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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Non-Plus Ultra Ideologies in Multilingual Teacher Education Research: Towards Real Inclusion

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Abstract

In this duo autoethnography, we reflect on the ideologies prevailing in the United States regarding the use of English as the de facto academic language. In a parallel manner, we analyze the ideologies embedded in the rejection of academic variations in other languages (i.e., Spanish and Mandarin). We collected data from 2016 to 2023 in physical and digital spaces while interacting with U.S. academia. To analyze our experiences, we used a framework that combined critical literacies and language ideologies. We found the rejection of non-English academic domains related to structural and epistemological ideologies present in some U.S. institutions and among scholars. We argue that the intersection of imperial and linguistic ideologies, which simultaneously place U.S. epistemologies as superior, resembles larger structural patterns of ideologies that imply that there is no more beyond the United States and western borders—or, in other words, *non-plus ultra* ideologies.

Keywords

critical literacies; duo autoethnography; Global South; language ideologies; multilingual education

INTRODUCTION

We, the authors, live in the borderlands. From our offices, we can see meandering resacas—small water channels from the Rio Grande, parsing the landscape. From our classrooms, we can see the Mexican-U.S. border: We watch the border patrol surveilling *la frontera*. Our university is not physically far from a Mexican university (around 5 kms/2.6 miles from our campus to theirs), but it is very far from it in terms of ontologies and epistemologies. To explain, although our campus is closer to Mexico than to any other U.S. university, we, U.S.-centered academia, have created a *knowledge wall* in which we use scholarly work that is almost entirely created within U.S. borders. Ironically, our student body is mainly composed of transnational and translingual communities, many of whom live, study, work, and interact with multilingual individuals on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border—that is, we serve students who disrupt fixed epistemological and ontological notions with their fluid and permeable linguistic and cultural identities (Zhou & Martinez-Prieto, 2023).

Scholars around the globe (i.e., Gao & Zheng, 2020; Kuteeva, 2020; Piller et al., 2022; Selvi, 2024) have addressed the epistemological walls that transnational academics and students, particularly those coming from the Global South, face when dealing with western hegemonic systems of oppression and exclusion. In Northen Europe, for example, Kuteeva (2011, 2020) has extensively explained the tensions that scholars experience when English is understood as the *de facto* language for academic development. In China, Gao and Zheng (2020) have addressed the socio-political challenges that Chinese multilingual scholars face when their institutions aspire to become elite universities, particularly as their linguistic autonomy is relegated to institutional goals. Recently, Piller et al. (2022) and Selvi (2024) have questioned the peripheral exclusion of scholars who do not align with western cultural and linguistic practices, in which the term *decoloniality* has had a superficial conception by mainstream academics in applied linguistics; namely, that the apparatus in academia perpetuates a systematic discrimination of non-western scholars.

The present work aims to contribute to current academic discussions by critically deconstructing some superficial practices descriptive of U.S. academia at the institutional and individual levels. In other words, in this manuscript we illustrate how the (so-called) inclusive practices by members of western academia can also diminish other linguistic, cultural, and epistemological perspectives mirroring larger structural patterns (i.e., U.S. and western imperialism). We must clarify that this manuscript might superficially seem like an attack against mainstream scholars who advocate for the recognition of home literacies and languages. Likewise, this duo autoethnography might also seem to undermine linguistic emancipation of multilingual communities in the United States. However, this is not our intention. Our hope is that the experiences narrated in this duo autoethnography can provide a different perspective regarding U.S.-centered academic practices towards a deeper understanding of inclusion.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The main objective of this article is to reveal some of the ideologies embedded in some communities of U.S. scholars who work in multilingual education. For this reason, this duo autoethnography utilizes two intertwined frameworks: critical literacies and language ideologies. While current scholarship regarding the intersection of international scholars, western academic practices, and language learning has focused on language ideologies (i.e., Yazan, 2019; Yueh & Pariyadath, 2023; Zacharias, 2020), we believe this framework can be complemented by notions of critical literacies, as this latter perspective is rather focused on

revealing ideologies embedded in multilingual education. We frame our theoretical decision in the fact that language ideologies "refer to both language beliefs and their enactment in everyday language practices" (Yazan, 2019, p. 35), and that critical literacies have the ultimate goal of dignifying alternative literacies (Trigos-Carrillo et al., 2021) by unveiling "fixed" truths in the educational context. That is, our theoretical choices will serve to analyze linguistic interactions which refer to greater power structures, specifically in the way these ideologies are related to U.S. ethnocentrism and self-superiority. We examine the ways larger macro-cultural or societal/institutional forces manifest these ideologies, and how micro-cultural or interpersonal ideologies function as gatekeepers in academia to preserve and stiffen those ways of thinking.

After we discuss the relevance of critical literacies and language ideologies, we will situate the present investigation *vis-à-vis* current scholarship about transnational scholars and their experiences in the United States.

Critical Literacies

Critical literacies have long been present in multilingual education research. From the seminal works of Morgan and Ramanathan (2005), who proposed a bridge between local and global complexities in the second language teaching process, to the recent work of Martínez-Prieto (2024b), who used this framework to examine the resistance of Mexican language teachers against the violent imposition of neoliberalism in this country, the utilization of critical literacies have been constant in this research arena (Pennycook, 2021).

