Changing Education One Story at a Time

by

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Examining Committee Membership

The following served on the Examining Committee for this thesis. The decision of the Examining Committee is by majority vote.

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

Higher education, traditionally founded on white epistemologies and philosophies, promotes Standard Language Ideology resulting in a linguistic hierarchy in which white English is the benchmark expected in the classroom while other varieties of English occupy a lower position in this hierarchy. The language we speak shapes how we perceive and navigate through the world since “language is a carrier of culture” (Ngugi wa Tiong’o). As such, enforcing a Standard Language Ideology mutes and undervalues the socio-cultural and linguistic traditions of Peoples of Colour and pushes them to the margins.

According to Paulo Freire, the aim of education is to free people, not enslave them. The raison d'etre driving my dissertation is to foreground rather than elide the lived experiences of BIPOC speakers and writers of World Englishes, to critique mainstream writing pedagogies that participate in that elision, and to theorise a translingual and code-meshing pedagogy that provides safe and open spaces for the identities, languages, epistemologies, and discourses of BIPOC to prevail in North American writing classrooms and writing centres. I do this by demonstrating my own indoctrination into whiteness and its effects on me as student, writing teacher and writing program administrator. I also trace my journey of decolonising of self which encompasses my ongoing efforts to foreground and amplify voices of People of Colour in education especially in first year composition demonstrating a commitment to adopting a trans-epistemic and translingual philosophy of education. I conclude with a call to all peoples of colour to start telling our complex stories to counter the single story being told in education and offer some suggestions for future opportunities and research inspired by this dissertation.

Acknowledgements

This dissertation is the culmination of a long journey of unlearning, reimagining, and healing. I did not walk this path alone. I arrived here because of the love, care, and wisdom of many who held me up and walked beside me.

First, my deepest gratitude goes to my supervisor, Dr. Frankie Condon. Your guidance, patience, and critical insight pushed me to think deeper while always making space for my story. Your unwavering belief in counterstory as legitimate scholarship has been the foundation of this work and of my confidence in telling it.

To my committee members—Dr. Barbara Schmenk and Dr. Jay Dolmage, my generous readers; Dr. Kim Hong Nguyen, my thoughtful internal-external examiner; and Dr. Asao B. Inoue, my inspiring external examiner—thank you for your time, thoughtful feedback, and encouragement. Your intellectual generosity and support for this unconventional project affirmed that this work matters.

To my students—past and present, including the English tutors—thank you for being the heartbeat of this research. Your brilliance, courage, and resistance have taught me more than any textbook could. You remind me every day that writing matters—and that how we teach it matters even more.

To my peers and friends at the University of Waterloo: thank you for your solidarity, your laughter, and the countless cups of coffee we shared. You held space for me in moments of doubt and celebrated each small step forward. A special thanks to Dr. Frankie's Dissertators, whose steady companionship and writing sessions helped carry me across the finish line.

To my colleagues and friends at Sheridan College—thank you for dreaming with me. Your openness to imagine and practise a decolonial, anti-racist pedagogy in our classrooms gave me the courage to believe it was possible. In some of my hardest moments, you offered not just support, but solidarity. Your presence reminded me that I was never doing this work alone.

To my husband, Francis Alexander—thank you for walking beside me every step of the way. Your steady presence, deep patience, and unwavering belief in me carried me through the hardest, most uncertain moments. You held everything together when I couldn't, and you did it with quiet strength and boundless love. This dissertation exists because you made space for it—and for me—to grow.

To my daughter, Francesca Alexander—you have been my light. Even on the most exhausting days, your laughter, questions, and fierce heart reminded me why this work matters. You showed me what abundance looks like in its purest form. Watching you become who you are becoming has been the greatest lesson in hope. This is for you as much as it is for me.

To my sisters, Cynthia and Elaine Samboo—thank you for being my roots and my safe place. You remind me where I come from and who I am. Your love and support are with me in every part of this work. This dissertation holds pieces of all of us.

And to my younger self, who once sat in classrooms feeling invisible and out of place—this is for you. You were always enough.

Dedication

Walking. I am listening to a deeper way. Suddenly all my ancestors are behind me. Be still, they say. Watch and listen. You are the result of the love of thousands.

— Linda Hogan, Dwellings: A Spiritual History Of The Living World (2007)

I dedicate this dissertation in memory of my loving parents, Alfred Hillary Samboo and Shirley Christina Samboo née Pang Ging Lang, whose unwavering compassion, resilience, and deep love for family have shaped who I am today. I also dedicate this work to the memory of Papa, my paternal grandfather, Arumugam Sivasamboo, who taught me to never give up and to always shoot for the stars, knowing that even if I fall short, I'd land in the trees, not in the mud.

Your love and guiding light have been a constant source of strength throughout the writing of this dissertation. It comforts me to know that I am the result of your love and the love of thousands who came before me.

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Textual Notes

To change education one story at a time, there must be opportunities to insert decolonial options (to delink from whiteness) and to foreground the marginalised voices of People of Colour without being shackled and muted by the rigid structures and constraints of academia. As such, in this section, I enumerate the textual features I purposefully employed for reasons of accessibility and decoloniality.

1. Footnotes are used to provide more context and information (i.e. explain a concept, discuss opposing viewpoints) and also to provide citations for concepts and terminology for immediate consumption to aid accessibility and ease of reading without having to turn to the references at the end of the dissertation.
2. Block quotations which distil key concepts are used as epigraphs to introduce sections and chapters within this dissertation, and also within the text to improve readability and accessibility by separating lengthy quotations from the surrounding text to ensure that quoted material is not mistaken for original content.
3. The use of non-scholarly or popular resources such as newspapers, magazines, websites, social media, personal communication, etc. demonstrates the pervasiveness of 'othering' and racism that occurs daily and also acts as a tool for decoloniality.
4. The use of visuals and charts within this dissertation is to foreground key concepts and to provide accessible presentation of data for clarity.

5. The use of epigraphs whether block quotations or poetry is used to convey themes or connections to the section or chapter that follows, and also to break up the text to denote a new section/chapter for accessibility.
6. Throughout the dissertation, I consciously use British spelling interspersed with some American/Canadian spelling to demonstrate dual consciousness within me as someone who was schooled in British English in Singapore and is now living in Canada where American/Canadian English is the standard.

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Introduction

The wisest of us know that humans organise the world in terms of stories and that stories have the power to unite, heal and help us make sense of life. From the time I was born, I was told stories by adults in my community to help me understand my kinship, but also to learn and build my moral character and personality. Through these stories, I began to understand the effects World War II had on my paternal family: how they struggled to find enough food to feed themselves; how they were discriminated against because of the colour of their skin; and how my grandfather rose up the ranks during the British occupation of Singapore because he had knowledge and skills that were valuable to the British. Knowing this history makes me appreciate where I come from and grateful for who I am. The pride I feel knowing that my family survived a brutal war and emerged from it stronger gives me the confidence to face my own adversities. "You may tell a [story] that takes up residence in someone's soul, becomes their blood and self and purpose. That [story] will move them and drive them and who knows what they might do because of it, because of your words. That is your role, your gift." (Erin Morgenstern[1], *"The Night Circus*). My gift is to tell my personal story which will also foreground the stories of other people of colour who like me have been marginalised. My story is of an Asian woman moving through a world underpinned by white systems and structures. My story hopes not only to build kinship ties with all peoples of colour who have also experienced

[1] Erin Morgenstern is an American multimedia artist and author of two fantasy novels, "The Night Circus" (2011), and "The Starless Sea" (2019). "The Night Circus" won the Locus Award for Best First Novel and was published in more than a dozen languages. Morgenstern is a 2012 recipient of an Alex Award, which annually recognises "ten books written for adults that have special appeal to young adults ages 12 through 18."Alex Awards | Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) (ala.org).

marginalisation, but to forge alliances to labour in anti-racist initiatives to reduce harm done to equity-denied and oppressed peoples. Only when others recognise and validate our stories can the anti-racist work begin. This sentiment is encapsulated best in the words of Canadian Indigenous writer, Richard Wagamese (October 14, 1955-March 10, 2017), Ojibwe author and journalist from Wabeseemoong Independent Nations:

> *All that we are is story. From the moment we are born to the time we continue on our spirit journey; we are involved in the creation of the story of our time here. It is what we arrive with. It is all we leave behind. We are not the things we accumulate. We are not the things we deem important. We are story. All of us. What comes to matter then is the creation of the best possible story we can while we're here; you, me, us, together. When we can do that and we take the time to share those stories with each other, we get bigger inside, we see each other, we recognize our kinship – we change the world, one story at a time…*

Prejudice, bigotry, and fear thrive in shame, secrecy, and silence; through stories, we can bring these issues to light. By honouring individual experiences, we forge bonds through our shared humanity. If we truly want to effect meaningful changes, it will take all of us, as one people, to rewrite our collective narrative and create a culture that celebrates the diversity of our community.

I.1. Appropriation as resistance

> *Appropriation may describe acts of usurpation in various cultural domains, but the most potent are the domains of language and textuality. In these areas, the dominant language and its discursive forms are appropriated to express widely differing cultural experiences, and to interpolate these experiences into the dominant modes of representation to reach the widest possible audience.*
>
> (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2008, pp 15-16).

I grew up in Singapore, a former British colony for 144 years which became part of Malaya (Malaysia) in 1963 and eventually gained independence as a Republic of Singapore in 1965. By the time the British returned in 1945 to re-assume power over Singapore after the Japanese Occupation of Singapore between 1942-1945, there were already stirrings of anti-colonial sentiments. Cries of "merdeka" (freedom) erupted amongst the locals desiring to be free from British rule. Despite gaining independence in 1965, the impacts of colonialism were deeply etched in the systems and structures that remained in Singapore. An education system and court of law based on British systems, and standard English ideology were just some of the ramifications of 144 years of British rule in Singapore. It is common for postcolonial societies such as Singapore to take on aspects of imperial culture in terms of language, writing, art forms, political and social thought which affords them the opportunity to articulate their own socio-cultural identities, but also as a means to resist the colonisers' power. Homi Bhabha, an Indian scholar, critical theorist and one of the most prominent figures in contemporary postcolonial studies, is known for the key concepts of hybridity, ambivalence, mimicry, and third space

which describe how colonised peoples have resisted the power of the colonisers. His concept of mimicry is especially valuable as I discuss how I use appropriation as resistance against white supremacy. Mimicry appears when members of a colonised society imitate and take on the culture of the colonisers. Bhabha states that "the colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of differences that is almost the same*, *but not quite*… in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference." (1994, p. 122). Jacques Lacan asserts, "The effect of mimicry is camouflage… It is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled background, of becoming mottled" (Lacan qtd in Bhabha, 1994, p. 121). Thus, mimicry is a "sign of a double articulation"; a strategy which "'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power." (p. 122).

The PhD is one such colonial tool in academia which equity-denied peoples have appropriated or mimicked to disseminate their research and to gain recognition as scholars in the traditional, colonial field of academia[2]. While it seems paradoxical to use the imperial tools, i.e. the English language and its forms of writing, to disrupt colonialism as Ngugi wa Thiong'o, a prominent Kenyan author and academic, argued, many non-white writers such as Chinua Achebe, a Nigerian novelist, poet and critic, have written in English believing that it can be used to bear the "burden of another experience" (James Baldwin) and that it "has become a useful means of expression [ ] that reaches the widest possible audience." (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2008, p. 16).

[2] See "An Education System Built on the Pillars of White Supremacy and Anti-Blackness: A Collection of Autoethnographic Studies Depicting How Black Kids Never Had a Chance" (May 2021). PhD dissertation submitted to the University of Missouri-St. Louis by Abena B. Boateng; Ida B. Casey; Jamie C. Klupe; Julie C. Moorman; Angeline Williams-Jackson.

As an Asian woman who originates from a former British colony, the variety of English I speak at home is Colloquial Singaporean English, or Singlish which is a heterogeneous stew of English, Mandarin, Hokkien[3], Malay, Tamil and other heritage languages of Singapore; however, the variety I was taught in school was British English which was considered the standard and "correct" English. So, even though I was born speaking English, I am not considered a "native speaker" of English because I speak a variety which is considered non-standard. As such, writing in academia which upholds the "standard"[4] variety of English has always been a struggle for me because the "standard" variety sometimes doesn't have an equivalent word or phrase which conveys a sentiment or concept as well as Singlish could. For example, in Singlish, we have a word or concept, "kiasu", meaning "afraid of losing", which is a term derived from Hokkien, a Chinese dialect. "Kia" means "afraid" and "su" means "to lose". Research done on the "kiasu" nature of Singaporeans or on "kiasuism" show that there are two types of tactics: kiasu-positive and kiasu-negative tactics. The former involves an individual motivated to put in more effort to attain their goals with the reward often justifying the means (Kirby & Ross, 2007)[5]. The latter involves an individual putting down someone in order to gain an advantage and in the process hurting themselves and others with the end reward not justifying its means (Bedford & Chua, 2017).[6] Although there are terms in English such as FOMO (fear of missing out) and hyper-

[3] Hokkien is a language spoken by the Hoklo people, from the Fujian region in China who are also found in overseas Chinese communities in Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines and Southern Vietnam, etc.

[4] "Standard"English is the geographical dialect of English favoured by the most prestigious and powerful social group within that community. In North America, it is American or Canadian English which is based on middle class white English. In Singapore, it is the variety called standard Singaporean English which closely approximates British imperial English.

[5] Access article here: "Kiasu tendency and tactics: A study of their impact on task performance". doi:10.21818/001c.16716.
[6] Access article here: "Everything also I want: An exploratory study of Singaporean Kiasuism (fear of losing out)". https://doi.org/10.1177/1354067X176938

competitiveness which share a similar element of competition to “kiasu”, they differ in that these two terms refer to an unintentionally maladjusted and hard to control urge whereas “kiasu” is a controlled and intentional tactic to get ahead. An English idiom close to “kiasu” is “keeping up with the Joneses”, but this idiom intimates someone who is compulsive unlike “kiasu”.

As such, often there is a tug of war within me as I oscillate back and forth deciding how to say or write something in order to communicate clearly, but also to maintain my Singaporean identity. This struggle is very much present as I write this dissertation. While I know that writing in standard English would reach the widest possible audience in academia, yet I know that there are some experiences in my life that standard English cannot convey accurately and meaningfully. Throughout this dissertation, I demonstrate how I have had to navigate the whiteness and whiteliness of the world in order to be seen by writing within the lines which have been drawn for me by white epistemologies and ontologies. I use the terms “whiteness” and “whiteliness” often but struggled to define them for so long. In “Performing Antiracist Pedagogy in Rhetoric, Writing, and Communication”, Condon and Young state that “whiteliness” is a term coined by Minnie Bruce Pratt and taken up by Marilyn Frye to describe the various ways white supremacy ideologies are manifested in thought and speech. (Condon and Young, 2017, p. 36). Whiteliness is not confined only to whites, but non-whites can also perform whiteliness. This differs from “whiteness” which is an ideologically constructed racial identity which carries systemic and structural privileges. In her article, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack”, Peggy McIntosh, American feminist scholar and anti-racist activist, confesses, “I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned

assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was "meant" to remain oblivious." (McIntosh, 2010; 1989)[7]. The creation of a "white race" is a social construct designed to exclude people of colour or non-whites from benefiting from the privileges and power which whites enjoy.

To be able to arrive at this point of dissertation writing, I have consciously engaged in the process of appropriation or mimicry of whiteness throughout my PhD studies because I have had to fulfil specific requirements in order for me to attain the PhD credential, a research degree that makes a substantial, original contribution to its field. Below is an excerpt from the University of Waterloo webpage describing the requirements for a dissertation proposal and the conditions I had to fulfil to arrive at this stage of dissertation writing:

> *A dissertation proposal should contain an overview of the entire project of approximately 1000 words, a chapter-by-chapter breakdown of approximately another 1500 words, and a bibliography (of no fixed word count) of both primary and secondary texts. It should include first-page headings with your name, your supervisor's name, your committee members' names, and a title. Sections should be clearly signaled with subheads and blank space. Pages should be numbered. The total word count should not exceed* ***3000 words****, exclusive of bibliography.*
>
> Dissertation | English Language and Literature | University of Waterloo (uwaterloo.ca)

The PhD is Eurocentric in its foundations. "The first Ph.D. was awarded in Paris in 1150, but it was the early 1800s before the degree gained its contemporary status as the highest academic honor. Friedrich Wilhelm University in Berlin, Germany, was the first university to

[7] Access article here: https://www.nationalseedproject.org/key-seed-texts/white-privilege-unpacking-the-invisible-knapsack

award a Ph.D. for a course of study that today's doctoral students would recognize; that is, a sequence of coursework, followed by completion and successful defence of a dissertation of original research." (Hall, 2019). The PhD spread to the US in the 1800s; to Canada in 1900; and to Great Britain in 1917. The PhD replaced other doctorate credentials such as the DPhil. in Great Britain.

Doctoral students in Canada are still required to go through this rite of passage from coursework to dissertation proposal to completion and successful defence of the dissertation to earn the title of PhD. An essential requirement in obtaining the PhD credential is the ability to produce multiple expository and argumentative essays during course work culminating into an approximately 80,000-word dissertation. This heavy emphasis on the written form for knowledge creation in PhD studies stems from a Eurocentric, western epistemology and ideology despite having doctoral students who originate from oral cultures. Moreover, the written form that is acceptable is "academic" English or more frequently called "standard" English, which is really an elite English rooted in white upper class linguistic principles, and which is hardly used by anyone in the real world.

To be able to earn the PhD credential, I have to appropriate a Eurocentric genre and textuality in this dissertation. Ironically, I have to comply with certain academic conditions which are colonial in origin in order to undertake decolonising work because sometimes we

need to use the master's tools to dismantle the master's house.[8] Audre Lorde believed that using the master's tools "may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game"; however, I believe that we should make use of any opportunity to beat the master at his own game, even though temporary, in addition to other sources of support to foster momentum to bring about a change. What I am doing is to resist assimilation into a whitely academic discourse community through the coloniser's tool of appropriation. "The metaphoric displacing and returning of the imperial gaze is a fundamental operation of the appropriation of imperial technologies, discourses and cultural forms. The colonised subject not only alters these to local needs but uses them to direct the gaze upon the coloniser and thus reverse the orientation of power in the relationship." (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2008, p.209). Even as I comply with the overall structure of the PhD dissertation, I alter its structure by using the power of narrativity and storytelling to direct the gaze on the coloniser in an effort to assert my power. This is how I strive to engage in mimicry which has to continually produce the slippage, the excess, the difference to be effective so that it "does not merely 'rupture' the discourse, but becomes transformed into an uncertainty which fixes colonial subjects as a 'partial' [incomplete] presence" and "poses an immanent threat to both 'normalized' knowledges and disciplinary powers." (Bhabha, 1994, p. 123). As a result, I have made certain choices within my PhD dissertation to include personal stories, counterstories, epigraphs, footnotes, visuals, and some non-traditional resources to begin the process of decolonising the dissertation. It is my

[8] This is an inversion of Audre Lorde's quote: "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. And this fact is only threatening to those women who still define the master's house as their only source of support." Lorde, Audre. (1984). "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House." Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches. Ed. Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press. 110- 114. 2007. Print

small step towards changing education one story at a time. (Please see the section entitled, Textual Notes, which explicates the intentional choices I made in this dissertation).

