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Antiracist Praxis in the Adult English Classroom

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ANTIRACIST PRAXIS IN THE ADULT ENGLISH CLASSROOM

by

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A capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in
Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

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DEDICATION

To my ancestors who bravely sacrificed their Indigenous languages and knowledge for the protection and betterment of their children. May no one ever feel the pain of assimilation again.

“When you make the effort to speak someone else’s language, even if it’s just basic phrases here and there, you are saying to them ‘I understand that you have a culture and identity that exists beyond me. I see you as a human being’”.

-Trevor Noah, Born a Crime

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My family - Thank you for always believing in me and supporting me in all of my dreams.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Overview

Shaking with frustration, I am sitting at a staff meeting about the new Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) professional development we are going to do as an adult education nonprofit. To introduce the Seeing White podcast we will be listening to over the next year, the equity consultant explains the choice of podcast exclaiming “we all need to look at our white privilege.” No ma’am. No we do not. At this point I had been fighting push back on equity initiatives from our administration and other teachers that I had been devoting so much time and energy on. Apparently, this is as far as we have gotten. This is the millionth example of how my experience of being a person of color within a dominant white culture and organization is erased. I was not the only staff of color in the meeting, and we all looked at each other like “do we exist?” Though this happened a couple of years ago, it still weighs heavy on me. It was the pivotal moment where I realized that this is going to be an even longer battle than I thought it would be. Not only were we made to be invisible in that moment, we were going to be invisible for the next year since this was going to be our only DEI professional development. As BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) staff, we had expressed that this professional development was not relevant to us. We were told we have to wait for other staff to be ready for other topics. A perfect example of white privilege by putting the priorities of white staff above staff of color. Why couldn’t we do two separate topics? Or pick something shorter so there could be a variety of topics that could be relevant to different people? Our other concern was this would be the only equity-related

professional development we would do as an organization for the whole year. We were right. Every BIPOC staff that I know of went to only one of the optional meetings and never returned. Even white ally staff complained that the sessions were too focused on personal development and not enough focus on applying what we learned to our work. Exactly what we feared happened.

If I felt like my culture was being erased everyday in this organization, I worried what that meant for a majority of white teachers teaching a majority of adult English language learners immigrants of color. Even as a BIPOC teacher, I worried how I might be perpetuating racist approaches to teaching English (i.e. monolingual and standardization ideologies), which have been used as a weapon for colonialism and racism for hundreds of years. I knew I had to do something about this, which meant I needed to research ways to dismantle racist ideologies in the classroom. The aim of this capstone project is to answer this research question: *How can educators of adult English learners utilize antiracist praxis like translanguaging to more deeply value learners' linguistic and cultural identities and experiences?*

In this chapter, I will present my personal background that informs my rationale for picking the topic; explain why it's needed throughout the whole field of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), and provide context for how this project began related to my professional experience.

Personal Background

I have two main motivations for wanting to do this project: 1) I believe at the core of everything we do in education should be social justice, especially antiracism; 2) My family's history of losing our indigenous languages. For the first motivation, before I

applied to Hamline, I had been developing a curriculum that used the United Nations' (2015) Global Goals for Sustainable Development, which are 17 goals the UN has prioritized to implement by 2030. These goals include ending poverty, gender justice, and climate justice, to name a few. I used this curriculum in the GED program at work and also during my practicum for my Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) Certificate. I was drawn to these goals because they provided a way to talk about social and environmental justice in the classroom. The activities broke down these huge issues in ways that connected to our daily lives. Our conversations in class proved that learners are hungry to talk about the issues they face and to work on actionable solutions, all while practicing English skills. As soon as I realized this could be a capstone project, I applied to the program.

Though I was very excited for this idea, my project has evolved since then. During my classes, we talked about more foundational problems in the field of teaching English, such as harmful monolingual ideologies and racism in the classroom. I realized that though talking about social action in the class is very important, I felt like there is a bigger issue to be addressed first. In other words, I realized as educators, we have to start with how to implement antiracist pedagogy in our classrooms. I will define antiracist more thoroughly in Chapter 2, but for the purposes of this chapter, I am referring to Kendi's (2019) definition of an intentional approach that breaks down racist hierarchies, such as those that constantly tell English learners and people of color that there is a 'standard' English and that their cultures and languages are inferior. To be antiracist, we have to first realize the power and privilege that exists in English classrooms. This idea was solidified for me when I read a friend's capstone that focused specifically on white

teachers' power and privilege in the classroom (Griffin, 2016). I wanted to take the decolonizing approach she took of having teachers examine their own whiteness and privilege and take it a step further and make it more relatable to teachers of color. I will also more thoroughly define decolonization in Chapter 2, but similar to antiracism, decolonization looks at how to actively dismantle the way English has been used as a weapon of colonization (Wilson & Yellowbird, 2005).

This is where my second main motivation for doing this project (referenced at the beginning of this section) comes into play. For the first time in my life, I was able to really process the connection between my family's experience and what is happening to English learners now. I should start by explaining that I am multiracial. I do not know very much about my family's history because of the racist pressure to assimilate to white culture and hide what makes us different, something immigrants still experience. The little I do know is that my mother is Louisiana Creole, which is an ethnicity and a language variety. I know I have African, Native American and French ancestors on my mother's side. Growing up, I was always told we spoke French, but it was not until my linguistics class that I realized it was probably a version of French Creole. I also recently learned that my grandpa remembers being told he cannot learn Creole because English is better for him since English is what he needs for school. It may be hard for white readers to understand the years of questions and fear of pushing my family members too hard that led to finally getting that little bit of information. There is a lot of trauma wrapped into my family's history. Some topics are taboo because sometimes the only way people know how to cope with racism is to just not talk about it. Then this trauma is passed on

generationally by perpetuating this fear of asking questions. Sometimes I did not even know what questions to ask because I was given such little information.

Not only did I recently realize that my family spoke French Creole, but I also did not have the linguistic awareness to understand that my grandparents speak African American Vernacular English (AAVE). I knew they spoke a little differently than what I grew up speaking, but I always assumed it was more “country” without really thinking about it. It was always made clear to me that I needed to sound more educated, so I could not speak like them. Once I learned what AAVE was in my linguistics class, I realized they used many of the features of AAVE. Thinking back on this now, it makes sense. One of the most influential books I read in high school was *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston (1937). I can so vividly remember the other kids complaining about having to read the book and that it was too hard to understand because it was written in AAVE. I, however, had no problem understanding the book. At the time, I knew I appreciated the book because it told a story about southern Black people which was something that was very rare in my education experience. From an early age I knew that I was not represented in my school’s curriculum. I knew there was not enough African American or Native American history in school, and what little we did learn was very white-washed. However, now *Their Eyes Were Watching God* means even more to me because with my new linguistic knowledge, I realized that it was written in my family’s dialect. I cannot express how much reading a book, a single book, in school that represents my family means to me. Imagine what learners could feel if their culture was represented everyday.

These stories are examples of ways that I know from firsthand experience what it is like when society tells you that your family's languages and dialects are inferior to standard white English. And that's just my mom's side. On my dad's side, some of my ancestors spoke different Native American languages, though I do not know as much about that. What has been clear to me though is my family had to hide being Indigenous for the safety of the family, which would have included hiding their language. These are examples of the generational trauma that can happen under our country's toxic language ideologies. I feel pain so clearly knowing that I am missing parts of my culture and heritage because of racist language ideologies, which is why I do not want the same to happen to English learners today.

Knowing all of this about my family, I actually resisted teaching English for a while. I knew English had been used as a weapon for colonialism and I did not want to perpetuate this harm. However, I realized that people want to learn English for a variety of reasons. So, instead of not teaching English and letting the problem continue, I decided I can build a classroom that honors learners' linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The problem is not learning English but instead the monolingual ideology we have that says you have to give up your language and culture to live here. This is when I understood that my capstone project needed to be on teacher professional development (PD).

Rationale for Professional Development Project

I want to create an intensive and in depth PD workshop, in the form of a study circle, that addresses racism in English education. I had a difficult time deciding between PD and a curriculum unit, but overall, I ended up deciding PD fit my goals better. PD is more of a big picture take on antiracist approaches with guidelines that get at the root

causes of racism in the classroom. Each class is different, so the antiracist guidelines need to be adaptable. A study circle focuses on a certain topic with a learning community of about 8-12 teachers during 3-5 sessions, (Vinogradov, 2012). For PD to be effective, it is essential that it is an ongoing rather than a one-time workshop (Guskey, 2000, as cited in Echelberger, 2018). Teachers need time to discuss how to move theory into practice, and study circles fulfill this requirement. The final product will be a facilitator's guide so that not only I can facilitate this PD, but someone else can take the guide and bring this important work to their school with their colleagues.