Before we explain the main tenets of critical literacies, we would like to exemplify what we mean by ideologies embedded in U.S. academia by using a note from the first author's journal. To contextualize, David was the teaching assistant of a group of graduate/undergraduate students. Although we were affiliated with U.S. universities, many of us were Mexican citizens:

> My U.S. professors advocate for minorities and bilingual education in the U.S. They are explicit about it. I admire their work. However, when in Mexico, in our study abroad program [in Oaxaca], they asked us [individuals with the Mexican citizenship] not to vote in the Mexican presidential elections which will take place during the study abroad program. They also warned me not to participate in any political demonstration... If we were in the U.S., how would they react if someone asked these professors not to vote? How would they react if someone tried to constrain any political demonstrations even after working hours? Are they aware that they are violating our most fundamental rights as citizens of this country [Mexico]? In spite of my affiliation with a U.S. university, I am not sure my professors understand that U.S. institutions need to adapt to local laws and regulations (David's reflective journal, May 2018).

This journal passage exemplifies the way some academics in the United States can simultaneously advocate for multilingual minorities and demonstrate little awareness of their own ethnocentrism. In this case, by bypassing the laws and rights of citizens of other countries, these scholars are perpetuating ideologies that place U.S. institutions as superior without acknowledging the civil rights of locals—Mexican national students, in this case. Unfortunately, these scholars did not provide any further explanation for this behavior. *In the United States*, however, the same professors would encourage political demonstrations and social action towards the promotion of bilingualism.

Critical literacy scholars base their work on the ideas of structural (i.e., Karl Marx's) and post structural theories (i.e., Pierre Bourdieu's) to explain how literacy practices promote regimes of signification (Giroux, 1992), in which certain meanings are imposed through formal education. Thus, scholars such as Apple (2009) and Luke (1997) explained how the elites foster certain ideologies in which non-western literacy practices are considered "threatening to the character of American policy, contrary to the merits of individualism, and disrespectful of the high culture of the West" (Giroux, 1992, p. 5). More recently, scholars have used critical literacies with the goal of promoting alternative literacies, such as the ones created in Latin America and Africa (Trigos-Carrillo et al., 2021). In simply terms, critical literacies unmask hidden ideologies which, otherwise, would be understood as neutral towards the achievement of human dignity and the recognition of alternative epistemologies and knowledge, such as those created in the Global South.

Scholars who have analyzed ideologies embedded in education have focused on the impact of curricula among students (i.e., Gee & Gee, 2007; Martínez-Prieto, 2020, 2023; Zhou, 2023), or administrators (i.e., Ross & Vinson, 2014). Critical literacies have also examined prevalent ideologies among U.S. scholars and educators, particularly in terms of neoliberalism, or the socio-economic and cultural theory that promotes free market (Mehta et al., 2021), neo-colonialism/imperialism[1], or "the way that one country exercises power over another, whether through settlement, sovereignty, or indirect mechanisms of control" (Kohn & Kavita, 2024, p. 1), as well as ethnocentrism, which relates to the lack of willingness and acknowledgement of

[1] We must clarify that we use the terms neocolonialism and imperialism exchangeably. Our decision is based on the fact that both processes relate to the domination of one nation over other at the economic, cultural, political and social levels (Harvey, 2003). Particularly, at the late 20th and early 20th century, both processes are related to the accumulation of economic, social, and cultural capital at the cost of others' dispossession. However, several authors refer to these process as two separate ones, mainly depending on their epistemological perspectives, such as political, anthropological or educational ones (see, for example, Kohn & Kavita, 2023).

what "others" do outside an specific space, either physical or imaginary (Martínez-Prieto, 2020; 2024b).

Critical literacies scholars have focused on the impact of embedded ideologies in education. For example, Ross and Vinson (2014) questioned how teachers have blindly adopted neoliberal practices as educational guiding practices, such as the adoption of standardized tests. In a more critical tone, Chatterjee and Maira (2014) criticized the imperial orientation of U.S. universities in which scholars become aligned in the promotion of U.S. superiority and hegemony as a global superpower. In terms of multilingual education, Macedo (2000) and Macedo and Bartolomé (2014) emphasized the superficial advocation for multilingual education in the United States. Pertinent to this duo autoethnography is Macedo and Bartolomé's (2014) critique of the neocolonial orientation of U.S. multilingual education, in which English becomes the language of science, and the other languages are ranked as secondary.

Language Ideologies

To explain the origin of the importance of language ideologies in western academia, particularly the one situated in the United States, Piller (2015) referred to the work of Silverstein (1979) as pivotal in the recognition of the relationship between language use and social organization. However, probably the most cited definition of language ideologies is Kroskrity's (2004), who described them as "beliefs or feelings about languages used in their social worlds" (p. 498) in terms of political and economic interests of certain individuals. More recently, scholars such as Palmer et al. (2019) have emphasized that while language ideologies are enacted, they are also challenged and in constant change.

As most conscious and unconscious linguistic choices are usually guided by ideological constructs at the societal (i.e., language policies), community (i.e., family), and individual levels, language ideologies, as a framework, have been used to examine different intersections in language teaching. Scholars, as agentic individuals, construct one reified portrayal of the world to which others need to aspire and "saturate scholarship with the result that, intentionally or not, the results of expertise in language study have contributed to formulating and legitimating (and sometimes undermining) political borders and hierarchies, including those of race, gender, and sexuality, and claims to national pasts" (Gal, 2023, p. 3). In this context, the present manuscript examines some language ideologies embedded in U.S. academia which,

while liberating, can simultaneously deem the academic production from other countries as inferior.