I.2. Who Am I?

In this section, I provide an overview of who I am, where and who I come from, to lay the foundations for my dissertation project. It is important for me to do this so you, the reader, understand the relationality of my subject position and this project. Sarah Morales, a Coast Salish and a member of the Cowichan Tribes states in her essay, "Su-taxwiye: Keeping My Name Clean" that "relationality is also one of the fundamental principles of Indigenous research methodology" as "relationality requires that you know about me before you can begin to understand my research and writing" (Morales, 2022, p.21). So, it is with my Asian roots which rely heavily on relationality within the community. My life history will illuminate why I have chosen to engage in this project and explain my passion for changing education one story at a time. My story is not widely known because like other peoples of colour, I have been minoritised and marginalised. Ours are stories of the people who have been oppressed by those in power through our social systems and structures. Those in power perpetuate their majoritarian stories or "master narratives of white privilege" (Martinez, 2022, p. 3) in a world where white epistemologies and ontologies are upheld and validated. This dissertation project aims to showcase my own story of oppression to enable others, like me, to share their own stories to counter the master narratives being told so that meaningful change can be made in education.

Body Acknowledgement

A body acknowledgement is an emerging articulation of commitment to antiracism offered by Dr. Vershawn Young and Dr. Frankie Condon, professors from the University of Waterloo, Ontario. I offer my own body acknowledgement as a sign of my commitment towards antiracist work. I describe in this dissertation and as a reminder to myself that this work requires constant nurturing and tending for there will be times when the effort I invest in this work does not produce the results I hope for. It is those times when I will revisit this body acknowledgement to give me the strength and motivation to keep doing the work.

My Body Acknowledgement:

> *I was born in Singapore of Chinese-Indian heritage. I now live, work and research in Canada as a citizen. I move through the world as a woman of colour whose body, language, and history have been surveilled and marginalised. I hear the cries of Black, Indigenous, Asians, Latine, and other Peoples of Colour who are subjected to racist violence as they cry out, "I cannot breathe." I have been unable to breathe too at different points in my life.*
>
> *I acknowledge my complicity in upholding systemic racism and oppression when I do nothing. I recognize that I am here in Canada on stolen land with the consent of white colonialists, not of the Indigenous peoples who originated here. As such, if I do nothing to heal and repair the violence inflicted on Indigenous peoples, I too am complicit in the stealing of their lands.*

It is my responsibility to labour with all peoples to oppose and resist racism and all other -isms. At times I will make mistakes, but I am committed to this resistance. I am willing to hold myself accountable, and I am willing to be held accountable by others to make this commitment actionable.

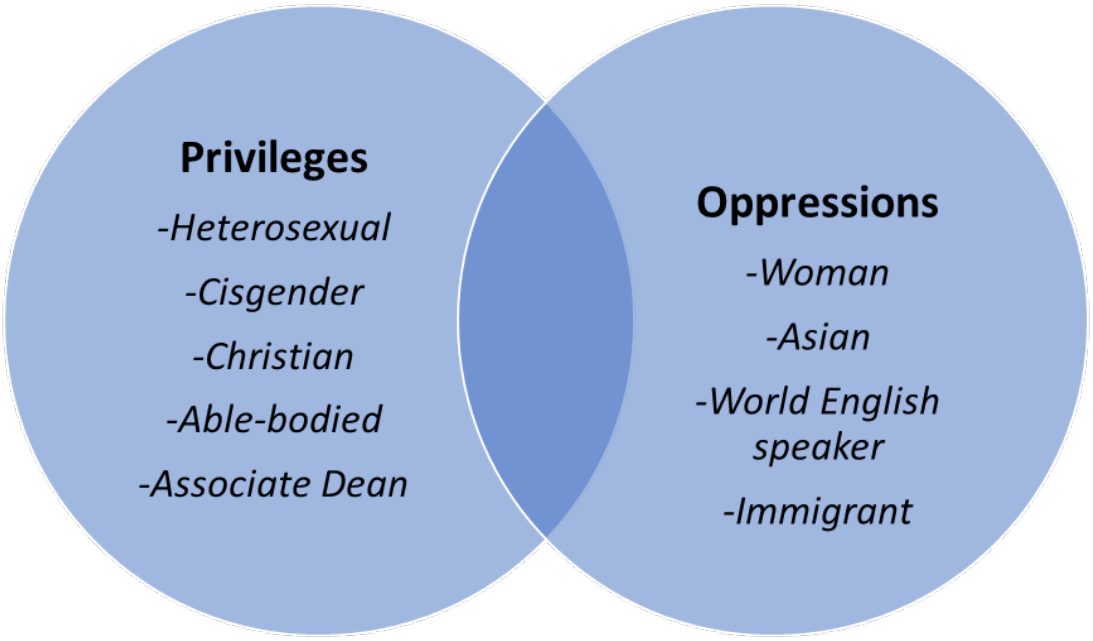
(adapted from Frankie Condon, https://uwaterloo.ca/scholar/fcondon/home (uwaterloo.ca))

Intersectionality

The Venn diagram below demonstrates my intersectionality as a multifaceted person with various social classifications. The concept of intersectionality[9] refers to the interconnectedness of our "social categorizations such as class, race, gender and sexuality which apply to particular individuals or groups showing how these categorizations overlap with systems of privilege and also discrimination/disadvantage." (Taylor, 2019). Intersectionality is important because it demonstrates how discrimination and exclusion cannot be solved by focusing on a single issue.

[9] The original definition of "intersectionality" was coined by Kimberle Crenshaw, an American civil rights advocate and a leading scholar of critical race theory in her 1989 article, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics". Crenshaw pointed out that Black women's experiences are shaped by the overlapping impacts of racism and sexism which creates a unique kind of marginalization. She explains that when legal and social systems treat racial and gender discrimination as separate issues, they miss the full picture of how these forms of discrimination actually work together in real life. Since then, the concept of "intersectionality" has expanded beyond its original focus on race and gender to include a range of social categories such as class, sexual orientation, age, disability, and other aspects of identity that shape how people experience the world and systems of power. In this dissertation, I use this broader definition to show how my own identities intersect across lines of both privilege and oppression.

Figure 1: My Intersectionality



[Figure 1 is a Venn diagram showing the intersectionality of my privileges and oppressions. The left Venn reflects my privileged identities: heterosexual, cisgender, Christian, able-bodied and an associate dean. The right Venn reflects my oppressed or marginalised identities: woman, Asian, World English speaker, immigrant.]

In this dissertation, I show how I am a product of systemic racism that permeates our world but also acknowledge the individual privileges available to me which will help me in my commitment to change education one story at a time. I enjoy the privilege of being a cisgender, heterosexual, Christian, able-bodied person which is considered "normal" in society[10]. I also hold a privileged position in a community college as an Associate Dean. Paradoxically, my equity-denied identities of being Asian, a woman, an immigrant, and a speaker of a World

[10] Here, "normal" refers to widely accepted socio-cultural norms and beliefs (i.e. heterosexuality, monogamy, cisgender, etc.) within Singapore and Canada, the two societies I have lived in, which conform to the usual, typical or expected.

English, have resulted in me being at the receiving end of microaggressions and linguistic racism in Singapore and in Canada. It is this side of me who craves equity and a sense of belonging. It is this side of me who strives to decolonise education by foregrounding my story and the stories of people of colour. By recognizing our intersectionality, we move towards understanding, acknowledging, and grounding differences among us.

As an Associate Dean, I have the authority and power to effect changes within my sphere of influence, i.e. my institution. In chapter 3, "De-centring Whiteness", I outline my efforts as Associate Dean to begin the process of decolonising education within my institution through the pedagogical embrace of translingualism. The following quote from Toni Morrison resonates deeply with me since I am in a position of power to free somebody else despite also being equity-denied.

> *I tell my students, "When you get these jobs that you have been so brilliantly trained for, just remember that your real job is that if you are free, you need to free somebody else. If you have some power, then your job is to empower somebody else. This is not just a grab-bag candy game.*
>
> ("Interview with Pam Houston." O, The Oprah Magazine, November 2003.)

This exhortation by Morrison fuels me to do something beyond lip service. Staci Perryman-Clark stated clearly in her chair's address at the 2023 Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) on February 16, that we need to stop paying lip

service to equity, diversity and inclusion work. Instead, “Commitment to substance, I assert, provides us with hope: We yet have time to change the narrative of higher education’s gloom and doom and use our disciplinary expertise to chart a path forward to a brighter future.” (Perryman-Clark, 2023, p.59). [11]

Michelle Obama, author of “Becoming” (2018) asserts, “I've learned that it's harder to hate up close.” How true! It’s easy to vilify people who don’t look like us or speak like us, but much more work is needed to accept and understand one another across all lines of difference. Many of us are not willing to invest in the energy and time to get to know people who are different from us. We are too busy, we say. But we cannot move equity, diversity, inclusion and decolonisation (EDID) forward if we do not do anything. Lip service is given to EDID. Academics, in particular, have a tendency to say the right things but do little. I learned a new phrase, “virtue signalling”. I was having a conversation with a friend about how socially aware many of our faculty colleagues seem to be these days, especially on social media, supporting social justice movements and causes such as Black Lives Matter, LGBTQ2S+, anti-Islamophobia, Save Soil Movement, etc. She countered my observations with, “They are only virtue-signalling, Steph. It’s easy to post on social media or let others know you support these causes, but what are they really doing to make a change?” The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines virtue-signalling as “The act or practice of conspicuously displaying one's awareness of and attentiveness to political issues, matters of social and racial justice, etc., especially instead of taking effective action.” This comment by my friend jolted me out of my naivete and prompted

[11] Access chair’s address here: 2023-CCCC-Conv-revised-program2.pdf (ncte.org)

me to look deeper into such declarations to see if there were any actions associated with them. For the most part, I discovered that most of them say politically correct words in meetings, commiserate with those who have been racialised, put up social media posts in support of Black Lives Matter or LGBTQ2S+ and denounce anti-Asian hate crimes, but refuse to inconvenience themselves to do the real work. These people have the mindset that, "Someone else will do it. My monetary donation and my verbal support should suffice." I am writing this dissertation to show you that this is not enough! You and I must roll up our sleeves and get our hands dirty to advance equity, diversity, inclusion and decolonisation in our colleges and universities, in our country, in our world. This dissertation project is one of the tools I am using to effect change in higher education, specifically in first year writing studies.

I.3. Goals of dissertation

1. I want to research my own journey towards decolonising of self which spans my lived experiences from my upbringing as a child in Singapore until now, as an adult woman of colour in Canada, and its effects on me as a student, a teacher of writing and as a writing program administrator.

2. I want to show how our educational systems, regardless of geographical boundaries, whether in Asia or North America, uphold and maintain white supremacy and ideology in the academy.

3. I want to interrogate how the everyday pervasiveness of racist ideology which marginalises and silences minoritised people like me is so robustly intertwined in our systems and structures, especially in the teaching of writing in postsecondary

institutions, that it is invisible to even people of colour who have become brainwashed into acceptance.

4. I want to show how students and teachers might gain awareness of this brainwashing and begin to disrupt this racism through engagement with scholarly work, with a community of anti-racist warriors, and through deep reflection of one's memories and life experiences through a critical race lens.

5. I want to share the labour I have invested in changing attitudes and culture towards becoming more inclusive and accepting of differences in my institution.

6. I want to suggest alternate methods for teaching writing in our classrooms which empowers and uplifts minoritised people to be our authentic selves and live out our stories and not be coerced to conform to the dominant stock stories which have been propagated in our predominantly white settler colonial societies.

I aspire to fulfil these six goals in this dissertation through my own life story by sharing reminiscence, reflections, anecdotes, poems, and counter-stories because "[s]o many of us go through life with our stories hidden, feeling ashamed or afraid when our whole truth doesn't live up to some established ideal. We grow up with messages that tell us that there's only one way to be [ ] – that if our skin is dark or our hips are wide, if we don't experience love in a particular way, if we speak another language or come from another country, then we don't belong. That is, until someone dares to start telling that story differently." (Obama, 2018, p.415). There *IS* room for our complex stories in the academy and this dissertation hopes to

bring that to light by sharing my story as a racially marginalised person, as a woman, as a student, as a writing professor and as an associate dean-cum-writing program administrator. The intersectionality of my identity will permeate this dissertation to show how as multifaceted individuals we occupy several subject positions in society which eschews essentialism as per Critical Race Theory (CRT).

According to Encyclopedia Britannica[12], Critical Race Theory is an "intellectual and social movement and loosely organized framework of legal analysis based on the premise that race is not a natural, biologically grounded feature of physically distinct subgroups of human beings but a socially constructed (culturally invented) category that is used to oppress and exploit people of colour." CRT was developed in the 1970s by legal activists and scholars to try to understand why the Civil Rights movement was losing momentum and on the verge of being reversed. These activists and scholars believe that race is inherent in the US legal systems and institutions which perpetuate the oppression of peoples of colour socially, economically and politically with the aim of maintaining white privilege. As such, CRT claims that a majority of society has no inclination to dismantle racism because the everyday racism faced by peoples of colour benefits White elites. The influence of CRT goes beyond legal studies as it has impacted scholarship in gender and women's studies, sociology and education. (Karimi, 2021).[13] In her 2021 interview with the New York Times, Kimberlie Crenshaw, a distinguished law professor at the University of California Los Angeles Law School and Columbia Law School and a leading

[12] Access material here: https://www.britannica.com/topic/critical-race-theory#Overview
[13] Access article here: https://www.cnn.com/2020/10/01/us/critical-race-theory-explainer-trnd/index.html

scholar of CRT asserts that "CRT is more a verb than a noun. It is a way of seeing, attending to, accounting for, tracing and analyzing the ways that race is produced, [] the ways that racial inequality is facilitated, and the ways that our history has created these inequalities that now can be almost effortlessly reproduced unless we attend to the existence of these inequalities." (New York Times, November 8, 2021). Thus, within the framework of CRT, powerful narratives of counter-stories have surfaced to combat the dominant stock stories traditionally embedded in our legal, political and educational systems and policies which oppress and exploit peoples of colour. In education, CRT affords educators and researchers opportunities to collect and analyse stories in support of educational equity. I will delve deeper into CRT under the Methodology section.

I.4. Context for this project

> *"The price a world language must be prepared to pay is submission to many different kinds of use.... [we] should aim at fashioning out an English which is at once universal and able to carry [our] peculiar experience."*
>
> Chinua Achebe, Nigerian novelist and poet

Today, the number of multilingual people who speak English is more than twice the number of monolingual speakers of English. According to Dylan Lyons (babble.com), "Out of the world's approximately 7.8 billion inhabitants, 1.35 billion speak English. The majority aren't native English speakers, however. [Only] about 360 million people speak English as their first language." (March 10, 2021). Linguist Robert Phillipson (1992) categorises two main types of

Englishes spoken by non-native speakers[14]: ESL (English as a Second Language) countries "where it is used widely as a medium of communication in domains such as education and government" and EFL (English as a Foreign Language) countries, where "English is not a medium of instruction or government, but is learnt at school for communicating with speakers of the language or for reading texts in the language." (p.24). A result of this phenomenon is the genesis of World Englishes. World Englishes was born out of the contact of imperial English with the home languages of mainly colonised peoples of a particular region. For instance, I speak Singlish, a melange of English, Hokkien, Malay and Tamil predominantly found in Singapore.

Current scholarship in translingual studies and linguistics, discursive, and rhetorical code-meshing suggests that writing instruction in higher education needs to make way for the speakers and writers of World Englishes who, as Chinua Achebe, a Nigerian novelist, poet and critic, argues, seek an English that is "at once universal and able to carry (our) peculiar experience." As such, the higher education system in North America needs to be reconceptualized to include this new and changing demographic of English speakers and writers. If we are committed to serving Black, Indigenous, and Peoples of Colour (BIPOC) students and faculty, and enriching the cultural competence, as well as the rhetorical and

[14] "Non-native speaker" and "native speaker" of English are contested terms today because they are connected to a nation, the geographical location of people. For instance, it is assumed that people in Britain or Canada or the US speak English as their mother tongue. However, due to globalisation and migration patterns, we know that there are people living in these countries who do not speak English as their mother tongue while there are people living in Asia who do. Thus, it is not easy to define who is a native and non-native speaker of English. I speak English as my mother tongue, but I am not considered a native speaker of English because I am not white. Moreover, use of these terms also supports a binarism of *us* versus *them* which does not progress decolonisation work.

epistemological repertoires of white settler students and faculty, World Englishes should not only be accepted but valued in the postsecondary writing classroom.

The languages, discourses, and rhetorical traditions of BIPOC continue to be policed within higher education broadly, and in writing classrooms and writing centres, in particular. As Frankie Condon, Associate Professor, University of Waterloo and Anti-racist educator and researcher, (2012) states, "In the everyday lived experience of peoples of color, despite the law, racism continue[s], shifting, changing shape, morphing into new and equally or increasingly insidious forms as it exceed[s] the capacity of the law to contain or mitigate its effects." (p.21). According to Ibram Kendi, in his book, "How to be an Antiracist", racism is "a marriage of racist policies and racist ideas that produces and normalizes racial inequities." (2019, p.17)[15].These inequities are manifested in our educational institutions through the preservation of white epistemologies, language, and culture. Higher education has historically pushed BIPOC to the margins by surveilling their languages, epistemologies, identities, and discourses to uphold and preserve white supremacy and the ideological justifications for Eurocentrism. Censorship of BIPOC ways of knowing, making knowledge, learning, speaking, and writing preserves and reproduces an English conceived and imposed as part of the historical project of Western imperialism and colonialism. Currently framed as Edited American English[16] (EAE) within the university, EAE is a variety of Standard American English used in most forms of academic writing

[15] Ibram Kendi is an author, professor and antiracist activist. He is the founder and director of the Center for Antiracist Research at Boston University. He is the author of six books. He won the 2016 National Book Award for Nonfiction for "Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America" (2016); and his book, "How To Be An Antiracist"(2019) was the New York Times #1 Best Seller in 2020. In 2020, Kendi authored a children's book titled, "Antiracist Baby".

[16] Edited American English (EAE) includes academic English used in the US and in Canada. Standard Written English is a form of EAE.

also known as Standard Written English and is based upon the version of English used by influential and powerful white speakers and writers.

BIPOC students who deviate from EAE are labelled as speaking or writing “English with an accent” (Lippi-Green, 2011) and are penalised through academic mechanisms such as in grading and assessments. These mechanisms are racially fraught as they preserve white supremacist ideologies. Asao B. Inoue and Mya Poe (2020) state that “All writing and style conventions, composing processes, argument structures, and genre conventions are shaped by White supremacy and legacies of oppression and trauma to BIPOC.” In “Should Writers Use They Own English” (2009), Vershawn Young calls out this linguistic prejudice of mandating everyone to use one standard English in his response to Stanley Fish’s comment that students should learn standard English so they will not be targets of racism. Young states that “… folks dont get no jobs or get fired or whatever cuz they talk and write Asian or black or with an Appalachian accent or sound like whatever aint the status quo.” Young asserts that it is not people’s language that limits their economic opportunities, but racism. In the same vein, Geneva Smitherman claims that “Tellin kids they lingo is cool but it ain cool enough for where it really counts (i.e., in the economic world) is just like tellin them it ain cool enough at all…See, we all time talkin bout preparing people for the mainstream but never talkin bout the changing the course of that stream" (Smitherman as cited in Young et al, 2014, p. 61). April Baker-Bell in her book, “Linguistic Justice: Black Language, Literacy, Identity, and Pedagogy”, points out the hypocrisy of the mainstream who reject Black language as a linguistic resource in school, but use it widely in the promotion of products and ideas in the fashion and entertainment industries to show that those who use Black words or phrases are considered “woke”

(possessing an alertness to injustice and racism). She states, “This is unfortunate but unsurprising because Black Language is one of those features of Black culture that white America loves to hate, yet loves to take.” (2020, p.14).