The pilot of this project will take place with an Adult Basic Education organization in St. Paul, Minnesota that sponsors study circles and other professional development for local educators. I already have a group of coworkers who are willing to be part of the pilot. They have been participating in the bimonthly Antiracist Classroom Praxis group (I will discuss this group in more detail in Chapter 3) I created in the fall of 2020 because we were all hungry for this very topic. We all expressed needing a place to learn, discuss, practice, and reflect on tangible antiracist practices. This group has been instrumental in helping me focus my research and realize where the gaps are in current antiracist professional development. If other schools are like ours, teachers are so busy and unfortunately antiracism or equity professional development is not usually part of our paid work time. As mentioned in the opening section, the organization I work for does not prioritize collaborative professional development time to implement antiracist practices. So, the teachers will have to do this study circle on their own time and it is intensive. That is why I want to make an easy-to-use, practical, tangible PD that is worth the time of educators across the state. The benefit of creating a quality study circle for

educators is learning these antiracist best practices are essential in making our schools and classrooms more equitable. Since these practices are not prioritized, our learners, who are not white and are immigrants, are generally negatively affected. We cannot afford to keep ignoring the need for this kind of teacher development. Once antiracist practices are implemented, a more equitable classroom will provide a better learning environment for our learners.

Summary

The aim of this capstone project is to answer this research question: *How can educators of adult English learners utilize antiracist praxis like translanguaging to more deeply value learners' linguistic and cultural identities and experiences?* In this chapter, I introduced the project with a story of the pivotal moment in my teaching experience that was the impetus for my idea to create teacher professional development on antiracist practices in the adult English classroom. I then provided the two motivations for this project: 1) I believe at the core of everything we do in education should be social justice, especially antiracism; 2) My family's history of losing our indigenous languages. I supplied more context to where these motivations come from. Finally, I illustrated the reasoning of why I believe professional development, specifically a study circle, is the best way to present the antiracist practices I found in my literature review to other educators, and why this topic is needed in the field of TESOL.

Chapter Two provides a literature review on what antiracism is and why it is a needed praxis for educators. It digs deeper into why honoring multilingualism should be embraced as an ideology in the United States because the current monolingual ideology is harmful for students and why teachers need an asset-based approach to contextualize how

English learners are viewed and valued in the classroom. The chapter ends by discussing how mixing nontraditional translanguaging teacher roles from García (2017) and Culturally Responsive Teaching from Hammond (2015) provides educators with tools to honor learners' linguistic and cultural identities as antiracist praxis. Chapter Three contains a description of the culminating project of a study circle which is how what is learned in the literature review will be presented to fellow educators. It also discusses the framework behind study circles and the setting and audience of the project. Chapter Four is a reflection of the capstone project and process.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Overview

The aim of this capstone project is to answer this research question: *How can educators of adult English learners utilize antiracist praxis like translanguaging to more deeply value learners' linguistic and cultural identities and experiences?* This chapter provides a literature review on what antiracism is and why it is a needed praxis for educators. It digs deeper into why honoring multilingualism should be embraced as an ideology in the United States because the current monolingual ideology is harmful for students and why teachers need an asset-based approach to contextualize how English learners are viewed and valued in the classroom. The chapter ends by discussing how mixing nontraditional translanguaging teacher roles from García (2017) and Culturally Responsive Teaching from Hammond (2015) provides educators with tools to honor learners' linguistic and cultural identities as antiracist praxis.

Introduction

The field of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) is growing because of the increase of global migration and use of English as a global language. As this growth happens, especially in the United States, teachers need to be aware of the colonial history of English learning that is harmful to learners (Motha, 2014). The colonial history of teaching English is filled with monolingual ideologies, such as the idea that English-only policies are best, which ignore the vast knowledge and experiences of learners. These policies and ideologies are constant messaging for English learners that their linguistic and cultural backgrounds are inferior. As educators, we need

to call these policies and ideas for what they are: racist ideas. They are racist because they perpetuate the idea that different cultures and languages exist in a hierarchy that results in mostly people of color thinking less of themselves, while whites believe they are better (Kendi, 2019). My original hope with this capstone project was to build a professional development workshop that goes beyond the basics of racial equity. My target audience is not teachers who are learning about racism for the first time and need to begin their journey into their implicit bias and white privilege. Instead, I am writing this for BIPOC and white teachers who want to go past basic definitions to do deeper reflection on their teaching practices and actively apply what they learn throughout their classrooms.

Antiracist Praxis

In the past couple of years, there have been more conversations about equity in the classroom. There has been an increase in the number of professional development workshops on equity, which is great, but the topics are generally very surface level and introductory. They are usually about Racial Equity 101 which means they cover topics like systemic racism, implicit bias, microaggressions, and white privilege. All valuable topics for white educators.

In this section, I will define some key terms like antiracist, decolonizing, white supremacy characteristics, and abolition teaching, while also demonstrating how these key theories fit together and why it's important as English teachers to be aware of and to implement these practices in our classrooms.

What is Antiracist Praxis and Why is it a Good Place to Start?

To define antiracism, this project started with Kendi's (2019) transformative work on antiracism because his book has revolutionized the work against racism, or antiracist work. His book is the main motivation and lens for this capstone project. Kendi argues that to be antiracist is to intentionally work towards racial equality or the breaking down of a racial hierarchy. He claims "there is no neutrality in the racism struggle. The opposite of 'racist' isn't 'not racist.' It is antiracist" (Kendi, 2019, p. 9). Kendi has a few definitions that are helpful for teachers to think about as they apply antiracist work to their classroom and schools. First, "racial equity is when two or more racial groups are standing on relatively equal footing." Second, "antiracist policy is any measure that produces or sustains racial equity between racist groups" (Kendi, 2019, p. 20). It is important to note that to Kendi, using terms like institutional racism is redundant because by definition racism is institutional. That is why he prefers the terms racist or antiracist policies. Third, "an antiracist idea is any idea that suggests the racial groups are equals in all their apparent differences--that there is nothing right or wrong with any racial group. Antiracist ideas argue that racist policies are the cause of racial inequities" (Kendi, 2019, p. 20).

Putting these definitions all together, it is up to educators to analyze how everything they do or think is either racist or antiracist. An important distinction from previous definitions of racism is that even BIPOC educators can have racist ideas or support racist policies. Kendi demonstrates this point by explaining that he has spent most of his life as being racist. Racist or antiracist are not "fixed identities" but they change from moment to moment depending on what you say or do (Kendi, 2019, p. 10).

This is why it is essential for all teachers to use these foundational definitions to apply to their own environments. Only then can teachers provide a space that is antiracist for their learners, and providing an antiracist space is essential to combat the cultural and linguistic hierarchy that currently exists in the United States, as mentioned above. To apply these learnings, educators need Freire's (1970) definition of praxis which combines reflection with action. Freire explains that our work "cannot be purely intellectual but must involve action; nor can it be limited to mere activism, but must include serious reflection: only then will it be a praxis" (Freire, 1970, p. 65). Educators must constantly reflect on their ideas, beliefs, and actions and intentionally change what is harmful.

What is Decolonization and How Does it Relate to Antiracism?

Though antiracism is the main lens this project is using to look at teaching praxis, educators need to talk about decolonization also because many nonwhite communities around the world have experienced colonization (Motha, 2014). Oppressive systems, usually colonial, affect many English learners. Decolonization allows for a more global perspective compared to the United States' unique racial history, which antiracism tends to focus more on. Decolonization can be defined as intentional praxis to liberate our minds from colonial "behaviors, ideologies, institutions, policies and economies that maintain the subjugation or exploitation of Indigenous peoples, lands, and resources (Waziyatawin & Yellow Bird, 2005, p. 2). Therefore, this term comes from Indigenous leaders and can be used as a useful model to rethink how English education causes harm through racism and colonialism. Freire (1970) also argues that breaking oppressive systems in education is extremely relatable to many global contexts which is why this framework should not be overlooked. Unfortunately, to narrow the scope of this paper,

this research's main focus is antiracism, so decolonization is not getting the focus it deserves. Hopefully future research can more deeply incorporate this framework.

However, one way to combine antiracism and decolonization is to look at characteristics of white supremacy culture.

What are White Supremacy Culture Characteristics?

