that impact us with a knowledge connected to personal, familial, and cultural history" (p.99). By their very nature, they are personal, as Fierros and Delgado Bernal (2016) stated, they allow us to personally interact with, construct meaning with, and bear witness to the personal knowledge of the person with whom one is

speaking. Structured interviews by their very nature are contrived and impersonal. Structured interviews do not necessitate a joint constructing of meaning. They are generally unidirectional, researcher to researched. Another way in which they are different from traditional interviews is that pláticas provide a vehicle for us to interchangeably and smoothly move from the personal to the academic across various spaces (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016). Within pláticas there is no clear delineation between the personal and the academic, they are inherently interpersonal and intersubjective. The line between "interviewer" and "interviewee" is blurred and thus they provide a space for the creation of humanizing relationships of trust and care. This blurring is paramount so that co-researchers (or what traditional research would term the researcher and participant) are able to construct a bond of trust in which they can mutually share themselves and co-construct knowledge. Pláticas are thus substantially more intimate than an interview because both co-participants willingly and openly share their lived experiences without regard to who is the researcher and the researched.

As a theory, LatCrit examines, calls for and centers the voices (i.e. languaging and literacies) and experiences of POCs. It also allows for a critical examination of how racial and linguistic ideologies impact educational programs. Due to its power to center how the languaging and literacies practices of POCs have been racialized, it will be used as the principal theoretical lens for this dissertation. The CS SFL framework works well within LatCrit because it provides a tool that can be used to help youth and others to explicitly deconstruct and examine linguistic ideologies. It also centers the experiences of POCs as normal and does not hold up the experiences of white middle and upper-middle-class people as what should be aspired to as normal.

**Research Questions**

This dissertation study explored the impact of a new linguistic and culturally sustaining framework that was used and created with bi/multilingual and bi/multi-dialectical youth and the adults (i.e., university researchers, pre- and in-service teachers, community members) with whom they created knowledge in a middle school in the American Southeast. Through a LatCrit lens, this dissertation centers the ways that knowledge is produced, critiqued and analyzed within minoritized communities. It also seeks to disrupt the white gaze (Yancy, 2008) as the measuring stick for success (Morrison, 1998). This dissertation answered the following two research questions by way of three interrelated manuscripts. Table 1.1 highlights what data was used to help to answer each question.

- Research Question 1: How were testimonios, counternarratives and pláticas used or not to center the lived experiences and knowledges of young people? Were the iterative learning modules designed within the CS SFL framework effective in centering the lived experiences, languages, and knowledges of youth?
- Research Question 2: What elements of CS SFL supported or not pre- and in-service teachers in coming to value, appreciate, and advocate for humanizing relationships, register shifting and language equity, multimodality, and translanguaging?

The following table lays out the major questions that were answered during this dissertation research project. The first column states the questions that were explored and the second one list many of the data points that were used to answer the two major research questions.

| Table 1.1 Research Questions | |
|---|---|
| Question | Data collected to answer question |
| How were testimonios, counternarratives and pláticas used or not to center the lived experiences and knowledges of young people? Were the iterative learning modules designed within the CS SFL framework effective in centering the lived experiences, languages, and knowledges of youth? | Pláticas, testimonios, audio and video recordings, physical artifacts, field notes, photographs, text messages |
| What elements of CS SFL supported or not pre- and in-service teachers in coming to value, appreciate, and advocate for humanizing relationships, register shifting and language equity, multimodality, and translanguaging? | Reflections from adult participants, semi-structured interviews and pláticas with pre- and in-service teachers, audio and video recordings, photographs, text messages |

This dissertation is organized into three different manuscripts. The first manuscript details the conceptualization of CS SFL. It works to weave together CSP and SFL into one cohesive tapestry that can be used to provide youth and adults with a way to support racialized communities. The second manuscript discusses how testimonios were an integral part of the work and allowed for the development of truly humanizing relationships between participants. The third and final manuscript explores how two focal pre-service teachers took up the CS SFL framework as they prepared to work with mostly racialized students in K-12 ESOL/TESOL classrooms.

In what follows, I discuss the Critical Race Methodologies that guided my design of the dissertation study, and then the particular data collection methods and participants involved in the research. The use of a framework that centers race and the lived experiences and knowledges of those who have been racialized is important because it works to "deconstruct the "apartheid of knowledge" (Bernal & Villalpando, 2002) that exists within the academy. It validates and honors

the knowledge making of racialized youth and their communities. Finally, I provide a brief overview of the full dissertation.

## Significance of the Study

Since the inception of the United States and the forced enslavement of Black people, activists and thinkers in the Black community have worked to deconstruct the white gaze (Baldwin, 1961; Du Bois, 1903/2015; Morrison, 1998; Yancy, 2008) as the measuring stick by which the humanity, community and languaging practices of POCs were measured (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Paris & Alim, 2014). Du Bois (Du Bois, 1903/2015), a noted civil rights activist and educator, wrote that he became aware of the white gaze from an early age when,

> one girl, a tall [white] newcomer, refused my card, —refused it peremptorily, *with a glance* [emphasis added]. Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others [i.e., the white students that attended his wooden schoolhouse]; or like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil. (p. 8)

As a youngster, Du Bois worked to pierce that veil until he learned that he could not and thus he learned to live "above it in a region of blue sky and great wandering shadows" (p. 8). In the same effort to live above the gaze or at least to highlight the assets possessed by racialized communities, many scholars have worked to bring asset-based pedagogies that center the lives of POCs to the fore. In respond to the Lau vs. Nichols case (Bon, 2020) asset-based pedagogies (e.g., Cazden & Leggett, 1976; Kinloch, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Lee, 1995; Garcia, 1993; González, Moll, & Amanti, 2006; Nieto, 1992) have striven to center the cultural assets that minoritized students bring to school and/or worked to make teachers aware of how a student's cultural or linguistic background impacts learning.

My work seeks to go beyond just recognizing the individual impact that culture or language has on the learning of students. CS SFL (1) centers the experiences of POCs, (2) acknowledges that language and cultures are not static but constantly changing, (3) explicates that language and languaging practices are not devoid of ideologies (4) cultivates a critical examination of community and dominant languaging and literacy practices, (5) recognizes the inherent value of the languages and literary practices that POCs possess, (6) works to disrupt the artificially constructed boundary between what has come to be termed every day and academic knowledges, and (7) provides macro and micro-level languaging tools, within a functional grammatical system, that assists in the critical examination of texts.

In using a critical approach and employing the use of *testimonios* and *pláticas* to center the learning experiences (inside and outside of school) of Latiné and Black youth in their own words, this study allows for the voices of those who had been traditionally marginalized and racialized to be heard. This study aimed to explore the effectiveness of the CS SFL framework in providing youth, myself and other adult allies with a recursive and iterative way of co-constructing knowledge. In order to explore the effectiveness of our work together, the next section will outline many of the non-Western/white ways that knowledge was constructed, analyzed, valued, and discussed.

## Methodology

Critical Race Methodologies (CRMs) (Pérez Huber, 2008) which were developed from CRT were used to gather and analyze the data for this study. Within these methodologies, race and racism are foregrounded (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). CRMs provide the methods or tools that help to center the racialized, classed and gendered experiences of minoritized students. They help to refocus what is generally taken as deficits and centers the strengths that make up

marginalized communities (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). This study utilized two CRMs, testimonios (Delgado Bernal, Burciago, & Flores Carmona, 2012; Pérez-Huber, 2012), and pláticas (Flores Carmona, Hamzeh, Bejarano, & Hernández Sánchez, 2018). Additionally, I used Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2012) but a version of Grounded Theory filtered through a CRT lens, critical race grounded theory (Malagon, Huber, & Velez, 2009).

*Testimonios* disrupt the hegemonic ways in which educational research has been approached. It allows the subaltern (Orelus, 2018) (i.e., those who have been minoritized and framed as less than by those in power. (Gramsci, 2005)) to speak by centering their voices in stark contrast to how knowledge is generally generated or valued in Western societies (Delgado Bernal, Burciago, & Flores Carmona, 2012; Pérez-Huber, 2012). *Pláticas* in the same vein as testimonios allow the subaltern to not only speak but to also build humanizing relationships (Paris & Winn, 2013; Paris, 2011) with others. While platicando, the roles of interviewer and interviewee blur in such a way that both share their lives and jointly build knowledge. Grounded theory filtered through a CRT lens helps to illuminate the patterns of racial inequity by centering the voice of POCs and it also calls for their inclusion in the collection and analysis of data (Malagon, Huber, & Velez, 2009). Taken together, these three methodologies center the voices, knowledges, and desires of communities of color. They allow them to teach others about their languaging and literacies practices.

**Context of the Study**

This study was carried out in Chestnut County located in the southeast of the United States. The first site of this critical ethnographic study was located in Chestnut Grove Middle school as part of a summer camp program during summer 2016. The school-based initial iterations of the research program were held at Chestnut Middle School. Both iterations of the

program were constructed around two different graduate-level courses (i.e., Youth Participatory Action Research and ESOL in the Content Area). Table 1.2 details the location and circumstances surrounding each iteration of the program. This dissertation focuses almost exclusively on the work that took place at Chestnut Middle School. To a lesser extent, it also pulls from the testimonios and pláticas that grew out of the work at Chestnut Grove. This is important to note as both projects took place within the same community.

Table 1.2 Youth Art Institute (YAI) Research Sites

| Name of Site | Location | Semester | Participants | Course Involved |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Chestnut Grove Middle School | Chestnut, Georgia | Summer 2016 | Bilingual and bi-dialectical and Middle school students drawn from the district, PhD and pre-service MAT students, university professors | Introduction to Youth Participatory Action Research |
| Chestnut Middle School | Chestnut, Georgia | Spring 2017 | Bilingual and bi-dialectical: middle school students,1 high school student, local community members, PhD, and pre-service MAT students, university professors | Youth Participatory Action Research, ESOL in content areas |
| Chestnut Middle School | Chestnut, Georgia | Fall 2018 | Bilingual and bi-dialectical: middle school students, 2 PhD students, 1 undergraduate | 21st Century afterschool program[11] (not a university course) |
| Chestnut Middle School | Chestnut, Georgia | Spring 2018 | Bilingual and bi-dialectical middle school students, local community members, PhD, and pre-service MAT students, 2 undergraduate students, university professors | Culturally Sustaining Systemic Functional Linguistics Praxis, ESOL in content areas |

According to state records, 65.4% of residents of Chestnut County identify as white, 27.5% as Black, and 10.6% as Hispanic (Governor's Office of Planning and Budget, 2019). The student population at Chestnut Middle was not representative of the overall county

[11] A Federally funded program to provide academic programming to students during non-traditional school hours. https://www2.ed.gov/programs/21stcclc/index.html

demographics. Most of Chestnut Middle's students were Black (50.8%) or Hispanic (39.1%) (GADOE, 2018).

During the first iteration of the Chestnut Middle School project in 2017, the majority of the youth who participated spoke Spanish (90%) and 10% speak Black American English (BAE) or a combination of BAE and Spanish. No students self-identified as white. During the second and third iterations of the project, the middle school participant population was remarkably different from the first. For example, during the second and third instantiations most of the students (80%) in the program spoke BAE at home, 10% Spanish, and 10% spoke a form of dominant American English (DAE) at home. The third iteration of the program in spring 2018 included two boys who self-identified as white.

**Focal participants**

**Youth co-researchers/participants.**

Chapter three focuses on four youth who voluntarily took part in various parts of the research. Chart 1.3 provides youth participant details. Their participation was authorized by the student, their parent(s), the Chestnut County school district and the IRB at my university. I chose to focus on them because they in large part were very representative of the different populations of students who took part in the program. Additionally, they all volunteered to continue working with me to analyze their testimonios and pláticas after the formal part of the research project ended. Indeed, my relationship with each of them has changed from that of an outsider to someone who is considered a family friend or tío.

***Cierra.*** I first met Cierra during summer 2016 when I took part in Camp Chestnut Grove (CCG). CCG was a K-8 summer camp that was jointly coordinated between the Chestnut County School District and a large land grant state university located in the American Southeast. During

the summer 2016, Cierra was a 14-year-old rising 8th grader who lived near the site of the summer camp in a large public housing community. As Cierra and I got to know each other we found that we shared many things in common while there were also differences. We were both Black, labeled as having a learning disability, live(d) in public housing, and live(d) in a single-mother lead household. While there were many things in common, there were also differences based on gender, age, and life experiences. Cierra and I worked together Monday-Thursday for over two weeks during the month of June. Due to our collaboration during the summer 2016 and our continue collaboration since then, we were part of a public housing and university partnership that allowed for the opening of a community center in Cierra's neighborhood, obtained funding so that she and her mother could attend a national linguistics conference where we presented together on our work and facilitated her attendance at a national English conference as a presenter and attendee. Our work together has also allowed me to foster a relationship with her mother and younger sister. We often talk about community issues, school concerns, and life in general. Her mother has also become an unofficial community center advocate.

***Simón*.** Simón and I first met during Spring 2017 when I co-taught a master's level English as a Second Language (ESOL) Content-based course at his middle school. The course was the first school-based iteration of CS SFL. At the time of our meeting, Simón who was only 15 had only been in the United States for a couple of years. He had immigrated from Latin America in order to escape the threats of death and violence at the hands of various gangs that had taken over his community. As a result of his relatively recent arrival into the local school district, he had been labeled as an English Language Learner (ELL) or Emergent Bilingual Learner (EBL). Simón and I found that we had a lot in common due to our experiences of living in Latin America. Although we had lived in different Latin American countries and were from

different generations, we found that due to a shared language, valuing of community connections, love of similar musical genres, and especially an appreciation for hip hop and reggaeton, we got along very well. When the first iteration of the CS SFL program ended Simón and another co-participant, Lucia, reached out to me and asked if they could participate during the second iteration of the program during Spring 2018 even though they were no longer going to be in middle school. He, Lucia, and I have also worked together to record some of their rap songs. Our collaboration has not just involved the direct work of the CS SFL project, we have also spent time together breaking bread with his family and my family on different occasions.

***Lucia.*** Lucia and I also met at Chestnut middle school. She was a shy 8th grader who I came to find out loved to listen to and write rap and hip-hop songs. Lucia was a United States citizen, yet she had lived most of her 14 years of life in Mexica. When she and I met during Spring 2017, she had only been back in the United States for a year after having lived in Mexico for over 10 years. As a result of her relatively recent arrival, she had been labeled as an ELL and her ESOL teacher had encouraged her to take part in our project. Over the course of the time we spent together, Lucia shared with me the numerous songs that she had written and also shared with me her passion for soccer and her desire to return to Mexico so that she could live with her parents. I also shared with her my musical playlist and my hope of one day returning to live in Ecuador.

***Edwin.*** Edwin was a brilliant and dynamic 15-year-old Mexican national when we first meet in Spring 2017. He had previously been involved in several different youth-related projects carried out by Ruth Harman (Chagoya & Harman, 2017; Harman, Johnson, & Chagoya, 2016). During the time that he had collaborated with Ruth, Edwin had been involved in a community-based writing project and due to that he co-authored several peer-reviewed articles and book

chapters based on his testimonios (e.g. Harman, Johnson, & Chagoya, 2016). At that time, he was the only high school student in our group. Since 2017, Edwin and I have had the opportunity to co-led and present at two national conferences and to also present at a combined university and community forum in the United States Northeast.

Table 1.3 Youth Participants' Details

| Name | Age | Language(s) spoken | Racial/Ethnic group | YAI project location |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cierra | 14 | African American English, Dominant American English | African American | Chestnut Grove Middle School |
| Lucia | 14 | Spanish (Mexico) | Mexican, Latiné | Chestnut Middle School |
| Simón | 15 | Spanish (El Salvador) | Salvadorian, Latiné | Chestnut Middle School |
| Edwin | 15 | Spanish (Mexico) | Mexican, Latiné | Chestnut Middle School |

**Adult co-researchers/participants.**

***Vanessa.*** Vanessa, a white middle-aged cis-gender female, graduated in the 1980s with a degree in business. Due to life circumstances after her graduation, she took several courses that prepared her to teach English as a foreign language (TEFL) in various countries around the world. She took part in the CS SFL program as a graduate student working to earn her master's degree in TESOL. Her participation in the project was her first time working with K-12 students.

***Melanie.*** Melanie was a young cis-gendered white female in her mid-twenties, at the time of the study. She was a relatively new Pre-K paraprofessional, less than one year of service. Her job as a paraprofessional and her desire to become a K-12 ESOL teacher motivated Melanie to take my ESOL in the content area course that was offered on-site at Chestnut Middle School.

**Data collection and analysis**

Data collection and analysis were informed by my theoretical and methodological frameworks and allowed me to examine the impact of the CS SFL framework on the

development of bi/multi-lingual and bi-dialectical youth and their adult allies' semiotic repertoires and civic engagement. Joint analysis with co-participants also helped to examine the benefit or not of reframing how racialized students and their communities are positioned.

*Data Collection*

Data collection occurred over a two-year period within two different contexts. The first phase of this project took place during Summer 2016 as part of a summer camp (see Burke, Harman, Hadley, & Mizell, 2018). I collected data during June 2016 and the latter part of Fall 2016. Data included adult participant reflections, pláticas with youth co-participants, multimodal artifacts, audiotape recordings of group discussions and interactions, videotapes of theatrical sessions, and course readings. During Spring 2017, Fall 2017, and Spring 2018 over 60 hours of video and audio recordings were collected, along with photographs taken by youth and adults. Additionally, I collected adult and youth reflection logs, multimodal artifacts, youth, and adult co-constructed final unit projects (e.g., final reflection papers, lesson plans, unit planners). I also cataloged course readings and emails from teachers and administrators at Chestnut Middle School.

The data corpus for this study is presented in Table 1.4. Table 1.5 highlights the data that was collected from each module.

| Table 1.4 YAI Data Corpus | |
|---|---|
| Summer 2016 | Graduate student reflections<br>Photographs taken by middle school/graduate students<br>Video/audio recordings<br>Physical artifacts produced by youth and adults |
| Fall 2016 | Pláticas with youth<br>Fieldnotes |
| Spring 2017 | Youth and graduate student reflections<br>Photographs taken by youth/graduate students<br>Video/audio recordings of group interactions<br>Physical artifacts produced by youth and adults<br>Youth reflections and text/emails/Facebook messages<br>Fieldnotes, graduate student weekly responses to readings, lesson plans, final projects |

| | |
|---|---|
| Fall 2017 | Photographs taken by youth<br>Artifacts produced by youth<br>Fieldnotes |
| Spring 2018 | Middle school/graduate student reflections<br>Photograph taken by youth/graduate students<br>Video/audio recordings of group interactions<br>Physical artifacts produced by youth and adults<br>Youth reflections and text/emails/Facebook messages<br>Fieldnotes, graduate student weekly responses to readings, lesson plans, final projects |

| Table 1.5 Module Data Collected | |
|---|---|
| Module | Data Collected |
| Introduction to YPAR | Graduate student reflections and course readings |
| Introduction to culturally sustaining pedagogy and systemic functional linguistics | Graduate student reflections and course readings |
| Oral history | Audio and video records, fieldnotes |
| Oral stories and drawings | Photographs of drawings, individual drawings, audio and video recordings, reflection logs, fieldnotes, course readings |
| Hip-Hop/Spoken work | Photographs, drawings, audio and video recordings, course reading reflection logs, reflection logs fieldnotes, course readings |
| Photography unit/Photovoice | Photographs, Audio and video recordings, fieldnotes, course reading reflection logs, reflection logs fieldnotes, course readings |
| Mapping of school | Photographs, maps, drawings, audio and video recordings, course reading reflection logs, reflection logs fieldnotes, course readings |
| Modeling of school with blocks and 3D with paper | Photographs of models, maps, photographs of activities, audio and video recordings, fieldnotes, course reading reflection logs, reflection logs fieldnotes, course readings |
| Legislative theater | Photographs of activities, audio and video recordings, reflection logs, fieldnotes, course reading reflection logs, reflection logs fieldnotes, course readings |
| Research around ideas that developed during legislative theater | Copies of some groups plans, photographs, audio and video recording, reflection logs, fieldnotes, course reading reflection logs, reflection logs fieldnotes, course readings |
| Presentation of ideas as a performance to group | Copies of some groups plans, photographs, audio and video recording, reflection logs, fieldnotes, course reading reflection logs, reflection logs fieldnotes, course readings |
| Final presentation of ideas to community at large | Reflection logs, photographs, email from principal and other teachers from Chestnut Middle school, audio and video recordings, fieldnotes, course reading reflection logs, fieldnotes, course readings |

*Data Analysis*

A critical action research approach (Carson, 1990) that incorporated testimonios and pláticas was used to collect the data. For three years, I worked as an active facilitator in each of the programs, implementing the design, collecting data, and reflecting in fieldnotes and logs about my relationships and work with youth. Following the tenets of testimonios, a critical approach was used to analyze participants' testimonios. I met with my focal participants in person or virtually so that we could jointly co-construct our understanding of their lived experiences. During that process, there was a blurring of the roles. We were all co-researchers and co-constructors of knowledge. No one person held all the knowledge. This proved to be both a generative and recursive process.

Several different topics guided my investigation, (1) if youth felt that they had cultivated critical awareness surrounding community and dominant languaging practices, (2) if students were able to recognize and value their languages and literacy practices, (3) if a conscious remixing of the communal and hegemonic took place that allowed youth to meet their needs and (4) what effect if any the CS SFL program had on the beliefs and practices of teachers.

The analysis that was used for the *testimonios* and pláticas was different from that which is generally used when analyzing interviews. As the interlocutor/interpreter/writer of this research, I worked to present the words/thoughts of my co-researchers as accurately as possible. I also strove to not interpret them through my lens. A true analysis of a testimonio should take place with the testimonalist (the person providing the testimonio) so that they can help co-construct the narrative that they wish to tell (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016; Pérez-Huber, 2012). As such, my participants and I co-constructed and identified emergent "themes" based on the information that we decided that was pertinent to share publicly.

Specifically, I shared parts of different transcripts, audio/video recordings, and photographs with my focal participants in order to co-create a joint understanding of their lived experiences (Delgado Bernal, Burciago, & Flores Carmona, 2012; Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016; Pérez-Huber, 2012) and understandings. The focal participants changed according to the focus of each chapter. After extensive pláticas with my co-knowledge generators, I then organized data that corresponded to each research question and used that to construct each chapter in the dissertation.

In addition to the *testimonios* (spoken and created artifacts) and pláticas, other ethnographic data such as field notes, photographs, participant observations, text messages, audio recordings, and video recordings were coded and analyzed.

