

## Book Reviews

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### **Centering Multilingual Learners and Countering Raciolinguistic Ideologies in Teacher Education: Principles, Policies and Practices**

*By Jeff Bale, Shakina Rajendram, Katie Brubacher, Mama Adobea Nii Owoo, Jennifer Burton, Wales Wong, Yiran Zhang, Elizabeth Jean Larson, Antoinette Gagné, & Julie Kerekes*

Multilingual Matters, 2023, 250 pages, ISBN 9781800414136 (paperback), publisher's list price \$49.95 (paperback)

In *Centering Multilingual Learners and Countering Raciolinguistic Ideologies in Teacher Education*, Jeff Bale and colleagues thoughtfully weave narratives set to disrupt the inequality and racism that have often gone unaddressed in language teaching and teacher training. The book offers a timely and insightful exploration of the intersection of language, race/racism, and teacher education, drawing on rich empirical research and theoretical frameworks. However, the research does not launch straight into the connection between racism and language. Inevitably, the *doing* of the research guides the analysis toward exploring this aspect. The theme of “collective thinking” (p. xv) permeates throughout, and the authors recognize that “this text and the project behind it are the products of a significant and rewarding group effort” (p. xv). Woven throughout the book are the researchers’ reflective stances, vignettes, and brief profiles of participants. These elements serve distinct functions: The reflective stances provide personal insights, the vignettes illustrate specific instances, and the profiles offer a deeper understanding of the participants. Together, they connect the thinking and doing of those involved in the research to who they are “as entire people and not just as (future) teachers” (p. 5) or mere participants in a study. This multifaceted approach enriches the narrative by highlighting the diverse identities and experiences of both the researchers and the participants, and it enhances the book’s overall depth and authenticity. This book stands to be advantageous to various reader demographics, including educational researchers, policy makers, English instructors, teacher trainers, and curriculum developers.

The author statements remind the reader of our identity as *homo narrans*, and the traditional “author bios” section is replaced by a picture of the author team with each author introducing themselves “in terms of who we are as people, how we came to this research, how our social positioning shaped our approach to the study, and what we have learned or how we have changed through doing this work” (p. xvii). The authors remain consistent with the theoretical positioning of this book, as each one takes the lead in “telling the story of this project” in different chapters. The book is theoretically positioned at the intersection of race, language, and teacher education, thus drawing from raciolinguistics and Critical Race Theory. The co-constitution of race and language is emphasized, framing them as intertwined social constructs rather than separate entities. The authors critique traditional cognitive approaches to language education, advocating instead for an understanding of multilingualism that includes social, historical, and material dimensions. They argue for a shift in focus from individual teacher beliefs to systemic structures of white supremacy within educational institutions. By foregrounding raciolinguicized subjectivities (p. 67), the book highlights the need for teacher education programs to address the dynamics of race and language in preparing future educators to effectively support multilingual learners.

The book comprises eight chapters, the first three of which carefully work together to ascertain *what* and *whom* the book is about. In Chapter 1, “Contradictions of Stability and Change,” Bale and Gagné begin