Once educators understand the difference between antiracism and racism, the next essential step is to understand what parts of white culture send people of color messages of inferiority constantly, especially in the classroom. A key source in the world of antiracist work is Okun's (2021) *White Supremacy Culture Characteristics*. These characteristics are defined as "the widespread ideology baked into the beliefs, values, norms, and standards of our groups (many if not most of them), our communities, our towns, our states, our nation, teaching us both overtly and covertly that whiteness holds value, whiteness is value" (Okun, 2021, p. 4). White supremacy is a term that makes a lot of people feel uncomfortable because their first thought is the Klu Klux Klan, but educators have to lean into the discomfort and realize that it means, in the United States, the idea that white culture and speaking English are seen as superior. This is the very hierarchy that Kendi (2019) was talking about. Therefore, to talk about superiority and inferiority in the classroom means to determine which parts of white dominant culture drowns out other ways of doing or speaking. There are over a dozen characteristics that Okun (2021) identifies. All of them are very enlightening, but for the sake of this literature review and the project, only three will be looked at more closely.

The first example is One Right Way which is defined as "the belief there is one right way to do things" (Okun, 2021, p. 9). This definition is connected to the belief in an

objective ‘perfect’ that is both attainable and desirable for everyone. It is connected to the belief that the teacher is qualified to know what the right way is for themselves and others without making space for any other cultural ways of thinking or doing (Okun, 2021). The second example is a Sense of Urgency which means people in power perpetuate hierarchies through urgency in an effort to be efficient (Okun, 2021). This kind of urgency leaves people’s voices out of the decision making process, which includes learners’ voices (Okun, 2021). The final example is Worship of the Written Word which can be seen all throughout the United States’ education system. This characteristic values written traditions over oral ones, even though many cultures come from rich oral traditions (Okun, 2021). Worship of the written word demands everything be “grammatically ‘correct’” or “properly cited,” otherwise it has no value in strict academic standards (Okun, 2021, pp. 18-19). Therefore, learners’ linguistic and cultural identities are ignored and treated as inferior.

What is Abolitionist Teaching?

Along with antiracism, the final essential equity lens that informs English classrooms in this project is abolitionist teaching. According to Love (2019), “abolitionist teaching is the practice of working in solidarity with communities of color while drawing on the imagination, creativity, refusal, (re)membering, visionary thinking, healing, rebellious spirit, boldness, determination, and subversiveness of abolitionists to eradicate injustice in and outside of schools” (p. 2). Abolitionist teaching takes Kendi’s antiracist approach and explains how to do that in a school context, where educators value every part of learners’ identities. To value every part of a student means to understand their complex, intersectional identities, or in other words “knowing their students’ humanity

and the richness of their identities” (Love, 2019, p. 7). This idea connects to a later section of the chapter: asset-based approaches and seeing all of the things students are experts in. Acknowledging learners’ humanity in this way breaks down the racist hierarchy in the classroom. Love’s work is highly based on leading scholar bell hooks, though hooks calls this approach liberatory education instead. Also similar to Kendi, hooks (1994) argues that education cannot be politically or racially neutral. It is not enough to say you are ‘not racist;’ teaching has to intentionally dismantle injustice in the classroom, and to turn antiracist or liberatory education into pedagogy means creating a safe community for learners (hooks, 1994). Finally, what connects both of these scholars is that part of abolitionist teaching involves critical thinking, which is based on Freire’s (1970) work. They argue education is liberatory because it encourages self-actualization and critical thinking which results in social justice (Freire, 1970; hooks, 1994; Love, 2019). Originally, I was worried that abolitionist teaching would be harder to transfer to teaching adult English rather than in the k-12 system. However, when the goal is creating a safe space that honors learner’s backgrounds, abolitionist teaching is still very relevant to teaching adults.

Why is Having an Antiracist and Decolonizing Approach Important?

All of these scholars are the first ones to admit this is not an easy path (Freire, 1970; hooks, 1994; Love, 2019; Okun, 2021). It is exhausting and teachers will rarely have support from coworkers and school leadership (hooks, 1994). Educators have to stay committed, and antiracism must be who teachers are in and out of the classroom. Teachers have to be a co-conspirator because we know if we don’t dismantle the injustice in our classroom and school, our classroom community will be harmed (Love, 2019).

There are many ways to practice abolitionist teaching in one's classroom. It is not a bag of tricks but a way of life that has to be adapted to your specific classroom (Love, 2019). This way of teaching requires an open mind and a willingness to try things, while knowing you will make mistakes (hooks, 1994; Love, 2019).

Disrupting Monolingual and Standardization Ideologies

Why are Multilingual Ideologies Necessary for an Antiracist Approach?

To continue looking at how adult English learners receive racist messages of inferiority, the next example is language bias, which includes discrimination based on accents and grammar. Multilingual learners' English is seen as inferior, and their multilingualism is not seen as an asset. They are forced to conform to harmful standardization ideologies of language and accent. In my experience, not enough teachers question why the United States has a dominant monoglossic ideology, how this is a racist ideology that harms learners, and how we perpetuate this ideology in our classrooms.

According to Flores and Rosa (2015), monoglossic language ideologies "idealize monolingualism in a standardized national language as the norm to which all national subjects should aspire" (p. 151). The United States has a long history of forcing families to assimilate and lose their native languages. Going back to Kendi's (2019) definition of racist policies, assimilation is racist because it inherently argues that there is superiority in knowing only standard English. Calderón et al. (2020) argue many immigrant, or non-dominant culture families, fall into this racist assimilation trap because they constantly get messages that English is better for their children in school or for themselves at work. Therefore, schools have a long history of English only policies. Until

recently, it was believed that people should only speak English in class because using learners' other language(s) inhibited their ability to learn English. However, research shows that multilingualism has many benefits (Calderón et al., 2020). Taylor (2016) describes this phenomenon as “linguicism [which] continues to reinforce cultural and economic Eurocentrism within the postcolonial world system. We have to look at the ‘colonialist heritage and racial hierarchies’” (p. 523).

How is Standardization Harmful?

Similar to monolingual ideologies, many teachers also do not question what standard English is, who decided what standard English is, how it is a racist ideology, and how we perpetuate this ideology in our classrooms. For very similar reasons as to why monoglossic ideologies are harmful, standardization is harmful because it reinforces a racist hierarchy.

It is a well-known fact that to linguists, no variety of any language is superior to another. Instead, cultural ideologies create linguistic hierarchies. Kendi (2019) questions this very idea of who decided what standard English is and why others, mostly dialects or varieties spoken by people of color, are seen as inferior. Again, it is this hierarchy that results in cultural and linguistic racism. hooks (1994) calls standard English “the language of conquest and domination; in the United States, it is the mask which hides the loss of so many tongues” (p. 168). Constant messages of assimilation and ‘broken’ English reinforce this idea that white people own what it means to speak English in the United States. That whiteness is what is normal so you have to speak like a white person and sound like a white person. (Crump, 2014; Flores and Rosa, 2015). Therefore, Flores and Rosa’s (2015) discuss their idea of raciolinguistics. They define raciolinguistic

ideologies “which produce racialized speaking subjects who are constructed as linguistically deviant even when engaging in linguistic practices positioned as normative or innovative when produced by privileged white subjects” (p. 150). Raciolinguistics questions why whiteness is the lens through which English is judged. This includes accents. English learners are expected to sound ‘white’.

Both ideologies, monolingualism and standardization, need to be questioned by language teachers. As discussed, they both perpetuate racist hierarchies that negatively affect people of color and immigrants. Therefore, to be antiracist educators, we have to combat the hierarchy and demonstrate to our classes that their linguistic identities are equally valuable.

Asset-based Approach

What is an Asset-based Approach?

Along with monolingual and standardization ideologies, many English learners face the harmful effects of deficit-based thinking towards immigrant communities (Calderón et al., 2020). Since learners may not have the English skills to fully express their deep knowledge and experiences, it is easy to fall into the trap of seeing learners as having many deficits. In other words, a deficit-based approach “draws from what students do not possess (or what we perceive that they don’t) as opposed to what they do inherently possess” (Calderón et al., 2020, p. 4). Additionally, the authors argue a “majority of EL programming has tended to all but purge students of their precious identities and strengths--their home languages and cultures” (Calderón et al., 2020, p. 4). Even ways of thinking about building students’ self esteem with affirmations can be a deficit way of thinking about them because we assume we need to build their self esteem

(Hammond, 2015). Instead, Hammond (2015) suggests affirmation is about building trust so learners feel safe and comfortable enough to learn, which comes from trauma-informed approaches. It is this change of mindset that is so important for educators to reflect on and practice.