## Limitations of the study

Despite its significance and impact, this study has several limitations. The first is the bias that I brought as the primary researcher. As someone who identifies as a hybrid (Gutierrez, 2017), Ecuadorian and Black American, and who has a son that is labeled as an EBL, this research is very personal. As Carol Hanisch (1969) stated, the personal is political and the political is personal. This is to say that what affects us personally also shapes our view of the world and how we filter our experiences. My personal experiences and intersectionalities have formed the lens through which I approached my work. They also impacted how I related to (or not) the adolescences and adults with whom I interacted. Secondly, I only included a small sample of the youth and adults with whom I interacted with over the course of three years. I purposively decided to narrow my focus, so that I could capture in greater detail the thoughts and experiences of my focal participants.

## Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into three manuscripts that will be submitted to academic journals. As the educational debt owed to minoritized students continues to grow, innovative and culturally sustaining asset-based pedagogies are increasingly important if we hope to provide equity of educational opportunity to all students. In chapter two, I outline how I came to conceptualize culturally sustaining systemic functional linguistics. I also explore why this work is particularly important during the time in which we are living. As I explore this work, I bring into conversation and cross-pollinate culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2014) and systemic functional linguistics (Halliday, 1978). I seek to outline SFL's potential in helping youth and others to learn to critically examine community and dominant languaging practices. As I explore SFL's potential, I also show some of its shortcomings and why and how it becomes even more powerful when it is cross-pollinated with CSP. CSP brings to SFL an explicit and intentional focus on anti-racist and anti-colonial framings of knowledge. It helps to focus SFL's critical languaging tools on the deconstruction of the white gaze (Yancy, 2013) and epistemological racism (Kubota, 2019). This chapter will be submitted to the Harvard Educational Review.

The power and necessity to cultivate and sustain ever-evolving relationships of care and support are discussed in chapter three. Those relationships allowed and encouraged us, youth, adults, cultural insiders and outsiders, to truly listen and act upon the voices of those who have been minoritized. This chapter brings into focus the power of testimonios and pláticas in jointly constructing knowledge with youth from racialized communities. Chapter three centers the t*estimonio/counterstories* of three youth co-researchers. Through their testimonios, the reader can understand how youth viewed the impacts of racism in their daily lives, how they grew to

appreciate the apprenticeship that was offered through the YAI program, and how the YAI program gave them a sense of power and knowledge so that they could affect change in their communities. This chapter has been submitted for in conclusion in a forthcoming book entitled *Culturally sustaining systemic functional linguistics: Embodied inquiry with multilingual youth* (Harman, et al., in press).

Chapter four examines how graduate students (pre-service teachers) (PSTs) were simultaneously apprenticed as researchers and educators in developing a culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) for multilingual classrooms (Paris, 2012) through the lens of critical systemic functional linguistics (Harman, 2018; Harman & Khote, 2018; Halliday, 1978). This chapter focuses on the experiences of two female educators, one young white PreK-3 paraprofessional from the US Midwest, and one mature white adult EFL teacher from the US South. This chapter through a critical race lens combined with grounded theory (Charmaz, 2012; Pérez Huber, 2008) traces how their thinking and practice changed or did not throughout the course. In particular, it explores their growing understanding of systemic functional linguistics, youth participatory action research, and culturally sustaining pedagogy and how they took up the work (or not) as a way to facilitate the learning of emergent bilingual and bi-dialectical youth.

The final chapter of this dissertation summarizes the key findings and provides implications for the field of education and in particular to those who work with bi/multilingual and multi/bi-dialectical youth. Further considerations in this chapter relate to how educators, administrators, and those in position to affect educational policy change could use the CS SFL framework in conjunction with the findings of this study to reconceptualize how to apprentice youth and others into becoming creative critical thinkers capable of deconstructing and then remixing various semiotic resources.

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# CHAPTER 2[12]

# CULTURALLY SUSTAINING SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS: TOWARDS AN EXPLICITLY ANTI-RACIST AND ANTI-COLONIAL LANGUAGING AND LITERACY PEDAGOGY

[12] Mizell, J.D. To be submitted to Harvard Educational Review

Abstract

This conceptual paper discusses the cross-pollination of culturally sustaining pedagogies (CSP) (Paris & Alim, 2017) and systemic functional linguistics (Halliday, 1978). Culturally Sustaining Systemic Functional Linguistics (CS SFL), the fruit of this cross-pollination, combines the goals of CSP and SFL, by advocating for the incorporation of anti-racist and anti-colonist participatory approaches, multimodal designing, translingual practices, and reflection literacy in every aspect of education. Through this conceptual piece, I work to show that by weaving CSP through SFL's genre literacy pedagogy (Martin & Rose, 2008), the expanded mode continuum (Dempsey & Accurso, 2018) and the embodied teaching learning cycle (Siffrinn & Harman, 2019), CS SFL can be used to help youth and pre-and in-service teachers to design curriculum that sustains and nourishes minoritized youth and provides them with explicit languaging and literacies tools that they can use to fight for equity.

Key words: culturally sustaining pedagogy, systemic functional linguistics, genre theory, register, mode continuum, teaching learning cycle, reflection literacy, translingual practices, multimodal

## Introduction

During the summer of 2016, my twelve-year-old son and I took part in a summer camp that was run by a US southeastern school district and a large land grant university. I remember one day as we were on our way home from camp, he confronted me. He asked me, "why are you letting them (the Black and Latiné[13] youth in our group) act a fool!?! If I were that disrespectful, you'd have a come to Jesus meeting with me! I don't want to go back if that's what they are going to do every day." His comment made me reflect on exactly what role I as one of only two Black people in a group of university folks had taken on or accepted as I spent the summer working with 20-30 mostly Black and Brown adolescents. The summer camp was part of a university local school district collaboration to provide K-8 students with safe summer space and to combat "the summer slide". Different groups of university professors and students were in charge of planning and carrying out a range of activities with different age groups. The group that I was with had decided that our work with youth would be centered around a youth participatory action research methodology course (Mirra, Garcia, & Morrell, 2015). (For a greater understanding of the course and the work that was done, please see Burke, Harman, Hadley, & Mizell, 2018.)

As I reflected on my son's comments, he was right. If those kids had been mine, we would have had a come to Jesus meeting from the git-go. I wouldn't have put up with that mess. In fact, as I thought about it, I knew that he wouldn't have behaved like them. Not because he was/is better than them but because he was being taught like I was, how to survive in what bell

[13] I have chosen to use the term Latiné as one way of breaking down the binary that is produced by using the term Latino. Latino generally implies that one is either male (Latino) or female (Latina). Some Spanish speakers in Latin America now use this term instead of Latinx as they find it pronounceable in Spanish whereas Latinx isn't.

hooks (1994) calls a "white supremacist capitalist patriarchy" (p. 47). Now, this is not to say that other racialized parents are not teaching their children how to survive, we just all do it differently. As a Black man that grew up in the American South, I was taught early on one way of surviving within a very racist educational environment. I was taught how to play the game and read between the lines. My mother taught me through her counterstories (Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2016; Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995) how she and others have survived segregation while maintaining a sense of themselves. As I was raising my son, I also worked to help him to understand how to survive the racist educational system in which he found himself without losing his sense of self. We often spoke about how our languaging, the books that we read and those that were assigned to him to read either helped to lift us up or to break us down. We also talked about how to critically engage with books and even people that sought to denigrate our languages, Ecuadorian Spanish, Black Southern American English, and dominant southern English or our literacies. All of this was filtered through my lens as someone who had been privileged to have been afforded a chance to critically examine our educational system inside and out. My son made me question why I wasn't doing the same for those other Black and Brown kids. He made me wonder as an educator, what could I do pedagogically to help them to critically push back against the institutional deficient framing under which they were living in constructive ways that would help them meet their present and future needs. This is not a critique of other racialized parents and how they are preparing their children. This is ultimately a critique of a system, a racialized system, and my desire to use what little I know in order to provide youth with greater choices from which they can select as they work to disrupt institutional racism.

I wanted the Black and Latiné youth with whom I worked to feel free to be themselves. I wanted them to truly experience an environment in which they could talk about and explore community joys and challenges and honestly talk about their experiences of racism in school and other institutions without fear. I also wanted them to acquire the linguistic and literacies tools that they would need to survive and more importantly to THRIVE.

The youth with whom I worked during summer 2016 made me question what part I could play in helping them learn how to critically celebrate the literacies of joy and pleasure that are found in our communities (Wong & Peña, 2017), while rejecting, naming and critically deconstructing the deficient framing of our communities. That deconstructing would entail helping and supporting them in using new, creative, and productive ways to fight for changes that would benefit them and their communities. As I contemplated what I needed to do, the work of Lisa Delpit (2012; 2006), Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995; 1990), Django Paris (2012; 2011), Michael Halliday (1978), Ruth Harman (2018; Harman & Khote, 2018), Kevin Burke (Greene, Burke, & McKenna, 2016; Burke & Greene, 2015), and others kept swilling around in my mind. I knew that I needed to develop a way to help make explicit what I knew implicitly as a kid and what the youth with whom I was working knew but couldn't name. What was needed was a languaging toolkit that would help us to tear down the anti-Black, anti-Latiné, and anti-immigrant rhetoric that we heard daily through different media channels during summer 2016 while at the same time edifying us. This was especially important because our kids, my son included, were part of a group of school-aged kids that did not and do not see and hear honest and true representations of themselves in most K-12 institutions. This paper conceptualizes a new pedagogical framework, Culturally Sustaining Systemic Functional Linguistics (CS SFL) as

a way to think through and combat the issues that youth from my community and I faced summer 2016 and still now.

Over the course of the next several pages, I highlight how many Black, Latiné, and other students have historically been minoritized. Additionally, I point out ways that previous activist researchers have sought to bring equity for our students.

**The Deficient Framing of My Kids**

According to the U.S. Department of Education (U.S. DOE) (2015), about 50% of P-12 learners are students of color (SOC). This will increase to at least 55% by 2027 (NCES, 2019). In contrast to this increasingly diversified student population, the U.S. DOE currently projects that unless something is purposively done, by 2027 less than 25% of the teaching force of P-12 schools will be teachers of color (Musu, 2019; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). These numbers are problematic, as the disconnect between the cultures, languaging practices, life experiences, and ideologies of SOC and their majority white teachers regularly lead teachers to more severely punish SOCs. Nationally students of color, in particular Black students, are suspended on average at almost three times the rate of white students for very similar offenses (Harper, Ryberg, & Temkin, 2019). This rush to punish students of color is especially true in the American Southeast where there has been an exponential demographic increase in the number of Hispanics[14] over the last two decades (Flores, 2017; Harper, Ryberg, & Temkin, 2019). Along with the exponential increase in population, Latiné students in the state where this work took place are up to 8.4 times more likely to be suspended from school than their white peers (Groeger, Waldman, & Eads, 2018; Welch & Payne, 2018)

[14] Hispanic is a term that the state of Georgia uses to encompass anyone with racial or cultural ties to Latin America, in particular to those from Spanish speaking countries. I will substitute the term Hispanic for Latiné.

The consequences of these harsh and inequitable practices and policies have been detrimental for the academic, emotional and social trajectories of minoritized students (Giroux, 2009; Noguera, 2003; Winn & Behizedeh, 2011). The policies are a direct result of the institutional nature of racism (Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2016) in P-12 institutions. This institutional racism has led to inequitable treatment and denial of equitable access to learning opportunities (Ladson-Billings, 2006). As I examined national and state data that indicated the exclusion of racialized students from receiving a high quality and rigorous education, I keep at the forefront of my mind a statement made by Smith, Kumi-Yeboah, Chang, Lee, and Frazier (2019). They wrote,

> The "achievement gap"—the significant difference between White and non-dominant students' scores—is premised on the notion that performance on achievement measures can supposedly be used to predict student success, which itself is often informed by and potentially biased because of "privileged epistemologies" or "ways of knowing" steeped in Eurocentric paradigms of knowledge (Milner, 2012). These ways of knowing, because they favor Eurocentrism, do not often acknowledge the epistemologies of Black youth, but rather, inappropriately favor individualistic and "present" (i.e., one-time) representations of success as opposed to consolidated representations that honor connections made by students across past, present, and future. (p. 533)

As I extrapolated from national and state testing and evaluation data, I purposively framed students as *being scored* instead of *as scoring* because of the problematic way in which student scores are based on "privileged epistemologies" or "ways of knowing" steeped in Eurocentric paradigms of knowledge (p. 533). These epistemologies lead to what Kubota (2019) refers to as "epistemological racism". In effect, dominant educational institutions "privilege the modernist

(or postmodernist) assumptions of white Euro-American civilization and position them as superior to the knowledges embraced by other civilizations, cultures, or peoples" (p. 7) and thus frame non-whites as ignorant.

Morris (2016) in her book, *Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools*, allowed the haunting testimonios[15] or counternarratives of Black girls to be heard loud and clear. They empathically stated that they and other minoritized students were regularly denigrated in their classes. Shai one of the girls testified by stating,

> [My school is] predominantly White, Okay, I'm terrible in math. So when little Suzie gets the question wrong, it's like, "Aww…you got the question wrong." It's funny. When I get a question wrong, it's like, "Oh, she's slow. What's wrong with her?" I get so angry……. Like, don't call me slow at all. I take my education seriously." (p. 86)

The way that students have been positioned as less than, as highlighted, in Shai's testimonio has led to minoritized students receiving a less equitable, rigorous, and high-quality education.

In the American Southeast where this framework for a new culturally sustaining asset-based pedagogy was developed, the inequitable education of SOCs is even starker than that presented in national data (Learn4Life, 2018). Part of the reason that SOCs find it harder to succeed in dominant educational institutions is that they continue to experience virulent punitive measures that regulate them to the margins and feed them into the school-to-prison industrial complex (Anderson-Zavala, Krueger-Henney, Meiners, & Pour-Khorshid, 2017). They are not seen as innocent or as worthy as their white counterparts (Morris, 2016; Hamann, Wortham, & Murillo Jr, 2015). Suffering mistreatment at the hands of school authorities negatively impacts

[15] "Testimonios provide a platform for voices of the subaltern (Orelus, 2018) (i.e., those who have been minoritized and framed as less than by those in power. (Gramsci, 2005)) to be heard and valued as legitimate knowledge (Kubota, 2019; Pérez-Huber, 2012)." (Mizell, 2020)

their academic, emotional, and social trajectories (Giroux, 2009; Noguera, 2003; Winn & Behizedeh, 2011).

In order to rectify what this inherently racist system (Du Bois, 1903/2015; Ladson-Billings, 2006) has created, many misguided policymakers have called for schools to institute standardized testing (Knoester & Au, 2017) and to employ dominant English only policies (Macedo, 2017). A major example of this push was the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Its focus was "to close the achievement gap with accountability, flexibility, and choice, so that no child is left behind" (No Child Left Behind, 2001). The tests that have been born out of the NCLB are seen as neutral assessments that can be used to measure the value of schools, teachers, and especially students. Unfortunately, as Au (2016) states, "standardized testing fundamentally masks the structural nature of racial inequality within an ideology of individual meritocracy, an ideology that advances a racialized neoliberal project that reconstitutes "anti-racism" as being against the very act of naming race itself" (p. 40). These tests do not value the literacies or languaging practices of Brown and Black students (Smith et. al, 2019).

**Changing the Focus**

Ladson-Billings (1990), instead of searching for testing options to measure student achievement or seeking other ways of documenting what racialized students were not doing well, sought something totally different. She set out to document and explore the characteristics of teachers who were successful in educating Black children. Her research reframed the question of what Black students were not doing well to the question of what teachers were doing who were successful in educating Black students. This seemingly simple pedagogical reframing was and still is paramount to breaking the deficit mind-frame that positions minoritized students as

inherently less capable. It moves the onus from them to the educational institution and thus the wider society.

Despite Ladson-Billings' (1990, 1995) efforts not much has changed over the intervening two decades (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). Due to this lack of substantive change, Paris (2012) took up and built on Ladson-Billings's work, developing culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP). CSP (Paris, 2012) works "to perpetuate and foster- to sustain- linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling" (p. 93). It brings to the educational project a decidedly anti-racist and anti-colonial framing that goes beyond holding racialized students and communities as simply relevant.

As a pedagogy that centers the ways of knowing of racialized communities as valuable in and of themselves, thus decentering the white gaze, I seek to weave CSP into and layer it over systemic functional linguistics (SFL). I do this so that CSP becomes a strong orienting thread within SFL and a lens through which SFL views the world. SFL is a theory and methodology of language that was first proposed by M.A.K Halliday (Martin, 2013). As a detailed theory and methodology of language, SFL is powerful because "it is very useful in showing how texts work beyond the level of the sentence, how different texts are structured, and how language varies to suit the social/ideological purpose(s) of the users" (Feng, 2013, p. 86). As such, SFL is both theory about language as a social process and a methodology that allows for the detailed and systemic learning/teaching and analysis of languaging patterns (Eggins, 2004).

In the following sections, I will provide background information on CSP and SFL. I also highlight how their cross-pollination has led to the creation of culturally sustaining systemic functional linguistics, an explicitly anti-racist and anti-colonial languaging framework that has the potential to help racialized students and others to expand their semiotic repertoires as they

learn to systemically and critically analyze dominant and community languaging and literacies practices. CS SFL also has the potential to support minoritized students to consciously and strategically remix elements from dominant and community languaging and literacies practices to meet their present and future needs.

**Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy**

Paris (2012), in his essay titled "Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy: A Needed Change in Stance, Terminology, and Practice," shone a light on why it was/is critical for equity-minded teachers to work toward an equity-framed pedagogy that does not just value non-dominant languages and cultures but sustains them. Later expanded upon by Paris and Alim (2014; 2017), CSP builds on Ladson-Billings's (1995) original tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy: 1) to support students' academic development; 2) to foster their cultural competence, and 3) to cultivate their sociopolitical and critical consciousness. CSP went beyond CRP by insisting that marginalized languages and cultures not just be held as relevant but also as subjects to be sustained. Paris pushed for a pedagogy that would work to maintain the hybrid cultural practices of students while also extending their repertories to include knowledge of "dominant language[s] literacies and other cultural practices" (Paris, 2012, p. 95). Additionally, CSP advocated for a view of the languaging and cultural practices of SOCs not as a simple bridge to be used to move students to a closer approximation of white-middle class ways of doing and being. This harkens back to the work of Du Bois (1903/2015) when he stated that Blacks

> would not bleach [their]… Negro [sic] soul[s] in a flood of white Americanism, for [they]… know that Negro blood has a message for the world. [They] simply wish to make it possible for a man [sic] to be both a Negro and an American, without being

> cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face. (p. 9)

Paris and Alim through CSP advocated for a valuing of and purposeful nourishing and sustaining of the ways of being of racialized communities. Their work centers the vibrant and ever-evolving ways of knowing of racialized youth. Just as they center the vibrancy of racialized youth, they are also mindful of the need to critically examine community practices that may be regressive (i.e., colorism, homophobia, linguicism, etc.).

Through CSP, racialized students who have been historically marginalized become the true foci and active participants in their educational lives (Kinloch, 2017; McCarty & Lee, 2014). They are no longer left on the margins as objects to be studied. They are now positioned as pivotal parts of teams valuing, nourishing, researching, documenting, and critiquing communal and dominant languaging and literacies practices (Walsh, 2018). As Paris (2012) stated, the purpose of CSP is "to perpetuate and foster- to sustain- linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling" (Paris, 2012, p. 93).

Just as Paris (2012) and then Paris and Alim (2014; 2017) worked to expand upon Ladson-Billings foundational work, I seek to infuse CSP into Systemic Functional Linguistics. Although SFL was originally developed to help fight linguicism (Halliday, 1978), one potential problem is that it can be taken up without this critical orientation, further reifying dominant languaging practices. I seek to provide SFL, a theory and methodology of language, with an explicitly anti-racist and anti-colonial component that has been developed by those who have been racialized by what bell hooks (hooks, 1994, p. 47) terms the "white supremacist capitalist patriarchy."

**Systemic Functional Linguistics**

Eggins (2004) "described [systemic functional linguistics] as a functional-semantic approach to language which explores both how people use language in different contexts, and how language is structured for use as a semiotic system." She emphasized what makes SFL distinctive from other theories, stating that "it seeks to develop both a theory about language as a social process *and* an analytical methodology which permits the detailed and systematic description of language patterns" (p. 21). In keeping with this idea of SFL as a detailed way of helping people to examine the structures of different language patterns, an adaption of Halliday's (1978) original work has been taken up by Jim Martin and David Rose (2008) and many others.

Martin and Rose (2008) stated that they and various other scholars, such as Suzanne Eggins, Guenter Plum, Fran Christie, Sally Humphrey, and Mary Macken-Horarik worked to develop what has come to be known as genre theory so that students who hail from marginalized groups could learn to see and understand the distinctions between the structural, processual or social purpose(s) of different texts. Through their work, they sought to help students to gain explicit knowledge of how dominant school genres were constructed and to access dominant academic and cultural text. Influenced by their involvement with the Disadvantaged Schools Project, they developed a methodology, *Learning to Read: Reading to Learn* (Rose & Martin, 2012). It was developed in response to the urgent needs of people who Rose (2005) referred to as "Indigenous and other marginalized learners" (p. 133) so that they could rapidly improve their English reading and writing skills and thus gain access to dominant educational programs and success.

In a similar vein, Sally Humphrey's (2009) work also engages with the application of genre pedagogy within schooled and out of school contexts. Humphrey draws attention to the permeability of the boundary between academic and personal domains. She stated,

> the identification of blurred rhetorical boundaries between the political and personal spheres of life in contemporary social movements opens the possibility for the voice of groups traditionally marginalised from the language of power to be heard in debates of political and social consequence. (p. 8)

She understood that if students were taught how to use dominant genre structures, their voices could be amplified. In her research, she showed how dominant genres could be mapped or overlaid onto the work of minoritized youth in community/political settings. Although this mapping opened the door to intentionally guiding youth into the use of the genres of power and potentially helping them to have their needs addressed, it can also be problematic. There is the danger of reifying dominant genres without any type of critical examination. This is the point or entryway of where weaving or cross-pollinating CSP into SFL strengthens this dynamic theory and methodology of language. It brings to SFL intentionality of not just mapping dominant institutional genres onto the languaging and literacies practices of racialized youth but a re-envisioning of ways to help youth to build and sustain what they are already doing while learning to explicitly and critically use SFL's tools to examine dominant and community practices. It brings to SFL a focus on using its tools to sustain, nurture, and when necessary critique the ever-evolving nature of youth practices. As such, this cross-pollution, CS SFL, helps us to see and reject " the fallacy of measuring ourselves and the young people in our communities solely against the White middle-class norms of knowing and being that continue to dominate notions of educational achievement" (Paris & Alim, 2014, p. 86).