Linguistic Domain and Academic Language

Some of the language ideologies we analyze in this article problematize notions of academic domains in languages other than English. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), linguistic domain as a re-occurrent and goal-oriented contexts in which participants use language to communicate with others for which language is used in a similar manner (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). In other words, linguistic domains refer to the familiarity and linguistic competences of speakers of certain languages depending on their individual trajectories. Nevertheless, despite its wider dissemination in academia, the Hallidayan definition of linguistic domain has been contested by a growing body of scholarship, particularly from scholars who have experienced or witnessed segregation due to their linguistic identities in and affiliations to the Global South (i.e., Navarro et al., 2023). In this regard, Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) concept of linguistic domain hinders the socio, political, and cultural struggles that non-western scholars have faced in a systematic manner, particularly when it comes to the ideological and cultural biases involving valid notions of linguistic and epistemological practices.

In the arena of bilingual Spanish/English education in the United States, the concept of what counts as "academic language" for Spanish speaking populations has been addressed from different angles. For example, regarding academic variations of Spanish, Flores and Rosa (2015) and Flores (2019) explained that the use of academic Spanish reproduces language ideologies that favor European colonialism and white superiority. For them, promoting academic Spanish justifies the maintenance of white supremacy. From a different perspective, other scholars have listed the benefits of learning academic variations of other languages (Guerrero & Guerrero, 2008, 2017; Guerrero, 2021; Martínez & Martín, 2018), especially as this specific academic domain can provide more opportunities for professional development.

International Scholars in U.S. academia

To contribute to current discussions, this duo autoethnography aims to reveal some ideologies that prevail amongst some members of U.S. academia at the intersection of language, imperialism, and ethnocentric perspectives. Particularly in the last decade, international/transnational scholars who are active members of U.S. academia have created

spaces to examine their own experiences and illustrate the embedded challenges, violence, and tensions they have faced because of their linguistic, epistemological, and national origin.

Most of these investigations are based on (collaborative) autoethnographies. For example, Jain et al. (2021) explained the challenges they have faced as transnational scholars regarding the rejection of non-western epistemologies embedded in U.S. academia, along with how authors were sometimes excluded to the academic peripheries of their areas of concentration because of their international origin. In a similar pattern, Yueh and Pariyadath (2023) shed light on several examples of academic and linguistic discrimination they have experienced in U.S. academic contexts because of their origin and "non-native" status. Yazan et al. (2023) and Yazan (2019) explained the identity negotiations that international academics engage in towards the achievement of self, academic, and linguistic legitimacy. We aim to contribute to the current discussion by explaining the relationship between language ideologies and societal aspects embedded in U.S. academia. To this end, we analyze the intersection of ethnocentric and imperial positions frequently present in U.S. academia which, while conducted in the name of social justice, perpetuate notions that diminish other languages and deem foreign academic knowledge as illegitimate.

METHODS

Design

This study is a duo autoethnography spanning the period from 2016 to 2023. The use of autoethnographies as methodological tools for self-reflection and critical analysis has been highlighted by scholars (i.e., Canagarajah, 2012; Vitanova, 2010; Yazan, 2019), who have discussed their benefits and drawbacks. More specifically, the use of duo autoethnographies has gained recent recognition within applied-linguistics scholarship, mainly due to its hybridity and flexibility (Keleş, 2022). International scholars who have attained professional development in the United States have examined their experiences as transnational and "non-native" English speakers while navigating the realm of academia in the United States. In this context, current research in this area has addressed the resistance towards non-western epistemologies (Jain et al., 2021), professional tensions (Yazan et al., 2023), the native and non-native dichotomy (Yazan, 2019), and the linguistic tensions that multicultural academics encounter in the United States (Rodríguez-Mojica et al., 2019).

In particular, this study adopts the approaches proposed by Hickey and Austin (2007) and Lowe and Lawrence (2020). From Hickey and Austin (2007), we embraced the idea that duo

autoethnographies relate to an "individual-societal" relationship (p. 2); in other words, the researchers take themselves as the center of the social interaction, for which they offer their perspective as agentic and critical members of it. From Lowe and Lawrence (2020), we adopted the intersectional purpose of duo autoethnographies—or the way that duo autoethnographers' experiences occur as part of larger and intersectional spaces.

While this manuscript was not originally conceived as a duo autoethnography, in 2023, we realized that our individual autoethnographies were similar as we shared comparable experiences as immigrants and members of U.S. academia. In view of this, in 2023, we started an iterative process—a process of reflexivity and meaning making (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009)—so we could make sense of our experiences along with other events that we faced while navigating U.S. scholarly contexts. By mutually narrating our experiences to each other, we began a dialogic, contextualizing, and meaning-making process which transformed this research from two autoethnographies to a duo autoethnography.