If teachers use an asset-based approach instead, there are many ways to bring in students' interests into the classroom that honors what they already know. Calderón et al. (2020) define an asset-based approach as focusing on “strengths and assets that all students possess or what is already there” (p. 6). Educators have to build relationships with learners to find out what they care about and what special skills they can share, including their cultural and linguistic skills and knowledge. Then the class material will be more meaningful to everyone and they become the experts rather than the teacher being the only expert. This is an excellent way of breaking down the power dynamics of the classroom and making the space more equitable.

Another term for an asset-based approach is funds of knowledge (Moll & Greenberg, 1990, as cited in Moll et al., 2013). They define funds of knowledge as “the practices they have developed and knowledge they have produced and acquired in the living of their lives. The social history of families, and their reproductive or labor activities in both the primary and secondary sector of the economy, are particularly salient because they reveal experiences (e.g., in farming, construction, gardening, household maintenance, or secretarial work) that generate much of the knowledge household members may possess, display, elaborate, or share with others” (Moll et al., 2013). It is not only important to build off learners' experiences as an antiracist approach, but it is also helpful as a teaching strategy to connect to learners' schema. By connecting

to schema the brain processes the information in a way that is more likely to stick for learners (Hammond, 2015). Another example often seen in classrooms are written activities seen as the academic standard, but funds of knowledge tells us that oral activities like storytelling play to the strengths of oral cultures which many of the learners come from (Hammond, 2015). Therefore, including more oral activities is an asset-based and antiracist lens for educators making the class more learner-centered.

Why is this Approach Necessary for Antiracist or Abolitionist Teaching?

As briefly mentioned above, an asset-based approach breaks down an assumed hierarchy of knowledge and skills; therefore, it is antiracist according to Kendi's (2019) definition. An asset-based approach also counters Okun's (2021) two white supremacy culture characteristics discussed above, One Right Way and Worship of the Written Word, because it breaks the teacher's authoritarian role as the only expert who can make decisions about class materials and activities. The asset-based approach allows for more room for relevant material and discussions to be led by student strengths. Finally, Love (2019) describes abolitionist teaching as recognizing a students' full humanity and seeing all parts of their identity, especially the assets that are often overlooked.

Translanguaging as Antiracist Praxis in the Classroom

This final section will look at how the theory of translanguaging combines the previous sections of disrupting monolingual and standardization ideologies and educators using an asset-based lens to bring antiracist praxis into adult English classrooms. The aim of this section is to break down these big frameworks and give educators some tangible things to try.

What is Culturally Responsive Teaching and How Does it Relate to Translanguaging?

One of the leading approaches to equitable or antiracist praxis in the field right now is culturally responsive teaching. According to Hammond (2015), culturally responsive teaching is:

An educator’s ability to recognize students’ cultural displays of learning and meaning making and respond positively and constructively with teaching moves that use cultural knowledge as a scaffold to connect what the student knows to new concepts and content in order to promote effective information processing. All the while, the educator understands the importance of being in a relationship and having a social-emotional connection to the student in order to create a safe space for learning. (p. 15)

Hammond’s definition and research is more focused on the neurological reasons as to why culturally responsive teaching is key to students’ ability to learn, which is a very important part of learning that is out of the scope of this paper. However, for similar reasons, culturally responsive teaching is essential as an antiracist practice. It is all about honoring learners’ cultural and linguistic identities and experiences (Cioè-Peña & Snell, 2015). Culturally responsive teaching is about valuing all aspects of a learner’s identity that are often ignored because they are seen as inferior, deficient or not valuable. For the scope of this paper, I have decided to primarily focus on the linguistic aspect of learners’ identities which comes from the increasingly popular research around translanguaging.

What is Translanguaging?

I draw much of my understanding of this term from the work of García (2017) who is a leading scholar on this topic. The definition she uses is “translanguaging is the

deployment of a speaker's full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state languages)" (Otheguy et al., 2015, as cited in García, 2017, p. 17). There are two central parts to this definition. First, according to the theory of translanguaging, teaching English is about adding tools to a "unitary language system." (García, 2017, p. 17). In other words, English is not a second, separate language, but an additional tool the speaker can utilize (Ascenzi-Moreno, Hesson & Menken, 2016; García & Sylvan, 2011). Second, this kind of perspective does not care what nation or culture learners are from; therefore, it is not dependent on monoglossic ideologies and traditional notions of what makes a native speaker. García (2017) also says neither language is in a "hierarchical position" connecting back to Kendi's (2019) antiracist definition.

This perspective is also not dependent on comparing accent standards, such as sounding like a 'native speaker' (Flores & Rosa, 2015). A study completed by de los Ríos and Seltzer (2017) builds off of García's definition. They mostly argue the same thing, but add that code-switching, another popular sociolinguistics topic, still sees the two or more languages someone speaks as separate entities. However, translanguaging changes our perspective of what makes a language system. This contrast is important to keep in mind since both terms are increasingly popular in the language education field.

Flores and Rosa (2015) discuss a similar idea in their research into a phenomenon they call raciolinguistic ideologies. The premise of their work argues that racialized ideologies determine what is standard or appropriate, so minority speakers are forced to sound and speak like false standards. Within this process, learners face racial discrimination in both the classroom and in the community. Therefore, they assert that

critical language approaches to language education dismatles raciolinguistic ideologies such as monolingualism and standardization (Flores & Rosa, 2015). Since translanguaging and raciolinguistic ideologies are related, both are important to language education because they provide new approaches that disrupt the monoglossic ideologies of the United States that are harmful to learners.

How can Translanguaging Praxis be Used in the Classroom?

Returning to the source that sparked my interest in this topic, García (2017) provides excellent examples of how to utilize translanguaging principles in an adult English classroom. She presents a case study of a Peruvian-born student named Carlos, who is living in Germany and his first couple days of classes (García, 2017). Though Carlos is learning German, the same principles can be applied to the context of adult English classrooms in the United States. I provide a more in depth summary of the principles García discusses because she is the only scholar I found that focuses on utilizing translanguaging in adult English classrooms. There is a big gap in current research that focuses on adults as opposed to youth education.

Using this case study, García (2017) provides four roles that transform the traditional teacher role in the adult classroom with translanguaging principles. These roles include “the detective, the co-learner, the builder, and the transformer” (p. 22). The purpose of these roles is to disrupt the current ideology that teachers have sole control over the class and bestow knowledge onto the students. Instead the class should be centered around the learners. The following subsections will combine these roles and Hammond’s (2015) culturally responsive teaching to give educators something tangible to reflect on and try.

What is the Detective Role and How Can it be Applied in the Classroom?

García's (2017) first role of detective seeks to find out what learners already know, what motivates them, and in what ways they need to learn and use a language. This role also considers what critical thinking skills the students possess in their other languages. Hildegard, Carlos' teacher, puts the learners into groups with the common languages, so that they can use each other and their other languages as resources. She purposely encourages the learners to use their other languages to facilitate learning, which strongly opposes traditional English-only policies. While the learners are using negotiation of meaning to translate the text about an instrument Carlos plays, Hildegard observes that Carlos is a good writer and can support opinions with evidence to be persuasive in Spanish (García, 2017). Many teachers ignore the skills that learners have in their other languages, which is something Moll et al. (2013) explore in their research on funds of knowledge. The basis of funds of knowledge is the idea that learners do not come to class as an empty vessel, but have a history of experiences and skills that they can offer to the class (Moll et al., 2013). This is critical to understand as a teacher in an adult classroom. Even though a learner may not have the English capabilities to express critical thinking and share deep life experiences, they still have these thoughts and experiences in their other languages, and this is something educators have to be a detective to genuinely discover.

Since the detective role seeks to understand what learners' know, something for educators to consider is how learners think and communicate in their own cultures. To help educators make space for learners' cultural and linguistic identities and their way of thinking in the classroom, Hammond (2015) claims culturally responsive techniques

“grow out of the learning traditions of oral cultures where knowledge is taught and processed through story, song, movement, repetitious chants, rituals and dialogic talk” (p. 127). Many learners come from oral cultures, so it is essential for educators to include parts of learners’ funds of knowledge such as oral traditions. All of Hammond’s (2015) oral traditions examples can be weaved throughout lessons. It is up to the teacher to be a detective and find out which ones connect to learners’ cultures, and by doing this, the teacher is demonstrating that learners’ cultures are valued in their classroom. Hammond (2015) also suggests using collectivist-based routines and rituals which value communal activities as opposed to only individualist activities that are often dominant in the United States. These routines and rituals include beginning class with a centering activity, using music during class transitions, reciting a class poem or verse, or sharing inspirational stories and proverbs from learners’ cultures (Hammond, 2015). These last two suggestions are especially important in making learners experts in the classroom, redistributing power dynamics in the classroom and removing hierarchies. To further connect to translanguaging, part of the ritual can be learning how to say these poems or proverbs in learners’ other languages. These activities are not only collectivist because they are community-driven, but they also speak to learners’ spirits and emotions which is a key part of collectivist cultures (Hammond, 2015). Again, it is imperative for the teacher to be a detective to discover more about learners’ linguistic and cultural identities to include and value them in the classroom.