## Context

The conceptualization of CS SFL developed (and honestly continues to develop) over an almost three-year period between 2016-2019. This work has been developed within a highly collaborative environment (see Harman, Siffrinn, Mizell, & Bui, In press; Harman & Burke, 2020). The epicenter of this work has been in Chestnut County, a semi-urban school system located in the Southeast of the United States. Chestnut County is one of the nation's most impoverished counties. According to state population records, 65.4% of residents identify as White, 27.5% as Black, and 10.6% as Hispanic (Governor's Office of Planning and Budget, 2019). The schools in Chestnut do not reflect the county's demographics. Most students in Chestnut county are either Black or Latiné (What is the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI)?, 2018).

Since 2016, I have worked with over 50 youth ages 11-16 who are predominately Black or Latiné. Jointly, the youth and I researched and built knowledge together in two different settings, a summer camp during 2016 and an afterschool program during Spring 2017, Fall 2017, and Spring 2018. In addition to working with youth, I also have worked with over 40 different pre- and in-service teachers who took part in the program that came to be called the Youth Arts Institute or YAI. The adults took part in the program as part of either a youth participatory action research introductory class or as an ESOL content area course that I co-taught.

## Conceptual Framework

In this section, I describe what a cross-pollination of these two frameworks entails by discussing what I and others with whom I have worked see as the key tenets of CS SFL. I then discuss how these key tenets led to the development of a CS SFL curriculum and how SFL played a pivotal role in the purposeful sequencing and organizing of each learning module.

By infusing CSP into SFL, a purposeful focus on racism, linguicism and white supremacy is brought to bear on how languages and literacies are learned and taught. This cross-pollination helps to emphasize (a) the inherent value in the ever-evolving languaging and cultural practices of communities that have been deliberately underserved and (b) the direct action that is needed to contest the deficient framing of minoritized communities. At the same time, SFL brings to CSP critical and clear macro- and micro-level languaging tools and concepts (e.g., ideational, interpersonal, textual and transitivity analysis, register variation, genre (Eggins, 2004) that can help teachers sustain and nourish the multi-dimensional languaging practices of students (Harman, 2018). It also provides tools that students can use to deconstruct dominant languaging and literacies practices (Gebhard, 2019).

By cross-pollinating CSP and SFL, CS SFL allows for the development of a race-conscious, purposefully sequenced set of modalities that support anti-racist and anti-colonial participatory approaches, multimodal designing, translanguaging, and reflection literacy (Harman, et al., in press). Within CS SFL, youth are positioned as civic agents of change and as multimodal designers of meaning in a range of modalities (visual, haptic, embodied). They along with their adult accomplices are supported in critically deconstructing hegemonic deficient portrayals of their communities. In other words, youth are apprenticed into thinking about their communities in culturally sustaining ways through immersion in a carefully sequenced set of modes (Gibbons, 2006) so that they move recursively from congruent genres (e.g., storytelling) to collaborative co-construction of complex arguments (e.g., performance in a dramatized school council space).

This sequencing of modalities over time can support their cumulative coupling of modal resources and ever-expanding ways of producing knowledge (Martin, 2010). Because this

approach is culturally sustaining, the knowledges, insights and mode preferences of youth of color and their communities are privileged over any macro or static planning of the curriculum that imposes dominant conceptions of "correct language usage". In other words, youth are provided with a permeable space where they can avail themselves of multimodal and translingual resources in ways that benefit them, which may be different from what others may think they need. In summary, CS SFL can be characterized through the following tenets (as illustrated in Figure 2.1):

1. Anti-racist and anti-colonial participatory approaches (Delgado-Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Kubota, 2019, Mirra, Garcia, & Morrell, 2015)
2. Multimodal designing (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001; Lenters, 2018)
3. Translingual practices (Otheguy, García, & Reid, 2015)
4. Reflection literacy (Hasan & Williams, 1996)

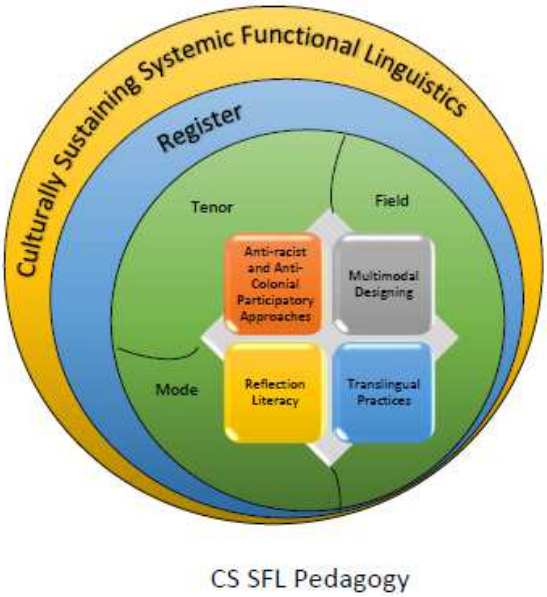


Figure 2.1 - Culturally Sustaining SFL Praxis (adapted from Bui, 2018

**CS SFL Learning Modules**

The CS SFL curriculum framework was developed around 12 structured yet permeable learning modules that incorporated Gibbons's (2006; 2003) idea of the mode continuum. Gibbons (2003) stated that the "mode continuum is most simply conceived in relation to mode differences between spoken and written language" (p. 251). Paraphrasing Eggin (1994), Gibbons (2006) explained that spoken language is "context dependent, involves turn taking and is grammatically intricate and lexically spare" while "written language is context independent and synoptic in structure and 'polished'" (p.33). Although she and others (see Gebhard, 2019; Harman, 2018) recognize that there are differences between the various modes, they also acknowledge that there are no pure modes, as gestures, pictures, and other semiotic resources blur the line between modes. For example, a digital online written text may also contain videos, graphics, pictures or even music. Due to this intermixing of modes, permeable and iterative program learning modules were developed, to begin with, what may be thought of as the most familiar to students, oral (e.g., a description of their neighborhoods), and progressed to multimodal argumentation (e.g., a presentation of a formal proposal to a school/city official).

Table 2.1 highlights the sequencing of the 12 modules and the semiotic resources that were featured in each.

Table 2.1 – CS SFL Youth Centered Modules

| Module | Topics | Semiotic resources used (Multiple languages used throughout) |
|---|---|---|
| Introduction to research | Pre-and in-service teachers, read about YPAR, SFL, and CSP (two weeks) | DAE, Irish, Mandarin, journal articles, videos, pictures |
| Props and storytelling | Youth, community storyteller, Jason (two weeks) | DAE, BAE, Spanish-varieties, various youth supplied props |
| Oral history | Youth and adults discuss what they love, like, dislike, hate, and wish to change about their communities | Multiple languages (i.e. Spanish, BAE, Mandarin, Vietnamese, DAE, Irish), gestures, artifacts, charts |
| Oral stories and drawings | Youth and adults couple their testimonios about their communities with drawings | Gestures, artifacts, drawings, charts |
| Hip-Hop/Spoken work | Hip-hop artist conducted a workshop | Dance, drawings, clothing |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Photography unit/Photovoice | Photographer workshop on photovoice Youth and adults use their phones to take pictures of locations in the community that are important to them | Photographs, written captions |
| Mapping of school | Urban designer conducted a workshop. Led a mapping activity | Map of school, paper, pens, gestures |
| Modeling of school with blocks and 3D with paper | Urban designer led building and designing/ redesigning community structures | Blocks, various types of paper |
| Legislative theater (LT) | Theater performer led the group in LT. | Gestures, intonation, whole-body movement |
| Research around ideas that developed during LT | Multi-age groups researched issues that came to light during LT. | Books, websites, community documents, podcast |
| Presentation of ideas as a performance to group | Participants prepared a variety of performances to represent their work and ideas on sustaining and/or changing aspects of their community. After performance, feedback was provided by the entire group | Dance group, rap-song, poetry, model of new structures, PowerPoints |
| Final community presentation | Multiage groups presented final proposals and insights to the school's principal and teachers at an assembly | Dance, rap-song, poetry, model of new structures, PowerPoints, written report, gestures |

Through these modules, youth and their adult accomplices were co-apprenticed (Mirra, Garcia, & Morrell, 2015) into thinking about, conceptualizing, and researching their communities in new ways through immersion in this carefully sequenced set of learning modules.

Below I discuss how the CS SFL tenets were realized through some of the different learning modules. Every module was designed with the intention of working purposively to center the needs of racialized youth. This was done so that their present and future needs could be met.

*An anti-racist and anti-colonial participatory approaches*

CS SFL centers, values, and works to sustain student language(s) and culture(s) while also providing space for critical growth and reflection. This means that students and their adult allies engage in dialogic conversations in open and honest humanizing ways (Paris, 2011; Paris

& Winn, 2013). While SFL provides a shared metalanguage that can be used to discuss and write about research goals, CSP brings to this process a humanization of participants. This combination, CS SFL, flattens (Siffrinn & McGovern, 2019) out power relationships and helps to open up honest dialog; it positions pláticas and testimonios as integral parts of the research process.

A "testimonio can be understood as, [the] verbal journey of a witness who speaks to reveal the racist, nativist, classist, and sexist injustices they have suffered as a means of healing, empowerment, and advocacy for a more humane present and future" (Pérez Huber, 2008, p. 170). Testimonios provide a platform from which a testimonialiste(s), the person or persons sharing their truths, can speak or use other modalities to inform others of their lived experiences (Flores Carmona, 2014). Testimonios morph the traditional roles of researcher and researched to co-researchers, where the researcher and participant become co-constructors of knowledge through a process of collaborative data collection, dialog, and analysis. They also decenter hegemonic ways of understanding how educational research should be carried out (Pérez-Huber, 2012).

Pláticas also help to morph or flatten (Siffrinn & McGovern, 2019) the power dynamics that are generally associated with research. They are detailed dialogic interpersonal conversations (Flores Carmona, Hamzeh, Bejarano, & Hernández Sánchez, 2018; Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016; Guajardo & Guajardo, 2013). Fierros and Delgado Bernal (2016) stated that pláticas "allow us to witness shared memories, experiences, stories, ambiguities, and interpretations that impact us with a knowledge connected to personal, familial, and cultural history" (p.99). By their very nature, they are personal, as Fierros and Delgado Bernal (2016) stated, they allow us to personally interact with, construct meaning with, and bear witness to the

personal knowledge of the person with whom one is speaking. As such, they allow for the voices, ideas, concerns, and knowledges of racialized youth to be heard and acted upon. This is possible because they provide a vehicle for us to move smoothly over, between and through the wall that has been artificially built between the personal and academic (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016). Since within pláticas there is no clear delineation between the personal and the academic, they are inherently interpersonal and intersubjective. The line between "interviewer" and "interviewee" is blurred and thus they provide a space for the creation of humanizing relationships of trust and care. This blurring is paramount so that co-researchers (or what traditional research would term the researcher and participant) are able to construct a bond of trust in which they can mutually share themselves and co-construct knowledge. When knowledge is produced within racialized communities that critically examine dominant and communal knowledges and ways of doing, it can produce explicitly anti-racist and anti-colonial knowledges.

One way that communities can critically examine dominant and community knowledges is through genre□based literacy pedagogy. Genre-based pedagogy, an adaption of SFL, provides one route for the critical and explicit examination of dominant and communal text as reflections of different cultural manifestations. Knowledge of genre can help youth and their allies to explicitly see and understand the structural, processual and social purpose of different texts (Martin & Rose, 2008). Martin and Rose (2008) when referring to genre positioned it above register and its constituent parts. They refer to those parts as

> **Field:** concerned with the discourse patterns that realize the activity that is going on. (p. 13)

> **Tenor:** concerned with the nature of social relations among interlocutors, with the dimensions of status and solidarity. (p.12)
>
> **Mode:** concerned with the channeling of communication, and thus with the texture of information flow as we move from one modality of communication to another (speech, writing, phone, SMS messages, e-mail, chat rooms, web pages letters, radio, CS, television, film, video, DVD, etc.) (p.14)

Knowledge of genre□based literacy pedagogy and its components allows for the apprenticing of youth into learning to talk about language and literacies with the help of their adult allies. It also supports the apprenticing of adults by youth by centering their pláticas and testimonios. A co-construction of knowledge takes place as youth and their allies intentionally go through the Teaching Learning Cycle (TLC). (For more information about the TLC, please see Gibbons, 2009).

CSP in this representation seeks to build reciprocal relationships of care and thus a sharing of emic knowledges. This coupled with SFL's understanding of genre prompts and allows racialized youth and their allies to openly and critically examine the deficient framings of communities. It also encourages them to celebrate the strengths that have allowed racialized communities to survive. Taken together, these two aspects give birth to anti-racist and anti-colonial intergenerational participatory action research approaches.

*Multimodal Designing*

Knowledge can be and is created and spread through the spoken word, the movement of a limb or even the beat of a drum. A growing body of research highlights the importance of embodied and multimodal learning in multiple contexts (Canagarajah, 2018; Lenters, 2018; Siffrinn & Harman, 2019). In fact, there are a growing number of voices that call for the

"suture[ing] [of] the bodymindspirit split common in positivist and so-called "objective" forms of research, as well as to examine the intersections of gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, nationality, and other identities (Calderón, Delgado Bernal, Pérez Huber, Malagón, & Vélez, 2012, p. 514). CS SFL brings together the "bodymindspirit" through its use of various musical forms, instruments, photovoice, drama, pláticas, creative movement, and myriad artistic modes that youth and community members find relevant in their communities.

Alim in some of his instantiations of CSP has spoken at length to how hip-hop can be used to help youth sustain and reimage and flow fluidly over, across and between their languages and communities (Alim & Haupt, 2017; Alim, Ibrahim, & Pennycook, 2009). When he discussed the multimodal nature of Hip-Hop, he called on one of its pioneers Afrika Bambaattaa (Alim & Pennycook, 2007). Afrika Bambaataa, Hip-Hop's first ambassador stated that

> Hip-Hop means the whole culture of the movement. When you talk about rap, you have to understand that rap is part of the Hip-Hop Culture. That means that emceeing is part of the Hip-Hop Culture. The Deejaying is part of the Hip-Hop Culture. The dressing, the languages are all part of Hip-Hop Culture. So is the break dancing, the b-boys, and b-girls. How you act, walk, look and talk is all part of Hip Hop Culture. (Davey-D, 1996)

In summarizing the various modalities and how embodying or a suturing of the "mindbodyspirit" is Hip-Hop, Alim, Ibrahim, and Pennycook (2009) write that hip-hop culture involves: MC'ing (rappin), DJ'ing (spinnin), breakdancing (streetdancing), and graffiti art (writing)" (pp. 89-90). As can be seen through the example of Hip-Hop, CSP provides youth multiple ways of interacting with their communities and connecting with others. Traditionally within SFL from Gibbon's (2003) point of view of the mode continuum, there is an emphasis on moving from more spoken like forms to more impersonal written like forms. The ability to track movement

across the continuum is important as it allows teachers to assess student learning and also to plan a sequence of activities to support learning.

Gibbon's concept of the spoken-like to written-like mode continuum can be juxtaposed with CSP's explicit integration of the corporal. This juxtaposition has been taken up within CS SFL because as Kress (2003) posited writing can no longer be considered as the dominant mode. It has been increasingly brought into contact with other modes due in large part to the evolution of communities as they interact with various technologies. Just like writing has changed based on evolving and expanding social contexts, multimodalities also have been and continue to be shaped based on their cultural, historical and social uses to help make meaning within and across various contexts. These modalities can be mapped onto an expanded mode continuum. Dempsey and Accurso (2018) developed an expanded mode continuum that joined together several different levels: oral, physical, visual, and written. They proposed this expansion of Gibbon's work in order to create "an expanded, inclusive, and multimodal continuum that can be used as a tool for assessing and tracking language and literacy development in all students."

By coupling CSP's focus on multimodalities, for example, the "MC'ing (rappin), DJ'ing (spinnin), breakdancing (streetdancing), and graffiti art (writing)" (Alim, Ibrahim, & Pennycook, 2009, pp. 89-90), with SFL's expanded mode continuum, a true purposeful focus on the modalities that allow youth to thrive can be centered. This combination allows for tools that have been developed as part of multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) (Bezemer & Jewitt, 2010; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001), an adaption of SFL, to be used to creatively and critically explore dominant and community creations. The expansion of the mode continuum also allows teachers to work jointly with youth to plan recursive units of study that encourage the mixing of different modalities so that they can be used to express a wider range of meanings.

*Translingual Practices*

"A language is a dialect with an army and navy," is a quote frequently attributed to Yiddish linguist Max Weinreich. This quote highlights that the only true difference that exists between which languages are official and thus valued or unofficial (i.e., dialects, slang or incorrect) and not valued depends on the power of the group that uses a particular language. Within a CS SFL framework, I and other participants (youth and adult) worked to not only support but also to sustain and actively promote participants' use of their varied languaging resources. Within the designing and remixing of CS SFL youth programs, facilitators supported language variation equity through a multilingual approach that validated and supported multi/bilingual learners in constructing meaning through dynamic reformulations from all available linguistic repertoires (García, 2009). As García has argued, schools need "to recognize the multiple language practices that heterogeneous populations increasingly bring and which integrated schooling, more than any other context, has the potential to liberate" (p. 157). These practices can liberate us from the colonial and raciolinguistic (Flores & Rosa, 2015) framings that are rampant in most educational institutions.

Within CSP, there is an inherent valuing of and work toward sustaining of all linguistic resources that students possess. In this respect, SFL and CSP are inherently compatible. One of Halliday's reasons for developing SFL was to help fight against linguicism (Halliday, 1978). He wrote extensively about how dominant language users looked down upon those whose language usage did not mirror their own. As he stated, "dialect is a problem only if it is *made* [original emphasis] a problem artificially by the **prejudice** and **ignorance** of others" (p. 26). In order to fight that ignorance, Halliday offered up three metafunctions that are part of every language: Ideational, Interpersonal, and Textual. (Please see Harman, 2018 for a concise definition of

each metafunction.). As an educational theory and methodology, SFL supports youth and teachers to see and use language as a pliable and ever-evolving configuration of choices, through the concept of metafunctions and register, that can support and disrupt institutional and social meaning-making in a range of contexts. As a meaning-making tool, SFL promotes the idea that "variation in language use is seen as a way of accommodating to the various situations of interaction (contexts of situation) that constitute one's life situation (context of culture) (Cloran, 2005, p. 154). This means that no one language is better or worse than another. The "appropriateness" of their usage depends on whether or not a person is able to have their needs met.

By combining CSP's focus on sustaining and nourishing the ever-evolving languaging practices of minoritized youth and SFL's emphasis on equity of language as a meaning-making resource through its focus on register, CS SFL is powerful. The multilingual nature of CS SFL explicitly provides students and pre-service teachers with the tools that they need to deconstruct monolingual language ideologies while also helping them to expand their languaging skills.

*Reflection Literacy*

Reflection literacy is the ability to not only understand how language is put together but also the ability to creatively remix, deconstruct, and design new texts that are responsive to the needs of knowledge producers. Importantly, according to Hasan (1996, 2011), reflection literacy emerges from the close semiotic analysis of texts in conjunction with a critical discussion of the content and context. She stressed the importance of creativity and re-design of available modes. Redesign is possible in part according to Hasan because youth and teachers are able to cultivate and share a metalanguage that allows them to talk about their languaging and literacies practices. Hasan additionally emphasized that reflection literacy encompassed action literacy or genre

studies, recognition literacy or the distinction between reading and writing, and critical literacies or the understanding of social concerns. She went on to state that this means that all of these factors taken together are "potent instruments of social formation" (p. 242).

Whereas SFL supplies the tools that allow for a detailed understanding of how texts are constructed and thus can be deconstructed, CSP has an explicit focus on educational justice and more importantly racial justice. Within this focus on equity, Paris and Alim (2014; p. 90) state, "it is crucial that we understand the ways young people are enacting race, ethnicity, language, literacy, and cultural practices in both traditional and evolving ways." Within a CS SFL frame, this means that as students and teachers learn how to analyze text broadly speaking, they also come to realize that texts as social constructions are constantly changing. They learn that no one snapshot of a culture at one point in time can permanently represent how youth from that culture will take up their own cultural and linguistic identities.

This point was truly brought home to me during one of our first youth-adult meetings. I started out speaking with the group in Spanish and a Latiné youth asked me "why, por qué, you speakin Spanish". Then a Black student said to another youth, "he been speakin Spanish since he been up in here". I remember responding, "what Black folks ain't suppose speak Spanish?" That interaction set the stage for many more conversations with students and adults about the fluidity of our identities and languaging practices. It also opened the door for us to critically talk about how different languages and or varieties are considered more prestigious than others.

CS SFL supported students and their adult allies to value the ever-evolving languaging and literacies practices of each other as a type of social remixing. As we remixed our languages and cultures, we examined and negotiated them as we wrote scripts for legislative theater scenes or as we prepared formal proposals that would be presented to school authorities. There were

times when this analysis was reflective in nature and did not have a physical outward expression. What there was entailed a change in attitude and acceptance for the hybridity of not being just Black, Mexican, Guatemalan, Korean, Chinese or Irish. We came to appreciate that we could accept that we were all evolving as we interacted with each other. Reflection literacy provided us with the tools to explicitly talk about our hybrid languaging and literacies choices in detailed critical ways. In fact, the CS SFL frame helped us to learn together as we examined, composed and remixed text using the knowledge gained by reflecting on the pliability of semiotic resources that can be manipulated and orchestrated to make meaning for different for social, political, and academic purposes (Gebhard, Harman & Seger, 2007).

**Conclusion**

CS SFL combines the goals of both CSP and SFL, by advocating for and the incorporation of anti-racist and anti-colonist participatory approaches, multimodal designing, translingual practices, and reflection literacy in every aspect of education. It seeks to provide students of color and their adult accomplices with a combination of explicit languaging and literacies tools that make language and literacy ideologies visible. This all happens while the languaging and literacies of racialized students and their communities are purposively sustained and nourished. Their nourishment means that there is an acknowledgment that their languaging and literacies practices are constantly evolving as youth interact in an increasingly pluralistic world.

One way that CS SFL helps youth to combat deficient ideologies is by helping them to become socio-politically conscious. This is accomplished by apprenticing them into researching the assets (i.e., language(s) and culture(s)) of their communities. This apprenticeship process supports youth in learning to value and reject how their community language(s) and culture(s)

have been negatively framed by dominant educational and societal institutions. It also provides them with the expertise to conduct research that highlights the assets that their communities possess. They learn that by leaning into the bodymindspirit connection (Calderón, et al., 2012) through multimodal and translingual designs and thinking that they can expand their semiotic repertoires. This process additionally helps them to break the shackles of Western positivist paradigms that do not value their testimonios, which can take on numerous forms ranging for song and dance to spoken word. Thus free, they can critically remix communal and dominant practices to meet their needs.