The reasons for choosing a duo autoethnography were also based on some of the ethical dilemmas Lapadat (2017) listed to be inherent to autoethnographies, such as the fact that an autoethnography can deviate to isolating, self-indulgent and rigor-lacking research. In other words, our dialogue made us aware of our roles as ethnographers, especially considering that "ethnography [is] not an innocent practice" (Denzin, 2006, p. 422) and that our own biased perspectives could obscure our coding and data analysis. We probably find that the most salient advantage of using a duo autoethnography is our experiences as members—yet still "outsiders" of U.S. academia, due to our transnational trajectories and backgrounds. This *insider/outsider position* (Kusow, 2003) allowed us to unveil some linguistic behaviors that we consider discriminatory, but that some local scholars would describe as emancipatory. In this regard, the research question that guided the design of our study was: What are some intrinsic values, behaviors, and ideologies prevalent in U.S. academia that create a "knowledge wall" amongst multilingual scholars?

Positionalities

David identifies as a Mexican (trans)national. He was formally educated in Mexico, Australia, and the United States. Highly influenced by Freire's ideas, the first author has advocated for critical thinking and the respect for diversity. He has taught in multilingual teacher preparation programs in the United States and Mexico for over 15 years. Because of his experience as a student and professor in both countries, he has always attempted to incorporate pedagogies and

epistemologies originated in the Global South. However, he constantly found himself being labeled as "too Mexican" for U.S. faculty, or "*demasiado [too] gringo*", in Mexico. In the borderlands, however, he has found a place in which rigid notions of national belonging are more flexible and permeable.

Xiaodi identifies as a 1.5 generation U.S.-Chinese transnational. After completing the first grade in China, he came to the U.S. to reunite with his mother and has attained all of his subsequent formal education in the United States. As a transnational, Xiaodi straddles dual allegiances and identifications. He has always been immersed in a shifting context of multiple cultures, multiple languages, and multiple nations, as he frequently travels abroad with his wife and two children. In his Chinese-American home, he also engages with components of the Mexican culture that characterize the Rio Grande Valley (particularly the food and festivities), as well as the Spanish language, which he is learning. Those multiplicities forever dialogically color his identity. Xiaodi is academically guided predominantly by Bakhtinian dialogism in how he conceives of cultures and languages. For instance, his present work in translanguaging is manifestation of that dialogism in terms of named languages. He has taught in China and the U.S. for nearly 20 years, and in his instruction, he tries to prioritize the coexistence of the multiple voices of students, teachers, and scholars.

Together, David and Xiaodi created a critical and polyphonic interpretation of their own experiences, in which the authors mutually and dialogically initiated discussions on the themes, meanings, and limitations of their own experiences (Burleigh & Burm, 2022).

Instruments

This duo autoethnography drew from the authors' reflective journals between 2016 and 2023. Reflective journals are instruments to analyze one's own thoughts, feelings, and experiences regarding new learning experiences (Cheng, 2017). As such, they are pedagogical tools that allow for the development of self-awareness and ownership of the learning process (O'Connell & Dyment, 2011). Besides their academic and research benefits, we concluded that writing reflective journals has afforded therapeutic benefits for us; in them, we have stated our personal changes, frustrations, achievements, and contentions while navigating academic contexts. Both of us also agreed on the circumstances in which we wrote the reflective journals that make up this manuscript. Such entries were written when the researchers experienced something that made them think or reconsider their value as scholars in the field, their language identity, or their worth as educators. Our reflective journals were composed either weekly, or at times,

monthly, over the span of seven and a half years. They were both kept digitally in MS Word on the researchers' laptops.

Context

Some of the interactions that are analyzed in this article occurred in physical spaces, while others occurred in digital spaces. While David wrote these journals in real time as he experienced the events when teaching in the United States as well as during his visiting professorship in Mexico, Xiaodi wrote them when he returned to the U.S. to attain his Ph.D. in Georgia after completing his teaching duties in China, and through his subsequent experience working in Georgia and Texas. As current colleagues, this duo autoethnography also includes contexts in which the authors shared spaces, particularly during the period between 2021 and 2023.

Data Analysis

In the spring and fall of 2023, we first discussed our experiences as transnational, translingual, and transcultural scholars in the United States in several casual meetings. During these meetings, we confronted our ideologies and biases, and found that, regardless of our former training and scholarly experience, our experiences and challenges were common. We also felt our students—future multilingual teachers—were somehow being exposed to a false version of inclusion that had little connection to their background. In light of this, we shared our reflexive journals with each other and met several times to contextualize and make sense of our personal experiences. By contextualizing these experiences, we created new layers of meaning which we, individually, had not considered.

After we made sense of the context of our individual interactions, we analyzed our reflexive journals' data in different coding cycles, as per Saldaña (2009). In our first phase of coding—inductive coding—we dissected data using a unit of analysis that included words, sentences, or phrases that indexed language ideologies about the academic use of English as well as other languages.

We utilized current research regarding language ideologies and critical literacies as reference for the second round of coding. This round of coding allowed us to refine categories and made us realize that some ideologies representing the promotion of home languages also implied a rejection to any epistemology that was not U.S.-centered. In our final round of coding—axial coding—we identified the relationships between our themes and subthemes. We

found that our data had the following overarching themes: "Conflicting Ideologies in the Achievement of Social Justice", "Academic Domain in Other Languages", "Institutional Policies and Individual Ideologies", "U.S. Ethnocentrism", and "The Perpetuation of English as a Lingua Franca."