What is the Co-learner Role and How Can it be Applied in the Classroom?

The second role of co-learner is similar to the detective and crucial in changing the power dynamics of classrooms to center learners. A co-learner considers what the

students are experts in, in order for them to share with the whole class, including the teacher (García, 2017). García obtains this role from research done by Wei (2014) who studied bilingual education in Britain. Wei (2014) defines co-learning as a different kind of relationship where there is shared power, co-construction of knowledge, identity exploration, and authentic engagement with the overall community. Both García (2017) and Wei (2014) connect their research to the Moll et al. (2013) foundational study on the funds of knowledge. Again, funds of knowledge is about acknowledging that learners have something to offer everyone, including the teacher. This is exemplified in the example with Carlos, when on the very first day of class, Hildegard provides space to learn about his life and his ability to play an instrument, and also in the translation activity where she observes he is persuasive and can write in Spanish (García, 2017). All of these skills could have easily been missed by a teacher who does not use a translanguaging framework. García (2017) also suggests using autoethnographies and community interviews to exemplify this principle of co-learning, which is supported by Moll et al. (2013) and de los Ríos and Seltzer (2017). Autoethnographies are an empowering tool for learners to share their voices and experiences. Community interviews do the same, while also connecting learners to the outside society.

In addition, Hammond (2015) brings in the idea of being a co-learner through culturally responsive teaching with a tool called the Culture Tree. The Culture Tree represents different parts of culture in three sections. First, there are the leaves, or surface culture, which represents more observable patterns, such as food, clothes, and holidays. Hammond (2015) claims these have a low impact on building trust and relationships with learners. The second part of the Culture Tree is the trunk which represents shallow

culture. These are more like unspoken rules, such as non-verbal communication, concept of time and tempo of work. They have a bit more impact on emotional connection or relationship building. The third and final part of the Culture Tree are the roots which represent deep culture. Deep culture is the collective unconscious, like how we make decisions, our notions of fairness, and concepts of self, which have an intense emotional impact on building relationships. The Culture Tree is such a wonderful tool for praxis. Educators can use it to reflect on their own culture and learners' cultures. The tree can be an analysis tool to look at lessons and see which parts of culture it connects to to help guide class discussions, so educators can actively make space for learners' linguistic and cultural identities and experiences. Additionally, throughout the book, Hammond (2015) constantly connects back to the need for educators to value oral cultures in the classroom, as discussed with the detective role above.

What is the Builder Role and How Can it be Applied in the Classroom?

The third role is the builder, which advocates for teachers to create a safe space that forms a real sense of community in a classroom (García, 2017). This is demonstrated by Hildegard putting learners into language groups. In smaller language groups, it can be less risky for learners to try new language forms and to share their life experiences. This approach makes learners more at ease and more likely to learn because anxiety can be a large barrier for adult learners. Therefore, not only is the lesson directly relevant to learners' lives and strengths, but they can also share the connections they make in a safe way. This is reinforced with activities such as the groups asking each other interview questions (García, 2017). The teacher provides authentic reasons for learners to interact

and share information about themselves in a safe space, connecting back to the co-learner role also.

To connect the builder role to culturally responsive teaching, Hammond (2015) encourages creating a safe space through trust. Educators cannot be detectives or co-learners if learners do not trust them. Hammond (2015) explains that trust is “at the core of positive relationships” and genuinely “caring is the way that we generate the trust that builds relationships” (p. 75). Educators “have to not only care *about*...but also actively care *for* them” (p. 75). Part of trust is also affirmation which is about acknowledging the humanity of learners. This idea connects to Love’s (2019) definition of abolitionist teaching. Hammond (2015) makes the important distinction that affirmation is not about building learners’ self-esteem, but instead is about building trust. To only affirm learners as a way to build self-esteem is a deficit view because it assumes learners need teachers to make them feel good about themselves (Hammond, 2015).

To build trust with learners, Hammond (2015) suggests using Trust Generators which are ways to authentically listen and be vulnerable with learners. Both listening and being vulnerable are essential in building relationships. These Trust Generators are selective vulnerability, familiarity, similarity of interests, concern, and competence. They facilitate educators to be able to slow down, resisting the white supremacy culture characteristic of Urgency (Okun, 2021). Another tool Hammond (2015) shares is a Rapport Interaction Tally Tracking sheet. With this tracker, educators can reflect on which students they need to build better relationships with. A lot of the time, bias can affect who educators build relationships with without us realizing our own patterns. The tracker helps educators again slow down to make sure we are building relationships

intentionally and not randomly. Finally, another useful idea from Hammond (2015) is the idea of educators being a warm demander. A warm demander focuses on building trust and actively caring for learners, while also holding learners up to high expectations. Often teachers can either be too caring and (unintentionally) hold students to low standards; only hold high expectations without caring for learners; or not care about learners and have low expectations. Hammond (2015) argues a warm demander is needed to have an asset-based lens while also building a safe space for learners to grow and apply themselves in the classroom. Each of these tools, the Trust Generators, the Rapport Tally, and being a warm demander, are excellent things for educators to reflect on how to bring into their classrooms and then put them into action for antiracist praxis.

What is the Transformer Role and How Can it be Applied in the Classroom?

The fourth and final role of the transformer actively disrupts the racialized monolingual ideologies of today's language education (García, 2017). For example, Hildegard approaches teaching the class with the mindset that the learners are not second language learners where they are "learning the language of 'the other,'" but instead are learning their own language which they need to live everyday in Germany (García, 2017, p. 18). Learners are developing their own repertoire and have the agency to decide what language to use and when, according to their own goals. As mentioned in the definition in the above section, translanguaging is about building one language system which provides a different perspective than monoglossic ideologies allow. In addition, the transformer role proclaims that language teachers must demonstrate to learners how to look at language critically so they can combat raciolinguistic ideologies just as Flores and Rosa (2015) argued. Therefore, learners and teachers together become sociolinguists, in order

to analyze texts and language practices. This allows them to critically understand the language and cultural discrimination that they might face, so they can transform their communities in a positive way. García (2017) argues this is a key aspect in connecting language education to social justice which is a fundamental principle to translanguaging.

For this final role, instead of connecting to Hammond (2015), I will connect it back to abolitionist teaching. Love (2019) argues that central to being an abolitionist is being a co-conspirator of learners. Being a co-conspirator is a lifelong commitment to action and taking risks for learners. This can look many different ways (e.g. standing up for policy changes at your school, encouraging other teachers to commit to antiracist praxis, fighting for immigration rights in your city), but it is essential to commit to social justice in and out of the classroom. To take up García's (2017) definition of transformer, educators have to be co-conspirators. Educators have to remember that "no education is politically neutral" (hooks, 1994). To stay silent is to perpetuate racist hierarchies, and as explained many times in this paper, well-intentioned educators can no longer stay silent. We have to be transformers, and we have to commit to antiracist praxis. Our learners' humanity, their linguistic and cultural identities, deserve that from us.

Summary

The aim of this capstone project is to answer this research question: *How can educators of adult English learners utilize antiracist praxis like translanguaging to more deeply value learners' linguistic and cultural identities and experiences?* The main goal of this chapter was to provide a literature review to answer the research question focusing on the following subsections: what is antiracism and why it is a needed praxis for educators; why honoring multilingualism should be embraced as an ideology in the

United States because the current monolingual ideology is harmful for students; why teachers need an asset-based approach to contextualize how English learners are viewed and valued in the classroom; and how the nontraditional translanguaging teacher roles provides educators with tools to honor learners linguistic and cultural identities as an antiracist praxis. Chapter Three contains a description of the culminating project of a study circle which is how what is learned in the literature review will be presented to fellow educators. It also discusses the framework behind study circles and the setting and audience of the project.