In- and pre-service teachers and other adult accomplices that work with and advocate for youth who have been racialized are also provided with tools that are anti-racist and anti-colonial. The cross-pollination of CSP and SFL leads to action. It calls for adults to deconstruct practices that have for centuries held back and demonized communities of color. The four major tenets of CS SFL can lead to direct action in communities because youth and adults from historically racialized communities are recognized by teachers as experts on their assets, challenges, and how they have been negatively impacted by institutional racism. The testimonios of joy and pain that they experience with minoritized communities also help them learn to understand, appreciate, value, and desire to sustain and nourish community languaging and cultural practices while helping students learn to critically examine dominant knowledges.

In all, CS SFL is one step in helping to rewrite the purpose of education. It changes the system from a white supremacist and colonial project to one that offers true liberation. This liberation entails students learning how to critically examine all languaging and literacy practices. It demands a re-centering of the educational system around issues that impact racialized communities. This happens because it necessitates, permits, and works to help

historically demonized communities, the nation, and the world to become a place that takes up Paris's call to "support young people in sustaining the cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence" (Paris, 2012, p. 95) by providing them with explicit linguistics tools. CS SFL promotes and apprentices youth and others to become reflective, critical, and thoughtful architects and remixers of languages and literacies.

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# CHAPTER 3[16]

# TESTIMONIOS: DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS TO NURTURE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND LEARNING

[16] Accepted by Routledge. Reprinted here with permission of publisher.: Mizell, J. (2020). Testimonios: Developing relationships that nurture active civic engagement and learning. In Harman, R.M. & Burke, K.J. Culturally sustaining systemic functional linguistics praxis: Embodied inquiry with multilingual youth. New York: Routledge. DOI: 10.4324/9780429029516

Abstract

"Es que yo no me olvido de los que me ayudaron y pasamos bien/I don't forget those who were there for me and we also had a good time." The heart of culturally sustaining systemic functional linguistics (CS SFL) is its ability to purposively support, sustain and nourish the hybrid languaging and literacies practices of racialized youth. Chapter 3 centers my testimonio as a Black American Southerner and my experiences of racism and linguicism as I came into my own in the American south and in Ecuador. It also centers the testimonios of three of my youth co-knowledge architects and how their lived experiences of racism and linguicism shaped their lives in and outside of schooled spaces. Together, we explored our testimonios by platicando. Platicando or true intimate dialog allowed us to build a caring and collaborative environment of support and respect where we voluntarily worked to sustain each other. Our pláticas allowed us to jointly analyze our experiences so that we were able to see and truly appreciate the literacies of joy and pleasure that have allowed our communities (Wong & Peña, 2017, p. 118) to survive and our struggles. This building of a truly humanizing relationship (Paris & Winn, 2013) is at the core of CS SFL (Harman & Burke, 2020). The tools and beliefs that make up CS SFL are in service to this greater mission, to not only allow minoritized youth and their communities to survive but to THRIVE.

Key words: testimonio, pláticas, culturally sustaining systemic functional linguistics, linguicism, humanizing, LatCrit, Latiné

**Jason's testimonio**

As Hurston wrote, "there is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you" (1942, p. 121). My story began decades ago in a small rural town in Northeastern Georgia. It was in my hometown that I learned that untold stories or testimonios from my community were important as a way of centering the truths of minoritized communities. As a young black boy who attended majority white elementary, middle, and high schools, I learned early on that the "stories" or counternarratives that my mom and others told me were more than just casual stories. I learned that they held meaning and lessons. Lessons that would help me survive in a world that wasn't built for me.

I remember coming home from elementary school one day and telling my mother that I had been put in one of the lowest reading groups and that everyone in that group was Black. My mother listened attentively and then told me how it was when she was in elementary school in another small southern town a few hours southeast of where we lived. She told me that before the end of segregation, the Black teachers in her school pushed her and her friends to be successful. The expectation and belief held by her Black teachers was that every Black child could and would be successful. My mother went on to tell me that her teachers had wanted her to skip from 1st grade to 3rd grade because she was so smart and capable. She also stated that after her school was integrated and most of the Black teachers were replaced with White teachers, she was placed in a remedial reading group. She went from being acknowledged as reading two years above grade level to supposedly reading below grade level in less than one year. The only way that she was able to get out of that group she told me was by working 5 times as hard as the White kids. She looked me in the eye and said, "Jason you are Black and if you want to succeed, you have to work twice as hard to get half as far."

My experiences throughout elementary, middle, high school and college were true to my mom's counterstory. My mom's counternarrative was/is a mirror, window and sliding glass door (Bishop, 1990) in that it allowed me to see a reflection of myself in her story (mirror); it allowed me to catch a glimpse of her life (window); and it has provided a way for me to truly come to empathize with her by "stepping" into her life (sliding glass door) to learn from her and also to understand that I wasn't and am not alone. As a queer trilingual (African American English (AAE)-Dominant American English (DAE)-Spanish) Black man, born in the American South but having lived over half of my life in South America, the testimonios of my communities (in the United States and the Global South) and in particular those of my family have driven me to become passionate about our CS SFL work.

Sharing my untold stories with my co-researchers (youth and adults) in our summer and after school programs allowed them to see and understand me (Paris, 2011; Paris & Winn, 2013). Opening myself up to them and freely owning my various identities through rich and profound dialogic conversations fell in line with Paris's (2011) work on humanizing research when he stated that youth participants:

> Demanded that I claim identities and experiences in the ways I was continually asking them to do in the somewhat dialogic process we call ethnography....This genuine and honest sharing led to richer and truer data than the model of the somewhat detached, neutral researcher that echoes across the decades from more positivist-influenced versions of qualitative inquiry. (p. 139)

The demand for sharing wasn't just from the youth but also from the adult co-researchers. We all wanted and needed to know the stories or testimonios of those with whom we were working.

Knowing what brought them to our critically oriented work helped us to build community and a shared purpose.

A vital part of our CS SFL work is relationship building. Sharing our testimonios functioned as a way to destabilize and deconstruct the white gaze (Yancy, 2008). We could focus not just on our pain but also on our joys. The joys that have allowed minoritized communities to survive and dream of a "literacy of pleasure and joy" (Wong & Peña, 2017, p. 118). Through the white gaze, knowledge is valued only if it conforms to a Eurocentric measuring stick. For instance, David Stoll (2008), widely known for his attempt to discredit Rigoberto Menchü (Menchü, 2018), expressed that one of his main reasons for not wanting to accept her testimonio was that it established "a new standard of truth gaining ground in the humanities and social sciences" (Stoll, 2008, p. xxv). Testimonios provide a platform for voices of the subaltern (Orelus, 2018) (i.e., those who have been minoritized and framed as less than by those in power. (Gramsci, 2005)) to be heard and valued as legitimate knowledge (Kubota, 2019; Pérez-Huber, 2012). Our CS SFL work centers the joys, truths, questionings, knowledges, and literacy practices of our communities.

The following sections provide a description of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Latiné Critical Race Theory (LatCrit). I explain why this lens supported youth and adults in our programs to convey their testimonios and counternarratives; and how it also helped me and can help others who wish to be accomplices of youth as they strive to become critical consumers and producers of knowledge. It will also challenge you, the reader, to think about how you can actively listen to, respond to, and center the testimonios of youth in your work.

## CS SFL praxis and LatCrit

This chapter was conceptualized through a LatCrit framework, which grew out of Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT is a powerful theoretical lens that enables researchers and practitioners to explore how race and power dynamics are interconnected within dominant ideologies, laws, and policies (Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009; Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2016). The approach centers the knowledge(s) of racially minoritized communities and decenters Eurocentric meritocracy and supremacy (Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). In our programs, a CRT critique of K-12 institutions helps us to see and challenge racialized policies and practices.

LatCrit developed out of CRT as a way to attend to the interplay of languaging practices (i.e., bilingualism/multilingualism), immigration/migration, and ethnicity in the lives of Latiné communities (Bernal, 2002). It disrupts the black-white binary of racial relationships generally adopted in the United States in establishing race remedy laws and/or procedures (Stefancic, 1997). LatCrit provides a nuanced view of racism through its historical view of language practices (bilingualism or multilingualism), immigration status, experiential knowledge, in addition to "other forms of subordination (e.g., class, gender, language)" (Rodriguez, 2011, p. 241. One way that LatCrit attends to experiential knowledge is by utilizing testimonios as a method and methodology that allows minoritized communities and individuals to bear witness to their truths (Pérez-Huber, 2012).

### *Testimonios: More than just stories*

Testimonios are lived histories/personal accounts or stories that Latines recount to let others learn about their lived truths, either as individuals or to represent communal lived

experiences. Oral traditions - such as dichos, adivinazas, consejos, and cuentos [or testimonios]- have played an important role in the lives of indigenous communities in the Americas since the times of the Maya (Fien, n.d.Menchú -Tum & Gugelberger, 1998; Smith, Flores, & González, 2015). Similarly, in Black culture, counternarratives have been used since slavery and reportedly even before in much the same way (Baszile, 2015). Not only do testimonios and counternarratives act as affirming text, they also act as revolutionary text that can help to refocus dominant narratives. As powerful text, they can be shared as oral histories, photographs, (Del Vecchio, Toomey, & Tuck, 2017), written text or through other modes (Eggins, 2004) such as 3D models or dramas (e.g., legislative theater). As potentially powerful multimodal representations and witness to the lived experiences of people of color, testimonios are an integral part of CS SFL praxis. They provide numerous ways for minoritized communities to have their voices heard and acted upon.

Testimonios also morph the traditional roles of researcher and researched to co-researchers, where the researcher and participant become co-constructors of knowledge through a process of collaborative data production, collection, dialog, and analysis. This aspect of testimonios played itself out throughout every aspect of our CS SFL work. The youth with whom we worked and their vecinos and parientes were central in helping us to construct, validate, and remix knowledges as we jointly worked together. This process of co-construction of knowledge helped to decenter hegemonic ways of understanding how educational research "should" be carried out (Huber, 2012).

As powerful generative text, testimonios helped my co-researchers and me to locate ourselves and our communities in dialogic conversations as we examined our context through various historical, linguistic, social, and cultural lenses. They have the power to support

minoritized students and others in finding mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors (Bishop, 1990). In this, chapter I use the terms testimonios and counternarratives interchangeably, though I understand they have slightly different origins.

*Centering ourselves in the telling*

This section introduces three of the more than 30 youth with whom I studied and co-researched between 2016 and 2018. These focal youth were chosen in large part because of their desire to have their stories shared widely and because their testimonios echo those of the other youth in our CS SFL projects.

***Cierra*** I first met Cierra during summer 2016 when we were randomly paired together during the first CS SFL program, which was part of Camp SPLASH. Camp SPLASH was a month-long K-8 summer camp jointly coordinated by the Chestnut County School District and a large land grant state university located in the American Southeast. 2016 was the first year of the camp and the CS SFL course, described in Chapter 1 in greater detail. At that time, Cierra was a 14-year-old rising 8th grader who lived near the site of the summer camp in a large public housing community. As Cierra and I got to know each other, we found that we shared many things in common. We are both Black, labeled as having a learning disability, and living or having lived in a public housing, single parent mother-led household. While we had those things in common, there were also differences based on gender, age, and of course life experiences. However, because of the deep and trusting bond that we developed during Camp SPLASH, Cierra advocated for our work to continue in the empty community center in her public housing complex. Thanks to her vision, we developed an agreement with the housing authority and university in our town and successfully opened the center for literacy and art programs. We also obtained funding so that Cierra and her mother could attend a national applied linguistics

conference where we presented our joint work. Our collaboration has also allowed me to deepen ties with her family, especially with her mother and younger sister. We often talk about community issues, school concerns, and life in general. Her mother has also become an unofficial advocate for the community center programs.

***Simón*** Simón and I first met during Spring 2017 when I co-taught a master's level English as a Second Language (ESOL) content-based course at his middle school. The course was the first school-based iteration of the CS SFL Institute (see description of the programs in Chapter 1). At the time of our meeting, Simón was 14 and had only been in the United States for a couple of years. He had immigrated from Central America in order to escape death threats at the hands of various gangs that had taken over his community. As a result of his relatively recent arrival into the local school district, he had been labeled as an Emergent Bilingual Learner (EBL). Simón and I found that we had a great deal in common due to our experiences of living in Latin America. Although we had lived in different Latin American countries and were from different generations, we found that we got along very well due to a shared language, valuing of community connections, and love of similar musical genres, especially an appreciation for hip hop and reggaeton . After Simón graduated from the middle school and was in 9th grade at the feeder high school, he reached out to me and asked if he could participate in the second year of the CS SFL program in Spring 2018. Simón and Lucia, another youth co-researcher, and I also spent hours at a sound studio, located on the campus of the local university, recording their rap songs. Because the building of close communal ties is a vital part of the culturally sustaining nature of the CS SFL work, we have also spent time together breaking bread with his family and with other community members on various occasions.

***Edgar*** Edgar was a brilliant and dynamic 15-year-old Mexican national when we first meet in Spring 2016. He had previously been involved in several different youth-related projects carried out by Ruth Harman. When he began collaborating with Ruth, Edgar took part in a community-based writing project and as a result was a co-author on several published articles and book chapters based on his testimonios. At the time of our meeting, he expressed his desire to help other bilingual youth so that they would not feel alone as they worked to understand their new lives in the United States. He came into our school-based CS SFL project in 2017 as a peer-mentor and as an experienced co-researcher and learner. At that time, he was the only high school student in our group. Since 2016, Edgar and I had the opportunity to co-lead and present at two national conferences and to present a two-day workshop to a combined university and community audience in New England. Outside of the project, Edgar and I often speak about our dreams for the future and how we hope that we can support our communities. Recently, we mapped out a tour of college campuses that he and my son would like to visit.

The testimonios of Cierra, Simón and Edgar are distinct but also representative of the lives of many of our youth co-participants. They most often found our co-constructed CS SFL programs powerful and meaningful. They felt that the focus on community problem solving and multimodality showed a respect for their cultures and knowledge(s); they also felt that the programs helped them to develop intergenerational relationships with diverse adults from the community and university.

**Testimonios and counternarratives**

The testimonios that are retold here are presented with as much fidelity as possible to their original meanings. They are drawn from the numerous conversations (i.e., oral conversations, Facebook messenger conversations, and text messages) that my co-researchers

and I had over the last several years. Due to the necessity to modify them somewhat from their original mode (oral conversations held in either in African American English (AAE) and/or Spanish, textspeak and models) to a written academic format, some changes were necessary. Due to the fact that I had to weave together and move through and across different modes and heteroglossic contexts (Khote & Tian, 2019), I freely offer up that in this retelling of my co-participants testimonios, that I am the filter. I act as an interpreter or interlocutor of meaning as I work to process the original statements of my co-knowledge generators as I select the words and grammatical structures that I present below (Esposito, 2001). Latiné scholar Judith Flores Carmona (2014) stated that in the process of translating as the "researcher/participant, we straddled together between lenguas and cross cultures, entre mundos" (p.119). Translating or weaving together the languaging of someone else was/is more than just repeating words from one language or mode to another, it is working to honestly express culturally specific nuances that are expressed not just orally or bodily but, in many cases, multimodally.

As the interlocutor, I take my job as re-mixer of languages, cultures, and modes seriously as I work to translate their stories from one or multiple languages, contexts, and modes to another so that their voices, thoughts, and intentions can be shared. With this in mind, as co-constructors of knowledge, my co-researchers and I jointly worked to "bring [their] situation[s] to the attention of an audience – the public sphere – to which [they] would normally not have access because of the very conditions of subalternity to which [their] testimonio bears witness" (Beverly, 2000, p. 572). One of central aspects of CS SFL is its focus on making sure that that the languages, cultures, and knowledges of the subaltern are valued for their own inherent value and thus afforded a central place in the "public sphere".

The testimonios that follow allow a glimpse into how my youth co-researchers felt and processed their feelings (i.e., love, joy, pain, anger, and hope) about their communities, schools and also their knowledge of racism and exclusion. These counterstories allow us to glimpse how one Black female teenager and two Latino teenagers from different countries of origin viewed and experienced their world(s). Their stories also help us to hear from them on how important they felt it was to build strong communal relationships intergenerationally and how those relationships helped them to become active critical consumers and producers of literacy as they became civic agents in their communities.

The following testimonios are composite stories (Cook & Dixson, 2013; Tafari, 2018) in that they are drawn from our numerous dialogic conversations that took place over the last three years. They will be presented with minimal interpretation so that the testimonista's voice can be heard.

**Cierra**

The following composite conversation took place during the summer of 2016. Cierra, I and several other co-researchers (youth and adults) discussed the book Tar Beach (Ringgold, 1991) and how we felt about our schools. In what follows, Cierra's testimonio that I have translated from oral AAE is based on her feelings about the book, her school and her relationships with the other participants of the CS SFL program. The excerpt highlights what she likes and dislikes about some of the work we did together in the program, crucial feedback for us in doing this work. She also shared what brought her joy:

> We read a book and it talked about racism. [We read the book Tar Beach (Ringgold, 1991)].…It was mostly about the projects, and about racism. It was a good book. It

relates to people that lives in apartments and projects. A very long time [ago]. And um, it was good. It was a good book. And you had enjoyed it to. And Monday, Monday was good. I had fun. What I like about it was how we [they] had a good advice, for people, advice about kids. And what I then like was the book talking about racism. I know that happened back in the day, but you still don't have to bring it up.

It is just fun hanging out with y'all guys and getting to talk to y'all guys and giving y'all guys advice when y'all become a teacher and things. And my day was good, yeah.

I didn't really think of racism like it was in the book, in that way. I just felt; I don't know. I mean, some teachers they act mean towards to you, to me, because of my color, but I don't know. It probably just me thinking like that.

Sometimes if like I asked a teacher what the answer to something is like they are mean to me but help the white kids and they go like eh, you can go find the answer. Or something like that.

It bothers me to talk about it. Because I feel like they was treated, I mean, not trying to say this in any race, but I feel like back then white people treated Black people wrong so many times, in so many ways. I mean, everybody could have been treated equally and how people want to be treated, but it seems like they wanted to treat us like trash, ……I don't like talking about it because I just feel bad about it.

I want to help you guys when you become teachers to know about kids. I like to give advice so that for people, advice about kids. So, you can more help with kids who struggle in their classes.

> More teachers in the class, and teachers who support, more support classes. And like, if you don't, if you didn't pass all your classes, they should help you get into summer school and all that. Most teachers are ready to see us fail.
>
> And it is just, it's just fun hanging out with y' all guys and getting to talk to y'all and giving y'all advice if when y'all become a teacher or anything and ummm….and ummm, my day was good and yeah….
>
> I like talking to Jason, he listens. Here y'all listen so if I have a bad day you listen to me. When I need -- when I'm having trouble with something or don't understand, he'll help me out no matter what it is.
>
> We need teachers who can help us no matter!

Cierra continued by sharing her insights about her public housing complex:

> Chestnut Public Housing community needs to be rebuilt. They be mold everywhere. We have [a community] center. It was closed down after they held a funeral there. Ever since, now we don't have nowhere to go. That's what we should do [Help the community]. Like, go and pick up trash and or help, like, buying food and give to the homeless. We could also uh-huh, …get to help the community. Chestnut is a place that people live. It is a place for people who need a place to live. It don't matter who they are. Chestnut is a place for people who need a home.

**Simón**

During the first couple of weeks of working with students at Chestnut Middle School, participants were asked to share as much or as little as they desired about their lives in small

multi-age-race-and linguistic groups. Simón honored and trusted the group by willingly sharing part of his immigration story. This is his story that I have translated from Spanish.

> When I was 12 years old, I left my home country with my sister. We had to leave because gangs were killing people. They were trying to get me to join them just like they had with my older brother and dad. My mom and dad had left years before because of the same thing. The gangs threatened to kill my dad if he didn't join. My mom told me and you (Jason) that when my older brother was a baby that some gang members took him from her and said that if my dad didn't join the gang that they would kidnap and kill him. I remember walking to school from my grandparents' house and seeing dead bodies. There was this one guy whose head was smashed in, I guess he didn't want to be in the gang or [that the gang] did something to him. I don't know. I was scared all the time. I didn't want to join but they were always trying to get me to join. They said they were going to hurt me and my sister. My grandparents knew it was dangerous, but we had to leave. My sister and I started walking and everything for a long time. One day she fell and twisted her ankle and I had to help carry her. My mother didn't want us to be separated but when we finally arrived at the border somewhere in Texas, they took my sister and left me. I went to this farmer's house, but he wasn't home. His son was mean. He locked me and this other guy in a grain bin. We were in there I guess for about a week with hardly any food or water. When the farmer can back, I don't know where he was…he was mad at his son. He said that we could sleep in his house and take a shower in his bathroom. A few days later, this truck came to take me away. We were on the road, like a highway and the migra came and stopped the truck. They took me to the refrigerator. It was you know, a place that they take kids who aren't with their parents. I was there for about two weeks. It

was so cold there. I was finally able to call my mom. She was here in Georgia. She was crying and stuff. I had to go to court and talk to a judge. I had to go alone. I was just twelve. They had me sign papers. I don't even remember what I signed. I was a little kid. He told me that I could go see my mom but that I would have to go to court again. They put me on a plane, and I got to Atlanta and my mom was there waiting for me. The trip from my country was scary but I had to do it. The gang was going to kill me.

Now that I am here it is hard. I have to make sure that I do everything perfectly so that I don't get in trouble. I can't be a kid and do stuff like everyone else. I have to be perfect. I have to work and help out, I just don't know what is going to happen now. Trump even got rid of TPS. Now my family is always scared. We can't go back. They sent my uncle back and the gang killed him. They even killed one of my aunts.

You know that I like working with you. I get a chance to learn about things from a different perspective. Plus, I know that you and Ruth try to help me. You are always supporting me. That is why I keep coming back. I don't forget the people that help me. We have to help each other. That way we can learn a lot of stuff together.

**Edgar**

The following conversation in part took place while Edgar and I were preparing a presentation to present our work to a community action group in the northeast of the United States.

When I first arrived here in the United States, I didn't really know any English. It was hard for me. When I was in Mexico, I knew everyone, and I could go wherever I wanted. I came here and I couldn't go anywhere. I didn't understand anyone. I didn't know

anyone other than my cousin. At first, school was so hard. The good thing was that there were a couple of teachers that were good to me. They were my ESOL teachers. They really worked to help me. I met Ruth and other people when I did Rabbit Box. It is this writing and performance group. We wrote about our stories, where we were from and stuff like that. The first time that I had to perform or discuss my story, I had to read it in Spanish and a friend translated it for me in English. The next time that I presented my story, I was able to do it in English. Since I started working with Ruth and the project, I have been able to write a couple of book chapters and articles with her and other people. They take my ideas and opinions seriously. They listen to me. Every time that I can, I keep on working with the group because I feel that I need to give back. I have even learned a little about Systemic Functional Linguistics and how language works. It makes a difference when adults work with you and value what you have to say. They open chances for you to help other people who are sort of in your shoes.