RESULTS

Conflicting Ideologies in the Achievement of Social Justice

As we discussed earlier in this manuscript, one of the most salient characteristics we—as multilingual education scholars—find in the United States is the explicit goal to pursue social justice for communities which have experienced, or are experiencing, historical segregation. Unlike the other countries where we taught and studied, there is consistent restatement of this goal among U.S. scholars:

> I, Xiaodi, began teaching middle school in Florida before transitioning to a university in China. After teaching English in China for three years, I then returned to the United States for my doctoral studies in English education. What I realized about the English language abroad, especially in China, was the social capital tied to the vernacular, a foreign language. Here in the United States, however, I have found no such veneration of foreign languages; it was as if all non-English languages were of a lesser value. In none of my courses are my other languages regarded as conduits of learning. Even as I embark on a doctoral journey into this field, I feel a need to advocate for other languages, not just those that I speak, but all of those that my students and future students speak. As I venture deeper onto this academic path, I feel a narrowing of my voice in order to match others' expectations—what others deem worthy—even as they claim a tolerance and veneration of differences. (Xiaodi's reflective journal, June 2016).

When Xiaodi reflected on his teaching experiences in both contexts, he realized the status of English as a global force. Even in China, the English language was a mark of social capital and status (Li, 2020). With regards to academia in general, he later learned there was a similar hierarchy of named languages, with English at the pinnacle (Hohti & Truman, 2021). Cognitive dissonance resulted from the progressive instruction he was hearing in his doctoral courses, which celebrated multilingualism and multiculturalism, and the boundaries he came up against in response to his academic writing. For instance, when he would write academic papers with Spanish and Mandarin phrases or sentences to showcase the beauty and effectiveness of translanguaging, professors and journal editors alike would instead ask for an English-only copy. He felt a distillation of the manner in which he linguistically engaged with scholarship.

As highlighted by Xiaodi, while navigating academia in different countries, we always admired the explicit enunciation of social justice principles embedded in multilingual education

programs in the United States. We have found that multilingual education scholars in this country are usually clear about the emancipatory objectives of heritage speakers (or speakers who learned a language in non-academic contexts, such as with their families or communities). However, some language ideologies become problematic when referring to academic variations of other languages (i.e., Spanish or Mandarin). While we apparently conceived the rejection of the academic/ linguistic domain as a way to legitimize the linguistic practices of heritage and immigrant speakers—as discussed in current research (i.e., Flores, 2019; Rodríguez-Mojica et al., 2019)—we eventually realized that referring to these linguistic variations in other languages was considered taboo amongst some scholars.

For example, during his doctoral studies, David attempted to write a paper to discuss the importance of academic variations of Spanish towards understanding epistemologies created outside of the United States. He found that the discussion of this topic could have negative repercussions for his professor:

> I approached Dr. Simpson (pseudonym) to ask her about my final project for the class: I wanted to discuss the way academic Spanish was sometimes treated as a second-class language among educators…She liked the idea and even suggested that we should write together…I was so happy! 3 hours later, however, she changed her mind. "See, I don't have tenure yet and I'm not sure about the political repercussions of it [writing a paper to analyze academic Spanish] in our department. Not many people [scholars] like that. I think it is better if I do not write with you, but you can still submit your paper for this class" (David's reflective journal, April 2018).

In this interaction, Dr. Simpson was explicit about some language ideologies prevailing in U.S. academia, for which she was selective of the kind of investigations that would help her towards tenure. That is, for Dr. Simpson, critically analyzing the role of academic Spanish would have negative repercussions in her career. We feel that her attitude was based on current scholarship in multilingual education in the United States, in which scholars embrace linguistic practices of immigrant/heritage speakers (i.e., Flores and Rosa, 2015). In other words, as exemplified in our review of literature, current scholarship understands the rejection of academic linguistic variations as a reaction against language ideologies which deem home linguistic practices as inferior. As immigrants and members of the borderlands, we commend this stance. However, when trying to promote scholarship that also legitimizes academic variations of our home languages, we have been advised to move away from any "colonial" linguistic practices that demerit native-linguistic traditions of immigrant communities—which paradoxically perpetuates the hegemonic role of English in academia. This perpetuation was salient later in the semester, when David asked Dr. Simpson why she did not publish articles in Spanish. Dr.

Simpson, who was proficient in Spanish and English, expressed her concerns again: "Because if I write in Spanish, no one would cite me, and I need citations to get my tenure" (David's reflective journal, May 2, 2018).

After one of these academic exchanges where David discussed some feedback he received for an article, he wrote:

> Sometimes, U.S. academia is not the land of freedom and reflection. In the attempts to break with the current status quo, scholars create a new (and probably just as rigid) status quo which only considers the U.S. as the universal producer of knowledge…there are some ideological mainstreams, and it seems that any dissident voice is suppressed…[They] keep suggesting that I use a different framework, a framework created and validated by scholars in the United States… In a way, they do not want me to use (or even mention!) scholarship in other languages. Instead, [they recommend] I should use *their* frameworks to only validate students' home practices…*their* advice, *their* frameworks, and the scholars they recommend, all of which, while ironically written in academic English, talk about multilingual/transnational populations. (David's reflective journal, December 2020)

In the first author's experience, some U.S. scholars aim to validate their own ideologies and experiences as if these were the only way in which to achieve social justice. To illustrate, many of these scholars advocate for the recognition of immigrants' linguistic practices in the academic world. However, in their attempts to legitimize their own and their students' linguistic experiences, they ironically perpetuate language ideologies which favor the use of English as lingua franca in academia, and any linguistic dissidence—or even remote mention of the benefits of academic variations of other languages—is silenced with totalitarian English language sentences. Concerningly, the ultimate goal of creating a more egalitarian society for multilingual communities within the United States appears to suppress any approaches to understanding scientific knowledge produced in other languages or other places. This ideological stance contributes to the reproduction of the status quo by d*e facto* establishing English as the dominant language for academic discussions and scientific production.

