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Coded: Dialect Diversity in the Secondary American Classroom

by

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A Thesis
Submitted to the Honors College of
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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the differences between dialects along racial, cultural, and ethnic lines with a specific focus on Black and Latine students inside the public secondary classrooms of America. The focus of the paper is on two linguistic tactics: “code-switching,” a linguistic practice which teaches students to separate their home language from the language they use in formal or professional settings, and “code-meshing,” a linguistic practice to teach students how to mesh together multiple dialects with which a student is familiar. Through the creation of a historical framework and an analysis of existing literature, theory, and pedagogical practices regarding the topic, I argue that code-switching is out of date and has negative impacts on students whereas code-meshing is the progressive way forward for English language arts classrooms. The appendix includes reading lists for preservice or active teachers, suggestions for classroom strategies, and two sample assignments.

Keywords:

Code-switching, code-meshing, dialects, linguistic diversity, Latine English, Black English.

DEDICATION

For educators around the world already fighting to create equitable classrooms for the diversity and breadth of students they teach every day.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAVE	African American Vernacular English
ESL	English Second Language
ELL	English Language Learners
IEP	Individualized Education Plan
LWC	Language of Wider Communication
SAE	Standard American English
SE	Standard English

THE ORIGINS OF AMERICAN LINGUISTIC VARIATION

Introduction

The way we use and interact with language, and the systems we assign to it, is what we define as grammar. Therefore, grammar is intrinsically subjective based on its connections to culture, time, place, and purpose. Between 1820 and 1860, 4.8 million people willingly immigrated to the United States and approximately 12.5 million enslaved Africans were transported to the Americas by force (Bryson 142-143). With this estimate of just over 17 million people being relocated to the U.S. less than one hundred years after its founding, it was inevitable that there would be compromises, conflicts, and tensions between the arriving ethnic groups and the languages and dialects spoken by all. Language holds these same powers to this day and is able to either bring people together or perpetuate societal inequalities.

People begin learning language structures and nuances at a very young age from the people in their lives on a consistent basis. These initial years are crucial to a person's language development and identity. Already, upon age five, incoming kindergarten students have a basic understanding of the language they use and how it functions (Barret 25). This ultimately creates tension early on in a classroom setting when a student has a proficient grasp on a linguistic understanding and suddenly a teacher, often someone outside of their racial or ethnic group, has new expectations for language. Students are often taught that the only acceptable form of English is Standard American English (SAE) and that whatever alternative language they use is incorrect or unprofessional.[1]

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[1] Vershawn Young states in the introduction to *Other People's English: Code-Meshing, Code-Switching, and African American Literacy* that, "African Americans are asked to use their language in appropriate settings and almost none of those settings are academic or professional" (3).

SAE is characterized by its strict adherence to grammar rules, structures, and tone. Rosina Lippi-Green emphasizes this prioritization of standardization in education, "We want the teacher to give our children that mythical perfect spoken language we call SAE, a language which is grammatically homogenous and accent less. Whether or not that child can do anything constructive with that language is in many instances secondary to the social construction or accent (96)." This "proper" English is often synonymous with the language of most white Americans, especially those in higher socioeconomic classes, which causes racially diverse students to feel alienated in their classrooms and sometimes face an identity crisis as they find themselves being taught by educators who view their dialects as incorrect, informal, or lazy.[2]

Today, 18.7% of Americans identify as having some Hispanic or Latino origin and 14.2% identify as being either solely or partially Black or African American as according to the 2020 United States Census data. Those communities are made up of 62.1 million and 46.9 million respectively ("Improved Race and Ethnicity Measures"). Even larger than those communities though is the growth of 'multiracialism' in America, the percentage of people who identified as multiracial, being of two or more racial groups, on the 2010 census was 9.7 million while on the 2020 census it was 33.8 million which is a growth of 276% ("Improved Race and Ethnicity Measures"). This census data shows that there are millions of people in this country who either identify as other races besides white or as not solely white and that number is growing rapidly. This racial and ethnic

[2] In *Other People's English*, Rusty Barret emphasizes the lack of linguistic foundations for dialect denial when he says "Teachers are more likely to find problems with a student's grammar if they believe they are reading something written by a minority child. So, prescriptive language ideology has little to do with language itself and everything to do with the social identity of language users" (20).

diversity puts into perspective the diversity among people and therefore among the language they use. So, the students inside our classrooms are being taught a restrictive form of English that they do not resonate with, use, or hear on a regular basis, yet they are being assessed on its linguistic structures and expectations.

In the United States, discrimination and the public educational system have long been intertwined. It was not until 2016 that the last segregated school in the United States of America desegregated (Domonoske). [3] This last holdout school was Cleveland High School in Cleveland, Mississippi and it is important to note that the racial demographics in Mississippi schools are vastly different than national statistics; while Black Americans make up just under 15% of all Americans, Black students in Mississippi make up 49% of the public school student population (note that this statistic only covers public schools and any private school statistics are not reflected). This last school was not desegregated until 62 years after the unanimous 1954 ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* that separate schools are "inherently unequal," (U.S. Supreme Court). With the end of segregated public education in America only being finalized six years ago, it is no wonder that educators, school administrators, and politicians are still struggling with establishing a centralized standard for classroom content and assessment. One major area of tension regarding standardization is language usage. Language usage is such a crucial part of community and personal identity for each individual student that a misguided or restrictive view of language can result in "more negative attitudes about themselves and their language use" (Young, et al. 3).

[3] The 2016 court case *Cowan & U.S. v. Bolivar County Board of Education* involved several parents and students teaming up with representative of the U.S. federal government to sue Bolivar County School District for the segregated schools in Cleveland, Mississippi.

Dialects can be formed and influence by a number of factors such as race, ethnicity, age, gender, and location. In the United States, there have been, and are, a variety of dialects based on region like southern, Cajun, Appalachian, and more. Contractions are often identifiers of southern dialects through words like "y'all" and "ain't." The umbrella term of southern dialects is expansive in itself. Cajun dialect— found in parts of Louisiana—, for example, is a quick, condensed speech while the typical 'southern twang'— found in states like Mississippi, Alabama, and Texas— is often exemplified through long, drown out vowel syllables. Given languages permeation into nearly all aspects of everyday life, one does not even need to be a participating member in a regional culture in order to pick up a regional dialect tradition as I myself am familiar with. My own experiences with code-meshing demonstrates the impact that regional location can have on a person's language.

While I do not consider myself Cajun, having grown up in southeastern Louisiana in Plaquemines parish, I was, and still am, affected by the surrounding dialects. At age eleven I moved less than seventy miles away but I may as well have moved countries. Swapping from a Louisiana middle school to a Mississippi elementary school halfway through my fifth-grade year created a hyperconsciousness of my own language that I still hold to this day. I remain a fast speaker as I was familiar with quick, abbreviated, rushed together sentences and many of my words which included sounds like 't,' 'th,' and 'ch' were warped. One distinct memory of mine was the first group project in my new fifth grade class in Hancock County Mississippi. I approached a group of girls and asked, "Can I work with you all?" but what I said was likely closer to "CanIWorkWitchYall?,"

all almost as one word in a brief breath. There was immediate mockery, and that memory has stuck with me since.

The phrasing that came out of my mouth that day was a result of the proximal community of Cajuns, both of inner-city New Orleans and of surrounding areas like Metairie, Marrero, and Gretna. This along with the racial dynamics I grew up in, living and attending school on a military base which was populated by a wide variety of people from a range of places and backgrounds, resulted in the mixture of dialects that influenced my speech on that day and every day since. My own limited experiences only begin to explore the effects of dialectic prejudice in a young person's life. I will never know what it is like to have to hear these unwanted linguistic critiques from people around me, separate from my community, on a daily basis. That is the reality for Black and Latine students in majority of American secondary classrooms and is even more true in the southern United States.

Due to our country's historic treatment of Black students, the way that school segregation unfolded, and the continuation of government and society to keep Black individuals in a disadvantaged position within our country, I knew my thesis would deal with these issues of racial prejudice, lack of representation, and discreditation of Black linguistics. At the very beginning of my thesis project, I realized that a depth of research has already been conducted regarding Black linguistics. I never wanted my paper to be a repetition of the work of someone else, so I began thinking of other demographics that had less research conducted and written regarding them. While there is a lot of research regarding Latine students learning English as a second language, there is very little about how such students need to code their language to conform to Standard American English

like other ethnic groups.[4] While forming my research question, I was close with a family in which the parents had immigrated from Honduras. Their oldest son spoke both Spanish and English fluently but, with each following child, four children in total, their proficiency with and connection to the native tongue of their parents diminished. This phenomenon interested me, and I wanted to continue exploring these dual language households, multilingual and multidialectal younger generations, or, alternately, how/why they seem to lose their connection to their background language. While these phenomena, along with linguistic discrimination, exist or pertain to nearly all racial or cultural groups, I have chosen to research Black and Latine Students given the scope of this project.