Now that I am almost ready to finish high school things are getting really hard. Here in Georgia, I won't be allowed to study at the top universities because of my immigration status. Plus, they want to charge me as if I don't live here. If I go to a university here, I'll have to pay what foreigners pay. I'm not a foreigner, I've been here since middle school. I live here, my family lives here. Georgia is my home. It makes me sad and sometimes depressed to think that next year for my senior year, I may have to move so that I will be able to study at a university without having to pay as if I were a foreigner. I don't want to have to leave my family and friends, but I know that if I want to honor the sacrifice that my parents have made for me, I may have to leave. All of this gets me down sometimes,

but I am not going to give up! I'm just grateful that I met everyone and that I am part of this community.

**Collaborative analysis of the testimonios**

Through pláticas (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016; Flores Carmona, Hamzeh, Bejarano, & Hernández Sánchez, 2018; Guajardo & Guajardo, 2013) or detailed dialogic interpersonal conversations with my youth co-participants, we were able to jointly arrive at an understanding of their testimonios. Over the course of the last year, I met with my co-participants numerous times to discuss and build on our work together. During those times, I also shared with them the above version of their testimonios to make sure that I had understood and recorded them faithfully and so that they could make any changes they deemed necessary. This process also allowed our pláticas to grow and that also expanded our joint understanding of their testimonios. Through our dialogic conversations or pláticas, we negotiated our understanding of their testimonios and how through them others might be able to learn from their lived experiences. Out of our pláticas and revisiting the work that we jointly produced during the various CS SFL projects, several different themes emerged. The themes that we identified were:

- Structural racism
- Benefits of building intergenerational relationships
- Desire to help our community(ies)

These themes are explored in more detail in the following subsections.

**Denial of structural racism**

Research has shown that Black students, in particular, along with other minoritized students are disproportionately punished in K-12 settings (Heilbrun, 2018; Wallace, Goodkind, Wallace, & Bachman, 2008; Welsh & Little, 2018). This has led to what many refer to as the school-to-prison-pipeline/nexus or school pushout (Morris, 2016). When socio-economic and other factors are taken into consideration, the one factor that repeatedly appears to influence the frequency and severity of punishments that are delivered in K-12 settings are students' minoritized status (Heilbrun, Cornell, & Konold, 2018). Research has shown that students who are subjected to punitive measures in school—suspension and expulsion among them—are more likely not to graduate from high school; they also tend to have lower grades and limited educational and employment possibilities after their secondary education.

Although Cierra did not want to talk about racism, she was very cognizant of how it impacted her educational experience. In her counterstory, she reflected on how she was treated differently than her white classmates when she asked for help in school. In a follow-up interview, she stated she wished that teachers were willing to help when Black kids asked for it. She even mentioned that when a Black kid insisted that teachers facilitate their learning, they were viewed as being disrespectful and sent to in-school suspension, something that didn't happen to the white kids in her classes. She stated:

> [This one teacher] would try to send you to ISS [in-school suspension] just for sharpening a pencil. And she would just try to get you in trouble for literally the smallest thing. Like, she would only like, let's say the class was talking. She would only try to send the Black people to ISS and she would act like she didn't see the white people talking.

It was situations like this that disturbed Cierra because she knew that they limited her educational opportunities. In a conversation that I had with Cierra and her mother, her mother discussed her own time in school. She told us that what was happening with Cierra also happened with her. That when she and other Black kids needed help and asked for it, teachers would tell them that they didn't have the time, or they would ignore them. This went on for years and played a large role in her dropping out of school. Her non-completion of high school has impacted her current situation and inability to obtain a decent paying job. In response to what her mother told us, Cierra stated that "It's the same now but I want to finish school. I want to be either a pediatrician and work with drug babies or a nurse. I just need them, teachers, to care and help me."

Cierra wasn't the only one of my co-researchers to have lived through events that were racist. During our frequent conversations, Simón often spoke about the conflicts that he lived at school and also within the Chestnut county community. As a un(der)documented (Pérez Rhym, 2017) teenager who was deemed by the school system as having limited English proficiency, he found that many teachers did not take the time to let him organize his thoughts so that he could participate in classroom discussions. He stated, "many times they won't even call on me or when I try to answer they don't give me time to explain myself. There are a couple of teachers who won't even let me ask my friends questions in Spanish so that I can understand what is going on in class." Unfortunately, his experiences were not confined to school. Within the larger community, he and his family were also subjected to discriminatory practices. When his brother was in a car accident caused by a drunk driver, his brother wasn't able to press charges. As Simón told me, "we couldn't do anything, if we did the police would come and arrest my brother and us because we don't have papers, that is what the cop told us when we got to the hospital to

see my brother. They had him handcuffed to the bed. As soon as he was able to leave the hospital, we just left and never pressed charges because if we did, they could arrest my brother. That's not right, just because he doesn't have papers." This was one of many situations where it was obvious that his lack of immigration papers was used against him and his family.

A few months after this discussion as Simón and I were driving to Chestnut Middle School to take part in an afternoon CS SFL project, he expressed his fear of things to come because President Trump had revoked TPS (temporary protected status) (Weiss, 2018) for several Central American countries. "What are we going to do now, I don't know what is going to happen with my parents? Trump just hates anyone who speaks Spanish! Even more than before, I have to make sure that I don't get in trouble. The other day the ex-boyfriend of this girl that I like told me that he is going to call la migra if I don't stop talking to her." Intuitively, Simón was able to see and understand that racist ideologies were behind the problems that impacted his daily life.

Although Edgar's story in many ways is different from Simón's in that his family came to the United States seeking a way to provide a more economically stable life rather than trying to escape gang violence, he also has had to confront structural racism. In 2010, the University System of Georgia Board of Regents issued a decree that effectively denied qualified un(der)documented students from applying to top state institutions of higher learning (University System of Georgia, 2010). It also reinforced the practice of charging un(der)documented students who had been educated in Georgia K-12 schools and who had lived in the state for years out-of-state tuition rates. This declaration established a two-tier system of education in the state of Georgia. Students who were able to prove their US citizenship had the opportunity to continue their post-secondary education at some of the most prestigious universities in the American

Southeast. By contrast, academically talented un(der) documented youth were explicitly told that they were unwanted and considered second-class students. It did not matter that in most cases they had been educated for the majority of their lives in Georgia public schools. This is the reality that Edgar is facing. As he looks to the future, he is struggling as he tries to decide what to do. In one text-message exchange, he stated, "pero es muy posible que me mude por la escuela, college el siguiente año. Es triste situación. Si es triste, pero tengo que hacer lo que tengo y a veces me desanima, pero no te preocupes no me rendiré tan fácilmente/ it is very possible that I'll have to move next year for school. The situation is sad. It is sad but I have to do what I have to do. Sometimes I feel like I can't go on, I lose hope but don't worry, I'm not going to give up that easily."

CS SFL as an explicitly anti-racist pedagogy helped me and my co-researchers to openly talk about our experiences with racism and more importantly the institutional linguistic ideologies that reinforce them. Through a valuing of our testimonios and how they helped us to generate knowledge, CS SFL promoted a complicating and extending of what was relevant to our lived experiences.

An interesting and unexpected finding in relation to institutional racism was that two of my co-researchers mentioned episodes in which they were treated differently based on their race, place of origin and/or languaging practices yet they did not want to call those actions racist when explicitly asked if they had ever experienced racism. In Cierra's testimonio, she acknowledged racism while also stating that she didn't want to talk about it. She even seemed to want to push knowledge of it away when she stated, "I didn't really think of racism like it was in the book [Tar Beach], in that way. I just felt I don't know. I mean, some teachers they act mean towards to you, to me, because of my color, but I don't know. It probably just got me thinking like that."

Simón reacted similarly when during one of our conversations when I asked him if teachers treated him differently based on where he was from and his languaging practices. He said, "No gracias a dios nunca/no thank God." He made that statement even though in his testimonio and our subsequent conversations, he has mentioned multiple times that some teachers and even classmates react negatively toward him when he speaks Spanish.

Teeger in her 2015 article puts forth the argument of "both sides of the story." Her argument is that the "both sides of the story" argument is cultivated within schools. It teaches students that racism is/was something that took place on both sides. In effect, this doctrine of 'both siderism' works to help institutions hide acts of racism and renames them as mistakes, misunderstandings, or overreactions. This thinking leads students to unconsciously work to not identify racist instances and when they do, to doubt their understanding of situations as racist. Simón and Cierra when platicando about their experiences intuitively talked about racism but when they were asked to explicitly name racist incidents that they had experienced, they adopted the "both sides of the story" explanation and attributed the incidents to misunderstandings or their own possible overreactions. This was one way that they had developed to cope with the insidious effects of discrimination.

**Intergenerational relationships**

Our CS SFL community-based project was intergenerational (Wexler, 2011) in nature although it did center the lived experiences and knowledge(s) of youth (Cammarota & Fine, 2010; Guajardo, Guajardo, & Cantú, 2016; Tuck & Yang, 2013). During the process, researchers from the university, master's level pre-service teachers, and adults from the community worked to share their knowledge(s) and experiences with youth co-researchers (Harman, Siffrinn, Mizell & Bui, in press; Burke, Harman, Hadley, & Mizell, 2018). It was the responsibility of adult

allies, whether they were adults from the community, teachers, or university-based activist scholars, to lend a hand in apprenticing youth into research (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Winn & Winn, 2016). Mirra, Garcia, and Morrell (2015) wrote in regard to their work with youth that likewise they:

> Found through [their] work that adults have a crucially important role to play in facilitating the research process; that, indeed, their active mentoring and support actually bolsters youth agency. [They continue by stating that] setting young people off on a research project without access to the resources, knowledge, and relationships that adults can provide can do a disservice to YPAR by denying students the necessary tools to reap the full benefits of the process. (p. 39)

Wexler (2011) also found in her work with Native Alaskan youth that culturally appropriate dialogic conversations between elders, adults, and youth fostered deeper communal relationships which nurtured youth learning and a growing sense of groundedness. This is very much in line with Holmes and González (2017) when they stated that asset pedagogies such as YPAR, and I'd argue CS SFL, are:

> Pedagogies [that] seek teaching and learning outcomes that respectfully engage with community funds of knowledge and that acknowledge that while culture can be dynamic and processual there are historically constituted reservoirs of knowledge from which communities draw. (p. 221)

CS SFL in its very nature is intergenerational. It is the co-construction of knowledge and the building of relationships that take place as youth and adults apprentice each other into their areas of knowledge that have proven to be especially powerful.

**Cierra**

Cierra definitely knew that she benefited from the intergenerational relationships that she developed during our time together. She also spoke about our CS SFL work as a form of apprenticeship. She stated that she learned a lot from working with us on community problem solving and even about what was going on in the world at large. During one of our conversations, she asked why so many white people were upset with Colin Kaepernick. Cierra and I then spoke about freedom of speech, peaceful protest, and police brutality. After our conversation was over, she stated, "That's what that meant [the news reports that she had seen on TV]? When they kneeled, they got sued for something… I didn't know about it. I didn't know about it until somebody told me…until you explained it to me."

**Edgar**

Edgar - like other youth participants - stated that one of the things that he loved about working with the CS SFL group was that he was able to learn from and with people who were older and also younger than he. During one of our first talleres, in response to why he wanted to continue to be part of the CS SFL program even though he was in high school, he stated that when he first arrived from Mexico, "[I got] support from my friends, from older people, like the teachers [the adults that worked within the CS SFL program], they kept pushing and like showing me new things. I would not go back and change anything. They helped me to learn. They made me stretch. They turned me into a believer. Sometimes like, I didn't want, they kept me going and learning."

**Simón**

Simón echoed Edgar's words when he stated in a text message that one of the things that he loved about the CS SFL project was the opportunity to learn from people his age and older. He said, "me parecío muy interesante y genial…bueno aprender cosas muy geniales nuevas que nos veamos cosas de un lado diferente…porque estamos trabajando con gente de diferentes edades. (I think it is interesting and cool, it is good that we are learning new great things from different points of view…this happens because we are working with people of different ages.)"

Edgar, Simón, and Cierra in their testimonios and later conversations all indicated an appreciation for and a desire to learn intergenerationally. As Holmes and González (2017) stated:

> Nesting, placing, and locating traditional Indigenous [I would also argue Black and Latiné] ways of knowing and being, languages, and oral practices of intergenerational transmission at the center of a movement of reawakening creates the possibility for contemporary reflexivity and responsiveness to the demands and immediacy of the times that are now presenting a vision of an earth straining under the unfolding grip of a worldview that is fundamentally and inherently unsustainable over the long term. All generations are needed to be in relationship with one another. (p. 220)

Adult allies need to provide support and guidance (not control) during the research process, for youth to succeed. It is through intergenerational communal, dynamic, fluid, and iterative processes that youth are able to take on the mantle of researcher and policy advocate. CS SFL acknowledges and values that the languaging and cultural practices of communities are fluid and dynamic (Paris & Alim, 2017). Holmes and González (2017) when speaking about the

responsibility of Western Scholars (I would reframe this and say all scholars who are passionate about social-justice and equity) must:

> Engage in decolonizing, anticolonial self-reflection and reorientation, to recognize that the very knowledge systems they have perceived to be static, stuck, antimodern, and antiprogressive could be the very ways of knowing that hold the possibilities for collective human survival. (p. 218)

When the knowledges that youth bring with them is valued and paired with the knowledges of adult allies within and outside of their communities, youth can be equipped to take up the mantel of engaged active civic agents.

All three youth co-researchers valued working with others with different skillsets and lived experiences that helped them to hone their skills, knowledges, and deepen relationships. The co-apprenticeship model, adult-youth, and youth-adult helped everyone to grow in their role as active critical civic agents who can dream of a "literacy of pleasure and joy" (Wong & Peña, 2017, p. 118). A literacy of celebrating and nurturing the assets that have enabled our communities to thrive under oppressive systems.

**A desire to help the community**

Over the course of the first couple of weeks of working with youth and their adult allies as part of the CS SFL projects, we always focused on examining the assets and challenges that can be found in our community(ies). As I spent time platicando y examinando their testimonios and counterstories, Cierra and Simón commented on how the CS SFL project helped them to realize ways that they could help their communities. They came to see that their new-found sense of critical literacy and civic engagement were in fact political. It is political in that it seeks to

disrupt power structures, in an effort to transform the ways in which their communities have been marginalized.

**Cierra**

"When I'd be outside, I'd see kids getting in trouble because there wasn't anything to do. I wanted to say something because I wanted a place where kids can learn and stay out of trouble."

This was the reason that Cierra gave to a local reporter when asked why she had worked with me to open the community center in her neighborhood. She saw the center as a way of helping those who live in her community. Cierra stated that the Chestnut apartment homes were and are for her, "a place where people who need a place to be, to live, can come for refuge and a fresh start." Cierra told me during one of our early conversations:

> Chestnut is a community. How would I put it? I don't know, like for example, the community center, when they have fire, the person who's working there was having a funeral up there, and it was a big problem. And everybody came and you know, talked about it. Because like, we used to go out there and have fun, do homework and all that, but ever since that happened it's like, it's just nothing to do. I don't really know how to say it, but I was mad because, I don't know. I don't know how to describe it, I did, basically, I was up there because I actually liked going up there and having a person, another person, like a person to talk to. It was a place for us to be a community.

Cierra wanted to reestablish the Chestnut community center so that she and others (youth and adults) could have a safe place to go. She wanted it to be a place that would help to build a sense of community, where she and her friends could do their homework and just be.

**Simón**

Simón felt the same way as Cierra. He desired to have places in his community where he and others could go. During the written portion of the legislative theater module in our after-school CS SFL program, groups developed a campus redevelopment plan. Simón, the chief architect of his group's plan, included various structures such as grocery stores, clothing stores, and restaurants in his neighborhood. He and Kevin, co-author of this volume, also crafted a policy statement that detailed why it was necessary to bring stores and restaurants to his neighborhood. Simón stated that his community needed those places because there wasn't anything located nearby. In order to go grocery shopping, many of the people in his neighborhood who were un(der)documented had to pay between $15-$25 to catch a taxi or to risk driving without a license in order to shop in surrounding communities. These are some of the things that Simón and others felt were missing from their neighborhoods: medical center, bike trails/racks, swimming pool, trees, outdoor classrooms, parks and soccer fields among other things.

Simón, Edgar and Cierra were emphatic about the ways they wanted to help their communities to have access to resources that would be of benefit to them. Through the CS SFL civic engagement, they deepened their connection to home and school neighborhoods (Ardoin, Castrechini, and Hofstedt, 2013). As Manzo and Perkins (2006) describe: "people are motivated to seek, stay in, protect, and improve places that are meaningful to them" (p. 347). Throughout all of our conversations, my youth co-researchers consistently talked about the importance of community in their lives. Their growing awareness of the power of their voices and ideas helped them begin to realize that they could have a hand in helping their communities to build on its assets. They also showed a growing critical awareness of how language and other semiotic

resources could be harnessed to make changes in their lives. While presenting at a national linguistics conference, Simon stated that he learned from the CS SFL program how power and social action rests not only in words, but also in use of pictures, designs and drama.

**Discussion**

This chapter has focused on the importance of not only listening to the testimonios of youth but also recognizing that their testimonios when pro-actively listened to can lead to positive changes in their lives and the lives of their communities. Often in our data-driven world, the "stories" or lived-experiences of our students aren't centered or even taken into consideration when decisions are made. Jason, by centering his youth co-participants' testimonios, shifted from the traditional roles of researcher and researched in university projects and instead co-constructed knowledge through a process of collaborative data collection, dialog, and analysis. Additionally, his approach decentered hegemonic ways of understanding how educational research should be carried out (Huber, 2012; Alemán, 2017). Lindsay Pérez Huber (2012) states that testimonios are powerful because they a) foreground injustices caused by oppression, b) challenge Whiteness ideologies, c) value minoritized community knowledge(s), d) recognize the power of human collectivity and e) center a focus on racial and social justice.

Within the framework of CS SFL, the theory and praxis of SFL validated and was the impetus for an equity and civic engagement project where minoritized students "usurped dominant genres [and ways of creating knowledge] to create a discursive third space in which their subaltern voices/[testimonios] pushed back against negative social positioning of their lived experiences and communities" (Khote & Tian, 2019, p. 10). Within this new space, they also spoke of the joys of their communities: the knowledges and assets that made them smile, kept their families and communities strong, and gave them hope.

The testimonios of Jason's co-researchers decentered the deficit discourses which too often frame their communities and their own lives. Instead, it provided us with deep insights into the strength and resilience of our youth members and together how they could address the challenges and obstacles they face on a daily basis.

Cierra's testimonio showed us that while she was reticent to talk about racism, she was very cognizant of how it was impacting her educational present and could possibly impact her future hopes and dreams. She was also very aware that she needed and wanted to be mentored or apprenticed into critical ways of examining the world around her. As she put it, "we need teachers who can help us no matter!" In our many conversations, there was always the understanding that for Cierra, teachers were not just those found in school buildings but also the adults with whom she interacted that were willing to listen, care, and guide her. Simón and Edgar were very similar to Cierra in many ways. They also appreciated and valued the work that they did with people younger than them and also older. Additionally, they valued the variety of ideas and experiences that they interacted with through the CS SFL project.

The CS SFL framework provided the tools and also a discursive third space that youth used to explicitly deconstruct and examine linguistic and institutional ideologies. It also centered their experiences, the lives and knowledges as normal and valuable. It did not compare their experiences to those of white middle and upper-middle class people in order to ascertain if they were of value or not. This framework also did not constrict their knowledge production to approved Eurocentric metrics. CS SFL allowed them to use all and every semiotic resource that they had at their disposal to produce knowledge. Their testimonios came to me as pictures, models, songs, poetry, bodily movements, and text messages among various other modes.

CS SFL allowed them to grow as active critical civic agents who can deconstruct and produce multimodal text. Furthermore, the CS SFL program helped them to access a wide range of semiotic resources to develop and expand upon their testimonios.

Delpit (2006) urged everyone that works with minoritized students to help them to become critical consumers and producers of knowledge so that they don't "simply [become] the grease that keeps the institutions which orchestrate [their] oppression running smoothly" (p. 19). This means that we must help them to critically tell their stories. We must learn to center and value non-dominant ways of producing knowledge. It is only by willingly becoming their co-participants, co-researchers, and co-sharers of personal knowledges, insights, and experiences, that we can help them and ourselves to find reflections of ourselves in testimonios as windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors (Bishop, 1990).

As more and more bilingual and bi-dialectical children enter our schools, they need healthy ways of reflecting on their own experiences, connecting with others, and understanding that they are not alone. Through the use of a LatCrit lens, this study has shown that testimonios in conjunction with CS SFL offered Jason and his youth co-researchers, and hopefully you the reader with, opportunities to see not only how elements of our life experiences are shared by others, but also how others have navigated, tolerated and found joy in the educational spaces in which we find ourselves as we work to become active producers of critical literacy.

**Praxis**

The following discussion questions and prompts are designed to support readers in forming and deepening relationships in collaborative research groups in school or informal contexts:

1. What stories of strength or the overcoming of hardship have been passed down through your family or friendship group(s)?
2. What accounts of joy in the face of adversity have helped you to grow?

3. Work to begin to share your history and your stories with your class or participants in your program. If you want them to open themselves up to you, you must also humanize yourself to them. (See Paris 2011; Paris & Winn, 2013)

4. Write your own counter story or testimonio and share it with your students.

5. Once you have developed a trusting relationship with your students, ask them to write their own counterstories or testimonios or those of their families.

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# CHAPTER 4[17]

# APPRENTICING PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS: BUILDING KNOWLEDGE THROUGH CULTURALLY SUSTAINING SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS

[17] Mizell, J: Submitted to Language and Education, May 2020

Abstract

Chapter 4 examines a combined after-school and graduate language education course that was located in a majority-minority middle school (Latiné and Black) in the US southeast. The program used youth participatory action research in conjunction with the arts and multiple literacies to position emergent bilingual and bidialectal middle school students as agents of their own learning. Graduate students (pre-service teachers) (PSTs) were simultaneously apprenticed as researchers and educators in developing a culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) for multilingual classrooms (Paris, 2012) through the lens of culturally sustaining systemic functional linguistics (Harman & Burke, 2020; Harman, Siffrinn, Mizell, & Bui, 2020). This chapter focuses on the experiences of two white female educators, one young educator from the US Midwest, and one veteran adult TEFL/ EFL teacher from the US South. This article traces how their thinking and practice changed or did not throughout the course. In particular, it explores their growing understanding of the value of humanizing relations, register shifting and language equity, and multimodal approaches, and culturally sustaining pedagogy and how they took up the work (or not) as a way to facilitate the learning of emergent bilingual and bi-dialectical youth.