Young argues that “complex argumentation, clarity of language, and depth of thought exist in all languages and dialects”; we have been simply conditioned and trained into thinking that academic writing must look a certain way. Therefore, he asserts that we should use language as a resource, and not to accommodate racism. Min Zhan Lu (1994) reinforces this ideology of language as a resource when she calls on all writing teachers to teach *grammars* as opposed to *grammar* in the classroom in her article, “Professing Multiculturalism: The Politics of Style in the Contact Zone.” An example of teaching grammars is demonstrated when Lu has her students engage and critically reflect on the usage of “can” in “can be able to” in one of her non-mainstream[17] student’s essays showing that this was not an “error” but more an attribute of how someone’s discursive positioning produces structures which are not recognised within the rigid confines of Edited American English. Being sensitive to different grammars helps to foster a truly multicultural lens into how students use language as a resource to express their unique points of view.

In her TEDx talk, “Why is English Class is Silencing Students of Colour”, presented on May 23, 2018[18], Dr. Jamila Lyiscott states that the multiple literacies she possesses gives her

[17] April Baker-Bell uses the term “**White Mainstream English** in place of standard English to emphasize how white ways of speaking become the invisible – or better, inaudible– norm.” (2020, p.3). So, conversely, non-mainstream students refer to those whose English is not “normal” because they may have acquired English as an additional language or may speak a World English which is subordinate to White Mainstream English.

[18] Access the Talk here: https://youtu.be/u4dc1axRwE4?si=LAymyfYNxDKZlQdD

power, but when she enters institutional spaces, that power is not given any value. She remonstrates how our institutions perpetuate racism through the preservation of historical practices which causes the erasure of the identities of historically marginalised peoples. She calls on us to practise critical self-awareness of our positionality in the world before we can reimagine our institutions beyond just having a diverse student body.

Higher education institutions in Canada and the US have embraced conversations on Diversity and Inclusion by instituting Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Decolonisation (EDID)[19] committees, and the hiring of BIPOC faculty and staff as an answer to aggrieved calls from the public following numerous incidents of police brutality of black bodies which resulted in the murders of Breonna Taylor, Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Pierre Coriolan, and George Floyd. These murders are exacerbated by the rising hate-filled incidents on Asians who were blamed for the onset of the COVID 19 pandemic, and the horrendous and shocking manifestation of Islamophobia in Canada which has culminated in the cold-blooded killing of a Muslim family in London, Ontario and the frequent attacks on women who wear hijabs. These incidents have shown us that there is an urgency in dismantling systemic racism before more people of colour are killed for no other reason than for just being who they are. However, higher education has fallen short of enacting meaningful change on matters related to equity and anti-oppression of BIPOC students, faculty and staff who are gasping for air in our institutions. To address racism,

[19] In a Higher Ed Dive publication dated September 19, 2024, Laura Spitalniak reported that DEI departments in US universities in Texas, Florida, Kentucky, North Carolina, Nebraska, Alabama and Oklahoma are being shuttered due to new state laws banning DEI. The anti-DEI rhetoric claims that such departments in universities "create division and exclude wide swaths of campus from accessing resources". Access article here: https://www.highereddive.com/news/dei-eliminations-cuts-offices-colleges-texas-florida-kentucky-alabama/727414/

higher educational institutions through their EDID departments have mandated that all employees complete anti-bias training. I completed one such online training course at my institution which took me approximately 45 minutes. Course material was tested with modular multiple-choice assessments and a summative assessment at the end. Participants could retake the assessments until they passed. As long as participants are able to "learn the language, acceptable behaviours and moral psychology of unconscious bias" (Tate and Page, 2018, p.2). and recognise instances of microaggressions or racist behaviour in different institutional events/contexts such as recruitment and selection, promotion processes, curriculum and classroom teaching, admissions, counselling, etc., they will pass the training. In their 2018 paper, "Whiteliness and institutional racism", Shirley Anne Tate and Damien Page argue that "unconscious bias is the acceptable form of racism, the phrase that a majority of the white sector feels comfortable with using and discussing to describe itself" without acknowledging structural and systemic racism. (p. 2.). They assert that higher educational institutions demonstrate their good faith and willingness to address racism through unconscious bias training which does not address the real issue at play which is structural and institutional racism. They further claim that unconscious bias is used as an excuse like "flight or fight response" which is inherent in all humans. As such, unconscious bias is at a genetic or instinctual level and not intentional. Thus, unconscious bias gives people a way out of their culpability right from the start. Tate and Page stress that this training is in itself not enough because it focuses on "the foregrounding of the individual that ignores the institutional and the systemic and positions unconscious bias as an enabler of whiteliness through assertions of ignorance." (p.7).

On the micro level, this sustained institutional lip service paid to EDID is evident in the teaching of writing in our classrooms where standard language and monolingualist ideologies are still being upheld despite the fact that our student and faculty demographics now include many who speak a World English. Additionally, our ways of knowing and being are monitored every day through institutional and academic policies which neglect the ever-changing demographics in our colleges and universities. In his talk, "The Freedom to Learn: Confronting Anti-Black Racism" on November 16, 2020, Canadian journalist, Desmond Cole, called for an end to talking and tokenism. Cole's impassioned plea is, "We want action!" My dissertation is a response to that call for action. The raison d'etre driving my dissertation is to foreground rather than elide the lived experiences of BIPOC speakers and writers of World Englishes, to critique mainstream writing pedagogies that participate in that elision, and to theorise a translingual and code-meshing pedagogy that provides safe and open spaces for the identities, languages, epistemologies, and discourses of BIPOC to prevail in North American writing classrooms and writing centres.

I.5. Methodology

Drawing on my lived experience as a racialised student, writing professor, and writing program administrator in a Canadian community college, I will use autoethnography, narrative inquiry, and counterstory, on one hand, and deep engagement with critical theory in the fields of writing studies, translingual, postcolonial, intersectional feminisms, and critical race theory, on the other hand, as a mixed methodology. My purpose in drawing from this particular range of critical research methods is to name, interrogate, and critique the muting and marginalising

of BIPOC students' languages, discourses, and rhetorical and epistemological traditions in and outside of the writing classroom and writing centre. I connect my lived experience as a racialised woman and speaker of a World English with those of other historically marginalised peoples. Story will be fundamental in theorising and illuminating the linguistic racism that is inflicted on peoples of colour. By codifying our stories as peoples of colour through a critical theoretical lens, I hope to illuminate the predominance and persistence of racism in our writing programs despite the current conversations and gestures being made by higher education towards being more "inclusive and diverse".

I use counterstory as a method and methodology in this dissertation to offer up an alternative perspective to the dominant stock stories that are told in the academy, to allow for minoritised voices to be heard while countering the stock stories of the dominant, majoritarian group. The case for counterstory is based upon the premise that the current social, cultural, educational and political systems and practices are founded on white supremacy and privilege. According to Rosemary Campbell-Stephens, a Visiting Fellow at the Institute of Education, University College London, people of colour make up about 80% of the world's population making us the "People of the Global Majority"; yet our stories are not reflected in these systems. Campbell-Stephens coined the term "People of the Global Majority" (PGM) as opposed to "visible minority" which seeks to construct our identities in relation to the dominant white population, to resist white supremacy. In 2016, Campbell-Stephens co-wrote an article, "We are not Visible Minorities; We are the Global Majority" in The Toronto Star with Sachin Maharaj which states that "describing someone as a visible minority situates whiteness as the reference standard and the norm by which all people are judged. It is a term of

disempowerment that promotes the othering of racialized peoples and implies subordination to white power structure… If we are to end white supremacy in this country, we need to change our discourse on race. This requires changing the way we think and speak about Canada's racialized population."[20] As such, it is heartening for me to see Statistics Canada put out a survey in September 2023 to consult the public on the "visible minority" concept in response to calls from the public to retire "visible minority" in the census. "The visible minority concept is currently under review. Statistics Canada is committed to engaging with partners, stakeholders, ethnocultural groups, and the general public to identify the appropriate terminology and categories to describe the population and properly address data needs in health, education, justice, and employment equity."[21]

Thanks to Derrick Bell, Patricia Williams, Robert Delgado and Aja Martinez (among many others) who laid the foundation for the use of counterstory in the academy as legitimate research, I am now able to tell my story using counterstory as a tool. Counterstory's aim, according to Aja Martinez, is for social justice, "eliminating racism, sexism, and poverty" and "empowering subordinated minority groups." (2020, p.17). In her book, "Counterstory: the Rhetoric and Writing of Critical Race Theory", Martinez discusses three methods of

[20] Click here to access article: https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/we-are-not-visible-minorities-we-are-the-global-majority/article_0432d86d-51a6-5928-9c74-0dc2d4244631.html
[21] Access the visible minority concept consultative engagement here: https://www.statcan.gc.ca/en/consultation/2022/visible-minority-concept

counterstories: counterstory as narrated dialogue, allegory and fantasy, and autobiographic reflection. Each method fulfils the main tenets of Critical Race Theory (CRT)[22]:

1. Permanence of race and racism
2. Challenge to dominant ideologies
3. Interest convergence
4. Race as a social construct
5. Intersectionality and antiessentialism
6. Interdisciplinarity
7. Centrality of experiential knowledge and/or unique voices of color
8. Commitment to social justice.
9. Accessibility

(Martinez, 2020 pp.9-18)

These nine tenets of CRT are significant in distinguishing CRT stories and counterstories from other stories and methods in society because not all marginalised narratives are counterstory. Martinez states that, "while there are indeed many marginalized narratives, the measure remains whether the tellers and stories subscribe to CRT's tenets, particularly in their critique of dominant ideology (e.g. liberalism, whiteness, color blindness) and their sustained

[22] For an in-depth explanation of the 9 tenets of counterstory, please see pp.9-18 of Martinez's book, "Counterstory: the Rhetoric and Writing of Critical Race Theory"*, 2020.*

objective on social justice as an objective." (2020, p.17). Telling stories in CRT is contiguous with the experiences of oppressed peoples because they recognise the lived experiences of individuals as bound up in the historical and political experience by peoples of colour in general, and more importantly, mount a critical challenge to white and whitely discourse.

Martinez demonstrates how we could use the three kinds of counterstory in CRT to de-centre whiteness in the academy, especially in rhetoric and writing studies, which "foreground[s] the workings of racism in the daily lives of all people" and "illustrates that we all function within a hegemony of systems of domination and subordination, advantage and disadvantage, structured according to racial categories." (2020, p. 27). She asserts that our core curriculum such as writing studies is "by and large the domain of white Euro-Western perspectives and ways of knowing…while the voices and stories of the racialized "other" are pushed to the margins in elective courses, or footnotes and asides within the core curriculum, at worst." (p.117). As such, she concludes that ethnocentric white students are happy to tolerate the work of people of colour "when it comes in the form of electives– so they can elect not to take these courses." (p. 117). I concur with her assessment since as Associate Dean I have oversight of writing and elective literary courses in my institution which tolerate stories of BIPOC in our elective curriculum, but not in our core writing courses. Those core courses preserve white epistemologies and pedagogies in their syllabi and expect all students to conform to the Eurocentric ideals of good writing. (I will discuss this in more detail in the later chapters).

In essence, CRT through counterstory as its methodology "uses a narrative method to theorize racialized experience (framed by any single one or combination of the above-named racial theories; symbiosis, color-blind racism, interest convergence, racial formation, intersectionality, or hegemonic whiteness) ...and these narratives serve the purpose of exposing stereotypes and injustice and offering additional truths through a narration of the researchers' own experiences". (Martinez, 2020, p.17).

With this particular purpose of CRT in mind, I employ counterstories in this dissertation to counter the majoritarian stories in the academy that are allowed to persist and thrive because those in power use their social and cultural capital to sustain these stories through systemic and structural white supremacist ideology. White supremacist ideology relies on a racial order which ranks non-white people as occupying a subordinate status to white people, who are seen as being superior. In our education system in Canada and North America, this ideology is manifested in the fostering and conservancy of a monolingualist ideology which upholds a standard language ideology. Lippi-Green asserts that "the standard language ideology (SLI) is a bias towards an abstracted, idealized, homogenous spoken language which is imposed and maintained by dominant bloc institutions and which names as its model the written language, but which is drawn primarily from the spoken language of the upper middle class." (Lippi-Green, 2012, p.67). This SLI is manifested in the "Standard English" upheld in our classrooms which April Baker-Bell labels as "White Mainstream English". Baker-Bell declares that "many teachers do not realize that standard English is a byproduct of white supremacy." (2020, p. 6). In her book, "Linguistic Justice", Baker-Bell quotes Wiley who professes that "Linguistic hegemony is achieved when dominant groups create a consensus by convincing

others to accept their language norms and usage as standard or paradigmatic. Hegemony is ensured when they can convince those who fail to meet those standards to view their failure as being the result of the inadequacy of their own language." (Wiley, 2000, p. 11 as cited in Baker-Bell, 2020, p. 15).

Using Standard English in higher education gives an unfair advantage to people who have been exposed to variations of this variety at home because nobody actually speaks Standard English. Carmen Kynard[23] once said that "Many white people think they are speaking standard English when they simply are not; they are just normative so the moniker of standard follows them from the flow of white privilege." (as cited in Baker-Bell, 2020, p. 3). White settler Canadians (and North Americans in general) tend to grow up in families and communities whose variations are closer in proximity to what passed for "standard". Thus, they have an easier time adjusting to academic culture in higher education. On the contrary, students who have not had much exposure to Standard English at home or those who speak other varieties of English i.e. World Englishes which are not recognised in educational institutions are disadvantaged even before they step into the classroom. This causes unimaginable trauma to

[23] Dr Carmen Kynard is a Black feminist compositionist who is the Lillian Radford Chair in Rhetoric and Composition, and a Professor of English at Texas Christian University. Kynard's research can be categorised into Rhetoric-Composition Studies and the Critical Context of Black Language; Black Feminist Rhetorics of Work, Language and Newlife; Anti-racist/Anti-colonial Pedagogies and the University; Histories of Black Studies/ Black Literacies Digication ePortfolio :: Carmen Kynard's Research Portfolio :: Theme III: Anti-Racist/Anti-Colonial Pedagogies & the University

these learners in the classroom. Neville Alexander[24] (as quoted by Geneva Smitherman) explains this best when he states that…

> *Being able to use the language(s) one has the best command of in any situation is an empowering factor, and conversely, not being able to do so is necessarily disempowering. The self-esteem, self-confidence, potential creativity and spontaneity that come with being able to use the language(s) that has or have shaped one from early childhood … is the foundation of all democratic politics and institutions. To be denied the use of these languages is the very meaning of oppression.*
>
> (as cited in Baker-Bell, 2020, p. 27)

In this dissertation project, I will also examine the work of scholars from the fields of Translingual Studies, Critical Race Pedagogy, Feminist Studies, Postcolonial Studies and Composition Studies to foreground my research project. Much of the work of the following scholars: Vershawn Young, Suresh Canagarajah, Aja Martinez, bell hooks, Geneva Smitherman, Ming Zhan Lu, Jeremy Horner, Frankie Condon, etc. intersect the afore-mentioned fields. For example, Frankie Condon's research encompasses Critical Race Pedagogy, Composition Studies and Translingual Studies. This is noteworthy because one of my assertions in this dissertation is

[24] Dr. Neville Alexander was a revolutionary scholar who revolted against the colonial South African State and was imprisoned for ten years on Robben Island as a fellow prisoner of Nelson Mandela. In post-apartheid South Africa, Alexander became a pioneer in the field of language policy and planning in South Africa from the early 1980s. He was the founder and director of The Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa (PRAESA) and was also influential in the language policy development with various government departments in South Africa. Salim Vally (2012). Neville Alexander: A Revolutionary Scholar, South African Review of Sociology, 43:3, 163-165, DOI: 10.1080/21528586.2012.730174

that we can create equitable spaces for all students and faculty in our classrooms and institutions through the study of intersectionality and transdisciplinary fields because our students and faculty, especially our non-mainstream students and faculty, within our institutions exist within intersections of cultural, linguistic, and social identities. Therefore, we cannot tackle our current state without acknowledging and considering their intersectionality through employing concepts and ideas from various disciplines. Additionally, April Baker-Bell, Gloria Anzaldua, Rosina Lippi-Green, and Asao B. Inoue's research on how language is used as an indicator of class and race is important in demonstrating how linguistic racism is practised within higher education in Canada and the US. I will employ Translingual, Postcolonial, Critical Race theories and Intersectional Feminism to situate my shared patterns of experiences and develop a critical framework within which I will examine current or mainstream Canadian writing pedagogy and, ultimately, posit and theorise an anti-racist translingual writing pedagogy. Using my institutional context as a case study and testing its representativeness through a review of Canadian writing studies scholarship, I will examine, analyse, and critique institutional and programmatic attachments to Edited American English and its underlying, justificatory ideology.

I will posit code-meshing as a translingual practice providing an entry point into building a safe(r) learningful and productive space for Black, Indigenous and students of colour in writing classrooms and writing centres. Code-meshing removes the shackles of adherence to a predefined, standard English that is wrought upon all peoples of colour by colonialists as the right way to communicate. I will draw upon the work of Vershawn Young in code-meshing and Suresh Canagarajah in translingual writing and pedagogy to argue for the affordances of code-

meshing to empower student learning and being. Jerry Lee and Christopher Wonks' work on adopting translingual dispositions will further strengthen this call for us to embrace diversity on campuses. Their study between US and Hong Kong students demonstrates that even monolingual students see the benefit of translingualism towards a greater understanding of their multilingual peers, and as a phenomenon used when shifting between registers in English in different contexts. Translingualism and code-meshing are practised by everyone, not just multilinguals. Bobbi Olson's and Frankie Condon's work on "Building a House for Linguistic Diversity" will illustrate how a translingual approach to tutoring in the writing centre is essential in contributing to an inclusive and welcoming institution which serves a large international and multilingual/multicultural student body.