Current scholarship legitimizes the use of language variations learned at home (see Sánchez & Machado-Casas, 2009). Such academic responses have influenced the adoption of stances aimed at legitimizing home linguistic practices—those that validate the linguistic variations of immigrant communities in the United States, particularly of their home languages. In this context, academic variations of other languages are thought to subjugate home heritage languages (Anzaldúa, 2012; Rosa, 2016) as the latter do not follow academic and prescriptive conventions. For this reason, academic domain in languages other than English is, many times, rejected by U.S. academia. In this respect, transnational/international scholars have emphasized

that non-western epistemologies are usually rejected among U.S. scholars (Jain et al., 2021). From a critical literacies lens, our experiences problematize that some language ideologies prevalent among multilingual educators in the United States somehow resemble the hegemonic perspective in which U.S. institutions and its participants—while apparently liberating—usually disregard the fact that academic knowledge can be produced in other places. These ideologies perpetuate the idea that academic variations of languages other than English—as in the case of Dr. Simpson—encounter structural barriers that leave little opportunity to challenge English dominance in academia.

Ethnocentric and Superiority Perspectives

In attempting to create a more just society, we, U.S.-based scholars, tend to isolate our academic practices, focusing solely on what happens in our communities in the United States. In doing so, we sometimes overlook the transnational bonds of the communities we serve. As an example, in 2020, a group of scholars and David submitted a paper analyzing translanguaging practices of students educated in the United States, but who, because of voluntary or forced return migration, worked as language teachers in Mexico. The paper was immediately rejected. When deciding to ask the reasons for such rejection, David reflected:

> I was not really surprised when I read the guest editors' reply. Our paper analyzed pre-service teachers who were educated in the U.S. but who continued their professional development in Mexico. However, although not explicitly mentioned in the call for proposals, for the guest editors, these bilingual pre-service teachers were not part of the larger definition of Latino pre-service teachers, for which they pointed out that our paper was a better fit for a Mexican journal…In a similar vein, they listed that our Spanish writing did not use the "inclusive" term of "Latina/o/x" as one of the reasons for which our paper did not advance to peer review. (David's reflective journal, April 2021)

In the interaction of David with a bilingual education scholar in the United States, he confronted the ethnocentrism of U.S. academia. The guest editors rejected a paper because, once transnationals left the United States, the editors did not consider them "Latino" (or Latina/o/x). Instead, the editors suggested the paper would be better accepted in another journal, one in Mexico. While we, the authors, acknowledge that manuscript rejection is part of the academic publication process, both of us were surprised by the argument the editors used to reject this article. Interestingly, the editors also noted that our article did not follow what they considered to be acceptable academic conventions in Spanish, as David's team did not include the "x" to replace the "o" in the word "Latino," regardless of the phonological, morphological and semantic challenges that terms as Latinx/a/o create among Spanish-speaking populations

(Martínez-Prieto, 2019). We understand the editors' comment to be based on the notion that U.S. scholars can impose linguistic features on other scholars, even with regard to the latter's home languages.

In a similar manner, after attending a conference that featured a renowned multilingual education scholar in the United States, we noticed that:

> One of the most shocking moments we experienced during this bilingual conference was when one of the speakers reflected on his time in Mexico. He described it as a "monolingual country" … A monolingual country! He continued narrating his trajectory as a heritage speaker and the challenges he faced with European and white colonial linguistic practices of (Spanish-speaking) discrimination. With some exceptions, his speech was completely in English. Is he aware of the colonial history of the English language? Is he aware of the thousands of indigenous communities who speak more than 2 languages in Mexico? (David's reflective journal, February 2022).

As David reflected on his journal, a concerning behavior among some U.S. bilingual education scholars involves their superficial knowledge of other cultures and countries. Rather than ascertaining a holistic knowledge of Latin American culture, based on piecemeal data, some scholars disseminate ideologies that place the United States as superior to other countries—in this case, the speaker was not aware that at least 68 languages are spoken in Mexico. For many multilingual education scholars based in the United States, colonialism is exclusively about European practices of linguistic prescriptivism. In a rather ethnocentric point of view, they ignore that their ideologies create a new form of hegemony—the one enacted and reproduced within U.S. institutions. In our experiences, disseminating incomplete information and rejecting academic literacies created in other countries is not unusual among some multilingual members of U.S. academia. More concerningly, in their (our) attempts to reject any colonial interference in their scholarly work, some U.S.-based scholars carry out thoughtless and insensitive actions that instead validate their ethnocentric perspectives.