Key words: pre-service teachers, culturally sustaining pedagogy, systemic functional linguistics, translanguaging, multimodality, teacher education

## Introduction

The U.S. Department of Education projects that by the year 2027, students of color (SoC) will constitute 55% of all P-12 students (NCES, 2019). In contrast to this increasingly diverse student population, less than 25% of the teaching force of P-12 schools is or will be teachers of color (U.S. Department of Education, 2016) by the end of the next decade. These numbers are problematic, as the disconnect between the cultures, languaging and literacy practices, and life experiences of students and their majority white teachers regularly generate conflict (Welch & Payne, 2018). Research focusing on teacher quality and preparation in the United States (e.g., Tellez and Waxman, 2005) suggests that most teachers have not been prepared to work with multilingual learners or to meet the demands of national standards. In this same vein, Athanases and de Oliveira (2011) documented the need for teacher education programs to work explicitly to provide teachers with a systematic way of addressing linguistic and cultural diversity throughout the curriculum. This is important because nationally SoC, in particular, Black students, have been historically undereducated (Ladson-Billings, 2006) and are punished on average at almost three times the rate of white students for similar offenses (Harper, Ryberg, & Temkin, 2019). This rush to punish SoC is especially true in the American Southeast where there has been an exponential increase in the number Latinés[18]over the last two decades (Harper, Ryberg, & Temkin, 2019). Latiné students in the state where this work took place are approximately 8.4

[18] The term Latiné is used as one way of breaking down the male-female binary that may be produced by using the term, Latino. Latiné is used to express that within the community of those who identify culturally, linguistically or otherwise with those who reside in Latin America that here exist numerous ways of identifying other than as simply male or female. The state of Georgia, where this research took place, uses the terms Hispanic and Latino interchangeably.

times more likely to be suspended from school than their white peers (Groeger, Waldman, & Eads, 2018). The consequences of these harsh and inequitable practices and policies are detrimental to the academic, emotional, and social trajectories of minoritized students (Winn & Behizedeh, 2011).

As the father of an Afro-Latiné son, I often worry that he will fall victim to many of the harsh and inequitable practices that are rampant in schools. In order to combat these destructive actions, I have worked with colleagues from Land Grant University[19] to apprentice educators and youth into anti-racist and anti-colonial practices (Harman, et al., in press). Our work has involved the development of an iterative and concrete way to provide teachers with a clear roadmap that guides them to nourish and sustain students and their communities. We call our roadmap, Culturally Sustaining Systemic Functional Linguistics (CS SFL). CS SFL works to help adults and youth to understand, value, and work to sustain and nourish the rich cultural and linguistic heritages of racialized communities. It also provides teachers and students with an explicit and critical way to examine and critique dominant ways of producing linguistic and literacy knowledge that is generally valued in P-16 institutions. This paper explores if/how belief systems of pre- and in-service teachers changed as they worked through 12 different CS SFL-inspired learning modules that challenged them to re-think how they believed languages and literacy should be taught. This paper also explores what learning strategies teachers felt allowed them to become accomplices of SoC in their fight for equity.

Informed by Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2016) and explored through grounded theory, I probed themes that became evident as I examined the reflections, discussions, and artifacts that pre- and in-service teachers produced as we worked

[19] All names of places and people are pseudonyms.

together at a middle school located in the American Southeast. The themes that I identified in my qualitative analysis were (a) the development of humanizing relationships between teachers and students, (b) the benefit of multimodalities, and (c) register shifting and language equity.

In the following sections, I discuss what CS SFL is and why there is a need for it. Afterward, I examine how two pre-service[20] teachers, representative of the responses of many educators in our program, took up this work and at times pushed back against it.

## Culturally Sustaining Systemic Functional Linguistics

### *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy*

Paris (2012), in his essay titled "Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy: A Needed Change in Stance, Terminology, and Practice," shone a light on why it was/is critical for equity-minded teachers to work toward an equity-framed pedagogy that did not just value non-dominant languages and cultures, but also sustained them. Expanded upon by Paris and Alim (2014; 2017), CSP builds on Ladson-Billings's (1995) original tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy: (1) to support students' academic development, (2) to foster their cultural competence, and (3) to cultivate their sociopolitical and critical consciousness. Although Paris and Alim (2014) appreciated and acknowledged that Ladson-Billings's work was the cornerstone upon which their work was built, they lovingly critiqued it. Paris (2012) wrote:

> The term culturally sustaining requires that our pedagogies be more than responsive of or relevant to the cultural experiences and practices of young people—it requires that they support young people in sustaining the cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence.

[20] In Georgia where this research took place, a person who has been admitted to a teacher education program that leads to **initial** state level teacher certification is considered a pre-service teacher. (GAPSC, 2016)

> [CSP], then, has as its explicit goal supporting multilingualism and multiculturalism in practice and perspective for students and teachers. (p. 95)

CSP went beyond CRP by insisting that marginalized languages and cultures not just be held as relevant, but also as subjects to be sustained. Paris pushed for a pedagogy that would help to maintain the practices of students while also extending their repertoires to include knowledge of "dominant language[s], literacies and other cultural practices" (Paris, 2012, p. 95). (For additional information on CSP and examples of its implementation, please explore Paris & Alim, 2017).

Just as Paris (2012) and then Paris and Alim (2014; 2017) worked to expand upon Ladson-Billings's foundational work, my work as a teacher-educator and researcher has been to cross-pollinate CSP into an SFL praxis. I do this to explore how CSP can be combined with a pliable theory of language that can be used to critically examine and deconstruct dominant languaging and literacy ideologies. Additionally, a cross-pollination of CSP and SFL also provides tools that those of us who are emic to racialized communities can use to explore and critique regressive practices that may be found in our communities.

*Systemic Functional Linguistics*

Systemic Functional Linguistics **(**SFL) emphasizes that language, in all of its manifestations, evolves to meet the needs of people in various social situations (Harman, 2018; Eggins, 2004). This takes places because as Halliday (1978) stated

> A child learning language is at the same time learning other things through language—building up a picture of the reality that is around him and inside him [*sic*]. In this process, which is also a social process, the construal of reality is inseparable from the construal of the semantic system in which the reality is encoded. In this sense, language is a shared

> meaning potential, at once both a part of the experience and an intersubjective interpretation of experience (pp. 1-2).

In other words, Halliday saw language as both a tool that can be used to interpret experiences and as a byproduct of experiences. This also means that as an individual learns to use language in their environment, language also acts as a powerful mediating tool.

Halliday saw language as a "tristratal system: semantics, grammar, [and] phonology" (Halliday, 1978, p. 39). This system can be understood to include several strata where context is always implicated: discourse or meanings (i.e., what is being said), words or grammatical structures, phonemes, and phonics. These systems work together to produce knowledge or understanding based on how a language user/receiver has learned to interact with or select/remix linguistic elements. This in effect means that understanding is built by juxtaposing what the user "said" alongside what was not "said," because as a semiotic system the choices made and not made produce consciousness. This all happens within a social context.

In conceptualizing how social contexts impact languaging choices, Halliday emphasized the idea of register. As Christie and Martin (2008) stated,

> One of the many remarkable contributions that Halliday and his colleagues made in the developing theory of language was to propose a 'hook up' between grammar and register. Some sets of choices relate primarily to activity, some primarily to the nature of the relationship in construction, and others primarily to organization of the language as message. (p. 5)

According to Halliday, register is important because users and creators of language always identify and focus on "what is actually taking place; secondly, who is taking part; and thirdly, what part the language is playing" (Halliday, 1978, p. 31). The notion of register is paramount to

understanding language critically because it helps us to understand that language changes, based on the situation in which a discourse event takes place.

Gibbons (2006) in describing register states that it "explains and describes the relationship between a text and its situational context, and on the related metafunctions of language [ideational, textual, and interpersonal]," all of which impact the mode continuum. She continued by stating that "although spoken and written language have distinctive characteristics, it is also clear that there is no absolute boundary between them (p. 34). From this understanding of the permeability of language, Gibbons frames the mode continuum as a system that recursively flows between "more spoken-like or more written-like" language (p.34). In other words, language flows fluidly between a context in which interlocutors are present in the same situation/experience to one in which a participant may be reflecting on an abstract phenomenon of which they have no shared person experience. These changes/shifts in the channels of communication necessitate a different use of language in terms of ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings.

*Cross-pollinating CSP and SFL*

In this study, CS SFL was created as one integral part of the course design of a youth and pre/in-service teacher summer camp (Burke, Harman, Hadley, & Mizell, 2018). The entire purpose of the camp and the collaborative[21] design of the work (Mizell, 2020) was to introduce CS SFL and youth participatory action research (YPAR) to youth and teachers (Burke, Harman, Hadley, & Mizell, 2018). CS SFL combines Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2014) and Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday, 1978).

[21] Throughout this paper, I weave between using I and we because of the truly collaborative nature of this work. The CS SFL program was a collaborative approach developed with Nicole Siffrinn, Khanh Bui, Ruth Harman, and Kevin Burke.

Alim and Paris (2017) stated that "culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) exists wherever education sustains the lifeways of communities who have been and continue to be damaged and erased through schooling" (p. 1). As Alim (2017) explained, this will lead to the transformation of "schools into the kinds of places that can actually sustain us, in all our richness, and take up the antiracist, anticolonial project of social transformation" (p. 21).

Halliday proposed SFL as one way of redressing how students from lower socioeconomic groups were discriminated against due to their languaging practices (Harman, 2018). As a way of examining languaging and literacy practices, SFL, as a theory and methodology, allows for the critical examination and understanding of language firmly centered in the lives of its users (Hasan & Williams, 1996). It provides researchers and practitioners with an effective way of disrupting how dominant ideologies negatively position students.

By infusing CSP into SFL praxis, a deliberate focus on race, racialization, linguicism, and white supremacy is brought to bear on how languages and literacies are learned and taught. Previously, scholars such as Rosen (2013) posited that SFL and other areas of study that grew out of it were focused on class differences and did not explicitly focus on race and its intersectionalities. Thus, this cross-pollination helps to emphasize (a) the inherent value in the ever-evolving languaging and cultural practices of racialized communities that have been deliberately underserved and (b) the direct action that is needed to contest and eradicate the deficient framing of minoritized communities. At the same time, SFL brings to CSP critical and clear languaging tools that can help teachers examine, sustain, and nourish the multi-dimensional languaging and literacy practices of students. It also provides tools that students can use to deepen their understanding of and how to deconstruct dominant and community languaging and literacy practices. By cross-pollinating CSP and SFL, CS SFL allows for the development of a

race-conscious, purposefully sequenced set of modalities that support anti-racist and anti-colonial participatory approaches, multimodal designing, translanguaging (Otheguy, García, & Reid, 2015), and reflection literacy (Hasan & Webster, 2011).

Within CS SFL, youth and their adult co-researchers are positioned as civic agents of change and as multimodal designers of meaning in a range of modalities (e.g., visual, haptic, embodied). In other words, youth and pre-service teachers are apprenticed into thinking about their communities in culturally sustaining ways through immersion in a carefully sequenced set of modes. They move recursively from genres that reflect direct personal experiences (e.g., recount) to genres that demand more abstract reflection or further from direct personal experience (e.g., sending a written a proposal to city council members) (Byrnes, Maxim, & Norris, 2010). This sequencing of modalities over time supports their cumulative coupling of modal resources and ever-expanding ways of producing knowledge (Martin, 2010). Because our approach is culturally sustaining, we privilege the insights and mode preferences of racialized youth over any macro or static planning of the curriculum. In other words, we provide youth with a permeable space where they can avail themselves of multimodal and translingual resources in ways that benefit them.

**CS SFL Learning Modules**

The CS SFL program was developed around 12 structured yet permeable learning modules. They were created to be recursive in nature because literacy and languaging are fluid and ever-changing and evolving constructs (Cazden, et al., 1996). To support the languaging and literacies development of youth, the CS SFL framework incorporates the idea of the mode continuum. Gibbons (2006) paraphrasing Eggins (1994) in explaining the mode continuum wrote that typically spoken language is "context dependent, involves turn taking and is grammatically

intricate and lexically spare" while "written language is context independent and synoptic in structure and 'polished'" (p.33). In our work, we supported students' engagement in the mode continuum by engaging them in embodied activities across different modalities that became increasingly more complex (from mapping to performing an argument). Through the engagement, they drew from an increasingly complex set of semiotic resources to make meaning about environment and design.

Due to this sequential use of modalities and modes, we designed our permeable and iterative program learning modules, to begin with, what may be thought of as the most familiar to students, oral (e.g., a description of their neighborhoods), and progressed to multimodal argumentation (e.g., a presentation of a formal proposal to a school/city official).

Table 4.1 highlights some of the modules and the semiotic resources that were featured in each.

Table 4.1 – CS SFL Selected Learning Modules

| Module | Participants and Topics | Semiotic resources used (Languages used throughout) |
|---|---|---|
| Introduction research | Pre-and in-service teachers, read about YPAR, SFL, and CSP | DAE, Irish, Mandarin, journal articles, videos, pictures |
| Oral history | Youth and adults discuss what they love, like, dislike, hate, and wish to change about their communities | Multiple languages (i.e. Spanish, BAE, Mandarin, Vietnamese, DAE, Irish), gestures, artifacts, charts |
| Oral stories and drawings | Youth and adults couple their testimonios about their communities with drawings | Gestures, artifacts, drawings, charts |
| Hip-Hop/Spoken work | Hip-hop artist conducted workshop | Dance, drawings, clothing |
| Legislative theater (LT) | Theater performer led the group in LT. | Gestures, intonation |
| Research around ideas that developed during LT | Multi-age groupings researched issues that came to light during LT. | Books, websites, community documents, podcast |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Final presentation of ideas to community at large | Multiage groups presented final ideas/suggestions and insights to the school's principal and teachers at an assembly | Dance, rap-song, poetry, model of new structures, PowerPoints, written report, gestures |

Through these modules, youth and their adult allies were co-apprenticed (Mirra, Garcia, & Morrell, 2015) into thinking about, conceptualizing, and researching their communities in new ways through immersion in this carefully sequenced set of learning modules.

The following section will describe the collaborative research site. I will then examine the reflections of two teachers who took part in the program.

**Description of Research Site**

The research reported in this study was implemented at Chestnut Middle School, a majority-minority middle school, 90 % of the students were identified as Black or Latiné, located in Chestnut County in the U.S. southeast. 100% of the students were classified as economically disadvantaged, and 24.1% as emergent bilingual learners (EBLs). The initial iteration of this project was Summer 2016 at Clay Middle School; the second instantiation, Spring 2017 at Chestnut Middle; the third, Fall 2017 through Spring 2018, also at Chestnut Middle School. Between Spring 2017 and 2018, more than 50 youth and 27 pre- and in-service teachers took part in the program. The youth participants were enrolled in an afterschool program that was funded by a 21st Century grant (U.S. DOE, 2019). They were given the option of choosing between over 20 different "club" activities. Once they decided to participate in our "club", in consultation with their parents, they were given the option to allow us to use their work as part of the research project or not. They were assured that their participation would not be limited if they decided not to take part in the research. The adults who took part in the program did so as part of a cross-listed master's/doctoral level ESOL course (Burke, Harman, Hadley, & Mizell, 2018; Mizell,

2020). Just like the youth, the adults who took part in the program were given the option of opting in or out of the research aspect of the program. They were also informed that analysis of their work would not take place until after final grades had been posted for the course.

During the Spring 2017 session, 90% of the middle school students were Latiné, and 10% Black. There were no students who self-identified as white. During the Fall and Spring 2018 iteration, the middle school participant population in our "club" changed. 80% of the students identified as Black; 10% as Latiné and 10% as white. Additionally, over the course of this iteration, several Latiné youth who had participated in 2017 returned to work with us. During 2017, 11 pre- and in-service teachers (1 Black,1 Chinese, 1 Vietnamese, 8 white) participated. In 2018, 10 pre-and 4 in-service teachers (6 Chinese, 1 Black, 7 white) and 2 undergraduate students (1 Black and 1 white) took part in the project.

**Focal participants**

Although more than 50 university students from a variety of educational and non-educational programs (e.g., TESOL, foreign language, geography, English, journalism, art) participated in the first three iterations of the CS SFL project, this paper will explore the uptake and resistance of only two of them. These two teachers represent the range of teachers that I worked with. As national data indicates, most teachers are white women (U.S. DOE, 2016). Due to this disturbing statistic, in this paper, I wanted to explore how a representative sample of teachers who had been educated and now sought to teach in the United States either took up or resisted CS SFL. One of my focal participants is a veteran, non-state certified, teacher with over 10 years of teaching experience. The other aptly represents those who aspire to become credentialed and/or have less than three years of experience. As I coded and analyzed the work

of my adult participants, the work of my two focal participants was very representative of that of others.

*Vanessa*

Vanessa, a white middle-aged female, had graduated years before with a degree in business and due to life circumstances had taken several courses that prepared her to teach English as a foreign language (TEFL) in various countries around the world. After more than 20 years working as a private 1-to-1 or small group EFL instructor, she decided to return to graduate school to earn her master's degree in TESOL. This was her first experience working with K-12 students. Like many who were trained as TEFL instructors in the past two decades, Vanessa's training and teaching had revolved around implementing a Chomskyan approach to teaching and learning that focused on learning generalizable rules. She once stated, "I come from the generation of learn the rules and memorize the words". Up to her participation in our program, she believed that students could only learn English if they were immersed in the language and memorized grammatical points.

*Melanie*

Melanie was typical of most of the pre-service teachers in the college of education at Land-Grant University. She was a young, cis-gendered white female with fewer than 5 years of experience working with Pre-K-12 students in any capacity. When Melanie took our course, she was a 1st year pre-school paraprofessional. During an interview a year after she had graduated with her master's degree, she mentioned that one of the reasons that she had taken our course was because she didn't want to be a "sit and get" teacher. She wanted to be a dynamic teacher who let students know that she cared about them as people first.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

Grounded theory (Charmaz, 2012) filtered through a CRT and LatCrit lens was used to examine, explore, review, organize, and critique the data in this study. Malagon, Huber and Velez (2009) conceptualized a critical race grounded theory as one that was built from the lived racialized experiences of the researchers and/or co-participants. In much the same why, filtering grounded theory through a LatCrit lens allowed me to also bring into focus how the immigration statuses and testimonios, and ways of languaging of Latiné and Black youth impacted the learning experiences of the pre-and in-service teachers that took part in this project. As a methodology that allows for the collection of data with ongoing data analysis and creation of theory in process, this CRT and LatCrit filtered grounded theory allowed me to permit my participants to help in the data collection and analysis process (Malagon, Huber, & Velez, 2009). Between my field notes, reflections and those of teachers and youth, we recorded more than 50 hours of audio and video recordings and took more than 200 photographs. Several youth and adults also provided copies of their spoken word poetry, while two Latiné youth provided copies of their studio-recorded Hip Hop songs. Additionally, teachers submitted weekly reflection logs along with copies of their final unit teaching plans/reflective papers.

The data were coded using a multistep process. The first step involved a general reading/listening/watching (i.e., written, video, and audio recordings) of the data. Some videos were transcribed using Kaltura. During this stage, I began to code the data by attaching labels to segments of data that depicted/summarized each segment (Charmaz, 2012). Some of my early codes were: (a) building of trusting relationships between teachers and students, (b)youth feeling free to translanguage, and (c) teachers feeling conflicted about how to engage with students. Those initial codes led me to the second stage of analysis, re-reading each reflection written by

every adult participant from 2017 and 2018, mindful of my initial codes. That process compelled me to write analytic notes or memos about the codes, plus prompted me to compare how teachers spoke/wrote about their practice and that of others. I then grouped participants into two groups based on US teaching experience, less than 5 years and more than 5 years. Research has shown that the five-year mark predicts whether a teacher will continue in the profession (Raue & Gray, 2015). Ingersoll, Merrill, Stuckey, and Collins (2018) reported that approximately 44% of teachers leave for a variety of reasons such as low pay, class size, and lack of support during their first five years. The third step in the process involved the selection of one "typical model" participant from each category. Afterward, I re-read the reflections of my two focal teachers, again coding their reflections by comparing them.

The next section examines the themes that emerged from the reflections and artifacts of focal participants: humanizing relations, register shifting and language equity, and multimodal approaches. Humanizing relations are relationships in which youth and adults come to see each other as trusted members of the community. It also, in this case, implies that jointly they co-constructed ways to advocate for equity. Register shifting and language equity imply an understanding by teachers and youth that every language variety is valid and useful based on its effectiveness in different contexts. The last theme was the benefit of multimodal approaches. Multimodal approaches are those in which the entire person—body, mind, and soul—are involved in the meaning-making process. This may also involve the use of colors, physical objects, and even sound to help a person communicate their needs.

The following sections showcase the development of the thoughts, beliefs, and understandings of my focal participants from when they began working with CS SFL until when their work concluded. Their reflections are in chronological order.

## Emerging Themes

### *Humanizing Relationships*

> Humanization is the ontological vocation of human beings and, as such, is the practice of freedom in which the oppressed are liberated through consciousness of their subjugated positions and a desire for self-determination (Freire, 1970, 1994). Humanization cannot be imposed on or imparted to the oppressed; but rather, it can only occur by engaging the oppressed in their liberation. (Del Carmen Salazar, 2013, p. 126)

One of the purposes of CS SFL was to provide the tools and space that teachers and students could use to deconstruct deficient ideologies prevalent in education. As Del Carmen stated, "humanization cannot be imposed or imparted….it can only occur by engaging the oppressed in their liberation" (p. 126). In effect, CS SFL created a space in which students and teachers became co-investigators of K-12 and community languaging ideologies.

*Vanessa*

Vanessa entered the CS SFL project with more than a decade of teaching experience. For most of her teaching career, she had operated under the premise that it was the teacher's job to instruct and the student's job to absorb the information, very much a banking model (Freire, 2018). From the very first meeting, her beliefs came into conflict with what she was experiencing as part of the youth project. She stated, "I was a little uncomfortable allowing the students to just do whatever they want. I didn't so much want to control them as I didn't want them to miss anything!" Her need and desire to "control" students started to change as she worked and got to know them. Additionally, as she read articles that spoke to the importance of valuing and sustaining students' socio-political or critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2014) she grew to understand that "school-approved" knowledge was not the only

way that students should be judged. During week four of the course, Vanessa read, "I'm not a Pencil Man": How one Student Challenges Our Notions of Literacy "Failure" (Knobel, 2001). After reading the article and working with students she stated,

> I was a student that day, even though I helped the middle schoolers find some books – they taught me about their diversity, their need to play, and their greatest need of finding themselves, liking themselves and being empowered in order to become people of passion, to accomplish great deeds and to expand their minds"

Vanessa started to see that for students and herself to experience true liberation, it would only be possible if they worked together to develop critical languaging skills as co-researchers.