Another focus of my dissertation project is to shine a light on my own lived experiences as a student in post-colonised Singapore showing how this eventually influenced my sense of self as a teacher of writing in a Canadian community college and as an Associate Dean-cum-Writing Program administrator in a Canadian community college. The analyses of these three "I"s– as a student, a teacher and writing program administrator– within this dissertation will afford me the credibility and lend exigency in my argument for why the current state in Canadian postsecondary institutions is in dire need of urgent intervention in service of progressing Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Decolonisation from an emic perspective, from an insider who has been both in the centre and in the margins through her intersectional identities. bell hooks in her criticism of feminist theory states that much feminist theory emerges "from privileged women who live at the center, whose perspectives on reality rarely include knowledge and awareness of the lives of women and men who live on the margin. As a

consequence, feminist theory lacks wholeness, lacks the broad analysis that could encompass a variety of human experiences" (Feminist Theory, 2015, p.xviii). Here, hooks is discussing radical feminist thought and calling for the inclusion of Black women and men located on the "margins" to be included in the feminist movement. It is white women and men who produced feminist theory and who occupy the centre, and the feminist movement is weak because it holds a disjointed discourse of only these bodies at the centre who are privileged according to race, class, and social norms. "Although feminist theorists are aware of the need to develop ideas and analysis that encompass a larger number of experiences that serve to unify rather than to polarize," hooks continues, "such theory is complex and slow in formation" (p. xviii). The way to overcome these distorted perspectives of feminism, hooks seems to be saying, "is to rehabilitate the view of racialized and minoritized women". She writes that "Black women must leave the margins to which they have been relegated, to become part of the center of feminist theory and action." Yet, she acknowledges that many are hesitant or afraid to move toward the centre.

Reading bell hooks' work, I recognise this tension in my own life. As a woman of colour, I often feel a similar fear when stepping into central or visible positions—like the one I hold as Associate Dean. Despite the authority of my role, imposter syndrome can creep in, making me question whether I truly belong in that space.

hooks says that feminism works if we have individuals who have knowledge of both the centre and margins. Similarly, decolonisation needs such people like me, for "[a]t its most

visionary," as hooks says, “it will emerge from individuals” - people like me - “who have knowledge of both margin and center” (p. xviii).

Having laid down the context and foundations for this dissertation project, the next section provides an overview of the chapters within this project.

I.6. Overview of chapters

Chapter 1: Linguistic Imperialism

This chapter examines how English, first used by the British to colonise the world, continues to marginalise people of colour through its dominance in “inner circle” or “norm-enforcing” countries like Canada and the USA through the lens of composition studies. Braj Kachru’s concept of the three concentric circles of English; Alistair Pennycook’s “Discourses of Colonialism”; and Robert Phillipson’s “Linguistic Imperialism” will be foundational in revealing the persistence of linguistic hierarchies. A short history of Singapore’s colonisation will contextualise my institutionalisation into whiteness. This chapter will also demonstrate the gaps in current scholarship in writing/composition studies that ignore the experiences of non-mainstream students and faculty in shaping educational policies.

Chapter 2: Colonisation of Minds

This chapter traces my personal journey into whiteness, from growing up in a former British colony to becoming an adult in Canada. I compare my own institutionalisation through convent schooling with the experiences of Indigenous residential school survivors, such as Bev Sellars, Maria Campbell, and Theodore Fontaine. Both educational systems, i.e., convent and

residential schooling, which uphold whiteness as supreme, and the benchmark for academic success, will be used as points of entry to show how different communities had shared approaches towards perpetuating racism through colonisation. It also affords us a shared understanding of how our epistemologies and languages were policed and muted in both types of schooling as both institutions ingrained in its learners the inculcation of "Rinse and Repeat Christianity"; White Christian morality; and the mandate of using "white" English. The chapter also reflects on the cognitive dissonance I faced as a Canadian newcomer when my use of English was corrected by others. I argue that speaking 'standard' English offers no immunity from racism, as April Baker-Bell (2020) reminds us: "Eric Garner was choked to death by a police officer while saying 'I breathe.' Wouldn't you consider 'I cannot breathe' standard English syntax?" (5).

Chapter 3: De-centring whiteness

This chapter employs autoethnography, narrative inquiry and counterstory to trace the efforts, successes, and learning-ful failures of my labour in my current institution, a Canadian community college, in attempting to develop a pedagogical praxis informed by current scholarship on how to de-centre whiteness. I describe, in my role as Associate Dean cum Writing Program Administrator, my efforts in decolonising the curriculum in my School of Communication and Literary Studies and in promoting the adoption of a translingual disposition in the classroom. Additionally, I will describe and share lessons from the Translingualism project, inspired by Frankie Condon's and Bobbi Olson's 2016 article "Building a House for

Linguistic Diversity" which culminates in a composite counterstory arising from the themes emerging from the Translingualism project.

Chapter 4: Possibilities: Decolonial Options

This chapter interrogates a current first year writing course in a Canadian community college by examining its course outline, weekly topical outline, assignments and rubrics, and course text guided by questions on student agency, inclusion and equity. I propose and demonstrate what a translingual, problem-posing first year writing course could look like with a course syllabus that is critical and reflexive allowing ample opportunities for student agency and development of their writer identity using a grading system designed to minimise inequity in the writing classroom.

Chapter 5: Storying Abundance Beyond Whiteness

This final chapter revisits the six goals of the dissertation to illustrate how each has been addressed and fulfilled. It reflects on the implications of this work for educators, scholars, and practitioners who are committed to decolonial transformation in education. This chapter serves as a call to people of colour to share our complex stories to challenge the single story being told and propagated with the aim of creating holes in whiteness which are foundational to our education system. The chapter concludes by offering future directions for research and praxis inspired by this dissertation.

End of Chapter

Chapter 1: Linguistic Imperialism

In my view language was the most important vehicle through which that power fascinated and held the soul prisoner. The bullet was the means of the physical subjugation. Language was the means of the spiritual subjugation.

Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Kenyan author and academic

Ngugi's quote from his 1996 seminal work, "Decolonising the Mind", refers to the linguistic imperialism that colonised countries such as Kenya and Singapore experienced at the hands of the British. Even when the second world war was over, the British continued to subjugate their previous colonial subjects through the spread of English. Soon English became the de facto language used in socio-political and economic arenas in these countries, especially in schools. Like Kenya, schools in Singapore valued English and relegated the indigenous languages to the margins, good for communicating at home, but unsuitable for formal education and participation in global business.

It is useful to understand the difference between the terms "imperialism" and "colonialism" in order to understand the complex ways power and domination operate in the world. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, imperialism" is "the ***policy, practice, or advocacy*** of extending the power and dominion of a nation especially by direct territorial acquisitions or by gaining indirect control over the political or economic life of other areas" (emphasis is mine). Colonialism is the "***domination*** of a people or area by a foreign state or nation: the practice of extending and maintaining a nation's ***political and economic control***

over another people or area" (emphasis is mine). Therefore, in plain terms, imperialism is the political ideology which drives colonialism, the physical act of dominating another country and its people. There are four types of imperialism: protectorates, colonies, spheres of influence and economic imperialism and four types of colonies: settler colonies, exploitation colonies, surrogate colonies, and internal colonies (Zafar, 2020)[25] Singapore was an example of an exploitation colony in which the country's resources were exploited by the British for economic and political gains. "Exploitative colonial policies in Singapore and the peninsula limited the economic options of poor Malays, Indians and Chinese. These workers were increasingly forced to clear cut vast swathes of rainforest to literally carve out a living for themselves at the expense of local ecosystems." ("Earth Day: Colonialism's role", 2019). Canada is an example of a settler colony which refers to an ongoing system of hegemony and domination by the Whites from Britain and France who settled in Canada in an effort to displace the indigenous peoples of the land with white settlers.

To some, imperialism did not seem problematic because it was seen as "the larger organization of colonies into one economic, military or political system under one power." (Pennycook, 1998, p.34). It was almost seen as a benevolent gesture of the Europeans civilising the "Third World" countries in Asia and Africa when in fact they were pillaging the natural resources of these countries for their own economic gain[26]. However, to the subjugated

[25]Watch lecture on Differences between Imperialism & Colonialism video by Drishti IAS: English https://youtu.be/O0HujE5YS-8?si=mKH58Qqm1KZoj3Mr;

[26] "Third World" is in quotations to show that this term is contested. Some modern academics consider the "Third World" label to be outdated. Terms such as "developing countries" and "low and lower-middle-income countries" are now often used in its place.

peoples, “colonialism is only imperialism seen from below” (Thornton, 1965 as cited in Pennycook, 1998, p. 34). It was more about the ‘context of existence’ for those subjects. Thornton suggests that “imperialism was used to dignify Crusoe’s relationship to Friday; colonialism was Friday’s awareness of his subjugation.” (Pennycook, 1998, p.34). Pennycook concludes that colonialism is the “lived experiences of those that experience imperialism.” (p. 34).

Today even though many former colonies such as Singapore and Kenya have gained political independence, it still does not signal the end of imperialism because we know that imperialism controls our global economic system as European or Western countries still possess much economic power in the world. The US and European Union (EU) are the two largest economic superpowers. According to the World Bank, “the US and EU are the two largest economies globally in nominal terms. As of 2021, both together share 42.4% and 30.7% of the entire global GDP in nominal and PPP terms, respectively.” (“Comparing Unites States and European Union”, 2024). Because they control the world economy, they have the power to dictate terms to countries which need to trade with them. Singapore is one such country which requires good trading relations with the US and EU. Singapore’s success and existence depend on its strategic geographical location in Southeast Asia which has proven advantageous for international trading. A by-product of this reliance on the US and EU for trade is the conservation of English as the language of trade and business in Singapore. Even though British imperialism ended after World War II, linguistic imperialism took over with the spread of English globally.

1.1. A short history of Singapore

In this section, I share a truncated history of Singapore's 144 years as a British colony to contextualise my indoctrination into whiteness in my birth country. In 1819, Singapore, a fishing village on an island along the Straits of Malacca was founded by Thomas Stamford Raffles, a British colonial officer. He signed a treaty with Sultan Hussein Shah of Johor on February 6, 1819, that gave the British East India Company the right to set up a trading post in Singapore, which was part of Malaysia at that time. "Since the late 18th century, the East India Company (EIC) had begun acquiring several territories in the Straits of Malacca in order to consolidate its hold on the India-China and Southeast Asian trades". ("Straits Settlements", July 29, 2014). The British were looking for a new British settlement to replace Malacca which had been returned to the Dutch under the 1815 Treaty of Vienna. The British were concerned that without a strategic trading post within the Straits of Malacca, the Dutch could eventually gain control of the Straits trade. So, Singapore was an excellent panacea to this problem and became an entrepot trading post of the British empire. This was just the beginning of the indoctrination of the local Singaporeans in Eurocentric epistemologies and ontologies. In an effort to modernise Singapore, Raffles established a Raffles Town Plan, in which people were housed according to their ethnicities. However, he made sure that a European town, separated by a river, was built to segregate the Europeans from the Indigenous population. He also established Singapore as a free port, given its strategic geographical location, to rival the ports which were under Dutch control. Additionally, Raffles launched "the administration of justice to ensure peace and order in the thriving settlement". He set up "the Resident Court, appointed magistrates, and implemented trial by jury." ("Stamford Raffles' career and contributions",

January 2019). He also founded the Singapore Institution Free School, an institution of higher learning to teach Indigenous languages to the officers of the East India Company to help them forge better trading ties with the locals in the area, to collect literature on the local traditions and laws, but also to educate the sons of the Malay chiefs. Today, Singapore is a metropolis, a financial, economic and medical hub in Southeast Asia with English as its lingua franca used in the public and political arenas.

By sharing Singapore's history, we see how a small fishing village became a valuable asset to the British empire in Southeast Asia. In order to ensure Britain's financial and economic success, the British poured many resources and much attention into Singapore. A by-product of this was the indoctrination of its inhabitants into upholding white, Eurocentric ways of being and knowing as a criterion of success. The local Singaporeans began to perceive their own Indigenous languages and culture as being subordinate to the English language and European culture. Alastair Pennycook (1998) argues in his book, "English and the Discourses of Colonialism", of the far-reaching influence of English as a carrier of colonialist ideologies which socially and culturally construct the binary of the Self (white) and the Other (non-white). The Self personifies what is right, decent and normal. The Other personifies what is wrong, barbaric/savage and abnormal. Robert Phillipson's discussion of Robinson Crusoe's English lessons to Friday, his servant, is "one of the earliest instances of English linguistic imperialism" (Pennycook, 1998, p. 10). Phillipson states that Crusoe's lessons to Friday were aimed "to teach him everything that was proper to make him useful, handy and helpful" (as cited in Pennycook, 1998, p. 11). He further reasons that the fact Crusoe teaches Friday English rather than learning Friday's language demonstrates the "racial structure of western society at the heyday

of slavery" (ibid). The English language assumes the role of racial positioning. Crusoe teaches Friday to address him as "master", referencing the different positionalities they occupy: Self vs Other. Phillipson opines that "this is perhaps the *locus classicus* of the start of English linguistic imperialism, a moment emblematic of the origins of the British Council and the constant attempts to spread English around the globe" (ibid).

In most of the former British colonies, the British Council continues to have a presence. The British Council was created in 1934 to support English education abroad. According to their 1940-41 annual report, the aim stated was:

> *to create in a country overseas a basis of friendly knowledge and understanding of the people of this country, of their philosophy and way of life, which will lead to a sympathetic appreciation of British foreign policy, whatever for the moment that policy may be and from whatever political conviction it may spring.*
>
> ("Our history: British Council", 2024)

The British Councils were also granted Royal Charter, a document issued by the monarch giving them independent legal standing which set out their mission as "promoting a wider knowledge of [the UK] and the English language abroad and developing closer cultural relations between [the UK] and other countries." ("Our history: British Council", 2024).

In fact, today the British Councils offers English Language Training for those who want to learn English, TESOL[27] Teacher Training programs, and even jointly administers the global IELTS (International English Language Testing System) English-language standardised test with the University of Cambridge ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) Examinations and IDP Education Australia. ("Does it matter where I take my IELTS", January 26, 2024). Currently, the IELTS test is used as an academic and immigration entry requirement by most English dominant countries. Thus, we see that the British Council became the agent of British colonisation by spreading English globally when the British lost their imperial power after the second world war. The British Council's success is evident in its global presence—operating in 100 countries—and its claim of having reached 600 million people during the 2022–2023 period. ("British Council: The UK's international culture and education", 2024).

A useful model to help us understand the spread of English globally was developed by linguist Braj Kachru. Kachru's three concentric circles of English represent "the type of spread, the patterns of acquisition and the functional domains in which English is used across cultures and languages" (1985, p.12).

- The inner circle or *norm-enforcing* circle represents the traditional bases of English such as the United Kingdom, Australia, Anglophone Canada, Ireland, New Zealand and the United States.

[27] TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages)

- The outer circle or *norm-developing* circle represents countries where English is not the native tongue but for historical reasons (such as colonisation) has become the lingua franca: Jamaica, Singapore, Malaysia, Nigeria, Kenya, the Philippines, India, Tanzania, Bangladesh and non-Anglophone Canada and South Africa.

- The expanding circle or *norm-dependent* circle represents countries where English plays no historical or governmental role but is nevertheless widely used as a foreign language: China, Russia, Japan, Korea, Egypt, most of Europe and Indonesia.

(Kachru, 1985)[28]

"Current research suggests that the English language is now spoken by approximately 1.35 billion people worldwide. That's 17% of the world's population". (Gration, 2024)[29]. A majority of the speakers of English speak it as an additional language, not a mother tongue. These are speakers from the outer or expanding circles, not the inner circle. Researchers from the University of Winnipeg show that in 23 non-English dominant countries such as Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Brunei, Dominica, Jamaica, Singapore and Spain, English lessons are mandatory starting at the age of 4 years old. In other countries such as Cambodia, The Republic

[28] While Kachru's model has been valuable in describing how English has spread throughout the world, it has been criticised for defining the circles by geography not proficiency. There are people in the Inner circle who are not native speakers of English, i.e. Gaelic and Welsh speakers in the UK. Furthermore, Canagarajah (2006) notes that the circles are leaking; the boundaries neither contain nor prevent penetration by other Englishes. Hence, we see an increase in the number of English Language teachers that are not from the Inner Circle; literature in English from authors like Chinua Achebe and Anita Desai; and the production of texts on Indian English.

[29] Elizabeth Gration is a "marketing and SEO specialist who produces a wide range of content for clients in a multitude of industries. Her background is in English Language and Linguistics, and she has over 5 years of experience working in digital marketing, SEO and PR." (https://preply.com/en/blog/author/elizabeth-gration/)

of Congo, Indonesia, Nicaragua, Venezuela and Switzerland, English lessons are mandatory from the age of 12 years old. In 55 countries worldwide (28.5% of the world's countries), English is recognized as an official language by law. The definition given of an official language is as follows: "The language or one of the languages that is accepted by a country's government, is taught in schools, used in the courts of law, etc." (Gration, 2024).

According to David Graddol, an applied linguist, " "native speakers" lost their majority in the 1970s" (as cited in Canagarajah, 2006, p.588). Another linguist, David Crystal, predicts conservatively that by 2050, the number of English as an additional or second language speakers will be approximately 30 million more than the "native" speakers (Crystal, 1997). Therefore, although English speakers in the outer and expanding circles have exceeded those in the inner circle, yet it is still the inner circle who control how English should be spoken and written and taught despite losing their majority status as English speakers. This brings us to the concept of raciolinguistic ideologies which "link the legitimacy of English to White speakers and, therefore, the notion of native English speakerism is attributed to White settlers." (Kubota, Corella, Lim & Sah, 2023, p.761). So, only white people own English and can therefore command how it should be used. Even in Canada, English belongs to the white settlers, not to people like me even though we grew up speaking English as a mother tongue. This idea of English belonging to whites relates to the idea of whiteness as property. In 1993, Professor Cheryl I. Harris wrote a text entitled "Whiteness as Property"[30] published in the Harvard Law

[30] Access article here: https://harvardlawreview.org/print/no-volume/whiteness-as-property/

Review. The text discusses the intersection of racial identity and property rights in the USA and how whiteness was protected as legal property in the US in the parallel systems of domination of Black and Indigenous peoples. “Following the period of slavery and conquest, whiteness became the basis of racialized privilege — a type of status in which white racial identity provided the basis for allocating societal benefits both private and public in character. These arrangements were ratified and legitimated in law as a type of status property.” (Harris, 1993, p.1709). Therefore, English spoken by the white colonialists was and is considered property belonging to the whites. And since the whites still hold the most political, economic and social power today, speaking and writing “white” or “standardised” English increases a person’s cultural capital. Pierre Bourdieu defined cultural capital as “the accumulation of knowledge, behaviors, and skills that a person can tap into to demonstrate one's cultural competence and social status”. (Cole, April 5, 2023). Cultural capital exists in three states: embodied, objectified and institutionalised states. Embodied cultural capital is closely related to Bourdieu’s concept of “habitus” in which a person unconsciously inhabits certain ideologies, values and dispositions from their social, cultural and economic backgrounds as well as from their life experiences. Cultural capital in the objectified state is denoted by a person’s material possessions (educational pursuits, jobs, clothing, food) which signal their economic status. Cultural capital in the institutionalised state refers to how cultural capital is “measured, certified and ranked”. Examples of the institutionalised state are academic qualifications, job titles and political roles which formally recognise a person as an asset. (Bourdieu, 1986). In all of these states, English plays a key role in how much cultural capital a person possesses, allowing them to move up the socio-economic ladder.

In fact, English is the language of knowledge-making and knowledge-keeping in science, technology and education. A majority of journals in academia are in English and insist that all articles submitted adhere to a particular variety of English (i.e. Academic English) to meet their publication standards. Thus, using English, especially "white" or "standard" English, reifies a person's chances of climbing up the social, political and economic ladder. As such, English Language Teaching (ELT) either as a second language or as a foreign language is now a global cash cow industry with people all over the world eager to learn and master English. As a result of this frenzy to learn English, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) teacher training programs have become commercially successful to meet the demand for ELT.