When corresponding with an author while working as a managing editor of a bilingual journal, David wrote:

> In correspondence with a scholar, I referred to some Spanish language guidelines to inclusive language edited by the University of Barcelona…The scholar replied that referring to a European university was "colonial". His answer was articulated in English. Are scholars aware that English is the language of current neocolonialism? Don't they know that English was also the language of the British empire, one of the most expansive and hegemonic the world has ever seen? Are they aware of the neocolonialism we enact as members of U.S. institutions? When convenient, some scholars bypass their own colonial ideologies and, instead, reject any idea by carelessly referring to ideas of monolithic European colonialism to impose their own ideologies on others (David's reflective journal, March 2021)

As in this case, regardless of the historical linguistic resistance of some communities in Europe (such as the Catalonian nation, where the University of Barcelona is located), some bilingual education scholars, when convenient, play the European monolithic colonialism card—despite the fact that they, by using the English language and by rejecting other forms of literacy, are perpetuating a new form of academic neocolonialism, one that is supported by the imperial power of the United States. The relegation of non-English languages to a private or domestic domain perpetuates the acceptance of English as the sole academic lingua franca in the United States.

The use, legitimization, and execution of what counts as valid knowledge does not occur in a vacuum. In fact, what qualifies as academic knowledge represents a form of power and ideological impositions (Salaita, 2015). Thus, by promoting—superficially revolutionary and emancipatory—fallacies about Latin America and Europe, some scholars erase centuries of resistance to linguist, social, and military oppression—as in the case of Catalonia (Mar-Molinero, 2002) or of Mexican indigenous and multilingual nations (León-Portilla, 2004).

Current duo autoethnographies of transnational scholars have highlighted the difficulties that they have faced to gain legitimacy with their academic communities (i.e., Yazan, 2019; Yazan et al., 2023). In light of this and based on our research on imperialism and language education (Martínez-Prieto, 2020; 2024b), we have adopted the Latin term *non-plus ultra*, which the Roman empire utilized to express that there is *nothing more* worth exploring beyond the empire's borders. We find this term useful to examine the ideologies that discriminate against the epistemologies, languages, and individuals that do not align with *mainstream inclusion* in western academia. Thus, we argue that the intersection of language and epistemological exclusion should be understood as part of a phenomenon that replicates imperial notions of dominance and superiority of scholars affiliated and aligned with the Global North.

Superficial "Inclusion" and English Language Hegemony

While U.S. academia (superficially) accepts multilingualism, this acceptance is sometimes far from being a reality. That is, whereas the use of a native linguistic domain in languages other than English is often tolerated, some U.S. scholars question the linguistic proficiency of scholars deemed "non-native" speakers of English, based on their ethnic origin. In this regard, Xiaodi experienced such biases in his submissions for publications:

> When my manuscript was sent in a blind review, comments pertaining to the language would generally be positive, like "well-written" and "great figurative language." However, when the editors gave comments, because they were aware of my name and Chinese background, they would be less positive on the language, and comment about the lack of refinement. Editors when they know my identity have even commented how those same wordings praised by blind-reviewers were now "common errors made by non-native speakers." Editors have gone line by line with some of his manuscripts to "correct" this "accented English." (Xiaodi's reflective journal, May 2020).

Xiaodi's experience in the manuscript submission process reflects the biases of majority culture gatekeepers in academia, illustrating the problems with what gets published and admitted into the academic canon. Concerningly, his experience reveals the embedded English nativism that some scholars still face because of their ethnic or racial origin, despite living for most of his life in the U.S. and having English as his first language. Xiaodi's experience is similar to other scholars' challenges within U.S. academia (i.e., Yueh & Pariyadath, 2023).

These encounters are similar to the institutional policies David faced while teaching classes in English and Spanish between 2016 and 2018: "English for Academic Purposes" and "Fundamentos de la Educación Bilingüe" [Foundations of Bilingual Education]. The first class, taught in English, sought to prepare already-linguistically proficient international students in academic English. The second was a course which served as an introduction to bilingual education, taught in Spanish, and designed for bilingual (Spanish/English) pre-service teachers. Both classes were offered by the same Bilingual Education Department and represented a clear example of the subjugation of non-English languages within U.S. academic settings:

> Last semester, I taught English learners. They came from all around the world. Because they did not score high enough in their language tests, they needed to take an academic English class. In some cases, the English level of my students was excellent; some students even came from countries where English is the official language! In contrast, anyone, literally anyone, who claims to be a Spanish speaker, can enroll in my [Fundamentos de la Educación Bilingüe] class (David's reflective journal, August 2017).

David's contrasting experiences teaching two classes within the same institution show how English superiority works at the institutional level. On the one hand, students who desired to take classes where content was taught in English being punitively evaluated and further requested to take additional academic English classes, even after demonstrating high scores on the TOEFL IBT. Some of these students came from countries such as Nigeria, where English is the official language in schools. In contrast, anyone who considered themselves a Spanish speaker was allowed to take a content class which, in David's perspective, was challenging even for students who were proficient in this specific linguistic domain.

While current literature has analyzed the impact of discriminatory institutional policies among Spanish heritage speakers in the United States (see Showstack & Guzman, 2020), these policies can also be interpreted to subjugate non-English languages to a less-relevant status. The relegation of academic variations of other-than-English languages to inferior roles does not only impact the space of linguistic and content development (Guerrero, 2021), but it paradoxically perpetuates the idea that academic versions of other languages should be institutionally deemed as less scholarly relevant when compared to English. In this respect, other duo autoethnographies of transnational scholars have analyzed the challenges and discrimination they have faced due to their non-English home languages (Yazan, 2019; Yueh & Pariyadath, 2023).