CHAPTER THREE

Project Description

Overview

The aim of this capstone project is to answer this research question: *How can educators of adult English learners utilize antiracist praxis like translanguaging to more deeply value learners' linguistic and cultural identities and experiences?* This chapter contains a description of the culminating project of a study circle which is how what was learned in the literature review will be presented to fellow educators. It then discusses the framework behind study circles and the antiracist and abolitionist teaching that informs why a collaborative approach to professional development is needed for teachers to implement these practices. Next, I describe the setting and intended audience of the project. Finally, I explain the assessment that will be used to gauge the effectiveness of the study circle and the project timeline.

Introduction

In the United States, English has been used to perpetuate harm towards nondominant culture communities (Motha, 2014). Through colonizing ideologies of monolingualism and standardization, adult learners of English constantly get messages of inferiority towards their linguistic and cultural backgrounds. It is educators' responsibility to combat these racist practices in our classroom and community by being antiracist. Kendi (2019) argues that to be antiracist is to intentionally work towards racial equality or the breaking down of a racial hierarchy. There is not enough antiracist professional development (PD) for adult English teachers, and what little exists is too basic. There has to be a next step on the journey of antiracism for teachers, especially

BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) teachers like myself. Most PD is aimed at white teachers to reflect on white privilege and power. Though BIPOC teachers also need to look at our own implicit bias, PD made specifically for white teachers is not good enough, and often does not go past the reflection stage. Therefore, this project will be good for BIPOC teachers and white teachers who are ready for the next step for intentional action in making classrooms more equitable.

Overview of the Project

Based on the antiracist practices I compiled in Chapter Two, I wanted to create an intensive and in depth PD workshop. I had a difficult time deciding between PD and a curriculum unit, but overall, I decided PD fit my goals better. PD is more of a big picture take on antiracist strategies with guidelines that get at the root causes of racism in the classroom. As mentioned in Chapter Two, these practices are not gimmicks, but a framework to revolutionize the classroom (Love, 2019). Each class is different so the antiracist framework needs to be adaptable to each educator's setting. The chosen PD is a study circle (described below) of five meetings, two-hours each. The final product will be a facilitator's guide so that not only I can facilitate this PD, but someone else can take the guide and bring this important work to their school with their colleagues.

Research Framework

Not only is the aim of this project to create PD that focuses on antiracist practices in the classroom, it is also important that the approach to the PD itself is antiracist. The key to antiracist PD is collaboration and praxis. Collaboration is essential because characteristics of white supremacy culture such as urgency and paternalism do not leave room for radical imagination when dismantling oppressive systems (Love, 2019; Okun,

2021). Often as educators, we either do not have enough time (and often not paid time), or we participate in a lecture that does not leave space for educators to brainstorm new antiracist strategies that can be individualized for each person's classroom. For antiracist praxis, according to the monumental work by Freire (1970), praxis combines reflection with action. He explains that our work "cannot be purely intellectual but must involve action; nor can it be limited to mere activism, but must include serious reflection: only then will it be a praxis" (Freire, 1970, p. 65). Therefore, educators require real time and commitment to the process of praxis when applying antiracist practices to their classrooms.

Recent research into effective PD for educators demonstrates that the best method that combines collaboration and praxis is a study circle. A study circle focuses on a certain topic with a learning community of about 8-12 teachers during 3-5 sessions, (Vinogradov, 2012). This practice is based on research into communities of practice by Lave and Wenger in 1991 (as cited in Vinogradov, 2012). Study circles are also based on the definition of effective PD by Desimone (2009) "which summarizes these elements as a) content focus, b) active learning, c) coherence, d) duration, and e) collective participation" (as cited in Vinogradov, 2012). To meet these requirements, this study circle is content focused because it is narrowed down to adult English classrooms and looks at a few key antiracist practices, especially translanguaging teacher roles (García, 2017). The study circle is centered around active learning with reflection questions as pre-meeting tasks to set up the in-meeting discussions. Coherence is achieved through circular routines in each meeting, such as processing new ideas and information through individual reflection, discussing and brainstorming how to apply to each participant's

classroom, trying something in your classroom, and then debriefing how it went and what to do next time. Duration is met by recommending a minimum of five meetings to cover the material. The study circle facilitator and participants can decide to take more time, but five meetings is the minimum because for PD to be effective, it is essential that it is an ongoing rather than a one-time workshop (Guskey, 2000, as cited in Echelberger, 2018). Teachers need time to discuss how to move theory into practice and study circles fulfill this requirement. Plus, antiracism especially takes a lot of time to reflect, process, and work to continually improve. Antiracism is a lifelong commitment, and this study circle is just the beginning (Love, 2019). Finally, this study circle meets the requirement of collective participation because it is driven by participant discussion. Collaboration is essential both in the pre-meeting tasks and the in-meeting discussions.

As mentioned above, study circles fit into the antiracist approaches of PD, but it also fits into the closely related framework of abolitionist education which was defined in Chapter Two. hooks (1994) argues that theory and practice cannot be separated if teachers are to commit to the liberation of all within education, and “the power of the liberatory classroom is in fact the power of the learning process, the work we do to establish a community” (p. 153). It is not only important for educators to have this approach when we are teaching, but also as we are working collaboratively as a community of practice. While creating this kind of liberatory environment in professional development, it is essential to work together as a community because implementing these practices are not easy. Often it is exhausting because teachers will rarely have institutional support from administrators and colleagues (hooks, 1994).

Abolitionist teaching is also challenging because educators have to try new things and get out of their comfort zones. Many teachers are scared of negative feedback, or afraid of perpetuating racist hierarchies in ways they do not realize because there are not enough models on how to do this work (hooks, 1994). This is why hooks (1994) argues that teachers should work collaboratively in a community to share experiences and to help each other come to these practices with an open mind. Finally, building a community of practice is also important to encourage each other and to not be afraid of criticism. Part of the commitment necessary to do abolitionist teaching is to be open to criticism because you know you are in a community of teachers who are trying to make each other better. The same thing we want in the community we build for our students. It is definitely easier said than done, but it is necessary in antiracist praxis.

Setting and Audience

This project will take place with an Adult Basic Education organization located in St. Paul, Minnesota that sponsors study circles and other professional development for local educators. This study circle will be open to teachers from different schools throughout the state. In my experience, most attendees of their other workshops are from urban schools in Minnesota, though some come from the more rural areas of Greater Minnesota. I hope to specifically invite BIPOC teachers, but given that I don't know many in Minnesota, I assume most teachers will be white. In the description that is used to promote the study circle, there are working assumptions so participants know this is not a beginning level racial equity workshop that goes no further than defining racism and white privilege. In other words, though it is hard to "grade" people on their antiracist journey, I want to make it clear that if you are just starting out on understanding systemic

racism, implicit bias and white privilege (or not sure any of these exists), then this is not the best workshop for you. The assumptions are as follows:

1. Racism is systemic. White supremacy and systemic racism are leading problems in our education system. These systems are especially harmful to people of color and the English language learners we serve.
2. Identifying and addressing implicit bias is paramount to this work. It is a personal journey, and we all enter this work together from different places.
3. It is not enough to be “not racist”; we have to be intentionally antiracist.
4. We are willing to work in a collaborative environment and to hold each other accountable.

I have a group of colleagues who are willing to be part of the pilot. They have been participating in the bimonthly Antiracist Classroom Praxis group I created in the fall of 2020 because we were all hungry for this very topic. We all expressed needing a place to learn, discuss, practice, and reflect on tangible antiracist practices. This group has been instrumental in helping me focus my research and realize where the gaps are in current antiracist professional development.

The organization we work for is a nonprofit that provides free educational opportunities, such as English, GED, citizenship and computer classes. For the English classes, we have four levels ranging from Prebeginning (CASAS Life and Work Reading 27/28R Test score 153) focusing on phonics with mostly preliterate students learning to read and write for the first time) to Advanced (CASAS Life and Work Reading 187/188R Test score 236) focusing on pre-GED English. There are multiple learning centers around Minneapolis and St. Paul, and each school has a very different population based on the

local community. However, throughout the whole program, most students are from East Africa, Southeast Asia and Latin America. Learning centers also vary in the amount of staff at each site. Each school has a coordinator, but only two schools have paid teaching staff, so the other four have volunteer-led programs. At the organization, a potentially good continuation of this capstone project is to figure out how to take the antiracist practices learned in this study circle and translate it into volunteer-led programs. Unfortunately, this topic is out of the scope of this project, but should definitely be considered for a future project.