Linguists Robert Phillipson and Alastair Pennycook trace the colonial history of the English Language Teaching (ELT) Industry showing how the teaching of English in the outer and expanding circles became an ideological tool for the inner circle countries to dominate. The dichotomy of the Self and Other in TE (Teaching English) and SOL (Speakers of Other Languages) in TESOL became evident through teaching methodologies and textbooks which were created and produced in Britain and imported into other parts of the world. (Phillipson 1992; Pennycook 1998). When I first started teaching ELT in 1998, the textbooks that were provided to me by my institution in Singapore were published by either Oxford University Press or Cambridge University Press or Macmillan Education and written by white scholars such as Scott Thornbury, Michael Swan, Jeremy Harmer, David Crystal, etc. I was expected to employ the pedagogies in the textbooks to teach my Chinese students who had come to Singapore to learn English prior to enrolling in their Computer Science or Engineering degree programs. As an ELT teacher in Singapore, I was expected to uphold white epistemologies and ontologies in my

classroom. My students had to plan their essays using the Eurocentric, linear process of writing: brainstorming, essay plan, and multiple drafts. They were corrected on awkward phrasing and syntax which did not meet the "standard" English requirements. I believed then in standard language ideology and that there was a standard English which was British English which we all had to master. My students were treated as empty vessels which needed filling. Their identities, and cultural norms and beliefs were not part of the equation in my classroom. They just needed to be taught so they could conform and perform in order to be successful in their degree programs and beyond. This is the "banking concept of education" (Paulo Freire) which I upheld until I moved to Canada where I experienced linguistic racism firsthand as a writing teacher in a community college and in my everyday life as a citizen.

The turning point for me was when an Arab student challenged me one day in my composition class at a GTA (Greater Toronto Area) community college. She was upset because I had graded her essay down for some awkward and peculiar phrases and words she had used. She said I made her feel stupid even though she spoke five languages. When she communicated how she felt to me, something in me shifted and I completely understood how she felt. The racist incidents I had experienced in the Canadian classroom as a writing teacher and as a Canadian immigrant came hurtling back to me. I decided to spend time with my student to understand the writing choices she made in her paper. We spent an hour poring over her paper as she explained to me why she had used certain words, phrases, and syntax which were influenced by her other four languages. I learned a valuable lesson that day: there are different ways of expressing which should be respected. Each writer should be allowed to bring themselves into their writing and not be forced to conform to someone else's way of writing. As

a teacher, I had the power and privilege to transform editing into negotiation which opens the door for conversation, not hegemony.

It is important to note that I was complicit in perpetuating Eurocentric ideologies and epistemologies as an ELT and writing teacher. I only came to realise what I had been doing after that eye-opening experience I had with my Arab student. That experience taught me that mandating a particular variety of English from my Arab student was me practising linguistic racism. In essence, I was demanding she erase her identity as a speaker of five languages instead of embracing the linguistic repertoire and fluidity she brought to her writing. In chapter 2, I trace my own indoctrination into whiteness starting from my convent schooling and how I have been "othered" in Canada for the peculiarity of my English variety: my pronunciation, my choice of vocabulary, my syntax.

1.2. Writing/Composition Studies in Canada

In this section, I turn to the linguistic imperialism present in our Canadian First Year Composition (FYC) or writing classrooms. Composition/Writing studies in Canada is a field fraught with politics. In most Canadian universities and colleges, the teaching of FYC is not considered a "real" discipline and is usually relegated to the bottom of the heap compared to STEM or other more "prestigious" disciplines. Postsecondary teachers are aware that teaching FYC is not as well respected as teaching a subject in Engineering, Business, Game Design or the Health Sciences even though writing is a foundational skill that students require in all these disciplines to graduate from their programs. When I taught writing in a GTA community college,

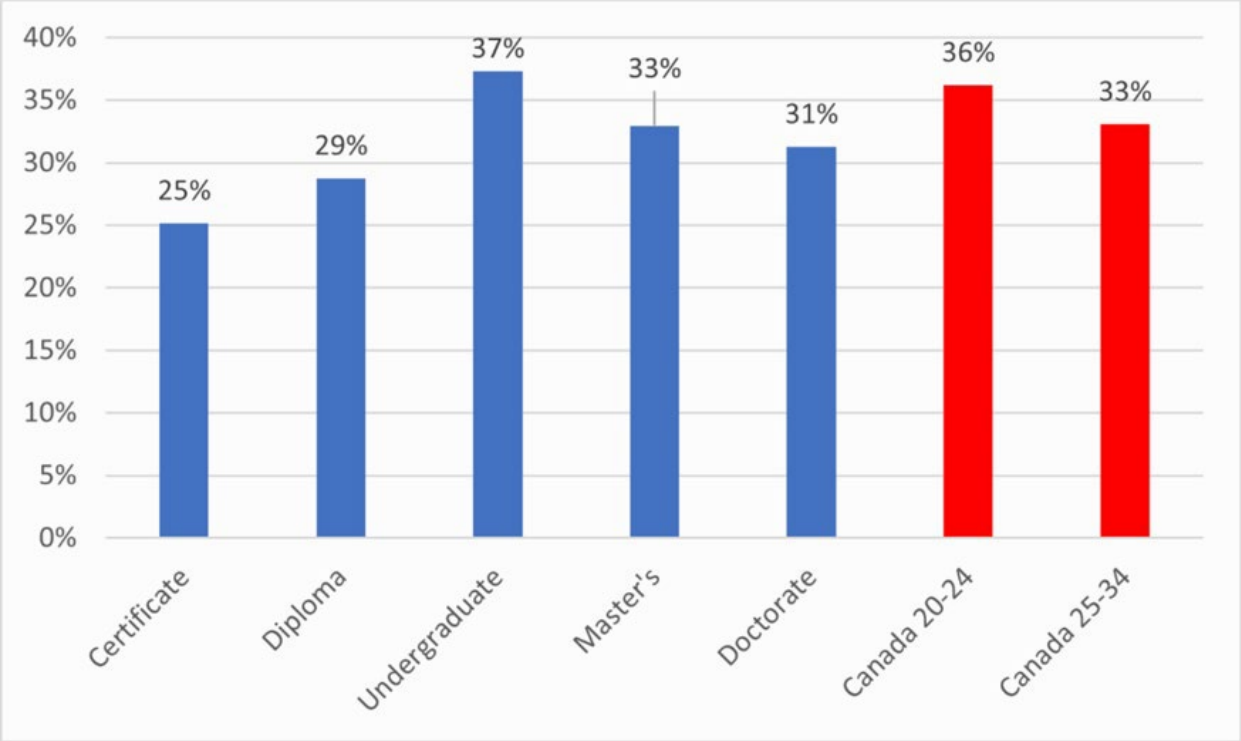
I personally experienced how it felt to be overlooked as a non-essential faculty member in the institution compared to the ones who taught in the more desired STEM fields. I know that very few faculty in my institution aspire to teach FYC as they do not see it as a stepping stone towards a successful academic career because FYC is not considered a discipline, but "according to Hunt (2006) as a "hodgepodge structure" (p.381) of "isolated and uncoordinated initiatives…varying wildly from context to context"" (p.371). (Landry, 2016, p.12). Paradoxically, in our Canadian educational institutions writing skills occupy an important role as they are used as a gatekeeping mechanism when admitting students into postsecondary programs. Students who do not meet the minimum English proficiency requirement based on their IELTS (International English Language Testing System)[31] scores or a post admission writing assessment, are enrolled in remedial writing courses or in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses to get them up to par. Those who end up in remedial writing courses or in EAP, have their self-confidence knocked down a rung which paves the way for self-doubt and high levels of stress because it signifies that they are not good enough to join the "normal" classes with students who are deemed to have already mastered "standard" English.

Before we can analyse the state of composition/writing studies in Canada, it is important that we understand the demographics of the student body in Canadian higher education institutions. Below are two charts showing the visible minority statistics in Canada from 2020-2021. These charts from Statistics Canada are taken from a digital newsletter from

[31] IELTS is a high stakes English language proficiency test. "It is designed to assess the language ability of people who aim to study and work in, immigrate to and integrate into an English-speaking environment." https://www.ielts.ca/take-ielts/what-is-ielts-exam/. It assesses candidates on four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Canada accepts the IELTS for immigration purposes and for admission into universities and colleges.

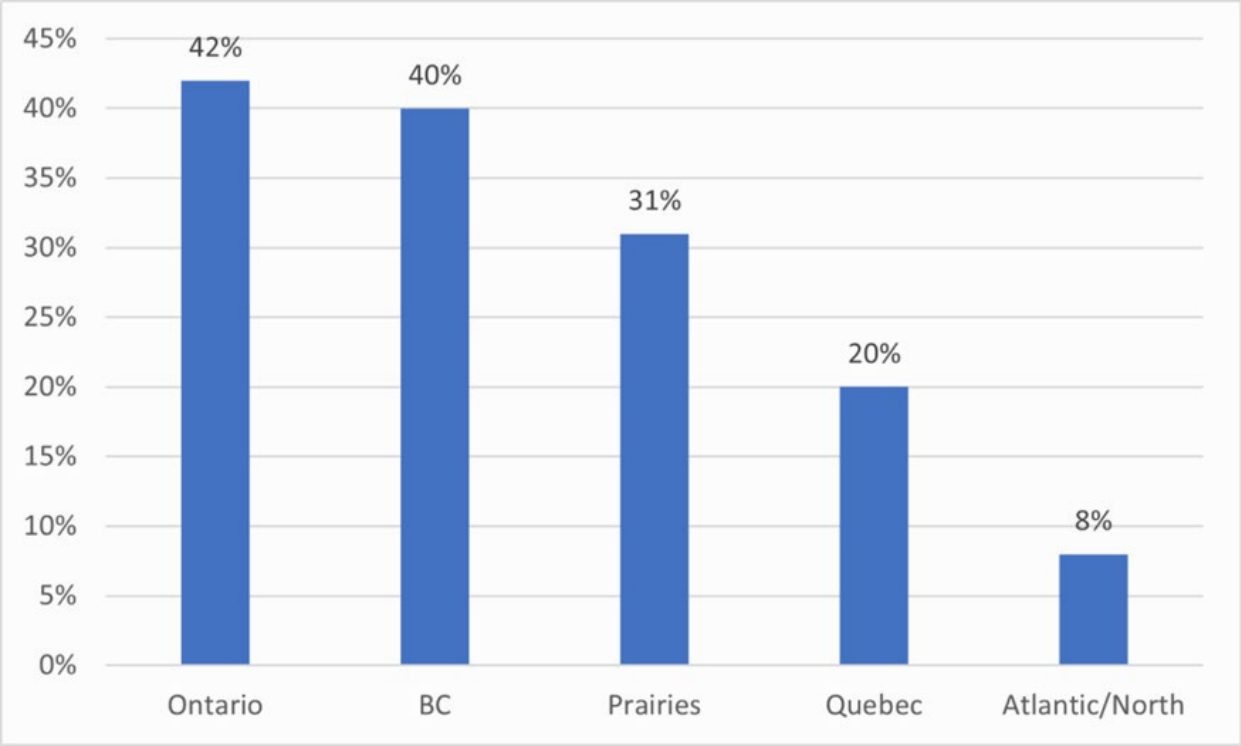
Alex Usher, from the Higher Education Strategy Associates group, which I subscribe to. It is important to note that this population sample looked “at “entering” (i.e. first year) students at various levels of education” and so “these reports are only true for this subset of students rather than the student body as a whole”. (Usher, 2023). Secondly, “the students identified here are exclusively Canadian students – that is, citizens and permanent residents” because on the census days (May 10, 2016 or May 11, 2021), there were “too few international students who were in the country to make it possible to include them in the ethnicity analysis.” (Usher, 2023). Also, it is important to note that Statistics Canada does not include Indigenous peoples as part of the visible minority. “The *Employment Equity Act* defines visible minorities as “persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour.” The main groups designated as visible minorities are South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Arab, Latin American, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean and Japanese.” (“Visible Minority and Population Group Reference Guide”, October 26, 2022).

Figure 2: Proportion of student body which is "visible minority", by level, Canada 2020-21



In figure 2, we see that the number of visible minority students is highest at 37% in the undergraduate studies followed by master's and then doctorates. It seems to demonstrate that Canadian universities are overrepresented compared to community colleges (including certificate, diploma and some undergraduate) which seem underrepresented in comparison to the whole. In addition, the last two columns of the chart in red show that a majority of these visible minority students are within the age group of 20-34 years old at 69% of the total census population.

Figure 3: Proportion of Students who are Visible Minority by Region, Canada, 2020-2021



In Figure 3, we see clearly that the greatest number of visible minority students reside in Ontario at 42% with BC having the second highest at 40%. That is almost half of the population of the census lives in Ontario and BC which coincides with the "distribution of ethnicities among young Canadians as a whole." (Usher, 2023).

What does this mean for us as writing teachers? There is a pressing need now for us to reconsider how we teach writing/composition. Continuing to maintain the current standard language ideologies in our classrooms and institutions will make us complicit in propagating linguistic imperialism and to an extent, linguistic violence on students who possess a linguistic repertoire which far exceeds the monolingualist foundations on which Canadian education stands.

Additionally, “according to a recent-ish Universities Canada report[32] , the proportion of faculty who were racialized/Indigenous was about 22%, based on the 2016 census. Among senior leadership, it was about 11%, based on a 2019 survey. In the last few years, those numbers will both have ticked up a bit, but you’re still likely looking at a situation where the student body is about 2x as likely to be visible minority/Indigenous as the academic staff and roughly 4x as likely compared to senior university leadership.” (Usher, 2023).

We know we need to hire more diverse faculty and staff, and with the increased attention given to Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Decolonisation (EDID), there has been a concerted effort to hire BIPOC faculty and staff to meet institutional EDID mandates. Yet, the majority of faculty and staff is still white because our institutions pay lip service to EDID. I have seen how academic discourse is weaponised in the hiring process to reject BIPOC who look like our students from faculty positions by using excuses such as lacking Canadian experience. Our hiring and search processes effortlessly reproduce racism by building in plausible deniability through the epistemology and discourse employed. According to Sheila Block, senior economist at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, “racism is alive and well in the Canadian job market.” (Somani, July 25, 2019, GlobalNews).[33] Block asserts that what needs to be done to

[32]Access report here: https://www.univcan.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Equity-diversity-and-inclusion-at-Canadian-universities-report-on-the-2019-national-survey-Nov-2019-1.pdf

[33] Access news article here: https://globalnews.ca/news/5678054/racial-ethnic-discrimination-hiring-interview-callbacks/

counter this racism is for people to look at their employment systems. “So the first thing that you need is you need some data and you have to look at it and say, ‘Does my workforce reflect the population around us?’ And if it doesn’t, who’s not at the table, who’s not being hired and why aren’t they being hired?” These are pertinent questions that should be asked by senior administrators in our universities and colleges if we truly want to diversify our faculty and staff to meet the diversity of our students.

Historically, the first-year writing courses in Canada were an offshoot of literary studies. According to Dana Landry who wrote her 2016 PhD thesis titled, “Writing Studies in Canada: A People’s History”, there are two distinct characteristics of writing studies in Canada: “the first is the belletristic tradition outlined in Johnson (1988) and Hubert (1994), and the second is opposition to the U.S. model of freshman composition.” (Landry, 2016, pp. 9-10). Landry states that “The belletristic tradition was born of loyalist, nationalist aims of literary studies to teach writing through appreciation and imitation of the literary greats in the English canon” and that “this tradition in Canada through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries led to the erosion of classical study in rhetorical arts from English studies and an increasing emphasis on writing instruction as remediation in grammar.”(Landry, 2016, p.10). The second unique characteristic of the Canadian context “was opposition to the U.S. model of freshman composition, which manifest in multiple institutional locations for writing instruction.” (Landry, 2016, p.10). While the US composition model placed composition and rhetoric as ancillary within English departments, the Canadian writing/composition was scattered among different locations within English departments: attached to other disciplines such as Engineering, Health

or Cultural Studies; in a Writing Centre; in Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC): in Writing in the Disciplines (WID); or as stand-alone academic units. (Graves and Graves, 2006; Landry, 2016). Roger Graves likens Canadian writing studies to a mosaic, a cultural metaphor used to describe Canadian multiculturalism, as opposed to the US melting pot. Graves states, "if one looks too closely at any section of the mosaic, the picture fails to cohere or focus, and the pieces resemble nothing more than scattered tiles. From a distance, one can draw back and begin to see patterns of differentiation, of connection, and perhaps even of design." (2006, p. 1). According to Landry, Graves hints at the purposeful design of Canadian writing studies as flexible and spontaneous in direct opposition to US composition studies. Landry claims that "A multiplicity of locations is distinctly Canadian because those locations arose from the belletristic tradition that insisted that English departments were for the study of literature. This separation of literary studies and composition dispersed "composition" into the disciplines and any number of other locations that worked in local conditions." (pp. 12-13). This liminality that Canadian writing studies occupied within the universities and community colleges rendered a "disciplinary homelessness" (Hunt) to writing studies with writing faculty always pushed to search for allies within the institution. (Landry, 2016, p.13). Thus, writing faculty were seen as non-disciplinary and thus devalued in the institution. "Liminality defies the traditional institutional structures of disciplinarity and can sanction the notion of writing instruction as remedial service, rather than disciplinary activity." (Landry, 2016, p.13). As such, those who teach FYC in Canada are viewed as liminal beings, not essential in the institution. Given this contextual history of Canadian writing studies, institutions are willing to hire a limited number of permanent fulltime faculty to teach FYC with the majority of faculty being contingent or

contract faculty, who enjoy very little job security and benefits. With little attention and budget given to FYC, the teaching of writing/composition is dependent on the expertise of individual faculty members who are usually Literature majors, especially in my community college. Most of them lack formal training on how to teach writing. Because most of them are English graduates who have authored a master's or doctoral thesis, they are thought to be credentialed and competent enough to teach writing courses. These faculty through no fault of their own, bring a remedial lens to their teaching of FYC. They believe that students in their classrooms are deficient and lacking in writing skills and need to be taught how to write to conform to the standard English ideology they were trained in as literary scholars. In 1991, Susan Miller wrote "Textual Carnivals: The Politics of Composition" in which she undertook a survey focused on marginalised populations "interrogating individuals' experiences of the intersecting subject positions of composition teachers and women." (Landry, 2016, p. 66). Miller's goal was to expose "the experiences of those in composition studies in order to tell what she called, "a good story," a different story of writing and of teachers and students of composition than the myth usually told about them." (Landry, 2016, p.66). However, that same story is being told about them, more than 30 years later, in a distinct national context. According to Landry,

> *The myth naturalizes good writing as good writing; writing studies sees good writing as contextually determined. The myth says that students are not good writers due to cultural or moral deficiencies; the field says that students do write well when engaged by informed (that is theoretical and researched) pedagogy. The myth says that writing*

> *instruction is remediation of error; the field says writing instruction is enculturation into the social and textual habits of a given community. The myth says that the work of writing instructors is not disciplinary, and inextricably, that they, as people, are not disciplinary; those who do that work and belong to the field know differently*. (2016, p.66).