As language is ever fluid and evolving, the terminology used to refer to groups of people, especially those based around race, ethnicity, or culture, are crucial to the portrayal of those in the communities. I myself am a twenty-two-year-old white woman, but I am taking every step I can to use correct, empathetic, and accurate terminology regarding these research ideas and the identifiers I use for these two ethnic groups. Black scholars like Geneva Smitherman have been using "Black" in formal research writings for nearly five decades now and more modern scholars such as Vershawn Ashanti Young and April Baker-Bell continue to do so. With any racial or ethnic identifier, specificity is preferred but "because of the history of Black people in this country [America], most of us do not have a specific African nation to link our ancestry back to" (Coleman). Regarding respect, John Eligon says that the capitalization of Black "honors Black

[4] Latine (pronounced la·ˈti·ne) is a gender-neutral form of the word Latino, created by LGBTQIA+, gender non-binary, and feminist communities in Spanish speaking countries. The objective of the term Latine is to remove gender from the Spanish word Latino, by replacing it with the gender-neutral Spanish letter E. (James Lee, *Call me Latine*, 2020)

experiences," and Nancy Coleman says that "for many people the capitalization of that one letter is the difference between a color and a culture."

As for "Latine," many Latin and Hispanic communities prefer to be identified with their country of family origin (i.e. Mexican, Honduran, Brazilian, etc.), but I did not want to limit research to one specific nationality and sought for this project to be an analysis of the shared experiences of all these differing nationalities within the Latin and Hispanic community and therefore settled on a variation of the term Latina/o. I was originally using the term "Latinx," a gender-inclusive alternative to the masculine Latino and the feminine Latina as promoted by scholars like Ed Morales, Paola Ramos, and Claudia Milian in the early 2000s, but I quickly learned that this variation deviates entirely from the existing structures in the Spanish language and originated instead from Anglo American perspectives. Latine, on the other hand, has a rather ambiguous origin but seems to be a more grassroots, self-titling of the Latin community without the implications of gender. According to some it began online in Puerto Rican online chat rooms; others cite a movement of teens and young adults in Venezuela; and a lot of the popularization (and U.S. understanding) of the term comes from a movement titled *Call me Latine* which was founded by a south Texas native, James Lee, who first wrote a Facebook post to simply introduce his friends to the term (Schmidt). The term "Latine" originates from the fact that while many nouns in Spanish are directly gendered based on the final vowel being either o or a, some end in e which makes it more ambiguous what the gender of the noun is (while it still does indeed have a gender for corresponding words). This concept carried over to the term Latina/o/x and simply created inclusion through the rejection of being defined by one single letter. I am doing my absolute best to

use the most current, inclusive, and respectful language possible and have learned so much regarding not only these cultures but also the way languages are structured and how dialects can alter its meaning. The significance of racial and ethnic identifiers serves as an initial insight into the importance of language. A person can feel either empowered or diminished by the language used to refer to them and the goal of every linguist and English Language Arts (ELA) teacher should be to impart this importance of chosen language onto their students. The goal of this thesis, and of code-meshing, is not the eradication of Standard English (SE) and its teaching, but it is to seek equity and inclusion in the workplace, classroom, and everyday life for all people speaking all dialects.

Background of Black Linguistics

Many speakers of Standard English have a negative perspective towards what is considered Black language or African American Vernacular English (AAVE); they have an understanding that it is an improper, broken, or sloppy deterioration of SE (Smitherman, *Talkin that Talk* 19) . Yet, an array of interdisciplinary scholars covering everything from grammar and communication to history and sociology argue in favor of the merit, structures, and foundations of Black linguistics. According to Geneva Smitherman, AAVE was likely a pidgin language, a simple language, "spoken on a limited basis" to begin with that was spoken between newly enslaved people who had to find a way to communicate in order to work together (Smitherman, *Talkin that Talk* 32). One separation between a pidgin and a creole is the preservation of a native or home language (Smitherman, *Talkin that Talk* 33). These enslaved people likely spoke pidgin to one another while working with people from differing countries of origin but spoke the

language of their respective country to their families or others from their home country. Through the years and generations, these native tongues began to fade, and the pidgin developed in complexity and depth; this led to the transition from a pidgin to a creole as "Plantation Creole" became the language of the enslaved African American. Throughout the development of this pidgin and creole, Black people retain elements of their home languages such as sentence structures, syntax systems, and communicative styles. This is seen even today in examples such as "she coming" or "he working," which show a negation of necessity for the use of "is/are for equative structures and present tense actions"; in other words if an action is taking place at a current date or time, there is no need for the linking verb "are" or any other form of the word "be" (Smitherman, *Talkin that Talk* 23). Further the frequent use of "dat" rather than "that" in modern AAVE is likely linked to the absence of a "th" sound in majority of west African languages (Smitherman, *Talkin that Talk* 20-25). Think about the way certain sounds are pronounced differently such a roll of some "r" sounds in Spanish as well as the sometimes-silent letter "h" and the nasal accents in French. Many English speakers cannot achieve these linguistic features in an effective and authentic way. Similarly, the "th" sound within English was not natural for enslaved people as their language had never contained it before their arrival in the Americas.

With the banning of the transatlantic slave trade in the U.S in 1808 and the ensuing rise of the abolitionist movement came a shift to "de-creolize" the Black dialect (Smitherman, *Talkin that Talk* 33-37).[5] Many Black people at the time viewed an

[5] De-creolize: "the linguistic de-Africanization of Black speech," in an effort to attain mainstream speech. Often used by "house slaves" in the presence of their slave keeper but became more widespread during and after abolition as Black began to "dream of freedom and citizenship- as an American, not an African-

adaptation of their language as the only way to present themselves as real American citizens rather than simply enslaved property, as well as a pathway to becoming more successful in their efforts towards employment and furthered education (Smitherman, *Talkin that Talk* 36). Language differences became even more racialized as economic disparities grew in Black communities. As Smitherman says, "the linguistic role models for working-class Blacks were middle-class, professional Blacks not whites," and that the concept of "talkin white" would only begin with the growth of "the contemporary isolation of the Black working and under classes in the cities. The Black models and speakers of LWC are now living outside the hood" (*Talkin that Talk* 39-40). This rift has ultimately grown into "two separate Black societies, an expanding middle-class group of 'haves' who have do have command of LWC (which is often perceived as 'talking white' these days…) and a very large and troubled group of 'have nots' who do not have command of LWC" (Smitherman, *Talkin that Talk* 39-40).

Discussions of Black linguistics, specifically regarding its validity, legitimacy, and scholarship saw a peak in 1973 when Robert L. Williams coined the term "Ebonics" at a conference on "Language and the Urban Child." Williams went on to expand this term two years later with his book *Ebonics: The True Language of Black Folks* (Smitherman, *Talkin that Talk* 28). Today, Ebonics is used to describe a subset, dialect, or accent of American English, but Williams originally meant for it to be a "subordinate term, covering all the African-European language mixtures developed in the various African-European language contact situations throughout the world." In his own words,

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loom[ing] on the horizon" and saw language assimilation as a path to that freedom and success (Smitherman, *Talkin that Talk* 33-37).

"it includes the various idioms, patois, argots, idiolects, and social dialects of Black people, especially those who have been forced to adapt to colonial circumstance… and refers to the study of language of Black people in all its cultural uniqueness" (Smitherman, *Talkin that Talk* 28-29). In 1983 came another pivotal win for the understanding and portrayal of Black dialect with the publication of *The Color Purple* when Alice Walker became the first African American woman to win a Pulitzer Prize for fiction, with a novel "written almost entirely in Black language" no less (Smitherman, "Education of Black Children" 28). This practice of reclamation and re-creolization is ongoing today in Hip-Hop culture and other examples of Black authorship and creativity.

Court cases in the U.S. show that the journey towards linguistic acceptance in American school systems had progressed in no other aspect than time. Such cases focused on language and the "lack of academic progress and educational underachievement of African American Students in the nation's public-school systems" (Smitherman, "Movin on Up" 187). The Oakland Ebonics Resolution took place twenty-six years ago, and as I am only twenty-two at the time of writing this, all of my experiences with linguistics inside classrooms are after crucial discussions and decisions regarding Black Linguistics such as *Brown*, Oakland, and the NCTE's Student's Right to their Own Language. Despite these advances, I have seen firsthand the disadvantages forced upon dialectically diverse students through my time as a student as well as my time as a preservice teacher.