If other schools are like ours, teachers are so busy and unfortunately antiracism or equity professional development is not usually part of our paid work time. The organization I work for does not prioritize collaborative professional development time to implement antiracist practices. So, the teachers will have to do this on their own time and it is intensive. That is why I want to make an easy-to-use, practical, tangible PD that is worth the time of educators across the state, and hopefully beyond. The benefit of creating a quality study circle for educators is learning that an antiracist lens is essential in making our schools and classrooms more equitable. Since this lens is not prioritized, our learners, who are usually not white and are immigrants, are generally negatively affected. We cannot afford to keep ignoring the need for this kind of development. Once antiracist practices are implemented, the more equitable classroom will provide a better learning environment for our learners.

Project Description

As described above, this project will consist of a facilitator's guide of a study circle as the chosen professional development approach. The study circle consists of five meetings, two-hours each. The facilitator's guide is located in Google Docs because the program is easy to use and many people are familiar with it. It is also easy to save and to make your own copy if someone decides to adapt the guide for what works best for their group. A copy will also be on the website of the organization doing the pilot. The guide includes instructions for the facilitator to do the study circle from start to finish, including a study circle description for promotion to colleagues, emails to send for preparation of each of the five meetings, the agendas and all materials needed for each meeting, and evaluations.

In each meeting's section of the guide, it begins with the objectives and tasks for the facilitator to do before the meeting. The guide sets up the study circle to be virtual, but it can easily be adapted to in-person meetings. There is an email draft to send to participants, which includes the time and location of the meeting. The email draft also includes the pre-meeting collaborative discussion guide for participants. This discussion guide lists all of the tasks for participants to complete with instructions and spaces to put answers to the reflection questions. The hope of these reflection questions is to prepare participants for deeper discussions during the meeting; lighten the load for participants so that they don't have to answer every question and can read other people's answers and interact if they so choose; and especially give time for internal processors to process before jumping into live discussions. The materials that the reflection questions cover include readings (García, 2017; Hammond, 2015; Okun, 2021) and videos based on

Kendi (2019) and Love (2019). The videos are included in the study circle, rather than the books used in the literature review, to give participants a variety of mediums to learn about these topics.

Next, the facilitator's guide has the agenda for the meeting with detailed instructions and a sample script to match the corresponding Google Slides presentation for the meeting. There is also a description of all activities. Finally, the guide has example evaluations for the participants to fill out.

Assessment

At the end of each meeting, there is an evaluation to answer questions about how effective the professional development was. The evaluation can be added into a Google Form to use virtually, or can be printed off to fill out in-person. The participants will not need to write their name on the questionnaire so they can keep their anonymity. It will also be optional. There will be only a post-workshop questionnaire because I can assume based on my experience with my colleagues that teachers are missing PD like this. The questionnaire will have both open-ended questions and Likert Scale questions (see example below). It is important to use both so that the results can reflect a more quantitative and qualitative understanding of the study circle. The open-ended questions are particularly important because they give participants space to answer with whatever comes to their mind as opposed to a scale based solely on biased questions I have picked. Therefore, participants have more creative freedom to respond. However, the scale questions do have room for additional comments after. An example of assessment questions is as follows:

1. How well do you feel the following objective was met? 1) Articulate a basic definition of translanguaging and the four teaching roles García discusses.
1 (Not met) - 5 (Very clearly met)
Comments about Objective 1?
2. How well do you feel the following objective was met? 2) Prepare to implement the co-learner role into their adult English classroom through discussion and reflection.
1 (Not met) - 5 (Very clearly met)
Comments about Objective 2?
3. How well do you feel the following objective was met? 3) Share 2-3 antiracist strategies from the week's topic they are interested in trying.
1 (Not met) - 5 (Very clearly met)
Comments about Objective 3?
4. How ready are you to do the following objective? 4) Try or deeply reflect on 1 strategy to try in their classroom.
1 (Not ready to do this yet) - 5 (I'm quite ready to do this)
Comments about Objective 4?
5. You did a number of tasks in preparation for this meeting (videos, readings, reflection questions). Which of the pre-meeting tasks and resources did you find to be the most helpful? Why?
6. Which of the pre-meeting tasks and resources did you find to be the least helpful? Why?

7. During the meeting, we had discussions, Jamboards, brainstorming, etc. Which of the in-meeting activities/discussions did you find to be the most helpful? Why?
8. Which of the in-meeting activities/discussions did you find to be the least helpful? Why?
9. What other comments or questions do you have?

Project Timeline

The timeline for the completion of this project is the winter of 2021. Due to scheduling issues, the pilot will take place in five sequential weeks. However, I have previously stated my recommendation for spacing out meetings at least every other week, so that educators have time to prepare for each meeting, try new strategies, and reflect as much as possible. Seeing the meetings back to back in the pilot should be insightful though, in order to see if spacing meetings out was a good recommendation.

Summary

The aim of this capstone project is to answer this research question: *How can educators of adult English learners utilize antiracist praxis like translanguaging to more deeply value learners' linguistic and cultural identities and experiences?* The goal of this chapter was to give an overview of the capstone project for the reader. This project consists of a study circle as a form of professional development where the aim is to provide praxis for antiracist approaches to teaching adult English language learners. Of the five two-hour sessions, each one will have time for teachers to collaborate on how to implement antiracist praxis into their classrooms, try something, and then reflect. The target audience includes my colleagues and fellow educators in Adult Basic Education in Minnesota. The study circle will be hosted by a local organization that does professional

development in the state. The chapter also includes an example of the evaluation that is provided for the pilot participants at the end of each meeting. The pilot of the project will be completed in winter 2021. Chapter Four will conclude the project with an analysis and reflection of the finalized project.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

Overview

The aim of this capstone project is to answer this research question: *How can educators of adult English learners utilize antiracist praxis like translanguaging to more deeply value learners' linguistic and cultural identities and experiences?* The goal of this chapter is to reflect on the capstone paper and project as a whole. The chapter begins with a reflection on what I have learned as a writer and a learner, especially as a student of color within a predominantly white institution who struggled with this writing process. I then reflect on what I learned as a researcher, and how inspired I was by the majority BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) scholars I pulled from so that I can share their wealth of knowledge with fellow educators. Third, I lead into what I have learned from developing this project, one that I am very proud of. Antiracist professional development for adult English educators is very much lacking, and I am excited with how this study circle turned out. I further discuss how this project will be a benefit to the field, how I plan on spreading the word about the project, and what limitations I found while doing the project in hopes that similar projects improve on what I have started.

What I Have Learned as a Writer

A few years ago, I would never have thought I would be able to write a capstone paper. I was drawn to this program because of the project component. I wanted something tangible that I could walk away with and use, but I was terrified of writing the chapters along with it. As I wrote in Chapter One, academic writing is hard for me, which I think has partly to do with me being a person of color from a non-dominant white culture who

has a different cultural way of communicating. I was pleasantly surprised that Chapter One and Four were personal reflections so I could keep my personality in them, but I really struggled with the writing of Chapter Two. I do not think I am necessarily bad at literature reviews, but I do not enjoy it and find the process quite painful. With Chapter Two, I had multiple professors tell me to take out little bits of personal reflections because they do not belong in literature reviews. It feels like the standardization of academic writing goes against every fiber of my being, of how I communicate. Academic writing feels like it sucks all of my personality out of it, and I do not believe that in writing we need to keep a professional distance by not writing our personal thoughts. Okun (2021) argues that objectivity, or “the belief that there is such a thing as being objective or ‘neutral’” or that emotions “should not play a role,” is a white supremacy culture characteristic. In other words, the belief that standard academic writing, being objective, is the superior way of writing. Remaining objective and not making research relateable is what makes academic writing so inaccessible to many people. I believe the research we do should be accessible and interesting to general audiences. There is no objectivity in racism, and if I am researching antiracist practices, I think it strengthens my literature review to explain in a couple of sections why this relates to my personal experience with racism.

My favorite academic books and articles I have read during my schooling, both undergrad and graduate level, include personal stories along with the research. Some of my favorites include Kendi (2019), hooks (1994), Love (2019), Calderón et al. (2020), and Hammond (2015). These personal stories make the research more relevant and they show authenticity and vulnerability, which I think is a huge reason as to why they are my

main sources. I argued in Chapter Two that educators need to disrupt this idea of keeping a professional distance from learners by being authentic and vulnerable (Hammond, 2015). I think academic writing should do the same. In Chapter Two, I also questioned the racist history of standardized English which has been used to exclude students of color like myself. How can I write about questioning the racism in education if I don't also address the capstone process and academic writing? Why does academia uphold these archaic writing standards just because "that is how it has always been"? Why can't there be more conversation about other possibilities? Why is my writing considered not as good because I wanted to include an introduction with a story of how I experienced racism to connect readers to why this research is relevant? We need to ask these questions. That is how we fight the racism in academia and standard English.