The quotation above aptly describes the myths which are still carefully tended and propagated today in Canadian writing studies which remain fossilised as an untended garden with wildly fluctuating and diverse terminology, ideologies, and structures occupying a liminal space in our institutions today. This liminality and fluidity seems to be the defining character of writing studies in Canada, yet writing teachers eschew the liminality and fluidity our multilingual students bring into our writing classrooms because the politics of teaching composition is inextricably linked to white supremacist ideology which demand a conformity to particular standards of whiteness: the hiring of a majority of white faculty to teach FYC; the perception of students, especially multilingual students, in FYC as poor writers due to being morally, culturally and linguistically deficient (and thus needing remediation); and the imposition of standard English ideology in the teaching of writing instruction.

As a result, BIPOC students in Canadian First-Year Composition (FYC) courses often struggle to express themselves authentically due to the myths discussed earlier. Before even stepping into the classroom, they have been othered and marked as deficient and require fixing or remediation so they can conform to whiteness inherent in our society and in the

marketplace[34]. Those who hold power in the marketplace—mainly middle-class white people—have shaped how it operates. Changing these deeply rooted, racist systems requires significant internal work. In his book, "Pedagogy of the Oppressed", Paulo Freire (1970) encourages students to stand up and fight against the status quo. He calls this "conscientization or critical consciousness". This is when one gains individual consciousness through self-reflection and takes action in the form of praxis (practice in action) to break one's social reality which has been oppressive. His work is called "liberatory pedagogy". This pedagogy is noteworthy today especially since as I discussed previously, we are seeing a different demographic in our postsecondary institutions – students who are immigrants to Canada, international or visa students, generation 1.5 who were born in Canada but born to families who speak another language other than English at home. We need to consider how we have adapted and adjusted our educational systems to make room for these new learners who come from various ethno-cultural groups bringing with them an abundance of socio-linguistic cultures to the classroom. These students could contribute rich perspectives into our classrooms if we create spaces for them to share and be their authentic selves. Instead, our writing classrooms have been sites of forced assimilation to the dominant ideology of what is considered good and valuable. Writing teachers teach a preset syllabus developed to maintain consistency across the classes but more importantly, to uphold white supremacy and privilege because our academic system is founded upon the principles of whiteness.

[34] In this thesis, 'the marketplace' extends beyond the traditional economic exchange of goods and services to encompass the broader socio-cultural and political systems where power, labour, and ideas are negotiated.

During his keynote speech at the 2021 Conference for Antiracist Teaching, Language, and Assessment, Asao B. Inoue quotes Marilyn Frye's work "White Woman Feminist" by stating that "whiteliness or whitely dispositions", which might be thought of as a part of habits of white language (HOWL), can be enumerated as the following:

- ***Being a judge and peacemaker****: a disposition toward giving responsibility and punishments, being the preacher and martyr, taking responsibility and the glory.*
- ***Self-understood benevolence****: a disposition toward seeing oneself (and other whitely people) as benevolent, good-willed, fair, honest, and ethical.*
- ***Being procedurally ethical****: a strong sense of right and wrong, usually rooted in dispositions toward forms, procedures, due process, and rules as the basis of the ethical; to be good, one acts according to the rules, which is understood as principled.*
- ***Authority****: a disposition toward running the show, or aspiring toward it, and a belief in one's infallible authority in most matters. (Frye 153-54; Fox 202).*

(Inoue, 2021).

Inoue claims that "Habits of White Language are historical and used not just in texts but to judge them and the people who are associated with them, like our students." Below is Inoue's description of HOWL:

- ***Unseen, Naturalized, Orientation to the World*** *– This is an orientation, a starting point, of one's body in time and space that makes certain habits, capacities, practices, languages, and ideas reachable. It assumes, or takes as universal, its own proximities or*

capabilities to act and do things that are inherited through one's shared space. It can be understood as an "oxymoronic haunting," leaving concepts and ideas unsaid or unstated for those in the classroom or other place to fill in. It is often stated or understood as "clear only if know" (or COIK). The authority figure knows precisely and assumes everyone else does too. When a teacher, writer, or authority embodies this habit, they often do not realize it, assuming that everyone has access to the same languages, concepts, practices, capacities, histories, and logics that they do. In this way, the classroom, or an ideal paper, or an expected language performance becomes an extension of the white body, its habits, and its languaging in such a way that it is hard to distinguish it as an orientation, body, or space in the classroom or other place. It's just, for instance, a standard that is both associated with but understood as separate from whiteness and white bodies.

- ***Hyperindividualism*** *– which tend to also support logics like "survival of the fitness," "free and open markets," and competition as proving grounds for discovering the best or what is most ideal. It can appeal to ideals of universal truths and knowledge that come from inside the individual.*

- ***Stance of Neutrality, Objectivity, and Apoliticality*** *– This is an orientation that assumes or invokes a voice (and body), or its own discourse, as neutral and apolitical, as non-racial and non-gendered. This is often voiced in the style of a "god-trick," which is a universal vantage or viewpoint by which to know something else in a nonpolitical or purely objective way.*

- ***Individualized, Rational, Controlled Self*** *– This is a stance or orientation in which the person is conceived of as an individual who is primarily rational, self-conscious, self-controlled, and self-determined. One's own conscience guides the individual. Sight (ocularity) is the primary way to identify the truth or to understand something (i.e. seeing is proof; seeing is understanding; seeing is believing).*

- ***Rule-Governed, Contractual Relationships*** *—This habit focuses on the individual in a contractual relationship with other individuals, either formally or tacitly, that tends to be understood as benefiting the individuals in the contract, not the whole community or group.*

- ***Clarity, Order, and Control*** *– This habit focuses on reason, order, and control as guiding principles for understanding and judgement, as well as documents and instances of languaging. Thinking and anti-sensuality are primary and opposed to feelings and emotions. Logical insight, the rational, order, and objectivity are valued most and opposed to the subjective and emotional.*

(Inoue, 2023, https://tinyurl.com/HOWLhandout6.).

To summarise, HOWL assumes that every learner in the classroom ascribes to one universal way of knowing and being which is in direct alignment with the writing teacher's values and beliefs; it lends prominence to logos and ethos over pathos in the classroom as emotions and feelings are not considered objective, rational and visible; it assumes that learners learn best as individuals not in communities; it believes in contractual relationships

between the learner and the teacher; and it perpetuates the notion in the omniscience of the teacher as the final authority in the classroom. If every writing teacher were to practise and uphold HOWL, the chips are already stacked against our non-mainstream or BIPOC learners before they enter the classroom. The difference they bring with their lived experiences disadvantages them; whereas those who have been nurtured in HOWL will have an unfair advantage in the classroom.

While as I stated earlier, many Canadian higher education institutions have committed to having an EDID department, with the inclusion of an EDID goal in their strategic plans, and even the creation of Employee Resource Groups which champion those who are equity-denied, they still fail to do the real work of unpinning *whiteness* from our curriculum and foundations in education. When our educational practices do not dismantle *whiteness* (and racism) from its principal foundations, we cannot hope for a better world where *everyone* is valued and empowered. In "Decolonizing Academic Writing Pedagogies for Multilingual Students" (2023), Suresh Canagarajah asserts that "making space for various languages and cultures in the name of accommodating diversity will be ineffective if the underlying knowledge systems are not delinked" (p. 3). Canagarajah quotes Souza Santos who argues that "there is no global social justice without global cognitive justice" (p.42).

This lack of global cognitive justice in colleges and universities in Canada is reflected in the FYC courses and in the assessments used to evaluate students. All writing courses validate Edited American English (or Standard Written English) which is a variety not explicitly taught to students especially those who are foreign born and come from a different academic culture.

EAE is a code learned by teachers of writing during their own schooling and graduate work. They are indoctrinated into thinking that EAE is the correct and only English that can and should be used and valued in their writing classrooms. They ignore other varieties of Englishes – World Englishes (WE) – which their students bring into the classroom because they have been taught to perceive WE as occupying a lower economic and social status in society. Oftentimes, students' heritage or home languages and non-native varieties of English are not condoned in the classroom but confined to their homes or outside the classroom. According to Suresh Canagarajah the "standard" English accepted in the classroom is known as Metropolitan English (ME), which are native varieties originating from traditional bases of English such as the UK, USA and Canada. The latter, non-native varieties, are labelled World Englishes (WE) by Braj Kachru. (Canagarajah, 2006, p. 588). By not allowing the use of WE in composition classrooms, we are implying that WE is unequal and pejorative. Thereby, we are discriminating against our students' home varieties which gives them their identities and voices. As Canagarajah states, WE is only permitted in some well-defined contexts:

WE for literary texts; ME for "serious" texts

WE for discoursal features; ME for grammar

WE for informal classroom interactions; ME for formal production

WE for speaking; ME for writing

WE for home; ME for school

WE for local communication; ME for international communication

(Canagarajah, 2006, p.594).

However, we know that language is dynamic and organic contingent on its users and their habits. As such, over time ME varieties of English have commingled with other varieties and languages to create new forms and lexical items. For example, words such as “dinghy” (Sanskrit), “mammoth” (Russian), “kaput” (German), “gung-ho” (Chinese) and “alchemy” (Arabic) are used widely in English today because of the contact English users made with users of these other languages. Vershawn Young provides another example of this phenomenon of language change in the use of the word “punked”. This term originally came from “black culture to describe someone getting tricked, teased, or humiliated [and] used to be taboo in formal communication” (Young, 2010, p.69). However, Young reports that in 2009 the New York Times Op-Ed article asked, “Is Obama Punking Us?” The New York Times is an American daily newspaper founded in 1851 and has won over 100 Pulitzer Prizes. The Pulitzer is awarded for excellence in journalism and is administered by Columbia University. If other non-standard varieties are creeping into such publications, it seems hypocritical that postsecondary institutions in North America are requiring that teachers teach students the standard variety. As Horner, Lu, Jones Royster and Trimbur claim, “Except perhaps for professional actors, few walks of life require attaining native-like spoken fluency in a particular variety of a particular language…Instead what is increasingly needed, and even demanded, is the ability to work across differences, not just of language but of disciplines and cultures.” (2011, p. 312). Very few people speak standard English in Canada including white people. There are often

disagreements on how to pronounce a word. For instance, Torontonians still argue over the correct pronunciation of “Spadina”. Some say “spuh-dee-nah” and some “spuh-die-nah” (Tsekouras, May 11, 2022)[35]. In my opinion, I do not think it matters because say it either way and Torontonians know which street you are referring to or if they do not, then they need simply clarify with you. Working across differences is a necessary skill in our society today because global migration patterns have resulted in the congregation of diverse people from various cultures and languages into one geographical space such as in Toronto. So, I am baffled when teachers and institutions pontificate that they need to teach students “correct” or “standard” English to survive and succeed in the marketplace when the reality is that the marketplace does not speak the “standard”.

1.3. Bilingual education in Canada: CALP vs BICs

There has been much research done by Jim Cummins, a professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, on the promotion of bilingual education in schools by allowing the use of heritage or home languages in the classroom to help multilingual immigrant students succeed in school. Cummins’ research focuses on language literacy and development in learners who acquire English as an additional language. As early as 1979 Jim Cummins differentiated between CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency/Academic Language Proficiency) and BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills) in his research on language education in Toronto schools. CALP refers to the ability to

[35] Access article here: https://www.cp24.com/news/top-10-mispronounced-places-in-toronto-revealed-which-one-are-you-saying-incorrectly-1.5898351

"manipulate language using abstractions in a sophisticated manner", while BICS refers to "basic communicative fluency" that is cognitively undemanding and contextual and used by students in informal contexts outside the classroom. (Cummins, 1980). Hence, we could surmise that students who are comfortable using EAE possess CALP and those who speak World English (WE) or who have English as an additional language possess BICS. While I believe that Cummins intention in foregrounding CALP and BICS was to help teachers in their teaching of students from non-dominant groups, it was based on the premise that English as an Additional Language students who are usually students from racially marginalised groups possessed a conversational English variety which was high context-dependent and not cognitively demanding which prevents them from thinking abstractly and conceptually. Cummins seems to be proselytising the ideology that only academic English has the ability to allow its users to manipulate language to produce academic and scientific knowledge.

> *Many minority language students acquire certain context-embedded English skills and become almost indistinguishable from native speakers in face-to-face situations within a relatively short period. In other words, they quickly acquire . . . communicative skills. However, this does not imply that such students have sufficient proficiency in context-reduced aspects of language to survive academically in an all-English class on an equal footing with native speakers of English.*
>
> (Cummins, 2001, p. 145)

Related to Cummins' distinction between social and academic language is his linguistic interdependence and threshold hypotheses. Linguistic interdependence declares that academic language learned in one language transfers to a new language (Cummins). "This principle is most succinctly defined as "to the extent that instruction in Lx [one language] is effective in promoting proficiency in Lx [that language], transfer of this proficiency to Ly [the additional language] will occur provided there is adequate exposure to Ly." (Cummins, 2000, p. 38). The threshold hypothesis extends this argument, by postulating that "continued academic development of both languages conferred cognitive/linguistic benefits whereas less developed academic proficiency in both languages limited children's ability to benefit cognitively and academically from interaction with their environment through those languages (e.g., in school)" (Cummins, 2000, p. 175).

Nelson Flores, a scholar in Educational Linguistics and an associate professor at the University of Pennsylvania, criticises Cummins in his 2013 article, "Silencing the Subaltern: Nation-State/Colonial Governmentality and Bilingual Education in the United States" in which he states: "... it would be equally disingenuous to gloss over the important similarities between Cummins' justification for bilingual education and nation-state/colonial governmentality." (2013, p.278). In Flores' article, he traces the rise of codified standard language and nation-state/governmentality ideologies which originated from Europe. "With the gradual decline of monarchical power in Europe alongside the rise to political power of the European bourgeoisie, the discourse shifted to defending "the people" (as represented by the European bourgeoisie) against the inferior races within the populace." (Flores, 2013, p. 266). In fact, the rise of standard language ideology arose out of the birth of the "objective" or "nationalistic" study of

language by political theorist, John Locke (1632-1704) and German nationalist, Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) who were "attempting to theorize a language ideology that would support the formation of a homogenous German national identity." (Flores, 2013, p. 269). Their work towards scientific/nationalist linguistics converged into structural linguistics which was ascribed to Ferdinand Saussure (1857-1913). Saussure argued that linguistics should study the underlying structure of language (*langue*) focusing on the science of language which is neutral and objective rather than the actual language practices (*parole*). Thus, the core idea of *langue* is that every nation has a common linguistic system which its nationals do not deviate from. For instance, the Spaniards eradicated all other folk languages and established Castilian as their standard language. According to Walter Mignolo, an Argentine semiotician and professor at Duke University, Spanish grammarian Antonio de Nebrijak "knew that the power of a unified language, via its grammar, lay in teaching it to barbarians, as well as controlling barbarian languages by writing their grammars" (1995, p. 39). The assumption was that having a codified standard language or homogenous language unifies all people in a nation state, but it also othered those who did not use it. Flores' asserts, "In terms of colonization, docile colonial subjects were created through an imposition of Eurocentric language ideologies that made little sense outside of the nation-state framework of European society." (2013, p. 271).

Thus, despite the intention of Cummins' promotion of bilingual education to show recognition of another language besides English, Flores sees Cummins' framework as an extension of the nation-state/governmentality and standard language ideologies. Flores claims that although Cummins' belief that "the way to empower students is to affirm their cultural identity and build up academic language in their L1 while working to introduce them to their

L2" is a direct contrast to the imposition of monolingualism with its nation state/colonial governmentality, an "Otherizing process" is still at its core. In Cummins' framework, the language practices of the "language minority" parallels the "racial Other of nation-state/colonial governmentality" while the language practices of the "language majority" parallels "the language practices of the idealized bourgeois subject that were codified as part of nation-state/colonial governmentality." (Flores, 2013, p. 278). In sum, Cummins seems to be asserting that the language practices of the Other must change to mimic the language practices of the dominant/majority. This dominant framing of bilingual education seeks to impose a double monolingualism– "that is, the imposition of standardized varieties that reflect idealized language practices of the bourgeoisie of both languages." (Flores, 2013, p. 278).

This thinking which sees bilinguals as possessing two solitudes, two identities, two discrete languages is founded upon a white, colonial ideology which rejects multilingualism and sees it as impure. Susan Gal, anthropologist and linguist, documented how European nationalists saw "heterogeneity in language practices as an impediment to the creation of a purified nation-state. They, therefore, saw it as necessary to create codified standardized languages to cleanse the language of perceived impurities" and as part of the creation of "docile national subjects, that is, people who served the political and economic interests of the rising European bourgeoisie" (as cited in Flores, 2013, p. 268).

As I delved more into my research of how nation states and standard language ideology came to be, I realised that the ideology of named languages and monolingualism are deeply rooted in colonialism. As a master's graduate in Applied Linguistics, I am now questioning

everything I had ever studied about linguistics and language acquisition. The texts I studied and the pedagogy that was used to teach me is steeped in white epistemology. For instance, the idea of bilingualism I studied was more akin to Cummins' idea of two monolinguals in one body. That the languages a bilingual or even a multilingual learned were discrete entities with clear demarcations of grammar, syntax, structure, etc. In fact, because I speak two and a half languages (English, Malay and a little Mandarin), I know intimately that these languages tend to overlap and intermingle within me, and they do not occur in mutually exclusive pockets in my brain. Sometimes a word in Malay comes to my brain and my lips automatically as I am conversing in English because that word precisely encapsulates the idea or message I am conveying. To separate out my three languages requires cognitive effort on my part and hence, I now understand why I am tired at the end of my work day because I have been cognitively "on" for the past eight hours speaking only English, a formal English, and scraping out any Malay and Mandarin from my tongue before the words are allowed to come out because of the negativity directed at me if I speak a composite version of English. Dr. Jamila Lyiscott, a tenured Professor of Social Justice Education at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and a celebrated scholar and author of "Black Appetite. White Food: Issues of Race, Voice, and Justice Within and Beyond the Classroom",[36] powerfully conveys in her spoken-word essay, "3 Ways to Speak English" (June 19, 2014)[37] that "the reason I speak a composite version of your language

[36] You can read more about Dr.Lyiscott here: https://jamilalyiscott.com/about/

[37]Access Tedtalk here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k9fmJ5xQ_mc

(i.e. English) is because mines was raped away along with my history." This is the plain truth for all colonised and marginalised peoples.

Like Lyiscott, I am "a tri-lingual orator" and I believe that instead of trying to "fix us" there should be a "linguistic celebration" of people like us in our academic institutions. To celebrate our linguistic fluidity and richness, we look to the theory of *translanguaging,* a term coined in the 1980s by Welsh scholar Cen Williams to describe the practice of using two languages within the same lesson which was a contrast to previous notions of bilingual education which separated languages by class, day or time. Ofelia Gracia[38] (2009) enhanced this concept of translanguaging to describe the phenomenon of bilinguals and multilinguals selecting and deploying their languages from a unitary linguistic repertoire which does not see languages as autonomous and discrete entities. Thus, translanguaging is an extension of languaging, the discursive practice of language speakers who employ all the languages available to them simultaneously. Embracing translanguaging is one way for our educational institutions to ensure that our non-dominant students feel safe in our classrooms because if we subscribe to the theory of translanguaging in our writing classrooms, then we must be open to our students speaking and writing a composite version of English and be accepting of World Englishes. Demanding that our non-dominant students speak and write EAE in our writing classroom engenders psychological trauma. Some of our students are refugees who have already experienced trauma, and the writing classroom as it is today continues to re-traumatise

[38] Ofelia Garcia is a professor at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York and a renowned researcher on the education of language minorities, bilingualism and biliteracy, and macrosociolinguistics. https://www.tcpress.com/ofelia-garcia

them through the adoption of inequitable teaching and learning writing practices. For instance, students are graded down in their essays for using irregular expressions and collocations and incorrect syntax which are deemed as “errors”.