Jamila Lyiscott raises an important question in her article "Racial Identity and Liberation Literacies in the Classroom" when she says "We out'chea fightin' for Black lives to matter in dese streets, but do Black Lives Matter in our classrooms?" (47). Sadly

the answer to her question is “no” because Black lives, Black literacy, and Black speech do not matter in most American public-school classrooms for one simple reason: Black texts do not matter. “Black textual expressions remain largely absent from classrooms,” and therefore so do Black ideas, thoughts, opinions, and emotions (Lyiscott 49). A crucial part of analyzing any text in a meaningful way involves considering the text’s wider connections to history. Perhaps this is why Black authorship is rare in classrooms as Black history, and its present-day implications, is often undertaught or outlawed (Kimathi). As Paulo Freire and Donaldo Macebo conclude, “reading the word is preceded by reading the world,” (35). Therefore if our connotations, understandings, and definitions of Blackness are skewed so too would be our readings of Black literature. Lyiscott argues that the preconceived notions of Black identities that teachers inevitably carry with them into the classroom are often direct reflections of the “dominant racial ideologies” of our society and time (48). Literature is not the only thing we read in this life. We also read groups of people, individual people, or even actions or attitudes through this personal cultural lens like a text. Lyiscott even brings up this idea of reading Black bodies as text to be the root of some police brutality cases recently: “I wanted to understand the relationship between the realities before me and the spaces of education that I navigate daily. Positioning Black bodies as ‘text,’ I reflected on how Michael Brown was read by Darren Wilson, who described the unarmed teenager as looking demonic (Lyiscott 48-49).” We may carry these readings of different people and events with us throughout our lives, intentionally or otherwise, and teachers and students are no exception to these biases. It can be easy for people of privilege, in whatever form it comes, racial or otherwise, to simply turn a blind eye. Yet, oppression, discrimination,

and prejudice still exist in America. This oppression is not something that people of color can simply turn off. For anyone, especially preservice and active teachers, to be ignorant to this fact and to be further ignorant that those limitations simply cease to exist on school grounds are ill informed and doing a massive disservice to their students of color.[6]

Latine Experiences and Linguistics in the U.S.

The 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was established to end the Mexican-American War and resulted in Mexico seceding nearly half of its land. These newly American lands were populated by Mexican people at the time and the U.S. gave them one year to decide whether or not to remain on their land; with choosing to stay resulting in American citizenship. Many Mexicans did choose to stay rather than uprooting their entire families and lives which resulted in the first major group of people classified as Mexican-Americans or as we would know them today, Latine people. What these people did not know at the time was the falsehood of the treaty's stipulations. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo stipulates that "the culture, language, and religion" of these new citizens would be respected (Sáenz & Morales 9). We see today, just under 200 years later, that those circumstances do not exist in our current society and likely never did. Latine people came, and continue to come, to America under this pretense of freedom, respect, and opportunity; yet these are still false promises.

[6] While controversial and often politicized, critical race theory is necessary for teaching among diverse populations. Some readings to elaborate on the effects of race and racism in modern society are Beverly Daniel Tatum's *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?: And Other Conversations About Race*, Heather McGhee's *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together*, Robin DiAngelo's *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism*, and Ibram X. Kendi's *How to be an Antiracist.* These are just a few examples of antiracist literature and work in tandem with other works in the appendix under the "Further Readings for Teachers and Preservice Teachers" section.

Today, America is home to more than thirty-three and a half million Spanish speakers, and that number only continues to grow (MacNeil, et. al. 90). The immigration of Latine individuals has been continual since the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. While the number, countries of origin, and reasons for immigrating have varied for over a century, the fact that Latine people are joining this country has never wavered. The U.S. economy has created a necessity for the labor from Latine immigrants, often times undocumented, meanwhile the U.S. government has only doubled and tripled down on persecuting these groups. Legislation has culminated to create an inhospitable environment for immigrants, most often Latine immigrants, and a legal landscape that limits the rights of these people while empowering organizations seeking to apprehend, detain, prosecute, and deport the undocumented immigrants in question. American immigration policies have effectively created an inhospitable environment for anyone deemed "not American," in both the legal system as well as within American school systems today.

Within the last thirty years, major shifts in immigration policies have come about. Some argue that the beginning of this shift began in 1994 with California Proposition 187. In their book *U.S. Immigration in the Twenty-First Century: Making Americans, Remaking America*, Louis DeSipio and Rodolfo O de le Garza explain Proposition 187 as, "A state ballot initiative that was later found to be largely unconstitutional and was not implemented. The proposition sought to deny social welfare and education benefits to the unauthorized themselves and to the US-citizen children of the unauthorized" (82). While the proposition was never enacted, the legal approval of something like this caused uproar. Not only did this result in the "largest march and rally in Los Angeles history" at

that time (over 100,000 protestors in total), but students themselves got in on the political movement (Acuña 199). According to Rodolfo Acuña, “that year saw massive walkouts” within school districts across the state (199). Over the next twelve years, marches across the nation persisted; peaking in 2006 with over a million marches in more than half a dozen cities across the nation (Acuña 199). Since 2001 immigrant communities and sympathizers have pursued the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, and while it has still not been passed as of today, in 2012 the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Act was enacted which is at the very least a step in the right direction (Acuña 200-201). According to Acuña, “the current xenophobia [surrounding immigrants] is driven by assumptions rather than education. The fact is that the dreamers are the best educated advocates for immigration reform that the immigrant community has had” (207).

Latine heritage is not a singular cultural background or ethnicity but a cumulative term regarding dozens of countries in Central America, South America, and islands in the Gulf of Mexico. Through immigration, Latine communities, neighborhoods, and even cities have grown all across the U.S. and with these population shifts came cultural and linguistic shifts as well. Latine populations in the United States reached just over sixty-two million in the year 2020, a twenty-three percent growth rate since the last census done in 2010 (Krogstad & Noe-Bustamante). Latine-influenced varieties of English began to emerge, especially in urban areas such as southern California, New York, and southern Florida. Each of these regions has developed its own dialect: California and other parts of the American southwest like Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico, and even Texas have Chicano English originating from Mexico; New York has a high population

of Puerto Rican immigrants and therefore has its own signature dialect of Puerto Rican English; and southern Florida has a high population of Cuban immigrants leading to Cuban English. Some of these dialects are just as indicative of stateside origins as they are indicative of ancestral country of origin. Controversy still surrounds Spanish linguistics whether that means Spanish-English bilingualism or Spanish/Latine influenced dialects of English. Some conservative or traditionalist Americans take a stance towards "English First," policies. The policies, while parading under the guise of U.S. nationalism are "negative attitudes [which] find their focus in attacks on minority languages, which are all too obviously badges of ethnicity" (MacNeil, et. al. 103). In other words, these linguistic patriots only seem to find a problem with deviation from widespread English if they are sourced in or indicative of ethnic background. The issue behind "English First" ideology is that it boils down to the argument that the only right American English is white American English.

There are three differing and distinct positions which Latine individuals inhabit in the American Secondary Classrooms and all three come with challenges: teachers, English as a second language (ESL) students, and English proficient/ fluent students. A space for Latine people in the field of education has not always been there, or at least has varied in size throughout the years. Much of the "English First" ideology also embraces the ideas of English monolingualism within American classrooms. The only state to put this thinking into legislation is Arizona. As of 2000 with Arizona Proposition 203, the only language that is allowed to be used in American classrooms, outside of the second-language classroom, is standard American English which posed an issue for the Arizona teaching community. Following Proclamation 203 came statewide legislation that

required all teachers of ELA and ESL to be "fully and proficiently fluent in English" and employs inspectors throughout the state to "ensure that fluency" while there were, and are, still "no definitions of accent or grammar or even of the concept of fluency" (Lippi-Green 274). With Arizona's population being composed of over a quarter Latine citizens and the state's close physical proximity to the Mexican-American border, many teachers in the region are bilingual English-Spanish speakers and some even learned English as a second language to Spanish. Hundreds of teachers' careers and livelihoods now rested in the precarious hands of "inspectors," with no real, clear guidelines for their positions (Lippi-Green 271-274).

Despite the basis of these English Only legislative proposals and creation of segregated ESL-only classrooms being for the benefit of English language learners, "little to no attention has been given to the consequences of linguistic isolation" (Lippi-Green 271). In fact, these structured English learning programs have the direct opposite effect. Humans learn everything, including language, first and foremost through observation; it is how we learn our native language in any culture. Keeping English language learners apart from native English speakers only prohibits a student's proficiency in both colloquial and academic English by offering them no direct, essential, interaction and observation of their English fluent peers (Lippi-Green 271). Students who struggle in these closed, essentially segregated, environments are often funneled, unjustly, into special education classrooms. Having an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) in American K-12 schooling is something that can be "outgrown" in some cases, but it is never erased from students' records entirely. Theoretically, if a student has a speech impediment, cognitive inhibition, or social issue in the third grade, any teacher all the

way through to high school graduation would be aware of that fact and may then form a negative connotation of the student both as a pupil and as an individual before even meeting them. This incorrect placement in a special education classroom can therefore not only overcrowd those classrooms and split special education teachers in too many directions, but it also can add more foundation for negative prejudice on these students' academic resume. Even students who are native English speakers or learned English at a young age and therefore never took part in a formal ESL program in school but maintain an accent or even just a connection to their Latine culture and roots face academic prejudice. This discrimination goes beyond the individual scale from student to student but is seen clearly on a wide scale from school to school, city to city, and state to state as well. The scope of this paper is more focused on these latter students, as my knowledge, comprehension, and research does not center around language acquisition. I will expand on the contemporary complexities surrounding varying dialects as well as explore classroom challenges and solutions in ways to create an equitable classroom experience for students of a wide variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds in the chapters that follow.