Vanessa came to understand education very much in line with how Freire (2018) and Paris (2011) framed humanizing relationships and pedagogy as one in which all those in the educational process worked together to advocate for equity in their communities. She also learned that this liberation would only come about if everyone learned about critical languaging tools and how to examine language. She wrote

> It (SFL) aids in thinking about the different functions of the language that are used and relates them to the social settings – that's really how I see SFL: an approach to teaching language by looking at its functions (the uses) in different social surroundings, so the purpose is fundamental. this approach enables students, as they read closely, to think critically and develop an understanding of how language works. I need to start looking at patterns (which really is grammar), points of view or participants, processes and circumstances. Within the processes, I need to think about "doing," "sensing," "saying," and "being". I also need to think more about "themes" and "rhemes" and how they are linked or connected cohesively.

Over the semester, Vanessa came to realize that only by viewing youth as co-researchers and co-knowledge producers could we (youth, teachers, and facilitators) enter into truly humanizing relationships (Mizell, 2020). To build those relationships with the ability to critically deconstruct dominant text, teachers, and youth must learn about the critical languaging tools that SFL offers.

*Melanie*

Melanie entered the work at Chestnut with less than five years of teaching experience, with a desire to learn as much as she could so that her future students would not be "sit and get" students. The first time that Melanie used the phrase "sit and get" she told me that when she was in school, the gifted[22] kids were in classes where they were challenged and took part in projects. They constructed knowledge. On the other hand, students outside of the gifted program were required to listen to a teacher talk, use worksheets, and be quiet. She referred to that type of teaching as "sit and get".

Although Melanie did not want to be a "sit and get" teacher, our program's goal of valuing and viewing students as co-creators of knowledge was initially foreign to her.

> So, [Chestnut] was a little different because we were interacting with them [our youth co-participants] and we were in sort of this inner place between being a teacher and being a friend. So, that was the first time for me, and that was a little weird. But, I think I kind of got used to it, and it helped prepare me for teaching middle school, but it was really the first opportunity that I'd had in my Master's to put theory into practice. Up 'till that point I had been reading theory, taking notes, presenting theory, asking questions about theory, writing papers.

[22] See https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Curriculum-and-Instruction/Pages/Gifted-Education.aspx

Even though it was “a little weird”, she knew that the process would be beneficial for her and for the youth with whom she was co-creating knowledge.

In time, she came to see and appreciate that the translingual (Otheguy, García, & Reid, 2015) and dialogic environment that CS SFL fostered allowed for the building of community. In the following excerpt from her reflection log, Melanie refers to the community improvement projects that students developed in multi-age groups.

> The students were actively participating in the creation of communities and took time to verbally represent their creations in ways that made us care about what they had done. I also see the true importance of the time we took at the beginning to set the environment and the tone for the group. We spent time getting to know the students, sharing about ourselves, and playing games to make the space fun, safe, and inviting. Because the space is safe, [Simón] felt comfortable sharing his incredible immigration story with me and Kelly. If we hadn’t taken time to get to know him and build a relationship with him, I’d venture to say that he would not have told his story so willingly and with such detail.

This finding is very much in line with what Paris (2011) posited when he wrote about the power of humanizing research and pedagogy. He stated, “This genuine and honest sharing [humanizing pedagogy] led to richer and truer data than the model of the somewhat detached, neutral researcher that echoes across the decades from more positivist□influenced versions of qualitative inquiry” (p.139).

As the course came to an end, Melanie had truly taken to heart what it meant to be a humanizing teacher or a teacher who knew that the true purpose of school should not only be to focus on school-sanctioned literacy but should also include mentoring students into critical

sociopolitical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995) with the tools that they would need to advocate for equity for themselves and their communities. She wrote that she had grown to love

> the way that we invited the kids to share their perspectives on their community and their school and that's something that I want to incorporate as I'm developing my own curriculum now. But getting their input on how things are going at school, what they like and don't like about their schools and their community and then giving them the opportunity to build what they would do.

Melanie valued the time and energy that went into building a caring and trusting environment with youth. She was able to see that by constructing a community within our program, we were able to share ourselves openly and honestly with our youth co-researchers and that also allowed them to be open with us.

Over time both Vanessa and Melanie were able to see that by developing relationships of care, students and adults were able to become co-producers of knowledge. Through that production of critical knowledge, they were able to work toward liberation and equity.

***Register shifting and language equity***

The children of many immigrants often feel as if their home/community language(s) and thus their very humanity is under attack by dominant educational and societal institutions. Many new immigrant parents are told implicitly and often explicitly that they must exclusively speak English with their children. This also happens with children who speak a variety of BAE (Smitherman, 2018). They are told if they want their children to be successful, they must give up their first language and embrace DAE. McCarty and Lee (2014), addressed the linguistic violence carried out and perpetuated by the state against Native American languages, and I would include Spanish and BAE, stated that the eradication was "directly linked to federally

attempted ethnocide and linguicide" (p. 105). Ethnocide is the "deliberate and systematic destruction of the culture of an ethnic group" (Oxford University Press, 2019) or "the extermination of a race" (Collins, 2019). By working to eradicate their language, the State was in fact, killing them, attempting to rob them of their humanity.

To fight linguicism, CS SFL works to teach pre/in-service teachers and youth the importance of maintaining and sustaining various languaging practices. Within CS SFL exists the understanding that language is a fluid meaning-making resource that evolves to meet the needs of those who use it (Lukin, Moore, Herke, Wegener, & Wu, 2008). CS SFL also works to ensure that youth and adults realize that language cannot be truly divided into two exclusively separate spheres, academic and social.

*Vanessa*

When Vanessa first began to work with us at Chestnut Middle, she stated:

> I was confused by why Jason was using Spanish in an ESOL class. During my time as an ESOL teacher, I always insisted that my students only use English. That was how they were going to learn the language.

By the end of the course, Vanessa's belief surrounding language learning had changed. She wrote about her new understanding of teaching language in context:

> I would start the process of working toward the final goal with an appreciation of registers – help the students to know what "field, tenor, and mode" are and their relation to the metafunctions of
>
> Ideational – Talk about experience, people and things and their relationships.
> Interpersonal – To cooperate and form bonds as well as negotiate meaning.
> Textual – Learn to link ideas cohesively to convey information.

> As I visualize a classroom with a variety of registers (from peer talks to academic talks to business talks [In a later conversation she explained that these included students using all of their languages.] there are more opportunities for questions and negotiating for meaning as well as comprehension and sharing information at different levels. Within these concepts, they will see the connection between purpose and functions of language.

In another reflection, she went on to lay out her belief that as language teachers and learners we must recognize that language does not stop at the classroom door.

> Classroom discourse can function as one of those tools [a tool that connects social needs to academic needs] but looking at language functions and being more culturally responsive will help construct this bridge. We cannot separate language development from the sociocultural context. Knowledge is definitely not just a commodity for students to consume. There are too many dimensions of what must be learned: enter the arenas of society, culture and language as an instrument, with functions and meanings.

Vanessa was able to see that the use of various languages was, in fact, necessary for learning. She also grew to see that language learning was and should not be confined to the classroom, that it was sociopolitical.

During a follow-up interview after she had taken on a teaching assignment in India, Vanessa reminisced,

> When I first started at Chestnut, I thought that they should all learn English and only use English in the classroom. Things changed over time. I was able to see that sometimes they needed to use their other languages to make sense of things. Now here in India, with some of my students, I encourage them to use their other languages and to help each other out. I know that they are explaining things to each other and learning more. I'm not

> as worried now. I'm thinking about how I can bring in social issues that they have discussed into the classroom. It will help them to grow. It isn't just about teaching a language. My class is about giving them the tools that they need to be successful however they want to be.

For Vanessa, language and teaching English has become a tool for social change. After taking part in the CS SFL program, she has come to see that all languages are equal in function. As an ESOL/EFL teacher, she now understands the power of register shifting and believes in language equity.

*Melanie*

Although Melanie did not consider herself to be bilingual, she relished in the translanguaging abilities of our group. During the third week of the project in response to reading Paris (2011), Melanie stated,

> Paris suggests that to fight this [languagism], we must create educational practices that are multi-lingual and multi-cultural and embrace multiple literacies. I see this taking shape in our project at Chestnut. We encourage the students and each other to use multiple languages to express our ideas, thereby promoting multilingualism instead of demanding "English only." For some of our students, I'm sure this is a refreshing change. Instead of being forced to produce meaning in only one language, they (we) can create meaning in whichever language feels best.

This was very much in line with Otheguy, García, and Reid (2015) when they stated that translanguaging is "the deployment of a speaker's full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually

national and state) languages" (p. 283). Melissa appreciated that students felt free to use all of their linguistic repertoires.

Although Melanie did believe that students should be able to use all of their languaging resources, she also felt that they needed to learn how to use effectively different registers of English based on the context of situation in which they found themselves. In a follow-up interview with her after she had her classroom, she discussed how she was going to structure the first few days of school with students who were new to the United States.

> I'm actually starting the year with register with my students because I think it's important to learn how to talk to certain people and I think it will help them in the future because you can't show up to a job interview and be like 'heeeeey, whaaaats uuuuup?' But you can totally say that to your friends. You can't brush off the principal with 'whatever man'. So to help them sort that out that will be really good.

Melanie had come to see that students must understand the registers of different situations to make linguistic choices that would help them to meet their needs. She was as concerned with students learning to identify the registers that educational institutions demand as she was with them learning to manage registers they would encounter outside the "four walls" of a school building.

In order for students to learn how to navigate different registers, Melanie knew that it was important to scaffolding language learning using the mode continuum, in other words moving from very personal and linguistically sparse to more semantically dense and abstract articulations of phenomena. This growing understanding was expressed in one of her weekly reflection logs. In this log, she mentioned how students started the ideal community project by visually observing their community and then talking about it with others who were present in the moment

and eventually progressing to arguing for adoption of their ideal community by outside policymakers. In discussing how the mode continuum helped students to move from visually observing, sketching, talking about, building a 3-D representation, writing a formal proposal for and eventually arguing for the adoption of their ideal community she wrote,

> A great example of this is Lysette, the young lady with whom I worked. While we were building the model [her ideal community] together, we were laughing a lot and using simple phrases to share our ideas. However, when she presented [to someone playing the role of the principal], she really took on an almost professional character [similar to the urban planner that lead one of our workshops] and shared her well-framed thoughts. This transmediating, or shifting of register, is proof to the argument for multi-modality. Through the use of multiple modes, Lysette was able to take an idea from an abstraction (a marking on a map) to a 3-D model and presentation. Her understanding of the language to use grew and developed through each stage of the process.

Melanie came to appreciate that by scaffolding the languaging experiences of students along the mode continuum from firsthand experience to more decontextualized and reflective that they were able to expand their semiotic repertoires.

Melanie like others in our program came to understand that language learning should not be regulated to just classroom practice. She understood that the development of sociopolitical consciousness was fundamental in helping students to fight for equity. In this fight for equity, Melanie realized that by scaffolding languaging learning opportunities using the idea of the mode continuum students were able to develop different registers that allowed them to meet their needs in a variety of situations.

*Multimodal Approaches*

In 1996, the New London Group (Cazden, et al., 1996) advocated for a new way of looking at and approaching the teaching of literacy. They called for a view of multiliteracies as a turn to learning to effectively use "multiple languages, multiple Englishes, and communication patterns that more frequently cross cultural, community, and national boundaries" (p. 64). This call to cross-connect is only possible if we also suture what Irene Lara (2002) refers to as the rupture between mind, body, and spirit. Lara (2002) addresses how in Western academia there has been a historical de-emphasis on the connection between the mind, body, and spirit. She states that since the Enlightenment (sic)[23] the focus on empirical science has led to a privileging of the rational mind as the sole origin of knowledge. An emphasis on the "empirical" has led to the disintegration of the body and environment. This has caused us to become blind to how the body's interaction with other semiotic resources is integral to the meaning-making process (Canagarajah, 2018). To suture the "mindbodyspirit" rupture, CS SFL emphasizes embodied learning that necessitates the development of bodily and spatial awareness, experiential reflection and action, and an understanding of the body's participation and positioning in the social world (Nguyen & Larson, 2015; Goeman, 2013).

*Vanessa*

Initially, for Vanessa, the idea of using the body and its senses to learn was very unfamiliar, yet she was open to experimenting. She stated,

> I have never used these resources [cameras, theater games, modeling blocks] but can imagine all three at Chestnut or any language classroom to open doors of various types of resources, communication and for the unique student skills and creativity.

[23] Sic is used here to denote that the use of the term Enlightenment implies that before this period of time non-Western societies were not advanced/knowledgeable. The belief that knowledge starts and ends with Western societies is what Kubota (2019) and Delgado-Bernal and Villalpanda (2002) respectively term epistemological racism or apartheid of knowledge.

Although the idea of using the body to learn was foreign to Vanessa during week three, she had an epiphany. She was able to see a direct connection between using the body and students opening up and beginning to care about each other and the adults in the group. In her reflection log, she wrote about what happened with one student after we had spent the entire class using our bodies as props in theater games.

> As they [the middle school students] left, Flor said, “I don’t want to leave, you all are so nice.” She came up behind me and put her arms around my neck. It had been a good day and I was thrilled to see the response with the theatre, it was exactly as I had anticipated and hoped for.

Not only was she able to see the importance of letting students explore their world through theater games, but she was also able to see that play was also important in helping them to suture the rupture between "mindbodyspirit". At the end of one session in which multiage groups used Keva planks and Legos to build desired structures in their communities, one of Vanessa's youth co-researchers became upset and ran outside. Vanessa followed her and wrote the following in her reflection log about their conversation.

> So I went out and Yona was just right outside the door. I asked her if she was okay and she replied, “I just wanted to play some more.” I assured her that we would next week and that unfortunately, our time had run out. She agreed and came back in. I tend to be so serious! I want to get the work done and would be more comfortable chatting with the students and asking them questions about their lives, rather than playing. But today, as I think about the “recess” [students mentioned that they needed time to just be, to socialize] comment and I talked with a client of mine whose major was Early Child Development, I recognize the importance of PLAY

Vanessa through her interaction with Yona and later on with one of her adult students was able to appreciate that youth and adults need time to "play". We need time to be together in community using our entire bodies as we learn and explore the world.

As the semester was about to end, Vanessa had the following insight into the power and purpose of encouraging and apprenticing youth into using different modalities.

> Movement as literacy! I was intrigued by the idea of "performative pedagogy" -- allowing students (encouraging them) to enact collaboratively and spontaneously. Spatial theory combined with the movement (from centering to line of flight) helped the students to make sense of ideas and move (express) with their bodies. If I'm short on words this week it is because I am in awe and rally [really] trying to digest this movement modality combined with the verb chain and trying to let my own imagination run with the thoughts! Can't wait to read my classmates comments

Vanessa was able to see that the body can produce, interpret, and interact with the world to produce meaning.

*Melanie*

Melanie came into our program with a drive to look for ways as she put it to not be a "sit and get" teacher. As a person who had lived through the birth of the standardized testing era, she wanted to find ways of making her teaching not only interactive but also responsive to her students. Although she knew that she wanted to have an interactive class, she was not sure how to accomplish it. During one of our first conversations, Melanie lamented, "All of my classes in the master's program have been about theory. Talking about what we should do but no one has shown us how to do it, what it looks like". She wrote the following during week three's reflection,

> As someone who wants to work with students who are acquiring English, I can easily see the appeal of an approach like this with my future students. Creating theater using their lives, their own funds of knowledge, will give them an avenue to not only tell their story, but to craft it and recreate it, and all the while, build and enhance their language skills.

Melanie was able to see that by encouraging students to use a range of modalities, they would be able to connect their lives outside of school to what they were learning during the school day. This joining could lead to what Ladson-Billings (2014) calls socio-political consciousness, "the ability to take learning beyond the confines of the classroom using school knowledge and skills to identify, analyze, and solve real-world problems" (p.75).

By the end of the course, Melanie like many others in our program had grown to understand that the use of different modalities did not detract from learning but led to and allowed for deeper learning. In her final paper for the course, she wrote,

> Before this course, I viewed necessary measures in terms of structured interventions, insistence upon completion of assignments, extra support, and tutoring. However, the experience with Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR), multi-modality, and working directly with middle school students opened my mind to an entirely different range of possible measures. In our work with the students, we engaged them with multiple literacies, multiple modalities, and meaningful work [Youth explored the assets and challenges of their communities.]. Through these avenues, I watched as the students took us on the journey to discovery with them. They used drawings and paper sculptures to create meaning by defining their names, they used small wooden planks to explore the idea of community and construct models of their ideal communities, and they engaged in performance-based projects with Land-Grant University students. In each of these

> experiences, the students accessed content and language in meaningful ways. Instead of simply writing about the meaning of their names, they physically constructed meaning and then used their oral language to share their creations. Similarly, they modeled and built their ideal communities instead of reading texts about community and having group discussions around those texts. These experiences showed me the value of engaging students in multiple modalities and validating their multiple literacies. Our world is not composed merely of meaning shared via reading, writing, and speaking. We engage in literary acts through our gestures, our visual creations, the language we use, the content we see and hear, and our orientation to the space around us.

Melanie was truly able to see that multimodalities lead to at least a partial suturing of the "mindbodyspirit" separation that our emergent bilingual and bi-dialectical students experience in school.

**Limitations and Hope**

This work is far from over. Although pre- and in-service teachers by and large were moved to action, some needed additional time. For some, it was not reasonable to expect them to abandon years of believing that students should be passive vessels into which teachers should pour knowledge. Going forward, if we expect pre- and in-service teachers to view their students as co-participants in the learning process and co-constructors of knowledge, colleges of education must integrate YPAR (Burke & Greene, 2015) or what I now call intergenerational participatory action research (youth and adults as co-knowledge architects) into each course. Another challenge that became evident over the last three years is that as standardized curriculum and testing maintain a death grip on educational institutions, we must work together to demonstrate that by helping students to bring into the classroom their community knowledges

and concerns, only then can we help them to develop socio-political consciousness (Ladson-Billings G., 2014). This will mean that we must learn to individualize education, not force students to fit a one-size-fits-all mold.

Another challenge will be to integrate within every content area a true understanding of how language works. Hasan (2011) called for teachers to develop Reflection literacy or

> linguistic meaning that goes beyond the literal meanings of the 'words and vocables', insisting on a recognition of the assumptions that underlie what is said.

Teachers who understand how language is constructed and the ideologies that surround it are in a powerful position to help their students learn to use language for equity.

Although there are many challenges ahead as we work to help racially and linguistically minoritized students acquire equity in the classroom, there is hope. Pre- and in-service teachers who participated in this project began a process of learning why and how to go about developing humanizing relationships (Mizell, 2020) with their students and families. They also in many cases developed a greater understanding of how language works and thus were able to value and learn to integrate a philosophy of register shifting and language equity into their teaching (Harman, 2018). They in conjunction with youth learned to remix community and dominant genres to develop new ways of helping their communities meet their needs.

**Conclusion**

Through participation in this project, many of our teachers were moved to action. This happened because just like my focal participants, they were able to recognize that CS SFL helped them learn to develop humanizing relations, the importance of and how to value register shifting, and language equity. It also helped them to learn about multimodal approaches and how to implement a range of them into their work.

Teachers learned that by developing humanizing relationships, they were able to co-construct knowledge with youth. They also learned that by allowing for and encouraging students to take on the role of co-knowledge architects, they and their students were able to experience true liberation. That sense of liberation moved many of them to become activist teachers. They became involved in community groups that advocated for equity not only in school spaces but also within the local government. Newly empowered, they now work to foster equitable changes within their schools and neighborhood communities.

Adults within our program learned that all languages are valuable and equal. They came to appreciate that languages change based on who is using them and what goal the user is trying to reach. Teachers also learned that by considering register, they were able to help their students and themselves to critically examine situations to decide how best to go about accomplishing their objectives.

Multimodal learning helped teachers to see that by allowing students to bring their entire selves into the classroom, into the text (Cimasko & Shin, 2017), deep and powerful learning could take place. By participating in Photovoice, legislative theater, body sculpting, modeling, drawing, and many other activities that involved the entire body, students and teachers were able to begin to rejoin the body, mind, and spirit (Lara, 2002). Through the CS SFL project, teachers were apprenticed into how to encourage their students to use their bodies and their senses to explore the world. They photographed parts of their communities that evoked different emotional responses. Keva planks were used as a tool to help them to reimagine what their communities could become. Their bodies were used as sculptures to represent their emotions and desire for change. Their voices were used to produce spoken word, Hip Hop and poetry. Their feet were used to stomp out pounding rhythms that represented their lives and those of their communities.

Tears were shed as frustrations bubbled up as a release valve to help them deal with love and loss as they reflected on their lived experiences. Multimodal approaches provided teachers and students with a way to use their entire selves as they worked to co-construct knowledge.

If we aim to prepare pre- and in-service teachers to sustain and nourish students of color, pedagogies such as CS SFL are one step in that direction. CS SFL provides teachers with a permeable and responsive outline to follow as they seek to restructure the educational experience of minoritized students.

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# CHAPTER 5

# CS SFL, THE CROSS-POLLINATION OF CSP AND SFL: IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Kiowa poet and novelist Momaday (1978) declared over four decades ago that "our very existence consists in our imagination of ourselves. Our best destiny is to imagine, at least, completely, who and what, and that we are. The greatest tragedy that can befall us is to go unimagined (p.vi)." Racialized youth are in constant danger of going unimagined due in large part to the fact that their literacies and languages are not valued, supported, sustained, or nourished in dominant educational spaces. As Flores and Rosa (2015) have demonstrated across numerous studies, even when minoritized individuals can approximate the literate behaviors of those in power, they are never heard or read as good enough. Their languaging skills and literacy practices are always seen or framed as deficient. Racialized students and their parents are regularly told explicitly and implicitly that if they want to be successful that they must give up their home and/or community language(s) and embrace dominant American English and cultural practices.

McCarty and Lee (2014) addressed the linguistic violence carried out and perpetuated by the state against languages other than English, in particular, First Nation languages, declaring that the eradication was "directly linked to federally attempted ethnocide and linguicide" (p. 105). Linguicide is the intentional eradication of a language. Noted linguist M.A.K Halliday (1978) stated that people use their languages in order to understand themselves and the world around them. Thus, our languages are linked to our personhood, an integral part of our identities,

our very lives. When state actors such as K-12 educational institutions implement implicitly and explicitly dominant English only mandates, they are in fact killing racialized youth. They are robbing them of their chance to imagine themselves; they are killing them.

This ethnocide and linguicide will only come to an end when racialized youth, their communities, and allies outside their communities are able to deconstruct oppressive societal structures and discourses, reconstruct human agency, and construct equitable and socially just relations of power (Ladson-Billings, 2016, p. 17). These are also some of the goals that Ladson-Billings (2016) attributed to critical race theory and its application in educational spaces. These educational spaces must become emancipatory spaces, where there is a redirection of critiques away from racialized children and a redirection to critically examine the oppressive systems to which they are subjected. The goal of this restructuring must be to sustain, nourish and provide racialized youth and their allies with spaces and tools in which to not only imagine a better more equitable future but also to literally create one. Gutiérrez (2008) spoke of a third space. According to her, a third space is a "place" in which "traditional conceptions of academic literacy and instruction for students from nondominant communities [or racialized communities] are contested and replaced with forms of literacy that privilege and are contingent upon students' sociohistorical lives, both proximally and distally (p.148)."