with an overview, before examining the linguistic, policy, and institutional settings in which the study is located. The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education's teacher education program is unpacked, since the study takes place in a jurisdiction where, since 2015, all teacher candidates are mandated to study linguistic diversity and support English language learners. This teacher education program explicitly pledges to combat racism and other oppressive structures in its policies and curriculum. The authors allow the analysis to be informed by the unfolding of major shifts in the world during the three-year multifaceted study. Next, "The Research Design and the People Behind It" (Chapter 2), by Bale, Rajendram, Nii Owoo, Brubacher, and Wong, summarizes the study's research framework and outlines the aspects that shape the analysis. Drawing inspiration from the tradition of critical ethnographies of language in education policy, the chapter proceeds to introduce the individuals who contributed to the realization of this work, namely multilingual youth, teacher candidates, teacher educators, and the research team. The use of Me Maps—"video profiles in which multilingual children and youth describe their linguistic, cultural, social and academic identities, and share their perspectives on school, family, community and the broader world around them"—is described in detail, and we are given a deeper sense of *who* makes up this study. Bale's "Framing the Study" (Chapter 3) follows, situating the project in this pioneering and rapidly evolving research area that prepares teacher candidates to work with multilingual learners. The book draws on the work of scholars from various international contexts, including Ester de Jong et al. (2018) in the United States and Lakeli Makalela (2018) in South Africa, creating a rich and multifaceted dialogue that informs its theoretical and empirical foundations. The theoretical orientation of the book is covered extensively in this chapter (raciolinguistics: Flores & Rosa, 2015; LangCrit: Crump, 2014; *Linguizismus/Lingualisierung*: Rosch 2019; Critical Race Theory: Crenshaw, 2019). The authors are quick to point out their deliberate "move away from ostensibly objective definitions of *race* to critical notions of racism or racialization, that is, from defining race as a fixed trait inherent in an individual, to understanding racism as a social, historical, material and ideological process" (p. 67).

In Chapter 4, "Who are Multilingual Learners in Ontario Imagined to Be?," Rajendram, Nii Owoo, Brubacher, Wong, Burton, and Bale look to various data sources, such as ministry documents and teacher interpretations thereof, to debunk the presupposition that defining multilingual learners is straightforward or widely agreed upon. They investigate how multilingual learners are imagined in Ontario, beginning with their own thinking about these learners, how this thinking changed over the course of the research, and how they arrived at using the term *multilingual learners*. In Chapter 5, "Preparing Teacher Candidates to Support Multilingual Learners: Insights from the Field," by Rajendram, Nii Owoo, Zhang, Kerekes, and Bale, teachers' and teacher educators' perceptions and responses to linguistic and racial difference are explored in the context of Ontario's new teacher education policy. This chapter is followed by "asset-based approaches as a response to deficit thinking about multilingual learners" (p. 137) in "STEPing into Deficit Thinking" (Chapter 6) by Bale, Brubacher, Larson, and Zhang. This chapter concerns the contradiction between candidates' generally favorable attitudes toward multilingualism and their prospective multilingual learners, and the Master of Teaching (MT) program's stated commitments on one side, and the recurrence of deficit perspectives evident in the data, on the other. "(Un)Learning Translanguaging Pedagogies" (Chapter 7), by Bale, Rajendram, Brubacher, Burton, and Wong, begins with Bale's vignette detailing experiences with the complex, often contradictory opinions expressed by teacher candidates in the MT program about language-inclusive teaching strategies and translanguaging specifically. The overview of the project's understanding of translanguaging is thorough, as is the detailing of how this understanding is used to make sense of the data reported. Finally, in Chapter 8, "Practices and Principles of Change," Bale, Rajendram, Gagné, Brubacher, Wong, and Burton offer multiple alternative practices that work to centre multilingual learners. The chapter homes in on the implications of the study, offering distinct strategies and principles of transformation that can aid teacher educators in prioritizing multilingual learners and confronting racism while training prospective teachers.

This book offers a nuanced analysis of the complex issues at the intersection of language, race, and education, while also providing actionable insights for advancing equity and inclusivity in education. A book co-authored by such a large research team presents inevitable challenges in maintaining a cohesive narrative “voice.” That said, given the magnitude of the project and its dependence on collective effort, attributing the research solely to individual authors would inaccurately represent the collaborative nature of the study. The very act of including everyone in the writing process, for instance through the personal reflections via vignettes, honours the ethical imperative of acknowledging and valuing the diverse perspectives and expertise that shaped the research. This approach in fact strengthens the analysis by incorporating a breadth of insights and experiences from the author team and participants, thus enriching the depth and scope of the study.

### *The Reviewer*

Sikose Mjali is a pre-doctoral instructor at the University of Washington, Seattle. Her research explores the role of language in shaping power dynamics, particularly through critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistics. Focusing on the language of resistance during apartheid in South Africa, she integrates antiracist pedagogy and the lived experiences of marginalized communities into her teaching and academic work.

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