LINGUISTS, MONOLINGUALISM, AND PEDAGOGY OPTIONS

Understanding the roots of a specific dialect and therefore the structures and expectations within it can greatly affect one's perspective towards said dialect. This understanding can help to validate the dialect to someone who may have had issue finding said validity prior to knowing its history. The issue of denying the current structures that require students to be proficient in multiple dialects—their own home language and the expectation for the classroom and other professional settings—though is separate entirely. Many feel as Stanley Fish did that while students have a right to their own language in different settings, they should be willing and enthusiastic to learn a second language/dialect (Young, "Should Writers Use They Own English?" 111). As Vershawn Ashanti Young rebuts though, "It is further disingenuous of Fish to ask: 'Who could object to learning a second language?' What he really mean by this rhetorical question is that the 'multiculturals' should be thrilled to leave their own dialect and learn another one, the one he promote" (Young, "Should Writers Use They Own English," 111). Essentially, no one is asking students of Anglo-American backgrounds to adjust their language and identity in order to be seen as professional, educated, and employable, so why is it acceptable to ask that of ethnically diverse students? It isn't and that only scratches the surface of society solely validating monolingualism. In this section, I will explore these issues of monolingualism along with the differences of coded language definitions as defined by educators versus linguists and the options we have to include linguistic diversity in pedagogy.

Perspectives of a Linguist Versus a Teacher

One would think that the practices instilled into the language classroom would be based in recent, relevant research done by professional scholars of linguistics, but that point does not ring true. There is a wide difference in the terms code-switching and code-meshing in linguistic studies versus in educational application. When comparing these identical terms when defined by linguists versus when defined by educators, the reasons that classroom code-switching is often ineffective becomes apparent. In linguistic studies, code-switching is categorized into four base distinctions: intersentential code-switching, intrasentential code-switching, situational code-switching, and metaphoric code-switching, all of which I will define within this section (Barrett 24-31). Educators though are often referring to a singular form of code-switching, situational. As the name implies, situational code-switching is less focused on a speaker using language to convey a certain message but instead is centered on ensuring language is correct for the situation, dictated by factors such as location and audience a speaker finds themselves in. This singular lens of what code-switching is within education, along with its discovered negative repercussions, is a large part of why code-switching is no longer a progressive practice in the ELA classroom and why many education scholars are turning away from the ideology.

Each of the four distinctions of code-switching has its own definition that makes unique. Intersentential code-switching is a switch in linguistic use from one sentence to another. Intrasentential code-switching is a linguistic shift between different dialects within a singular sentence. Situational code-switching is when speakers choose, either consciously or subconsciously, to change the dialect they are using based on a specific

social situation . Lastly, metaphorical code-switching is when a speaker is "using two languages in the same context/situation to exploit the context/meaning associated with each language" (Barrett 29-31). The first relates to the separation and timing of the linguistic shifts whereas the former two showcase the reasoning or need behind the shift. Linguists are often referring to intrasentential and metaphorical code-switching "thus, when linguists talk about code-switching, they are almost always talking about alterations between two language varieties in a single context, such as a single conversation or in a single text" (Barrett 30). For linguists, situational code-switching is less of a focus because it crosses into the field of sociology; the pressure to change dialects felt by those who code-switch situationally is often rooted in interpersonal and societal frameworks such as ideas about professionalism, implications of race in social situations, and gender expectations or roles. The concept behind metaphorical switching is that "one might switch into a new language to express specific emotions or to draw links between the topic of the conversation and the language typically associated with that topic" (Barrett 29). This idea that a speaker would link concepts, ideas, and emotions to a particular language or dialect is interesting because it goes beyond the typical idea that people are code-switching intrasententially because they do not know how to present their ideas in one language. It instead shows that speakers may think certain dialects or languages simply express these concepts in a better, fuller way. One such instance is the term "comunidad" often used by Spanish-speaking Latine people. "Comunidad" goes beyond the ideas of community which we have in the standard English language and instead combines the root words "común-" and "-unidad," to describe common and unity respectively. While it is similar to the term community as we know it in the standard

English language, “communidad” creates more of a oneness based on similarities throughout culture and practices where the American sense of community is often related to setting or outwardly expressed/noted factors like gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity. Yes, “comunidad” could be used interchangeably with the term community in many ways but community fails to acknowledge the shared traditions and values regardless of location and distance from one another as well as regardless of external forces like color, religion, and gender (Mize & Delgado 19-20).

The last form of code-switching as identified by linguistics that we will be looking at is not even a code switch at all, it is a code shift. Code-shifting is different from code-switching because those who speak multiple languages or dialects and code-switch do exactly that, they switch back and forth between their dialects. Code-shifting on the other hand is a singular, permanent activity that involves a speaker shifting from one language to another which they then go on to use for the rest of their lives (or significant periods of time). Think, for example, about someone who immigrates from one country to another, some may choose to shift into the native language of their country permanently (Barrett 31). My own grandmother did exactly that when moving from France to America in 1958 and now only uses French when speaking to family back in Europe because they understand either no or very little English. Because America does not have an established official language, though many people believe that it is English, there are many communities that speak mostly, or solely, other languages, most commonly Spanish. Many American immigrants therefore do not code-shift and instead continue to code-switch back and forth for a variety of reasons throughout their lives.

Issues of Single or Mono Linguistics

At its core, linguistics and code-switching, in whatever structure it takes or for whatever reason, is complicated. Some people see it as something far more simple than it is and fail to consider the interdisciplinary nature of linguistics as it begins to branch into other areas like sociology, history, and psychology. In the first chapter, I discuss "English First," and while this particular ideology regarding language does likely have some white supremacist and classist roots, many people still believe in the idea of mandating code-shifting when immigrating to a new country. Those who are merely ignorant in the basis for their language discrimination, rather than being based in race or ethnic superiority complexes, may ask themselves why this idea of a single language, also known as monolinguistics, is a problem? Certainly, learning a language is difficult but it is doable and many immigrant families in America may sustain their native language, at least at some level, for several generations after initially immigrating. It is because there are several reasons why monolinguistics are detrimental to not only people on an individual level, but also on a larger scale such as family structure and the wider community at hand.

As established through metaphorical code-switching, some languages or dialects may be able to present and embody different ideas, concepts, or topics in ways that other languages or dialects cannot. In *Other People's English: Code-Meshing, Code-Switching, and African American Literacy*, Rusty Barrett and other scholars say that the form of language we choose can "provide information about audience, or addressee, including social status, levels of intimacy, or even how we feel about the person" (Barrett, et. al. 24). This means that not only does our language choices hold the power to allow us to

communicate concepts better, but it also allows us to communicate our personalities, position in the conversation, and emotions better. This distinction between languages or dialects is certainly a learned or observed behavior, but it is not one that needs to be formally taught. Scholars also found that "children adjusted their speech depending on the topic they were discussing, the person to whom they were talking to and the reason they were speaking," and many "Black students from a young age will use SE when discussing images or content but will use their native dialect when describing relationships or emotion" (Barrett, et. al. 25-26). With these habits being observed in students of color as early as kindergarten it begs the question of whether children have already managed to pick up on societal pressure regarding language or if it is simply more natural for them to discuss topics they learned about in one dialect through that same dialect? According to scholars such as Barrett, it was often more theoretical concepts like relationships or emotions that children spoke of if their home dialects whereas more concrete topics like content and images were spoken in SE. Perhaps, either through classroom instruction, children's television programs (often spoken in SE), or even through an influential adult's own code switching when discussing these topics, young dialect speakers have realized from an early age the impact that dialect has on the content of a conversation. The problem here comes when students feel that one dialect or another is devalued in a certain content or subject area. Very few spaces in general academia are open, safe spaces for dialect variation. Therefore many students feel their ideas or input regarding academic ideas is regarded by the way they convey these ideas through their dialect (Young, et. al. 3).