In order to learn about the sociohistorical lives of minoritized youth, in this dissertation youth participatory action research (YPAR) (Mirra, Garcia, & Morrell, 2015), culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2017) and systemic functional linguistics (Halliday, 1978) were placed into conversation with each other. YPAR provided one important way of flattening the power dynamics generally associated with schooling (Siffrinn & McGovern, 2019). Through the use of this methodology (Cammarota & Fine, 2010), youth are placed as central in the co-

generation of knowledge process. Their voices are not only wanted, they are needed as integral parts of sustained community change. As emic particpants in their communities, they are intimately aware of the strength that has helped their communities survive generations of institutional racism. They are also aware of what they and their communities need in order to not just survive but to thrive.

Closely linked but in someways vastly different from helping communities to just survive is the desire to sustain and nourish them. Django Paris and Samy Alim (2014) built on the work of Gloria Ladson-Billings (1990; 1995), who reframed the debate surrounding student achievement from one in which the question was asked, what are students not doing well to one where the focus was redirected to ask, what are teachers doing who are successfully educating Black students? This refocusing is also very evident in the work of many activist-scholars such as David Kirkland (2004) and Valerie Kinloch (2012). Their research examines how and if teachers are tapping into, valuing and sustaining the rich linguistic and literacy knowledge that students use daily in their lives outside of dominant educational institutions. Pushing this type of equity-focused research even further, the contributors to Paris's and Alim's (2017) edited volume, *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies : Teaching and Learning for Justice in a Changing World*, advocated for teachers and others to actively support the ever-evolving languaging and literacies of racialized youth. They also demanded that teachers value racialized students' ways of being in and of themselves not as a bridge to get them to approximate white ways of doing and being in schooled spaces. As Paris and Alim (2014) stated, CSP is "centered on contending in complex [and critical] ways with the rich and innovative linguistic, literate, and cultural practices of Indigenous American, African American, Latina/o, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and other youth and communities of color" (p. 86).

Systemic functional linguistics as it was originally conceptualized by Halliday (1978) was taken up by some educators to provide one way of constructing curriculum that would advocate for the intrinsic value of all languages. He posited that they, languages, serve one purpose, to make meaning. In order to emphasis his belief, Halliday stated, a "dialect is a problem only if it is *made* [original emphasis] a problem artificially by the **prejudice** and **ignorance** of others" (p. 26). Several scholars have taken up and, in some cases, adapted parts of Halliday's original theory and methodology of language in order to provide explicit access to dominant knowledges to those who have been marginalized by the dominant society.

Martin and Rose (2008) took up Halliday's original theory and adapted it in order to examine and deconstruct the dominant genres in which most K-12 students are required to become proficient. They view genres as a manifestation of different culturally specific ways of knowing. To further Halliday's work of unmasking the hidden curriculum (Halliday 1978; Bernstein, 1973), in educational contexts, Martin and Rose along with others such as Fang and Schleppegrell (2008), Gebhard (2019), Humphrey and Economou (2015), Derewianka (1990), and Harman (2013) have worked in order explicitly to model and explain dominant school genres. In addition to these scholars, others have also taken up Halliday's work in order to make school-sanctioned knowledge accessible to youth. Gibbons (2002/2012) developed the mode continuum to allow teachers to notice, plan for, evaluate and remediate how youth move from more spoken like forms to more reflective written forms. Building on her work other scholars like Dempsey and Accurso (2018) and Siffrinn and Harman (2019) have expanded her work to take into account how texts can no longer be considered as just spoken or written. Texts and thus the mode continuum have been expanded to value and account for multimodal and embodied constructions.

Bringing together the work of the above-mentioned scholars and many others (i.e., (Kubota, 2019; Delgado-Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Hasan & Williams, 1996) has led to the conceptualization of Culturally Sustaining Systemic Functional Linguistics (CS SFL) in this dissertation. CS SFL is a framework created as one way to explicitly state that the languaging and literacies of racialized communities are valuable in and of themselves and that all languages/dialects and modes are appropriate in their power to help their users meet their needs. Additionally, CS SFL works to provide youth and their allies with concrete tools to critically examine dominant and community languaging and literacies practices. This critical examination is important as it disrupts what maybe a reifying or normalizing of dominant genres and white ways of being. As a framework that seeks to disrupt the deficient framing of racialized youth and at the same time foment a building of humanizing relationships between youth and adults, CS SFL is based around the following tenets (as illustrated in Figure 5.1).

1. Anti-racist and anti-colonial participatory approaches (Delgado-Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Kubota, 2019, Mirra, Garcia, & Morrell, 2015)
2. Multimodal designing (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001; Lenters, 2018)
3. Translingual practices (Otheguy, García, & Reid, 2015)
4. Reflection literacy (Hasan & Williams, 1996)

Chapter two provided my conceptualization of what CS SFL is. It began by discussing my intimate reasons for being involved in this work, my concern for my son and other multi/bilingual and multi/bi-dialectical youth. I then worked to draw a connection between the work of activist-scholars who came before me and how their work speaks to each other and has allowed me to cross-pollinate them in order to develop CS SFL in collaboration with a community of dedicated activist-scholars (see Harman, et al., 2020).

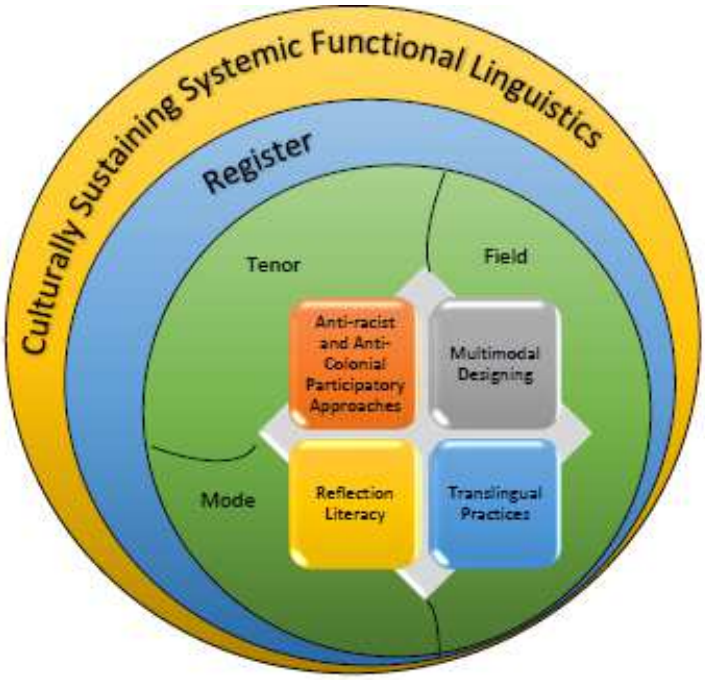


Figure 5.1 - Culturally Sustaining SFL Praxis (adapted from Bui, 2018)

In Chapter three, I explored how testimonios and pláticas were taken up as an integral part of CS SFL. Through the centering of youth voices through testimonios and pláticas, both of which not only supported but in fact required that youth and adults come together to co-construct knowledge, I was able to provide a platform from which the voices of my youth co-researchers could be heard. Together we explored, analyzed and theorized experiences and ideas surrounding structural racism, the benefits of building intergenerational relationships and a desire and need to support our communities. This co-construction allowed us to explore, learn and plan for change based on what our racialized communities needed/s from our frame of reference. No longer were we locked into seeing and judging our communities through the white gaze (Yancy, 2008; Morrison, 1998).

Chapter 4 explored how two focal pre-service teachers initially resisted some of the tenets of CS SFL but over time began to understand and value why we must become co-knowledge constructors with youth. During this journey, they came to appreciate and value reflection literacy (and its mandate to critically learn how language works), multimodality and translanguaging. More importantly, they came to see that by being open to and actively listening to their students, they could build deep and reciprocal humanizing relationships with youth. These relationships led them to become active allies in helping the youth and their communities to fight for equity.

This final chapter provides an overview of the strengths and challenges of CS SFL and implications for the future.

**The *How Come* of CS SFL**

"Why you lettin them ack the fool", those words although thrown at me over four years ago by my 12-year-old son went off in my head and heart as if someone had thrown a grenade at me. Watching as well-meaning white graduate students encouraged Black and Brown students to do whatever they wanted without attempting to help them to critically examine, dismantle and when necessary remix various knowledges for their benefit disturbed me. I wanted them to be safe and be taken care of not just academically but also physically. As a Black man who grew up in the American South and came into his own living in Ecuador, I knew that if my son and other kids like him were not just to survive but to thrive, they would need the skills necessary to critically examine, deconstruct and push back against the dominant deficient framing of them (i.e., their languaging and literacies: their very selves). I also knew that they would need to be educated in a society that values, sustains and nourishes them as complete and worthy

individuals who are part of dynamic and ever-evolving communities. From this need came CS SFL.

Developed in concert with others, CS SFL seeks to sustain and nourish the dynamic and evolving cultural ways of being, the blending of multimodal ways of expression, the translanguaging practices of youth and the relationship building of youth and the adults with whom they interact. In order to accomplish those goals, the work that was undertaken in this dissertation was based around a deliberately sequenced, yet open, range of modes that were responsive to the needs and wants of the racialized youth with whom I worked. These modes were purposively arranged in order to allow for the co-construction of knowledge and apprenticeship into reflecting on how language, in all of its forms, is used to construct and defend our realities (Halliday, 1978; Hasan & Williams, 1996).

Within the CS SFL framework, youth and their adult accomplices were apprenticed (Winn & Winn, 2016; Mirra, Garcia, & Morrell, 2015; Lave & Wenger, 1991) into thinking about, conceptualizing and researching their communities through immersion in a sequenced set of learning modules that moved recursively from simple genres (e.g., simple recount or storytelling) to complex collaborative co-constructions such as public argumentation (e.g., presenting of a proposal to a school administrator) ( (Humphrey, 2013; Hammond & Gibbons, 2005; Semali, 2002; Vygotsky, 1978). The 12 structured yet permeable learning modules incorporated Gibbons's (2006; 2003) idea of the mode continuum. Gibbons (2003) stated that the "mode continuum is most simply conceived in relation to mode differences between spoken and written language" (p. 251). Although the modules were originally conceived around Gibbon's original concept of the mode continuum and Rothery and Stenglin (1995) teaching learning cycle, its implementation was more closely aligned to Dempsey's and Accurso's (2018) idea of

the expanded mode continuum and Siffrinn's and Harman's (2019) notion of the embodied teaching learning cycle.

Table 5.1 highlights the sequencing of the 12 modules and the semiotic resources that were featured in each.

| Table 5.1 – CS SFL Youth Centered Modules | | |
|---|---|---|
| Module | Topics | Semiotic resources used (Multiple languages used throughout) |
| Introduction to research | Pre-and in-service teachers, read about YPAR, SFL, and CSP (two weeks) | DAE, Irish, Mandarin, journal articles, videos, pictures |
| Props and storytelling | Youth, community storyteller, Jason (two weeks) | DAE, BAE, Spanish-varieties, various youth supplied props |
| Oral history | Youth and adults discuss what they love, like, dislike, hate, and wish to change about their communities | Multiple languages (i.e. Spanish, AAE, Mandarin, Vietnamese, dominant American English, Irish), gestures, artifacts, charts |
| Oral stories and drawings | Youth and adults couple their testimonios about their communities with drawings | Gestures, artifacts, drawings, charts |
| Hip-Hop/Spoken work | Hip-hop artist conducted a workshop | Dance, drawings, clothing |
| Photography unit/Photovoice | Photographer workshop on photovoice<br>Youth and adults use their phones to take pictures of locations in the community that are important to them | Photographs, written captions |
| Mapping of school | Urban designer conducted a workshop. Led a mapping activity | Map of school, paper, pens, gestures |
| Modeling of school with blocks and 3D with paper | Urban designer led building and designing/ redesigning community structures | Blocks, various types of paper |
| Legislative theater (LT) | Theater performer led the group in LT. | Gestures, intonation whole-body movement |
| Research around ideas that developed during LT | Multi-age groups researched issues that came to light during LT. | Books, websites, community documents, podcast |
| Presentation of ideas as a | Participants prepared a variety of performances to represent their work | Dance group, rap-song, poetry, model of new structures, PowerPoints |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| performance to group | and ideas on sustaining and/or changing aspects of their community. After performance, feedback was provided by the entire group | |
| Final community presentation | Multiage groups presented final proposals and insights to the school's principal and teachers at an assembly | Dance, rap-song, poetry, model of new structures, PowerPoints, written report, gestures |

As illustrated in Table 5.1, the modal activities were purposively sequenced in order to encourage youth and adults to avail themselves slowly and recursively of an ever-expanding set of multi-semiotic resources. As these resources were taken up, they allowed for youth and adults to expand their ways of conveying their insights and reflecting on what and how they were learning. These reflections led to the construction of new co-generated knowledge. Through these modules, youth and their adult accomplices were co-apprenticed (Mirra, Garcia, & Morrell, 2015) into thinking about, conceptualizing, and researching their communities in new ways.

This process engaged and placed youth as knowledge producers alongside the pre-and in-service teachers/graduate students with whom they worked. Through multiple dialogic conversations, they discussed their lives (e.g., the joys, dreams, and pains), mapped their communities, built new community-centric structures and learned to trust each other as co-knowledge producers. At the end of the entire process, working in truly intergenerational groups, they used their expanded semiotic resources to remix dominant and community languaging and literacies practices to advocate for adoption of their ideas before institutional authorities.

As Chapter three pointed out, through participation in the CS SFL program, youth through their testimonios and pláticas were able to were able to openly discuss and analyze how structural racism appeared in their lives and affected them, the benefits of building intergenerational relationships and their motivations to help their communities by focusing it their literacies of joy and pleasure. This process also allowed and led to the development of

relationships of care not just with me but also with other members of the community-research collaborative.

Pre- and in-service teachers, in Chapter four, learned to pay explicit attention to the expanded mode continuum and how it could allow them to structure, plan, evaluate, and when necessary remediate the language and literacies learning of youth. Also through their readings, they learned how the components of genre-pedagogy and register and its constituent parts: field, tenor and mode could allow them to plan for the explicit building of knowledge, deconstruction, joint construction and then independent construction of knowledge as they followed the embodied teaching learning cycle (Siffrinn & Harman, 2019).

**Limitations**

Although my CS SFL work focused on valuing and centering the voices and interests of minoritized youth, analysis with youth and other participants revealed several areas where the design needs to continue to evolve in order meet their needs. One aspect that came to light was a need to discuss more explicitly and critically dominant school genres (Martin, 1984) and how they are constructed. This must be done so that we don't inadvertently reify dominant genres and thus hold them up as a one-size fits all measuring stick. There were times when some of the pre- and in-service teachers would insist that youth follow generic guidelines in writing without truly discussing or understanding the social purpose of the genre. Related to this, another salient point that arose was that although youth and their co-participants did read and write together, we did not explicitly dialog with youth about the Teaching Learning Cycle (TLC) (Callaghan & Rothery, 1988; Rothery & Stenglin, 1995) or the embodied TLC (Siffrinn & Harman, 2019) as one way to thoroughly explore and deconstruct multiple dominant school genres such as narratives or reports (Brisk, 2015) or community constructed text.

Another issue that came up during co-analysis with participants was that we did not explicitly address “regressive practices” such as homophobia or colorism that bubbled up as we worked together. This became very evident when the makeup of the student population changed between Spring 2017 and Spring 2018. We went from a majority of students identifying as Latiné and Spanish speakers to a majority of the students being Black and non-Spanish speakers. While I was *platicando* with some Latiné youth during Spring 2018, several of them expressed how uncomfortable they felt using Spanish around Black students. One Latiné student stated, “me miren mal y empiecen a decir cosas como taco, burrito, nacho y cosas así/*they look at me like I am weird and start saying stuff like taco, burrito, nacho and stuff like that.”* In the future, we must concisely and systematically address these and other regressive practices.

A fourth issue that surfaced during my conversations with students was who was positioned as an expert. Although youth were positioned as experts, no one from their immediate community (i.e., their parents, neighbors) was invited to speak in our program about how they saw their community. None of the local experts who were invited in lived in the same neighborhoods as our youth participants. Thus, they were all in some way connected to the local university but only tangentially emic to the local community. In speaking about the need to involve the entire community into the research process, Holmes and González (2017) stated, "pedagogies need to be placed within the proper framework of intergenerational learning and teaching" (p.220). They advocated for the inclusion of community Elders in everything that is done with youth by stating,

> To separate youth out of the relational, intergenerational circle by privileging their practices without deeply acknowledging the critical place of Elders in their education is simply not an Indigenous framework of knowledge or practice. (p. 220)

I would venture to say that many from the Latiné and the African diasporas also see education this way. They/we believe that the entire village needs to be involved in the co-construction of new knowledges because community Elders possess historical and experiential knowledge that youth may not possess. It could be argued that isolating youth from the knowledges of community Elders is just another form of trying to colonize their knowledges with Western ways of doing. In the next iteration of CS SFL program, community Elders must and will to be invited in as experts.

As I continue to reshape future iterations of the CS SFL program in dialog with my co-participants it will be of paramount importance to (a) critically discuss regressive community practices (b) explicitly examine dominant school and community school genres and (c) invite in and work with community Elders.

**Discussion**

This chapter has highlighted how frameworks such as CS SFL are one way of responding to Delpit's (2006) charge to apprentice youth of color so that they do not become the "low-level functionar[ies] of the dominant society, simply the grease that keeps the institutions which orchestrate his or her oppression running smoothly" (p. 19) but to help them to become critical and creative thinkers who are capable of deconstructing, remixing, and analyzing both dominant and community languaging and literacies ideologies. While helping to nourish and sustain the ever-evolving cultural and linguistic practices of minoritized youth (Paris & Alim, 2017; 2014), CS SFL works to help youth and pre- and in-service teachers to develop an explicit understanding of how language is constructed and acquired (Halliday, 1978). This is accomplished in part by helping them to understand and move recursively along the expanded mode continuum, a continuum that helps teachers and students realize the importance of the

mindbodyspirit (Flores Carmona, Hamzeh, Bejarano, & Hernández Sánchez, 2018) connection in learning.

It is of paramount importance that we, youth, pre-and in-service teachers, and community allies, learn to challenge racist and anti-immigration discourses while also closely and critically examining what could be repressive community practices (Paris & Alim, 2014). As a collective, it is our responsibility to examine critically why dominant American English and ways of knowing are highly valued in school settings and how that is a reflection of hegemonic ideologies. As we examine hegemonic ideologies, we must also examine ways in which our own minoritized communities have unconsciously adopted racialized ideologies from dominant institutions. For example, one of my Black youth participants ridiculed another one for being blacker than black. As she said," boy you ugly, you blacker than black, you blue-black". We must examine ideologies inside of and outside of our communities so that we can build on the strengths of our communities as we tear down constructs that are regressive in order to jointly construct a future that respects and prepares us for a linguistically, literately and culturally pluralistic future.

The CS SFL research that is chronicled in this dissertation worked to help youth to move recursively from very concrete and in some ways straight forward ways of talking and enacting knowledges about their communities to highly complex and layered ways. This framework also attempted to support youth to (a) (re)gain confidence in themselves as critical active civic agents of change, (b) provide a platform from which their voices can be heard, (c) realize that all of their linguistics resources are of value, (d) become part of an intergenerational community that advocates for sustainable change, and (e) gain explicit critical knowledge of dominant ways of

knowing and more importantly (f) realize that they and their communities are sites of knowledge and wonder and thus inherently valuable.

Through this work, I have seen how many students have become comfortable over time sharing and re-mixing their community knowledges with dominant ways of doing or rejecting dominant ways as not appropriate for what they want to accomplish. I have also seen that when strong collaborative and supportive relationships are built with youth, they are willing to invest their time, energy and dreams into helping to reshape the CS SFL program so that it can become more culturally sustaining. This work has also shown me that when pre-and in-service teachers are apprenticed into working in culturally sustaining ways with students paired with explicit linguistic knowledge, they become committed to language equity. Moreover, they develop a drive to sustain and nourish racialized students so that they can not only survive but also thrive.

This study was built upon the premise that when youth are (a) valued for who they are, (b) given access to a structured yet iterative and culturally sustaining learning curriculum, (c) work in multi-generational groups, and are (d) apprenticed into the use of explicit languaging tools that these factors could lead them to become active and critical civic agents. In other words, through sharing their understanding of the world and responding to and building on each other's ideas, youth and adults reach a deeper level of understanding about civic issues and agency in their lives. A clear theory of language, such as SFL, that is infused with or cross-pollinated with culturally sustaining pedagogy has the potential to nourish and build upon youth's translingual and multimodal practices. This cross-pollination, CS SFL, as an intergenerational third space facilitates the co-construct of knowledge between youth and adults. In this third space youth and pre-and in-service teachers come to see racialized communities as experts, possessors of deep and valuable knowledge that must be valued, sustained and nourished.

## Conclusion

Often, literacy isn't taught to minoritized students in a highly contextualized manner (Gibbons, 2006) or linguistically and culturally pluralistic ways (Paris & Alim, 2017). Instead, it is often taught in decontextualized ways that only value the languaging and knowledge production of the white middle-class. Practices such as these silence the cultural, multimodal and linguistic repertoires of multicultural and multilingual/multidialectal students (Flores & Schissel, 2014; Paris, 2012; Molle et al, 2015). Institutional school policies exclude plurilingual youth from being "legitimate stakeholders or participants in institutions that shape their lives" (Kirshner, 2010, p. 239). Only through the adoption of a culturally sustaining range of inquiry modes and rich literacy practices can students and the adults with whom they work be provided with the platforms and knowledges needed to disrupt these trends.

As a small part of a collective, I have learned that youth and their adult accomplices need to jointly co-construct a future that is truly translingual and transcultural (Alim, Rickford, & Ball A, 2016). This future should decenter the white gaze and instead replace it with a multiprismatic gaze that values and provides nourishment for minoritized youth with the cultural and linguistic scaffolding and opportunities to create language and literacy through and across a range of registers (Gibbons, 2006; Martin, 1984) and modalities (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001; Cazden, et al., 1996). Moreover, teachers need to actively disrupt "discourses of "appropriateness" that lie at the core" (Flores & Rosa, 2017, p. 176) of the ways that the languaging and literacy practices of racialized youth are deemed as deficient. They must center the hybrid and evolving linguistic and cultural practices of all students. Jointly, we can co-construct new knowledges and possibilities by drawing on, nourishing, and remixing all available semiotic, linguistic, and cultural resources.

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