Since I unfortunately felt excluded by the process of writing this capstone, I wanted to add a few thoughts on how collectivist and oral traditions can be included and valued just as I argue adult English language classes need (Hammond, 2015). Like objectivity, individualism is a white supremacy culture characteristic (Okun, 2021). So much of the writing process is individualistic and feels isolating. It doesn't have to be that way. We did have some group brainstorming when we started writing, but I encourage us to think how we can expand writing to be more collaborative throughout the whole process. I work best in collaboration with others, like many people from collectivist cultures, and working in isolation feels like it eats at my soul (Hammond, 2015). Even though the capstone is a writing process, oral traditions can be added to facilitate the process making it more culturally responsive (Hammond, 2015). Recently, so well after the beginning stages of writing, a couple of people suggested 'talk to text' dictation

programs to help my writing since I am a verbal processor. I have never thought of this before. As soon as I start writing, my thinking just stops. Something about writing my thoughts down paralyzes me. I have a physical response as soon as I sit down to type. I don't even think of other possibilities because I am regularly reminded that I am a cultural minority and that I think differently than others. Even if I had thought of doing dictation programs to help facilitate my writing, I might not have done it because I would feel too weird or different. The burden of thinking of alternatives cannot be only on me as someone who is in the minority. As an institution, there should be more reflection and conversations to make the capstone process more culturally responsive. That way professors and writing tutors can suggest alternative writing processes for verbal processors like me. I would even like to go further and encourage academia to think of an oral version of the capstone so we do not value the written word over oral traditions (Okun, 2021).

What I Have Learned as a Learner

Finally, I have one other consideration for academia. There should also be praxis, or reflection and action (Freire, 1970), on how BIPOC students experience racism beyond having to write in academic standard English. I did not have a single BIPOC professor. I knew only a couple of other BIPOC students in my whole program. I was never told of additional support, like an affinity group, for BIPOC students. I am so grateful to Hamline for the focus on social justice in this MA TESOL program, especially our sociolinguistics class, but there's more the program can do. The classes can have even more of a justice lens, especially even more conversations about how English has been used as a weapon of colonialism (Motha, 2014); hire more BIPOC professors and make

sure the university addresses white supremacy culture so BIPOC professors feel valued and want to stay; and have more support for BIPOC students, especially so we can grow in community with those who experience racism in the program like we do. For the latter suggestion, I do not think white professors realize the amount of microaggressions I have faced as a BIPOC student. For example, fellow MA TESOL students not understanding what I mean by saying English has been used as a weapon of colonialism (which means that teacher is not prepared to actively disrupt the harmful practices their learners face in their classroom); or having to read my peer reviewer's project who uses neutral language to describe colonialism instead of naming the genocide my ancestors faced (which continues today) as what it is: genocide. It's extremely triggering every time a well-intentioned white teacher tells me they have never thought about the racism their learners face. Therefore, frankly, our teacher training programs need more BIPOC students and better justice-focused training.

All of this I, and other BIPOC students, have to process and deal with while writing a capstone, something most people think is already a hard enough process. I have to include these stories and suggestions because I cannot research antiracist practices in education without discussing the racism I have experienced in the writing of this capstone.

What I Have Learned as a Researcher

I really enjoyed the research process since I got to focus on something I am extremely passionate about. I learned so much. I was intentional about reading mostly BIPOC sources and am amazed and inspired by the BIPOC leaders fighting for liberatory

education. I always knew that Kendi (2019) would be the first source of the literature review to use as the foundational grounding of why I picked antiracist as my main lens. Then, as I learned about liberatory education (hooks, 1994) and abolitionist teaching (Love, 2019), I knew how intersectional all of these frameworks were. I couldn't pick just one. I hope that even though I did not do any of these frameworks the depth they deserve, I at least gave teachers a foundation of justice-focused lenses that all inform each other.

Before officially starting the capstone process, I also knew that I wanted to focus on translanguaging as my main antiracist practice since I used García (2017) for my sociolinguistics paper. I had an epiphany when I saw how beautifully she reimagined the role of teachers. I was a little stuck and was not sure where to go after that though. At the same time, I was reading Hammond (2015) for work, not intending on including it in my capstone since it was not about translanguaging, but then I saw how well the two sources fit together. Though they come from different frameworks, I ended up making my whole project about how they can inform each other under the goal of honoring learners' cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The research process demonstrated how much I enjoy learning about all of the great research out there. I did not feel the need to collect my own data. I just wanted to make a study circle that was teacher-friendly and allowed teachers to explore antiracist praxis without having to find the sources on their own. There is no reason for all of us educators to recreate the wheel while operating in an education system that does not give us enough pay or resources to properly prioritize antiracist practices.

What I Have Learned from Developing this Project

I am very proud of the project I have created. I think the study circle will be of great benefit to other teachers. It will encourage educators to have conversations about being antiracist in the classroom, and provide enough reflection and brainstorming time to figure out how to do that together. My hope for this project is that it, or a similar iteration of it, will become a required training for teachers all over Minnesota and one day the country, including using some of these sources I chose in university teacher training programs. All teachers need to have antiracist professional development, and this study circle is a great starting point.

I will do the study circle through a local organization in St. Paul, Minnesota. Hopefully participants will take what they learned, including the facilitator's guide, which is the final product of the study circle, so that they can continue the conversations with others at their schools. The guide will also be posted on the organization's website for others to download and use at their schools. I am hoping the guide will be easily accessible and easy to use for teachers to adapt to their own context.

I have one surprising finding though after creating this project. I specifically chose the study circle format because it is proven to be much more effective than one-time workshops because there is a continued reflection in order to better implement learnings (Vinogradov, 2012). I recognize in the current educational system, not all educators can commit to a semester-long, or longer, professional development. However, I hope our field can move in the direction where teachers have more time and pay to do longer professional development because five meetings is not enough to do antiracist work. Antiracism is not like learning pronunciation strategies in five meetings. Antiracist

topics take a lot of reflection, and educators need time to wrestle with ideas and come back to them after a while. Antiracism is a lifelong commitment, and educators should have regular professional development on related topics, especially in how to apply what they learn to the classroom. From the agendas I put together, five meetings is also not enough to get through all the material I was hoping to get through, while also allowing for as much collaborative discussion as possible. I think reflective work like this has to slow down to implement real change. This is something I hope I can improve on in the future. I do have a group of colleagues who are taking this study circle and adapting it to a much slower pace to fit their organization's needs for one-hour chunks once or twice a month. This gives them more time to reflect and try antiracist strategies. They plan on breaking the structure even further by allowing flexibility in their plans. If they decide that one meeting was not enough for a topic, then they will extend it to the next meeting. I'm excited to see what that will look like.

Suggestions for Further Research

As mentioned throughout this chapter, I have learned a lot from this capstone paper and project. Based on these findings, I have a few suggestions for further research. First, how is antiracist praxis different from learning teaching strategies (e.g. pronunciation)? Why might a study circle not be enough for antiracist praxis and what would be a better way for educators to do regular antiracist professional development? Second, since a lot of adult English classes are led or assisted by volunteers, how can this research be applied to volunteer professional development? Third, I only began to scratch the surface of translanguaging theory, so I hope to especially delve more into research done by Nelson Flores. I only recently learned more about his work, and realized I do not

push the concept of multilingualism and translanguaging enough in this project. Fourth, this project also only began to scratch the surface of decolonization, and I hope I can devote a future project to this lens which is particularly important to me as an Indigenous person. Fifth, it would be interesting to see how one of García's (2017) translanguaging teacher roles could be narrowed in on. This project stayed fairly general to cover all four roles, but one role could certainly be looked at more closely.

Conclusion

I will end with my hopes for this capstone project and English education. I hope that English educators all over the world will acknowledge the harm English education has and does inflict. I hope that once this is acknowledged, educators intentionally and actively commit to antiracist and decolonizing teaching praxis. I hope more educators commit to being learners' co-conspirators. I hope this capstone project is the first step for many and is followed by even more PD opportunities focusing on antiracism. I hope my ancestors are proud of me for working to prevent the same harm they survived. And most of all, I hope learners know that all of their humanity, all of their identities, are valued and embraced in the classrooms they join.

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