In reality, "for people who speak more than one language variety on a regular basis, the range of possible context meanings that can be expressed is so much broacher compared to monolinguals" (Barrett, et. al. 22). So speakers of multiple languages or dialects have, quite literally, a wider and more expressive access to vocabulary and subtext through their dialects yet still feel, through societal pressures and standards, that their mix of dialects, or chosen singular underappreciated dialect, makes their messages less credible. Leading scholar in Black Linguistics, Geneva Smitherman even goes as far as saying, "the educational heart of darkness is the English course [with its] emphasis on correctness at the expense of a fluid, knowledgeable command of our mother tongue" (*Language Diversity* 7-8). Also, Elaine Richardson, notes that "there are many Englishes and those who are already have skills in more than one language are those who are more prepared to enter a global market than those who are confined to a single variety of single language" (49).

A final issue with monolingualism to note is the issues regarding societal and nationalistic discrimination. Smitherman reflects in her retrospective on the "Students' Right to Their Own Language" that " [a] nation proud of its diverse heritage and its cultural and racial variety will preserve its heritage of dialects," and our nation claims to be a melting pot for all regardless of culture, class, or race(21). Much of today's controversy against code-switching in favor of a more progressive pedagogical standpoint raises the question or what the purpose of that 'melting pot' is. Are we as American Citizens supposed to create a robust soup where we each bring something unique and different to offer to the table, or are we all just supposed to swirl together and be overcome by, and drown in, the majority of the pot's contents, creating a homogeneous,

single noted dish? The facts and data to support the acceptance of bi- and multi-dialecticism/lingualism exist and those who continue to back “monolingualism do so because they view English as the carrier of cultural and economic capital,” (Richardson 49).

Dialect Perspectives in Pedagogy

Code-switching in pedagogy regards what linguists know as situational and intersentential code-switching. Within a classroom, differing dialects are not often intended to exist within the same sentence; that is if undervalued dialects are allowed to exist at all within a classroom or school. The idea of a separation between “home language,” and “school/work language,” arises within many American classrooms as our national and state mandated standards are centered, for the most part, on the comprehension and usage of only SE so therefore that should be the only dialect present in classrooms. Code-switching is effective though. In nearly every study done regarding code-switching in a middle or high school classroom, there are increases in standardized test scores and decreases in the presence of dialect usage in student writing samples. The increase in standardized test scores is only that of a marginal, fractional increase at best and Young raises the question whether this decrease in dialect, often ethnicity or racially founded, is even an improvement at all (Young, et. al. *Other People’s English*, 3). Even if the ‘benefits’ of code switching were substantial in any way, there remain three major issues with code-switching. Code-switching has a goal of bidialectism, a focus on contrast analysis, and a high cost to the students’ psyche. Bidialectism and contrast analysis are crucial to code-switching because they are essentially the foundation holding up code switching; one being the end goal and the other being the means taken to reach

that goal. Contrast analysis is a pedagogical vantage point that allows teachers to teach students about dialects and code-switching by "highlighting the contrasts between the vernacular and non-standard variety and the standard or mainstream variety to accelerate the process of second dialect/language learning" (Young, et. al, *Other People's English* 2). Bidialectism is the goal of code-switching because it seeks to teach students to use Standard English as a new, second dialect to be used in 'appropriate,' scenarios which are often academic and professional in nature. Out of context these two goals and practices may seem somewhat harmless but given the circumstances, and the power dynamics involved in student-teacher interactions and dynamics, it can have a steep impact on a students' identity and psychological wellbeing.

There are three major 'costs' to the student, according to Young: Cost 1: Acting White, Cost 2: Increased Negative Attitudes Toward African American English, and Cost 3: Linguistic Confusion (*Other People's English* 67-73). Young and other scholars . define "acting white" on a wider societal scale as, "the problem African Americans face in order to integrate into the mainstream… African Americans have to negotiate and sometimes give up their Blackness and take on a racial burden, a performance that mimics what is expected from whites" (Young, et. al. 68). Regarding ELA, "acting white" is representative of how speakers feel they must lose their voice and identity and instead speak a certain way, the "white" way, for any setting or audience other than their own home cultural or racial groups. This standard, "white" variation of English is spoken with "no accent (regional, racial, or otherwise) by someone with an above average or superior education who pays close attention to their speech and is therefore 'easily understood by all'" (Lippi-Green 60). For students of other racial, ethnic, and cultural

backgrounds than that of many Anglo Americans, this means forming a new identity for school or other professional settings that is far removed from their typical identity. Even with this effort and awareness of audience, attaining the "above average or superior education" Lippi-Green mentions is sometimes impossible for minority students given the large socioeconomic disparities between racial categories (60). One classroom teacher analyzed that their students uses a vibrant and wide range of discourses when speaking amongst one another or freely within a class discussion whereas those same students "lacked conviction and force" within their writings or essays on the same topics. The force and focus on ensuring the "use of a language without any personal engagement, even for temporary utilitarian and pragmatic reasons, is to mimic not to speak" (Young, et. al. 68) How can we expect our students to have their own voice in a language or dialect that is not even their own? As explored in the descriptions of metaphorical code-switching, it is known that certain languages or dialects are able to present differing contexts and emotions; that kind of mastery of language only comes from someone who is either a native speaker of that language or has had multiple, different, close exposures to it throughout their lives. It is of no surprise that students lack mastery in a dialect that may only ever exist to them within the confines of a single classroom and not elsewhere in their lives.

The second cost, "Increased Negative Attitudes Toward African American English," is easily broadened and expanded to increased negative attitudes towards any undervalued dialect. The issue ensues when one realizes that this negative reaction stretches not only to the language itself but to any and all of its speakers. According to Richardson in *Language Diversity in the Classroom: From Intention to Practice*,

"research suggests that one's attitudes toward a language or language variety affects one's attitude toward entire groups of people associated with that language or language variety" (42). This creates clear hostility within communities and promotes the continuation of negative stereotypes regarding that community. Young said in a 2014 interview regarding dialects, "but don't nobody's language, dialect, or style make them vulnerable to prejudice. It's ATTITUDES…Black English don't make it own self oppressed" (Young 2014). In this quote, Young notes that regardless of a speakers' chosen dialect a basis for judgement and oppression is not established as there is nothing inherently wrong or "vulnerable" about a particular dialect.

Lastly, the third cost is "Linguistic Confusion," as rooted in the methodology of contrastive analysis. Contrastive analysis focuses on the differences between dialect and the specific, finite "mistakes" in the undervalued dialect, and this creates a resentment for the "wrong" way that students learned how to speak which can therefore lead to depression in some students and disconnect from communal identities in others. So, all in all, code-switching pedagogy does work. It produces marginal results that will likely have no impact on the student in the long term of a school district in the broader scheme of things and offers students a new way to communicate in a less personal, persuasive way, confusion regarding their language identity, and resentment for the linguistic community they come from. While we do see this small progress in students, pairing it alongside the new, detrimental, long term emotional and social impact it has on their linguistic ideology, the decision that code-switching needs either significant overhaul or to be abandoned seems clear.

Luckily, there is another option for linguistic pedagogy, code-meshing. Code meshing is similar to metaphorical and intrasentential dialect switching. This pedagogical idea behind dialect diversity "presents an alternative vision of language to teachers, one that offers the 'disempowered' a more egalitarian path into Standard English, a route that integrates academic English with their own dialects and that simultaneously seeks to end discrimination" (Young, et. al. 56). Rather than focusing on the contrasts between these dialects, code-meshing seeks to establish the relationships and similarities between differencing dialects like Black English and SE, Chicano English and SE, or even Black English and Chicano English which hold similarities giving the similar economic experiences of former generations within those racial groups in America. The goal of any public-school English Language Arts classroom is to ensure that students are capable of passing, and exceeding, state and national testing and progress checkpoints. While it would be ideal to not be required to exist under these constraints, that is simply what we as educators must do at this time but that does not mean we should have our students entirely abandon any other linguistic forms in their lives. The goal of code-meshing is still some level of bidialectism, but through a lens that acknowledges the strengths and abilities found in typically undervalued dialects. In the next, and final, chapter, I will discuss how to apply code-meshing to the public-school ELA classroom, focusing on the secondary levels, the benefits of code-meshing, the dispositions required for teaching in a modern classroom, and ways to reimagine assessment within one's classroom.

TEACHERS, TESTING, AND CLASSROOM ASSESSMENTS

With a grasp of who our students are and where they come from, along with an understanding of what is wrong with the current structure of linguistic education, the next question is how do we begin to fix the ELA classroom? Students are affected, for better or worse, by the pedagogical styles of their educators. These choices educators make must be thought through and well informed because in the long term it can affect not only a student's relationship to their own personal linguistic identity but also their relationship with and understanding of ELA entirely. While a long-term goal of reassessing the structure of standardized testing and education is ideal, our position as teachers today and tomorrow are just as important to the students in our classroom. In this section, I will look at what it takes to be a modern teacher, how to apply code-meshing into pedagogy, and how to take control of assessment criteria within one's classroom walls to offer students a place of self-expression.