The work of Mina Shaughnessy, Suresh Canagarajah, and Aimee Krall-Lanoue is noteworthy here because they question, what is an error? Shaughnessy’s 1977 book, “Errors and Expectations”, challenges the assumptions that basic or developmental writers make indiscriminate errors in writing. In Chapter 4, she demonstrates that there is a method to these “errors” that basic/developmental writers make which could be grouped into four general categories of “error”: accidental errors, blurred patterns, consolidation errors, and inversions. Her book has helped many writing teachers realise that these “errors” that they were grading down in students’ papers were not made randomly but that there was a pattern to them, influenced by the other languages students spoke. Once teachers understand why and how these “errors” are made, they could help the student fine tune their writing. Canagarajah and Krall-Lanoue problematised this notion of “error” further by questioning what constitutes an error. Is it really an error, or another way of expression? Krall-Lanoue (2013) shared two examples of her student’s work and deconstructed the “error” as follows:

Example 1 (verb tense): “I knew I felt bad but I want him to feel worse.”

Example 2 (vocabulary): “The overview of my weak Monday was one of my tired days.”

In Example 1, our first instinct as writing teachers is to cross out “want” and replace it with “wanted”. However, perhaps the student continues to want him to feel bad about it – the feelings she has are not finished. Similarly, in Example 2, our inclination would be to cross out

"weak" and replace with "week" and perhaps insert a colon before "Monday" which would indicate that "Monday was one of my tired days" provides an overview of his week. But the student could have meant that Monday was a particularly "puny" day (Krall-Lanoue, 2013, p. 230). The point here is not that there may not be any eventual corrections to be made in both these instances, but "the translingual approach is about negotiating language difference and creating shared resources, not editing student writing" (p. 231). Translingual theory argues in favour of "honoring the power of all language users to shape language to specific ends; recognizing the linguistic heterogeneity of all users of language both in the United States and globally; directly confronting English monolingualist expectations by researching and teaching how writers can work with and against, not simply within, those expectations." (Horner, Lu, Jones Royster & Trimbur, 2011, p. 305). In other words, a translingual approach accepts and celebrates difference; and as Frankie Condon (2012) writes "leaves the door ajar" for new ways of expressions and being; gives agency to the users of languages which are considered non-standard to express in a way that is authentic to them; and expects all interlocutors within an interaction to labour together to create meaning and not expect the user of non-standard variety to do all the work to be understood. If we engaged in discussion with our students prior to marking these as errors, we would have transformed correction into negotiation. According to Krall-Lanoue, "*Error* is not miscommunication; it is not breaking a rule. Instead, *error* is those items one or both members of the interaction refuse to negotiate – that is when one or more speakers, writers, readers refuse to engage, participate. This is the only true way an *error* can occur" (2013, p. 233). What we consider as a grammatical or lexical error could be the choice

that students make in adapting the underlying linguistic structure of their mother-tongue in writing their second language.

At this juncture, it is important to distinguish translanguaging from translingualism. As I understand it the former describes the cognitive language practice of bilingual/multilingual speakers, an internal process not reproducible to those external to this cognitive process. Translanguaging belongs to the individual language speaker[39]. However, translingualism or translingual scholarship describes language as a social practice that is always emergent, contemporaneous, always being reconstituted spatially and temporally. Language difference is the norm under a translingual framework and not considered a deviation from the Standard English ideology foundational to a monolingual framework. Another concept similar to translingualism which has made a significant wave in composition and writing studies is "code-meshing" by Vershawn Young. Code-meshing refers to the simultaneous use of two or more languages or dialects within a single act of speech or writing. (Code-Meshing as World English, 2011). It differs from code-switching which in education is seen as "a pattern of alternation where one language [or dialect] is used in one context and another language [dialect] is used in another context." (Young, Barrett, Young-Rivera & Lovejoy, 2014, p. 31). Code-switching in this sense is perceived as a racist act if it is mandated in the classroom because it ennobles a monolingual framework that upholds a standard language ideology thereby promulgating a hierarchical order of languages in our world.

[39] I am grateful to Dr. Barbara Schmenk for helping me realise the differences between translanguaging and translingualism during her course, "Decolonizing in Language Education" (GER 615/715) at the University of Waterloo which I audited in Winter 2024.

To sum up, the issues plaguing Canadian writing studies today can be articulated into two main points:

1. The lack of "place" for writing scholars and teachers physically and metaphorically. This occurs in the shape of Canadian institutions "situating writing faculty wherever it suits budget lines and institutional culture"; and it manifests in our institutions "as lack of tenured positions to support writing programs". (Phelps, 2014). According to Darroch et al (2019), "many writing instructors and writing centre staff are faced with precarious employment and heavy workloads, reducing their ability to conduct writing research to an off-the-side-of-the-desk venture." Thus, this leaves the writing studies field at "risk of being de-railed and de-disciplined" (Thieme, 2019, p.150) and "excludes the voices of many who are responsible for supporting student writing" (Darroch et al. 2019).[40]

2. Whiteness continues to be centred in our writing curriculum. As institutions are deficient in investing in First Year Composition/Writing, little or no training is afforded to the many contingent faculty who usually end up teaching a maximum of five sections (200 students) of a writing course in my college. This ends up being seen as grunt work for these instructors who do not have the bandwidth nor the willpower to engage in social and cognitive justice work to begin transforming their pedagogy into an anti-oppressive and anti-racist pedagogy. They simply follow the institutional course outlines

[40] Phelps, Darroch and Thieme's work are located in Mitchell, K. M., & Zwagerman, S. (2022). Editorial Reflections: The Places and Identities of Writing and Writers. Discourse and Writing/Rédactologie, 32, 1–3. https://doi.org/10.31468/dwr.947

to the tee, often duplicating lesson plans and assessments shared with them by seasoned instructors who have been doing this longer. Often these lesson plans and assessments are steeped in HOWL and do not take into consideration the intersectionality of the changing demographics of learners in our classrooms. So, the cycle of perpetuating whiteness continues with each new cohort of students. White supremacy remains centred in our classrooms while institutions megaphone their commitment to EDID publicly.

From my locus of enunciation[41] as an Asian woman who speaks a World English, as an Associate Dean in a community college, as a PhD graduate student in English, and as an immigrant in Canada, I see this daily paradox of institutions paying lip service to equity, diversity, inclusion and decolonisation but not willing to do the real work to minimise and reduce harm to equity-denied marginalised peoples. As I see it, the way forward for real progress is for BIPOC people like me to continue searching and seizing opportunities to bring these issues to the fore by flooding our non-white stories in the academy; standing in solidarity with and for other marginalised peoples; and putting one foot forward each day to engage in antiracist work despite the exhaustion we experience navigating a white world.

End of Chapter

[41] Locus of enunciation means "the geopolitical and body-political location of the subject that speaks" (p. 213). Grosfoguel, R. (2016). From "economic extractivism" to "epistemic extractivism" and "ontological extractivism": A destructive way of knowing, being and being in the world. Tabula. Rasa, 24, 123–143.

Chapter 2: Colonisation of Minds

Growing up in postcolonial Singapore, I correlated my brown Asian skin as "wrongness" since in the world I grew up in, whiteness was the norm and standard. One way this shame of being brown manifested was in how I made fun of my Chinese mother who spoke non-standard or "broken" English. My mother's first language was Foochow, a Chinese dialect from the Fuzhou region in China largely spoken in Sitiawan (a town in the state of Perak, Malaysia), and her second language was Malay, having grown up in Malaysia. So, English was her third language. At that time, I did not appreciate her multilingual ability and used to make fun of her when she pronounced English words incorrectly or when she could not find a word in English to express her thoughts. What I failed to realise then was that my mother was a creative and expert user of languages. During those times when she was unable to find an English word, she would describe what she meant using onomatopoeia. For instance, she would say "It was so funny, that I *kiki-kaka* until my stomach hurt". "I was nearly hit by a car and my heart went *duk-duk".* Despite not understanding what those words meant, we can easily guess that in the first example, she was describing laughter and in the second example, she was describing fear. That was how my mother sometimes communicated with us in English, and it was normal for me to hear her use onomatopoeia in place of a word.

I was performing whiteliness by judging my mother through the lens of white supremacy, and I did not even know it. I denigrated my mother's ability to speak English so I could feel better about myself. As ashamed and sorry as I am of this today, I realise that I was a product of white supremacist conditioning. White supremacy is the ideology that the ideas,

actions, thoughts and beliefs of white people are superior to Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC), and their ideas, actions, thoughts and beliefs. And as such, white people believe they have the authority and right to dominate BIPOC. This chapter traces my indoctrination into whiteness from childhood until the present showing the covert and pervasive process of white supremacy indoctrination in our daily lives, and in particular, how colonisation operates in different schooling contexts.

Throughout my life in Singapore and Canada, I have been compartmentalised, labelled, stereotyped and ascribed finite characteristics as an "other", a marked person. Postcolonial scholar Gayatri Spivak uses "othering" to refer to a process where the imperial discourse creates its "others". Spivak collapses Jacques Lacan's concept of "other" (an "other" from self when one looks at the mirror and sees a separate being) and "Other" (a secondary "Other" separate from self such as mother or father or colonial empire) into "othering" which she explains "is a dialectical process because the colonizing *Other* is established at the same time as its colonized *others* are produced as subjects." (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2008, p. 166). Edward Said's work in "Orientalism" supports this idea of the dialectical or binarism which helps the West, or Occident, understand themselves by creating the Orient, or the East. Said states that for the West to know itself, it has to have a comparator in an effort to feel superior and valued.

Alastair Pennycook in his 1998 book, "English and the discourses of Colonialism", also asserts that "colonialism produced a series of dichotomous constructs—the cultured and the natural, the industrious and the indolent, the clean and the dirty, the adult and the child, the

male and the female—for colonized people (the second item in each pair) and colonizers. These constructions of Self and Other have then continued to produce images of Us and Them, of Our language and culture and Theirs. (p. 30).

My "othering" began from my childhood and continues to the present day as an adult. From the classroom to social situations to work environments, I was conditioned into thinking of myself as not "normal", "less than", as occupying a subordinate role in the communities I studied, lived and worked. Even when I crossed the seas from Singapore to Canada to look for a new beginning, I remained an "other", a visible minority, someone from a non-dominant group. My story will demonstrate that speaking English does not help me gain equity in Singapore or Canada. Laura Greenfield, a writing instructor in Smith College and an expert on the intersections of language, power and education, expounds on how language is tied to bodies in her article, "The "Standard English" Fairy Tale: A Rhetorical Analysis of Racist Pedagogies and Commonplace Assumptions about Language Diversity." "Our attitudes towards language, it appears, are often steeped in our assumptions about the bodies of the speakers. We assume an essential connection—language as inherently tied to the body. In other words, language varieties—like people—are subject to racialization." (Greenfield, 2011, p.50).

In this chapter, I show you how my body is racialized in academic and everyday social environments even though I speak and write "good" English. I interrogate my social and cultural indoctrination into whiteness – believing that everything that originated from Europe and the USA was the standard I had to aspire to. I discuss the binarism that was prevalent in Singapore's social milieu where everything was black and white, right or wrong, and how the government

instituted campaigns to encourage Singaporeans to speak "Good English" which was based on the ideology of "Standard English". I analyse my journey into whiteness and my complicity in upholding whiteness from three perspectives: I as student, I as writing teacher, I as program writing administrator. I share the encounters which caused me to embrace a "double consciousness"[42] (DuBois, 1903) – a dual perception of who I was in postcolonial Singapore and Canada. I was looking at myself through the white gaze and did not like what I saw; yet I struggled to maintain my sovereignty within an oppressive society. DuBois' description of "two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body," resonates with what I feel as someone who straddles two cultures: the first struggle is between being both Chinese and South Asian; and the other struggle is being both Singaporean and Canadian. Lastly, I narrate my Christian convent school experiences alongside the residential school experiences of Indigenous authors such as Bev Sellars, Maria Campbell and Thomas Fontaine to demonstrate how colonialism and the "othering" process operated in these educational institutions. Although I have become complicit in settler colonialism, yet, I share a common history of subjugation to colonialism with regard to cultural and linguistic oppression. My purpose is to find solidarity along identity lines of peoples who have been culturally and linguistically oppressed so that together we can labour to reduce harm to equity-denied peoples.

[42] In *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), W. E. DuBois defines *double consciousness* as "It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, —an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder."

2.1. How I learned to internalise whiteness

As a child in Singapore, I was exposed to many fairy tales such as Sleeping Beauty, Snow White, and Cinderella. Common in all of them is the dainty, white-skinned female protagonist/princess and the darker-skinned villains (i.e. witches). Consuming these stories as a child, I came to ascribe beauty to white-skinned girls who needed saving from dashing, brawny male figures. These tropes were further valorised by Walt Disney who produced movies about damsels in distress who needed saving by male heroes until only very recently when Disney started to introduce female heroines in movies such as *Frozen* and then further evolved to include Heroines of Colour such as *Raya* (*Raya and the Last Dragon*) and *Moana*. I came to see whiteness as the normal and standard racial identity; everything associated with white was good, decent and kind. However, everything associated with black was bad, deceitful and selfish. Fairies and princesses were always white, and witches were always black. When I was 7 years old, I pleaded with my mother to buy me the Jamie Sommers (Bionic Woman) doll. Not only did she have bionic powers which I admired, but she was also blonde and blue-eyed. In fact, most of the dolls I had as a child were blonde and blue-eyed. I was not attracted to brown-eyed, black-haired dolls because I had been conditioned to perceive blondes as beautiful.

Fast forward to the year 2022. In Season Two of the popular British period drama series, *Bridgerton*, I was pleasantly surprised that two dark-skinned South Asian women, Simone Ashley and Charithra Chandran, were cast in leading roles as sisters, Kate and Edwina Sharma. I binge-watched all eight episodes in three days because I was elated to see South Asian women cast in leading roles and portrayed as strong, educated women in a mainstream

drama set against the backdrop of 19th century Britain. In fact, social media blew up with much praise for Shonda Rhimes, the filmmaker of Bridgerton, for casting Ashley Simone and Charithra Chandran in leading roles. [43]

Besides the South Asian leading ladies, there were several South Asian cultural elements infused in this second season. *Didi*! A Hindi honorific for an older sister was used among other South Asian words such as *appa* (*father* in Tamil) and *bon* (*sister* in Bengali). The women wore vibrant, jewelled dresses in purple and teal made from rich South Asian textiles and designs, and intricate beaded bangles and earrings. There were scenes depicting South Asian customs such as the oiling of hair and the *haldi* (turmeric) ritual the night before the wedding. It also featured a classical rendition of a song from *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham*, a popular Bollywood movie. I applaud Shonda Rhimes for using *Bridgerton* as a vehicle for change by foregrounding the talents of racialized peoples in a major drama to disrupt white supremacy. A third season is in the works, and I cannot wait to see how Rhimes further disrupts whiteness.[44]

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[43] Here are some excerpts from social media:

@honeyhajar tweeted: *Bridgerton did a superb job at the South Asian representation. Kate and Edwina were characters that were Indian. They didn't awkwardly point out that they were brown. They incorporated our culture so beautifully with the jewelry, the hold mask, the hair oiling, and the fabrics.* (Mar 30, 2022).

@ShaniiWije tweeted: *can I just say how enchanting is it to see brown girls as leads in a show?? bridgerton is changing the game and I for one am so thrilled and excited for young girls like me to finally be able to see themselves in their favorite tv characters.* (Mar 29, 2022).

@BhavMaharaj tweeted: *Bridgerton is the first time I've felt respected and represented in a satisfying way. Like a warm, huldi-covered, brown girl hug. Thank you @shondarhimes.* (Mar 25, 2022).

[44] Season 3 of Bridgerton was released on May 16, 2024, and Shonda Rimes does not disappoint as she casts two Black men in prominent roles in the series.

The world we live in is replete with binarism which makes it challenging for people like me who possess a slew of hyphenated identities being Singaporean-Canadian of Chinese-South Asian descent. In postcolonial theory, Swiss linguist Ferdinand Saussure claims "that signs have meaning not by a simple reference to real objects, but by their opposition to other signs." (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2008, p.18). Following Saussure's thinking, the concept of white as good, pure and godly is predicated on the existence of black, which is characterised as bad, dirty and devilish. This binary thinking of black and white ignores the interstitial or ambiguous spaces between the opposed categories and thereby create impossibilities for these liminal spaces to exist. You are either this or that. Moreover, binarism entails a violent hierarchy according to contemporary post-structuralist and feminist theories "in which one term of the opposition is always dominant (man over woman, birth over death, white over black), and that, in fact, the binary opposition itself exists to confirm that dominance." As such, "any activity or state that does not fit the binary opposition will become subject to repression or ritual." (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2008, p.19).

In Canada, I am considered closer to being black, as a person of Asian heritage, in this system of binarism. There are degrees of colourism or degrees of blackness, contingent on one's race, class, gender and society. Colourism was first coined by Alice Walker in 1982. Walker used this term to "reference forms of light-skinned privilege experienced in Black communities in the United States." (Norwood and Foreman, 2014)[45]. Similarly, Deborah

[45]Besides Walker, there were other literary scholars who wrote about the discriminatory and harmful impacts of colourism: Franz Fanon ("Black Skin, White Masks"); Audre Lorde ("The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism, Sister Outsider"); bell hooks ("Black Looks: Race and Representation*");* Toni Morrison ("The Bluest Eye").

Gabriel, founder and director of Black British Academics, (2007) asserts that "colourism is a system of privilege and discrimination based on skin tone. That is, the degree of lightness in the pigmentation of one's skin can warrant certain privileges." (Ogunyimika, Morise, n.d.)[46] Colourism can be inter-racial and intra-racial. Within society, the lighter a person's skin colour is, the more privilege they enjoy. This is also true within an ethno-racial group such as South Asians (known as Indians in Asia). In India and Singapore, fairer skinned Indians enjoy greater wealth and social status than those with darker skinned. Because of this, the skin whitening industry in the Asia-Pacific region was estimated to be an 8-billion-dollar industry in 2020 with a prediction that it will increase to 11.8 billion in 2026 according to a CNN article, "Skin Whitening: what is it, what are the risks and who profits?" by Meera Senthilingam, Pallabi Munsi and Vanessa Offiong. "Skin whitening is the use of cosmetic products or services to reduce the amount of melanin, or pigment, in the skin to make it appear lighter."[47] Skin whitening which is rooted in white supremacy and colonialism is targeted at women of colour with a promise that lighter skin colour brings beauty, and better prospects for employment and marriage. The intersection of being a person of colour and a woman leads to double discrimination. This is reflected in data from the UK's Higher Education Statistics Agency (2013–2014), which highlights the compounded disadvantages Black women face in employment due to the intersecting effects of race and gender.[48] In Canada, recent studies by Statistics Canada

[46] Access the article here: https://globalsocialtheory.org/topics/colourism/ (shared with permission of creative commons licence: CC BY-NC-ND 3.0

[47] Access article here: https://www.cnn.com/2022/01/25/world/as-equals-skin-whitening-global-market-explainer-intl-cmd/index.html

[48] According to the Higher Education Statistics Agency database for 2013/14 the total number of UK academics in 2013/14 was 194,240. Of these, 153,675 academics are white, that is, 79.1% of all academics with only 1.48% of Black academics.

confirm that Black, Korean, South Asian and Latin American women have a greater gender pay gap in comparison to their white counterparts, with employment incomes that are 8 to 9 per cent lower[49].