Our duo autoethnography exemplifies some ways institutional policies intertwine with individual actions to perpetuate English language hegemony within an academic domain—which extends the discussions presented in Selvi (2024) by examining structural spaces which, albeit structured to claim social justice (i.e., allowing self-claimed Spanish speakers to take a content class in this language), perpetuate disparities at the structural levels which place U.S. academic mainstream practices as superior.

DISCUSSION: MOVING BEYOND NON-PLUS ULTRA IDEOLOGIES

In this article, we analyzed some ideologies embedded in U.S. academia about the use of non-English languages as (non)legitimate academic languages. With this purpose, we drew from two frameworks—critical literacies and language ideologies—to unveil the relationship between language beliefs and academic practices that imply a sense of U.S. superiority and ethnocentrism. Aligned with Kroskrity (2004) and Palmer et al. (2019), we used this intersectional framework to examine the way language ideologies relate to larger societal and cultural structures, mainly those associated with U.S. hegemony and western knowledge. With this purpose, we adopted the term *non-plus ultra*—which considers that *there is no more beyond* the knowledge and academic discussions which take place in an academic domain in English or outside/western academic borders (Martínez-Prieto, 2020; 2024a).

Current discussions (i.e., Piller et al., 2022; Yueh & Pariyadath, 2023) have examined the linguistic, epistemological, and cultural discrimination that scholars experience in the Global North due to their linguistic and literacy backgrounds. Our experiences suggest that some of the ideologies that support the rejection of academic linguistic variations of other-than-English languages have a paradoxical impact. Through an analysis of language interactions, we

examined the hidden ideologies which, while promoting social justice within U.S. borders, also demerit epistemologies and academic knowledge produced internationally. In other words, while most likely unintentionally, the imperial hegemony of the United States and western countries is also reproduced among some scholars and institutions who aim to promote social justice, albeit superficially.

Both David and Xiaodi experienced academia's attempt to perpetuate a sanctioned variety of discourse and epistemological beliefs, engaging in fights that others deemed necessary and appropriate while the author's own lived experiences of censorship were dismissed. They endured the superiority assumed by some members of academia that superficially catered to social justice, espousing one ideology while practicing another. This study expands current research, adding new layers of analysis to ideologies of nativism (Yueh & Pariyadath, 2023), the rejection of non-western epistemologies (Piller et al., 2022; Selvi, 2024), and the identity tensions (Yazan et al., 2023) that other transnational scholars have analyzed during their own trajectories in duo autoethnographies. Particularly, we found that the rejection of academic variations of non-English languages goes beyond the mere recognition of home linguistic practices and, instead, relates to the daily reinforcement and reproduction of neocolonial and ethnocentric scholarly practices at different levels, some of which resemble the practices of the United States as a current empire. For example, when convenient, some U.S.-educated scholars use monolithic conceptions of former colonialism to justify their own neocolonial, limited, and ethnocentric practices.

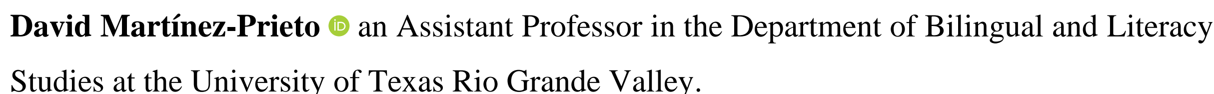
In a similar pattern, some institutions in the United States promote equivalent language ideologies in which students, based on their international origin, must meet several requirements to prove their English proficiency. Such requirements are not imposed on students who enroll in content classes in other languages, such as Spanish. Institutional procedures and ideologies also impact faculty's choice of languages utilized for disseminating their research, as in the case of Dr. Simpson, who was cognizant of the repercussions of publishing in Spanish. As such, it is vital to critically examine main-stream scholarship in multilingual education to move beyond *non-plus ultra* ideologies.

One of the first steps to promote self-awareness among us multilingual/bilingual education scholars is to recognize that our supposedly decolonial practices are embedded within a current context, in which we "directly or indirectly, willingly or unwillingly—legitimize American exceptionalism and rationalizing" (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014, p. 6). In other words, we encourage U.S. and western scholars to move beyond *non-plus ultra* ideologies and respect and

acknowledge the importance of academic knowledge produced outside the western and English language borders.

While concluding the final revisions for this article, we noticed some improvements academia is constructing towards the elimination of the *knowledge wall* between the Global South and Western Scholars (i.e., the American Association of Applied Linguistics, or AAAL, accepted bilingual submissions for their 2024 conference). In this sense, we are convinced that these actions should be accompanied by the continuous promotion of critical awareness—in which we disclose our own biases and limitations as U.S. scholars—towards the inclusion of more (academic) knowledge produced and discussed beyond the ideological borders of the United States and the English language.

THE AUTHORS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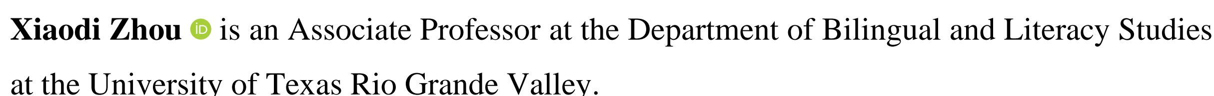
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