The Teachers We Should Strive to Be

Teaching has never been an easy job and likely never will be. An educator is responsible for, at most, the entire next generation, and at least, one child's feelings about themselves and their academic abilities. One educator, Erin McCrossan Cassar, writes, "teachers of English have an obligation to ensure that all students are able to meet city and state standards. If traditional methods of teaching grammar aren't working, then teachers have an obligation to seek out new ways to meet their students' needs" (Young-Rivera 71). Teaching comes with great power but, of course, with great responsibility. As we observed with the costs of code-switching, our decision to teach a certain topic or through a certain methodology can (and will be) very influential on a student's life,

potentially even affecting their perception of our entire field of study. ELA teaching has an enhanced impact on students, and therefore greater potential to do long term self-image damage, due to the close personal relationship one's spoken and written language has to their identity. Barrett argues that "disrespect for a person's dialect is disrespect for that person," and that practices "that exclude undervalued dialects from the formal aspects of school curricula and testing are destined to make children feel uncomfortable and unwelcome in academic environments," (51).

In order to best combat this linguistic problem, teachers must have two things: adequate additional training and a genuine understanding of their unique position within the classroom. Smitherman backs the need for additional training, particularly in linguistic identities when she says, "teachers must have the experiences and training that will enable them to respect diversity and uphold the rights of students in their own language" ("Student's Rights Retrospective" 21). Some topics are tense and confusing to navigate, especially with consideration for the power and age dynamics within a classroom, but that is often due to the relationships between said topics and our students' identities. Rosina Lippi-Green highlights this when saying, "In a classroom where societal racism is discussed and confronted, the performance of race and ethnicity can become emotionally extreme. In such situation, there is more than factual knowledge at stake, there is also the individual's sense and understanding of self," (267). There will be times in one's classroom when their students are the experts. Given an educator's own background, some students will have different and insightful perspectives related to differing racial and ethnic identities, similarly, ESL students will have an understanding of their native language and how it is either similar or different from English that a

teacher is likely not to have. Teaching is not always comfortable; it can be confusing as an educator to attempt to tackle some of life's big questions. Teaching students who speak differing or additional dialects and languages from what you speak can be uncomfortable, especially if you are an outsider of their cultural groups, but as Lippi-Green notes, "discomfort is not oppression" (265). It is the acknowledgement of differences and how they can build rather than divide that creates environments for diverse and authentic student inclusion within the lesson plan. This is the type of classroom environment and teaching that all educators should strive for, where students feel that they have an equal stake in their learning. Overall, the most important qualities of a teacher are a lack of prejudice, consciousness of own internal or former biases, and awareness of the impact that one's words can make on young people. There is no singular type, look, or approach of all good teachers. If one has the desire, drive, and knowledge to be a teacher they should be able to follow that aspiration by fulfilling a teacher training program.

Code-Meshing in Coursework

One opposition against code-meshing pedagogy is that we are putting students at a heightened disadvantage by not teaching them Standard English because it is the language of wider communication in the United States and many areas of the global economy. But, like all things, language trends and patterns change over time. Young states that, "contrary to popular beliefs about the so-called proper way that we should write and speak, few people, if any, exclusively adhere to the narrow rules of Standard English when communicating, even in professional, public, or formal settings," (Young, et al 77). Much of this may have to do with the growth in electronic communication,

specifically social media, because it has managed to create a space in the professional sphere that reaches target audiences immediately which has led to the development of a more conversational tone social media. One specific example is politicians' use of Twitter. Many politicians, often regardless of party, have begun using some form of slang or dialect in portions, if not the majority, of their online communication. Barak Obama specifically has been quoted on many occasions using dialect throughout his presidential term. Two examples of this were his January 2009 encounter at Ben's Chili Bowl where he responded to a cashier offering him his change with, "Nah, we straight," and his March 18, 2008, speech at the Constitution Center which reflects elements of traditional Black jeremiads (Alim & Smitherman 7, 83-86).[7] Like the former Commander-in-Chief, there are many scholars in either linguistics or English who publish works using meshed dialects. Some of those scholars include Geneva Smitherman, Victor Villanueva, and Vershawn Ashanti Young, as well as Kermit Campbell, John Rickford, Aja Martinez, and Carmen Fought.

Another resistance against code-meshing is the idea that one must master the rules of something, in this case grammar, before they can begin toying with the application of those rules. As Young suggests, these are "views that require writers from diverse language and dialect groups to leave their lives on the margins as they gain mastery of a dominating discourse, and then and only then can they represent themselves in a narrative argument" (Young, et. al. 81). While I am only able to speak for myself, I do not know of any quality, successful teacher who would want their student to enter their classroom

[7] Black jeremiads are a rhetoric of Black protest which express dissatisfaction with societal structures, often creating a call for personal and societal change.

without the knowledge their life experiences have offered them. Furthermore, this concept is rooted in the idea that a classroom has to be 'all or nothing' for a single dialect. While code-switching has managed to take that turn in the pedagogical sense, the entire "goal of code-meshing is to maximize (not minimize) rhetorical effectiveness," and the best way to have the most efficient speech is to be aware of the context you are speaking in, the tone and message you are trying to convey, and how to use words to express those existing conditions and goals (Young, et. al. 81). What is to say that undervalued language is not as effective as its standards counterpart? In fact, researchers have reported that "students' arguments in favor of using SE in work settings seemed to be driven more by a perception of negative judgments of AAVE [or any undervalued English] by mainstream society than by reasons such as clear communication or professional effectiveness" (Young, et. al. 56). The goal of code-meshing, and my goal, is not the eradication of SE and the teaching of SE, but it is seeking an equal playing field in the workplace, the classroom, and everyday life for all dialects. Standard English is not inherently bad; it only gains negativity when it is thought to be the only dialect of value. Therefore the goal of any successful code-meshing classroom is one that embraces all dialects, including but absolutely not limited to SE, while teaching students how to navigate their power over these dialects and how to use them in the most efficient way. We are teachers, and we decide how to teach and assess within our classrooms. As such, we should always keep our teaching practices focused on establishing diversity and acceptance within our classrooms. The overarching goals of diversity, acceptance, and community can be addressed regardless of the individual standards or themes in a

specific lesson or unit. The goal of language is to powerfully convey thoughts and ideas, but the goal of the language classroom has been proper, complete sentences for too long.

Much of teaching is orienting yourself with what your students know and then building your lessons on top of that starting point in order to offer students new content with minimal remediation. This practice is called scaffolding and it allows teachers to understand if their students have been prepared for certain lessons and topics as much as teachers expect/hope. This is where pretests originate from, they are used to gauge student comprehension before a lesson has been taught. For example, we cannot teach a student how ethos, pathos, and logos can impact the efficiency of an argument if they are unfamiliar with what ethos, pathos, and logos are. Further, we cannot teach them those terms if they are unaware of what figurative language as a whole is. Code-meshing pedagogy practices are scary for educators because they are new. The ideology behind code-meshing is important and seems like something we as teachers should implement as soon as possible to benefit our student's self-image, yet we must remember to scaffold learning not only for our students but also for ourselves. One scholar and researcher who has experimented with different ways to effectively teach code meshing is Y'Shanda Young Rivera.

In *Other People's English*, Young-Rivera emphasizes the importance of scaffolding to introduce code-meshing into classroom practices gradually. She offers a detailed narrative of an experimental lesson she got to teach where she was given thirty minutes a day (for one school week) with two separate class blocks taught by the same teacher. She begins both classes off with a pre-survey to understand if students have any familiarity with code-switching, code-meshing, or even dialects. The two class blocks

were different in many ways. One class was composed of eight graders all having some level of proficiency in English. This class was able to establish a working definition of code-meshing as “when we see the merging of ‘non-words,’ and words,” (Young-Rivera 94-112). While a good starting point, this definition holds onto the binary of standard versus nonstandard dialects; this allowed Young-Rivera to find a first step for her scaffolding. The other class was a mix of fourth and fifth graders, many of whom had very limited control of the English language as they were recent ESL students. This created an initial barrier for Young-Rivera as she is not fluent in Spanish. While this led to a slower start with the fourth/fifth grade group, the students seemed eager to receive her instruction. During her next lesson, Young-Rivera introduced the eighth graders to “a guessing game where students attempt to correctly match the faces of well-known celebrities with their code-meshed quotes,” which she entitled “Who Said What?” (98). This created an opportunity for the class to acknowledge “that we all have preconceived notions about what words we expect someone to use and how we expect them to sound, simply because of how a person looks,” (Young-Rivera 101). Throughout the lesson, Young-Rivera is repeating and maintaining that no dialect is better or worse than another while also pointing out to students that “like any other prejudice, dialect prejudice hurts. It’s unfair and it’s based on ignorance” (102). Many of these eight graders became excited by this new linguistic freedom Young-Rivera was offering them and she found that “some of them were deliberately using their dialect speech patterns, just because they could,” which is something many of them have never experienced inside the walls of a classroom before (111). While the eighth-grade group was grasping the concepts of code-

meshing through these lessons and assignments Young-Rivera was conducting, the same approach proved less effective with the other class period.

Her fourth/fifth grade bilingual class was struggling to grasp the idea of code meshing but Young-Rivera agreed with Cassar, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, that it was her duty and obligation to find a way to reach these students. And, instead of getting frustrated or giving up, Young-Rivera merely kept the class debate and discussion focused on "the song and how the author felt free and excited and wanted to express those feelings through the song, even if the wording wasn't what was considered 'proper' English" (Young-Rivera 100). To reach her students, Young-Rivera did a bit of research in the language all of her fourth/fifth students spoke: Spanish. She found that dialect prejudice existed in Spanish as well and found a few words that had several translations; for instance, the word "truck" being either pronounced as "troka" or "camioneta;" also, "light bulb" being pronounced as both "foco" and "bombilla." The students quickly understood when "they made remarks like, 'that's what the people from the hills say,' and 'that's the book way of saying it" (Young-Rivera 104). Just to drive the point home though, she created a lovely analogy for dialect and dialect choice using cups. She called her students up to each select the cup of their choice (the options being a Styrofoam cup, a Thermo cup, a teacup, and an orange cup); unsurprisingly, none of the students stated they had a preference for the Styrofoam cup while the majority chose the Thermo, then the orange cup, then the teacup. With all of the students standing in separate corners of the room which represented their cup choice, Young-Rivera explains:

> I then asked a series of questions, such as if they were at the park or having a party at school or had lots of people coming over to their house, which cup would

> they use? Every child chose the Styrofoam. Then I asked who in the class had never before used a Styrofoam cup. Everyone in the class had. Next I asked, 'If a Styrofoam cup has so many uses, is the most practical, and everyone has used it, why had no one chosen it when they were given a choice? After much discussion, we deduced that although it was practical and useful in a lot of situations, no one chose it because it wasn't as attractive as the other cups. Using that as an analogy, I explained how for some people the dialect they speak is like that Styrofoam cup: overlooked, undervalued, and underestimated, but when you really look into it, has so much to offer. (Young-Rivera 104-105)

This analogy seemed to relate to the students and Young-Rivera stated that she was there to teach students something else. She was going to teach them that they could use any cup in any situation, it still served the same purpose, much like dialects may be different or unexpected in some situations it still serves its purpose of communication. From there, she was able to establish the definition of code-meshing as "code-meshing doesn't want you to feel like you can only talk or speak a certain way when you're in a certain place. Code-meshing wants you to be able to mesh different dialects; to use them both, for the best form of communicating" with the fourth/fifth grade class (Young-Rivera 105). On the post-surveys following her lesson, Young-Rivera found that some students were already comfortable enough with the topic to answer the open-ended questions of the survey with code-meshed written responses. Young-Rivera came out of the lesson feeling that she had "tapped into hidden potential within students who struggle because of dialect differences," while encouraging self-expression, comfort within a classroom, and feelings of empowerment in both linguistics and the students' wider sense of self (Young-Rivera

111). Is that not what all teachers want for their students? We desire to unlock the potential of every and all students. Code-meshing is one way to begin allowing these students to express themselves and show their true potential. These exercises Young-Rivera details, and many others being created amongst the teaching community, are the first ways we can begin plugging these ideas into our classrooms and prompting discussions which enable our students to showcase their linguistic prowess.

Reassessing Classroom Assessment

Educators have an obligation to not only our communities and students but also to the guardians who trust us to educate and uplift their children, even if that obligation is challenging at times. Lessons should not always end at the door to our classrooms and neither should our position as student advocates. We must be willing to advocate for our students and the diverse linguistic features they present both inside and outside of our classroom. One way we can begin to accomplish education in tandem with encouragement is to begin shifting our ideas regarding classroom assessment, both summative and formative.[8] The stipulations and structure of standardization is heavily present in the secondary American classroom, and there is very little each of us can do on an individual level, but that lack of power we have over the situation does not, or should not, impact the ways we find to encourage and include a variety of student work. Yes, standardization is prevalent, and we must prepare our students for the set benchmarks, but we have the power to teach things beyond standardized expectations in our

[8] Summative Assessments are large, encompassing assignments at the end of a lesson designed to showcase all of the learning a student has done in a unit and what they are now able to accomplish.
Formative Assessments are small assignments administered throughout a unit or lesson to monitor progress and ensure that students are keeping pace with a teacher's learning expectations.

classroom. Within one's classroom, very little standardization exists; yes, for many classes there is an end of term or year standardized test such as the Mississippi tenth grade English II test, Advanced Placement exams, and college entrance exams like the ACT or SAT However, within our classroom walls, teachers have a lot of control. We have the freedom to teach our students how language can be used as a powerful tool that students can utilize and manipulate to their advantage.

I am not advocating for the dissolve of grammar lessons in the classroom, but I do advocate for a variety of diverse assignments that seek to help students master multiple, different aspects of language. For example, if I have assigned my students a persuasive essay on a topic relevant to them (e.g. school dress codes), there is really no need for those papers to be written in SE for them to be written with proficient or advanced persuasion through writing. Such instruction also allows the student to really show their mastery of the particular linguistic tactic/device. If a student is attempting to create or present a new linguistic idea, it will be even more confusing for them to do so in a dialect not their own and will likely produce a product that is an ill representation of the core outcome goal of the lesson or assignment and the student's understanding of it. "Standard English is larger, more expansive than most understand, and will grow even more through code-meshing" (Young, et. al. 82). Code-meshing seeks to utilize all of the linguistic and rhetorical options found in both speech and writing, therefore making us, and our students, better communicators. The formulaic nature of sentence structure, phrase type, verb tense, and opposition to contractions does nothing more than restrict the language of many of our students. It is not the placement of a comma, or the placement of the subject of a sentence which presents the message of a student's speaking and writing;

it is their command over their own voice and language and the conviction behind the message they are trying to portray. It is just as much our job as teachers to educate our students in regard to the expectations of certain formats, audiences, and settings for writing as it is to create confident, powerful communicators.

Conclusion

English language arts is the study of reading, speaking, writing, and language structure. Speaking and writing require a student to produce their own content rooted in what they understand about language and have read for a particular class. Creation of such content should seek, in part, originality, and we cannot expect diversity in what our students produce if we do not accept the diversity that they enter our classrooms with. Pedagogical code-switching asks students to leave their linguistic identities at the door if they vary from the accepted, monolinguistic standard English. Code-meshing asks our students to take the language they live with and the language they learn and combined them into something new, individual, and reflective of themselves. Allowing students exploration and validation through their home language will better establish in them the main concepts of what ELA should be. English language arts should center around giving a writer or speaker the skills to clearly convey their ideas or arguments with conviction and evidence but has been too long focused on the impossibility of perfection according to SE linguistic guidelines. With an understanding of our students and code-meshing as a way to embrace those students and their backgrounds, ELA can once again be a subject used to create powerful, effective communicators rather than forcing a student into conformation of arbitrary language rules.

While racial and cultural discussions are issues of human rights and humanity in general, they have become more and more politicized throughout the years. With the detainment of Latine immigrants in prison like facilities along our southern border and consistent instances of racially fueled police brutality giving rise to the Black Lives Matter movement, race politics are at the forefront of many political discussions of today. My goal of this thesis project is to state the facts of minority existence in American and how those socioeconomic factors have seeped into the public secondary classroom throughout America. I felt that the best way to create a basis for that argument and belief was to do so on a historical basis as to keep current emotions and politics distanced from the facts I am attempting to present. Further, being a public-school educator comes with this mythical expectation that you must be an impartial, wise role model for all of your students regardless of the situation.

This thesis is intended to serve as a launching point for my pedagogical framework and to better prepare me for the student body I will soon be teaching. As such, I feel it has gone above and beyond expectations. Not only do I now have a firm grasp of my specific research question, but I now also know how to tap into the vast network of educator conducted research which will help me going forward as a teacher. In the future, I hope to get the opportunity to have enough control over, and autonomy of, my classroom to where I am able to teach diverse and code-meshed texts, allow my students to analyze their own dialects, and explore writing in meshed dialects. I feel this research project has given me the footing I need to not only be the teacher that my future students deserve but also to be an active member of the network of educational research.

APPENDIX

Readings for Teachers and Preservice Teachers

Alim, H. Samy., and Geneva Smitherman. *Articulate While Black : Barack Obama, Language, and Race in the U.S*. Oxford University Press, 2012.

Baker-Bell, April. *Linguistic Justice : Black Language, Literacy, Identity, and Pedagogy*. Routledge, 2020.

Black-Borsheim, Carlin and Sophia Tatiana Sarigianides. Letting Go of Literary Whiteness: Antiracist Literature Instruction for White Students. Teachers College Press, 2019.

Chavez, Felicia Rose. *The Anti-Racist Writing Workshop: How to Decolonize the Creative Classroom.* Haymarket Books, 2021.

Delpit, Lisa D. *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom*. New Press, 2006.

Delpit, Lisa. *The Skin that We Speak: Thoughts on Language and Culture in the Classroom*. New Press, 2013.

Emdin, Christopher. *Ratchetdemic: Reimagining Academic Success*. Beacon Press, 2021.

Espana, Carl and Luz Yadira Herrera. *En Comunidad: Lessons for Centering the Voices and Experiences of Bilingual Latinx Students*. Heinemann, 2020.

Germán, Lorena Escoto. *Textured Teaching: A Framework for Culturally Sustaining Practices*. Heinemann, 2021.

Love, Bettina L. *We Want to Do More Than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom*. Beacon Press, 2019.

Readings to Use as Classroom Texts

While text selection was not a key focus of this thesis, the overarching theme of dialectic diversity and representation remains. One of the most effective ways to validate a student's dialect is for them to see successful literary example speaking their same dialect. This can easily be done through text selection or suggested class reading lists. Aside from solely dialect diversity, offering students an array of narratives from differing walks of like allows students to find themselves in text, therefore connecting better with the class itself.

Contemporary Texts (2010-2022) from Diverse Authors

Ward, Jesmyn. *Salvage the Bones: A Novel*. Bloomsbury, 2011.

Thomas, Angie. *The Hate u Give*. First edition., Balzer + Bray, an imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 2017.

Stone, Nick. *Dear Martin*. Random House Children's Books, 2017.

Reynolds, Jason and Alexander Nabaum. *Look Both Ways: A Story Told in Ten Blocks*. Illustrated by Alexander Nabaum, First Atheneum Books for Young Readers, Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2020.

Pan, Emily X. R. *The Astonishing Color of After*. Little, Brown and Company, 2018.

Heilig, Heidi. *The Girl from Everywhere*. Harper Collins, 2016.

Maldonado, Crystal. *Fat Chance, Charlie Vega*. Holiday House, 2021.

Onomé, Louisa. *Like Home*. Random House Children's Books, 2021.

Khoarram, Abid. *Darius the Great is Not Okay*. Penguin Books, 2019.

Ahmadi, Arvin. *Down and Across*. Penguin Young Readers Group, 2019.

Warga, Jasmine. *Other Words for Home*. Harper Collins, 2019.

Ribay, Randy. *Patron Saints of Nothing*. Patron Saints of Nothing, 2019.

Little Badger, Darcie. *Elatsoe*. Levine Querido, 2020.

Ahmad, Samira. *Internment*. Little Brown Books for Young Readers, 2019.

Older Works from Diverse Authors

Douglass, Frederick. "*What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?"* 5 July 1852. Rochester, New York. Learning for Justice. Accessed June 22, 2022. https://www.learningforjustice.org/classroom-resources/texts/what-to-the-slave-is-the-fourth-of-july

Morrison, Toni. *The Bluest Eye*. Vintage International, 2007.

Harper, Frances Ellen Watkins. *Iola Leroy, or, Shadows Uplifted*. Beacon Press, 1987.

Márquez, Gabriel García. *No One Writes the Colonel and Other Stories*. Harper Collins, 2005.

Cisneros, Sandra. *The House on Mango Stree*t. Vintage Contemporaries, 1999.

García, Cristina. *Dreaming in Cuban*. Ballatine Books, 1993.

Alvarez, Julia. *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*. Bloomsbury, 2004.

Daz, Junot. *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*. Penguin Publishing Group, 2008.

Coelho, Paulo. *The Alchemist*. Harper Collins, 2006.

Díaz, Junot. *Drown*. Penguin Publishing Group, 1997.

Walker, Alice. *The Color Purple*. Harcourt, 2003.

Ellison, Ralph. *Invisible Man*. Vintage International, 1995.

Hughes, Langston. *Not Without Laughter*. 1st illustrated reprint edition. Touchstone, 1995.

Tan, Amy. *The Joy Luck Club*. Penguin Publishing Group, 1989.

Classroom Strategies and Example Assignments and Rubric

Based on research conducted for this project, the mentorship I have received as a preservice teacher, and/or observations of other more experienced teachers, I suggest the following classroom strategies especially for teachers of ethnically diverse students:

- Allow yourself, as the linguistic role model of the classroom, to use dialects that you are familiar with to show students that their dialects too have a place in the classroom.
- Consider using mentor texts that include code-meshing (Lee and Handsfield 164).
- Remix existing texts or narrative ideas into a different dialect or a mixed dialect (Lee and Handsfield 164-165).
- Try an assignment which asks students to analyze the language they do use in their regional, cultural, or generational groups like Rhetoric, Y'all from Brennah Hutchinson and Angela Morris

Below is a writing assignment I created for a thematic unit on the question "What is Home? using the texts *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett, *Station Eleven* by Emily St. John Mandel, and "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Perkins Gilman along with the digital narrative *If Found* by game producer Dreamfeel[9].

While this unit was not directly intended to be focused on code-meshing, I was conscious when creating my rubric to not create strict grammatic expectations but instead focus on the students' narrative and analytic abilities. The reason I chose to include this particular assignment was the nature of the assessment points and the rubric. While the text selection in this unit does not feature diverse authorship, as per the rubric, I would not be assessing students on grammar or dialect choice. The goal is for students to form narrative arguments with strong tone and conviction behind them in order to make them effective.

End of Unit Character Analysis (Journal Entries or Letters)

Directions: For the final assignment of this unit you will be producing creative writings where you put yourself in the characters shoes in order to further understand the tone and themes of our stories as well as the motivations and influences the characters felt. You can choose any of the characters, major or minor, from any of the four works we went over in this unit (*The Secret Garden*, *Station Eleven*, *If Found*, or "The Yellow Wallpaper"). You have two choices for how to do this:

1. **Journal Entries**: You will write a minimum of two journal entries, one from before an event (such as the introduction of a new character, a minor event, or the major conflict point of the work) and one from after the event. You are able to do more, shorter journal entries but you must do them spread out over a longer period of time within the narrative.
2. **Letters**: You will write a minimum of three letters, one from character "A," one in response from character "B," and then a response to that from character "A" once again.

[9] I became familiar with *If Found* in my senior seminar course titled "Building Stories: Mind, Memory, and Media," taught by Dr. Craig Carey in the Fall of 2021. This course covered the differing forms and mediums that narratives can take such as movies, games, and graphic novels. I believe this course helped me understand the future of narratives as well as the way younger people, therefore our students, are consuming narratives more frequently in their lives.

Either format will require an analysis of the chosen character's feelings, motivations, and growths throughout the work, as well as some level of reflection on how the author wrote that character to embody those qualities. I expect specific details or quotes from your close readings of the text you choose to analyze. You may choose to do more entries or letters if you wish but your total word count for all writings should be between 500 and 750 words.

Letter/Journal Entries Rubric				
	20 pts	13 pts	6 pts	0 pts
Evidence	Student uses a variety of evidence points that develop their character presentation/analysis	Student uses just enough evidence to back their personal claims but not enough to show where their ideas come from.	Student lacks in textual evidence throughout the entries	Student does not use any evidence
Tone and Voice	Student uses an effective cohesive tone that boosts and validates their argument.	Student uses a unified, clear tone but it has little to no effect on the argument	Student's tone is incohesive and choppy at times	Student shows no attempt at writing cohesively and switches between perspectives and tones erratically
Organization	Entries have great structure that allows for flow and readability. This can be done in a chronological sense or otherwise.	Entries contain structure and organization but does not contain consistent unity	Entries have themes and evidence of organized, structured thoughts but does not see it to fruition	Entries do not contain organization or unity, is often sporadic, and makes reading confusing.
Narrative Detailing	Entries are full of sensory details, creating immersion and insights reader's interests	Entries contain consistent imagery but is either under or overwhelming at times. Details detract from the narrative rather than build it.	Entries contain varying, sporadic levels of detail that discourages reader engagement	Entries are either far too overstuffed with detail or lacks it entirely
Length	Student meets and stays within word limitation.	Student meets word limit but have done so by intentionally writing too detailed or longwinded rather than having valid content or writes beyond the word maximum	Student fails to meet, but is near the minimum, or far exceeds the word limitations	Student does not come close to the word limitations.

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