Although there is still much work to do to reduce the barriers for women of colour, I see Shonda Rhimes' casting of two dark-skinned South Asian women in leading roles in a mainstream drama series on Netflix which "had around 260 million paid subscribers worldwide as of the fourth quarter of 2023"[50] as a monumental attempt to dismantle existing oppressive regimes by de-centring whiteness in media entertainment. De-centring whiteness means foregrounding and centring people of colour/non-whites in spaces traditionally occupied by white people. If people of colour had been featured in the roles of the hero/heroines in the fairytales and Disney movies I was exposed to growing up, perhaps I would not have learned to normalise whiteness as the benchmark for everything good and decent.

At professor level 83.5% are white and 0.50% are Black. Gender negatively impacts Black women's promotion prospects once in academia as there were 60 male Black African professors and 5 female Black African professors, 15 male Black Caribbean professors and 10 female Black Caribbean professors and 5 male Black Other. (Tate, S and Page, D (2018) *Whiteliness and institutional racism: Hiding behind (un)conscious bias.* Ethics and Education, 13 (1). pp. 141-155. ISSN 1744-9642 DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/17449642.2018.1428718).

[49] "In general, two years after earning a bachelor's degree, the employment income was lower among racialized graduates than non-racialized, non-Indigenous graduates. It was also lower among women than men. Employment income averaged $45,700 per year for racialized women and $47,800 for non-racialized and non-Indigenous women, compared with $51,600 for racialized men and $54,100 for non-racialized and non-Indigenous men. The income gaps between racialized graduates and non-racialized, non-Indigenous graduates persisted for many racialized groups even when graduate characteristics were considered. Among women, West Asian and Arab graduates had the largest income gaps, earning 16% less (in the case of West Asian female graduates) and 15% less (in the case of Arab female graduates) than non-racialized and non-Indigenous women. This was followed by Black, Korean, South Asian and Latin American female graduates, with employment incomes that were 8% to 9% lower than those of their non-racialized, non-Indigenous female counterparts."The Daily — Racialized Canadians are less likely to find as good jobs as their non-racialized and non-Indigenous counterparts early in their careers (statcan.gc.ca)

[50] For more details, please access text here: https://www.statista.com/statistics/250934/quarterly-number-of-netflix-streaming-subscribers-worldwide/

Even in the world of advertising, in which I had worked for three years, the colour white was always used to represent purity and cleanliness. This perception of white was commercialised through everyday products such as toothpaste. In the 1970s, I recall a famous brand of toothpaste sold in Singapore called "Darkie". "The toothpaste's original name and logo were conceived in the 1920s, when Hawley & Hazel's CEO visited the United States and saw Al Jolson, a White actor who performed in blackface in the film "The Jazz Singer," ...The executive thought Jolson's wide smile and bright teeth would make an excellent toothpaste logo."(Pham, 2020)[51] The American brand, Colgate, bought shares in Hawley and Hazel and in 1989 renamed "Darkie" to "Darlie" re-designing the logo after much pushback from US church groups who claimed its product symbolised racism. As a child, I did not understand that using this toothpaste reinforced and sustained racism resulting in generational trauma and pain for Black people. Now, as an adult, after having been on the receiving end of racism, I realise that it is through the quotidian and mundane that racism slowly infiltrates us causing much pain to the people it targets. The pervasiveness of racism is everywhere; we only need to open our eyes and ears to become more conscious of the racist systems and structures which underpin our daily lives.

Growing up in Singapore in the 70's, 80's and 90's, it was ingrained into me that the only path to a successful job and life was for me to speak good English and do well academically in a

[51] Access article here: https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/19/business/colgate-darlie-toothpaste-intl-hnk/index.html

school system based on the British education system. My paternal grandfather[52], having emigrated from Sri Lanka to Singapore in the 1920s, and worked in the British army as an engineer, ensured that I attended a convent school run by the Good Shepherd Sisters in Singapore which was a government-aided school[53]. He was opposed to me attending the local public or government schools which attracted students from lower socio-economic classes where he believed "poor" English was spoken. He thought that if I attended a Catholic convent school which attracted students from the upper crust of society and which upheld a high standard of English with an Irish nun as the principal, he would be able to safeguard my future success. I attended elementary and high school in a convent school for 10 years from the age of 6 until 16 years old. (I will discuss my convent school days in detail under the sub-heading, *Tale of Two Schools*).

Being schooled that speaking good English *aka* white, British English, was the key to success, I naturally began to feel ashamed of my Chinese-Indian heritage because I was unconsciously trained to view myself as deficient through the white gaze. As I shared at the beginning of this chapter, I began to perform whiteliness to make myself feel valued by making fun of my mother's English. Now, when I look back, I think my mother was brilliant in making use of her linguistic resources to communicate her meaning across. She was code-meshing.

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[52] My paternal grandfather chose to use English when he immigrated to Singapore even though his mother-tongue was Tamil, so he could belong and survive in Singapore during British colonialism. He made a conscious choice to enrol his children (my father was one of them) in Christian English schools to learn proper English to ensure their future success. This is an example of conscious appropriation undertaken by my grandfather as a means of survival in a white dominated society.

[53] Convent schools in Singapore are *government-aided* which means that essentials such as furniture and teaching tools such as computers and whiteboards are provided by the Ministry of Education while the construction of the school building or building maintenance are paid for by the school through the Catholic Archdiocese of Singapore. Government schools are fully funded by the Singapore government.

"Code meshing blend dialects, international languages, local idioms, chat-room lingo, and the rhetorical styles of various ethnic and cultural groups in both formal and informal speech acts". (Young, 2007, p.114). Vershawn Young states that code meshing is what we all do whenever we communicate – write or speak. But even though my mother was adept at conveying her thoughts and ideas using English (her third language) by employing the strategy of code meshing, she was shut out of the upper social classes because she was perceived as speaking "bad" English and therefore, lacked *cultural capital*[54] to move up the social ladder.

My mother was born to Chinese farmers who did not speak English and occupied a low socio-economic status in Malaysia. She was taken out of school at the age of 14 to help her mother with household chores although her brothers were allowed to continue studying. She never learned how to speak "good" English but picked up "broken" English or "market" English from her workplace. Against this backdrop of my mother's upbringing, I understood why my paternal grandfather wanted me to study in a convent school with my mother's blessing. They both wanted me to network with students from a higher socio-economic stratum and speak "good" English which they believed would ensure my material success.

After secondary/high school (equivalent to Grade 10 in Canada), I attended two years of pre-university studies in a junior college (equivalent to Grades 11 and 12 in Canada) which was headed by a Catholic nun. During my time there, I was taught English literature by expatriate

[54] Cultural capital is the accumulation of knowledge, behaviours, and skills that a person can tap into to demonstrate one's cultural competence and social status. French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu coined the term in his 1973 paper the "Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction," coauthored by Jean-Claude Passeron. What Is Cultural Capital? Do I Have It? (thoughtco.com)

British teachers or Singaporean teachers educated in Britain. At the end of those two years, we had to take a General Cambridge Examination (GCE) "A" Level from the University of Cambridge. This was the second examination we had to take from Cambridge. Prior to entering junior college after high school, we were mandated to take the General Cambridge Examination (GCE) "O" Level for entry into pre-university. These standard examinations were developed and graded in Britain, so we were expected to write in Standard English, i.e. British English. The GCE "A" Level was the gateway to the only university in Singapore at that time.[55] I recall the stress I endured while studying for these two standardised examinations, especially for the GCE "A" levels, because if I did not gain admission into that one national university, I would not be able to have a university education required for white-collar jobs as my parents could not afford to pay for me to study abroad. Fortunately, I was successful in gaining admission into that university to study English Literature and Applied Linguistics.

My indoctrination into whiteness continued during my undergraduate studies. I was taught mainly by white British and American professors, or British-trained Singaporean professors and we studied the gamut of British literature from Geoffrey Chaucer, William Shakespeare, Samuel Richardson, Jane Austen, D.H. Lawrence to E.M. Forster.[56] It was during

[55] GCE "O" Level - General Certificate of Education (Ordinary) level. This exam is set and graded by the University of Cambridge after Secondary 4. (Grade 10 is the Canadian equivalent.) Your GCE O level grade allows you to enroll in a 2-year Pre-University in a Junior College or Polytechnic in Singapore. GCE "A" Level - General Certificate of Education (Advanced) level. This exam is set and graded by University of Cambridge during the second year of Pre-university in a Junior College. (Grade 12 is the equivalent in Canada.) Today, these examinations are still administered in Singapore and in Britain to assess students' entry into universities.

[56] Recently I reconnected with an ex-university colleague who reminded me that we also read a text from R.K. Narayan titled, "The Guide". Surprisingly, I have no recollection of having read that text and after much reflection, I conclude that the memories which are foregrounded in my mind are those of the un-ease I experienced reading texts written by white authors and poets. I recall consulting master plots to understand and see beyond the concrete page to figure out critical elements such as literary devices, symbolisms and imagery foreign to me. Perhaps the feelings of stress and incompetence precluded my mind from remembering the R.K Narayan text.

my undergraduate studies that I realised that I had lost all motivation for education as a means to better myself. Being in university further compounded the "othering" I had been feeling all along in school. I was told umpteen times that my writing needed to be more sophisticated for an English major, that I needed to stop writing simplistically. Hearing these comments from my professors only served to demotivate me in my studies. I always felt I was living on the fringes, fringes of experiences, memories and histories. So, my main objective during my years as an undergraduate was to survive and to graduate with a degree. I graduated with the bare minimum grades of Cs and Ds. I was just relieved to be done with university, a place I was made to feel unwelcome, small and an outsider.

After graduating in 1988, I found a job as a "suit", or advertising executive, in a multinational advertising agency where white supremacy was shamelessly on display. All the high paying creative jobs in advertising – copywriter, art director, creative director — were mostly filled by Europeans (mainly from Britain, America and Australia) who had the right skin colour and possessed the requisite English skills to create, develop and write advertisements while many locals were hired to do "donkey work" as production coordinators or assistants overseeing technical operations of the advertisements, or as junior "suits" to be the conduit between the client and the agency coordinating due dates, getting approvals from clients, shuttling back-and-forth between client and agency to finalise advertisements, etc. to ensure that the advertising process operated seamlessly. I worked as a "suit" in two multinational advertising agencies and in both of them the heads of the creative department were white males from Britain or Australia. At that time in Singapore, expatriate employment packages were common to import white talent into Singapore for C-suite or executive leadership

positions with the lure of an attractive remuneration package with additional perks for housing, transportation, schooling for children and more. Meanwhile, local Singaporeans were hired into low or middle managerial positions earning less pay and without any of those additional lifestyle benefits. Besides reserving top executive positions for whites, there was a clear segregation of non-whites and whites in terms of physical living spaces at that time. The "expat community", as the whites were called, mainly socialised within their white circles in their own country clubs and lived within specific areas such as Holland Road and Orchard Road, considered the downtown or centre of Singapore while most locals lived in the heartland or suburbs, along the outer areas of Singapore. This brings to mind the Raffles Town Plan, mentioned in Chapter 1, in which the Europeans were segregated from the local indigenous population so they could have their "white spaces".

In 1996, I left advertising to pursue a master's degree in English Studies (Applied Linguistics) at the same university I completed my undergraduate degree. My thesis supervisor was a white British male professor who was also the Head of the English Department in my university and my second reader, was a white British female professor. After graduation, I taught English as a subject, English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and writing courses at various postsecondary institutions in Singapore – the Open University, Temasek Polytechnic and the National Institute of Education (now part of the Nanyang Technological University). In 2000, I immigrated to Canada with my spouse and child, and in 2003, I started teaching as a contingent faculty in the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program at a Greater Toronto Area (GTA) community college. From there, I became a permanent full time faculty teaching EAP and first year writing courses at another community college in 2007 and then, in 2014, I was appointed

Associate Dean of the School of Communication and Literary Studies with oversight of first year writing courses, literature elective courses, an EAP program and a TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) Plus program. This is a role I still hold currently.

In summary, my indoctrination into whiteness started from my childhood in Singapore and immigrated with me as an adult to Canada. As I reflect on my journey into whiteness, I am intrigued at how I moved from being in a community which sits in the outer circle of Braj Kachru's three concentric circles of English model to being in an inner circle community which is at the centre of the model. Ironically, I have moved into the centre but feel more marginalised than ever. I feel like I am now in the eye of the storm living here in Canada where interrogation of the effects of colonisation on racialised peoples are at the forefront of politics and education. I arrived in Canada at the time the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was just beginning to take root. The TRC was established on June 1, 2008, with the objective of documenting the history and appalling impacts of the Canadian residential school on Indigenous peoples and their children through the shared stories of residential school survivors in private and public meetings across Canada. The TRC opened my eyes to a Canada I was not privy to prior to my arrival. The Canada I knew before I immigrated was a place of milk and honey with its lush and beautiful sceneries, abundance of natural resources, and polite and peace-loving citizens. Now, the Canada I know, and love is still a place with all of those attributes, but complicated and marked by its violent history of colonisation which is still perpetuated in its systems and structures. As a racially marginalised woman, I too have experienced the impact of this ongoing oppression.

In the next section, I demonstrate particular instances of white indoctrination and being a target of racism that happened throughout different stages of my life in the form of anecdotes and stories in both Singapore and Canada through my experiences as a student, a writing instructor, and a writing program administrator.

2.1.1. I, the student

A Student in Singapore

As an Asian woman who grew up in Singapore of Chinese-Indian parentage, my truth is not the truths in the master narratives propagated by those who own the most social and cultural capital: the Whites in Canada, or the Chinese in Singapore[57]. Being of a hybrid identity, I experience the world through a different set of lenses, always questioning and searching for my place in the world. Some days I still feel more Chinese and some days I feel more Indian. I continually move in between these two cultures in search for a sense of belonging, always aware that I was/am not of pure breed, but a mongrel. That is what makes me an outsider of these two cultures. I know bits and pieces of each culture but did not live fully in them while growing up since my parents brought me up in a household which spoke English as my mother tongue. Not possessing Foochow, my mother's Chinese dialect, or Tamil, my paternal grandfather's heritage language, as my mother tongue meant that I was not fully a member of

[57] In Singapore, the Chinese are the dominant group who hold the most social, economic and political power. The latest population census in 2023 shows the Chinese population at 75.6%, Malays at 15.1%, Indians at 7.6% and Others (usually those who are of mixed ancestry) at 1.7%. (population-in-brief-2023.pdf). The Chinese population has maintained their two-third majority since 1970 with the ongoing influx of naturalised Singapore citizens from China over the years. (DOS | SingStat Website - Singapore Population).

my Chinese or Indian families. In "Decolonising the Mind", Nigerian writer Ngugi Wa Thiong'o states that language acts as a badge of kinship and is also a transmitter or carrier of culture so for me being unable to speak the two languages in my blood made me an outsider. I learned Malay from Malay domestic helpers from the *kampung* (village) across our home whom my mother employed to look after the home and us, the three children, when she and my father were at work. Having had exposure to Malay, my parents decided I should study Malay in school to fulfil the Singapore mother tongue language policy. The mother tongue policy aimed to preserve the Indigenous languages of Singapore. "English was to become Singapore's working language, while the mother tongue would serve to strengthen an individual's values and sense of cultural belonging. The Singapore bilingualism policy has been implemented primarily through the education system, which requires students to study the English language and their respective mother tongues. In addition, annual campaigns are held to promote the learning and speaking of mother tongue languages as well as to encourage the use of grammatically correct English among Singaporeans." (Sim, 2016).[58] The mother tongue policy is an excellent example of the binarism that was present in Singapore while I was growing up. This policy assumed that everyone had a mother tongue which was not English. For those of us who did not fit neatly into this policy, we could choose Malay, Mandarin or Tamil as our mother tongue. Since both my parents were fluent in Malay, I was allowed to study Malay at school. Growing up, I used to think Malay was my mother tongue as I was embarrassed that I did not

[58] Access article here: https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/article-detail?cmsuuid=82fbbca5-e8e2-40cc-b944-fbb2bd2367fe

possess a legitimate mother tongue like many of my school friends. As such, I was linguistically atypical growing up in Singapore.

Navigating through primary (elementary) and secondary (high school) school, I was in a constant state of struggle with my identity. I was known as a subgroup in Singapore called "Chindians" (Chinese-Indian). We did not fit neatly into any ethnic categories in Singapore. However, on my Identity Card (IC) which every Singaporean is mandated to carry, under the section titled, "race", I am categorised as "Ceylonese" while my sisters are known as "Sri Lankans". This reflects the patriarchal system in Singapore that children would adopt their father's ethnicity. My paternal grandfather had come from Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon) in the 1920s to Singapore and so my father's identity was based on his father's. My sisters and I used to joke amongst ourselves that whoever designed the Identity Card did not understand that Ceylonese and Sri Lankan were not racial groups, but nationalities. Race was a category in almost every legal documentation (job application, school registration, passport application, medical forms, etc.) that I had to fill out in Singapore while I was living there. I never understood its effects on me until I moved to Canada where asking for someone's race or ethnicity during a job interview is illegal according to the Canadian Human Rights Act. In Singapore, everyone was made hypervigilant about one another's race/ethnicity through these reporting requests for race. That was how the government decided who could live within a Housing and Development Board (HDB) town – they had a quota for every racial group within a HDB town to engineer racial harmony. They made sure they had a mix of Chinese, Malays, Indians, and others, a category reserved for Eurasians or those of a hybrid identity who could not be neatly categorised ethnically, to ensure that racial harmony was maintained. I always

found it strange that no one really had the true freedom to choose to live where they wanted unless their choices aligned with the predetermined racial housing plans of the government. Singaporeans were so well trained that we accepted Big Brother watching over us and making decisions for us in almost everything we did. We conferred on the government the role of caretaker, especially the older generation who had experienced World War II and witnessed the transformation of Singapore from a poor fishing village into a modern city-state. They understood that the trade-offs of becoming a city-state was to give full control to the government who would ensure they had a comfortable life. In return, infinite trust was/is demanded of Singaporeans by the ruling party which is still in power today after 60 years of Singapore's independence from Malaysia.

With race at the forefront of our daily lives in Singapore, I learned how to consciously perform one of my racial identities in different social contexts accordingly. When I was with Chinese family and friends, I acted more Chinese and did the same with my Indian family and friends. I was the perfect manifestation of Dubois' *double consciousness* – always shifting from one identity to the next trying to fit in. When I was with a neutral group of people – Chindians – I found a middle ground and acted neither too Chinese nor Indian. Performing race was exhausting and left me more confused than ever about my place in Singapore society.

At school, I was one of the students who was welcomed into different social groups but was never fully considered a member. I was not told all the secrets of the group and was kept at arm's length, on the periphery of each group I joined. I was a floater looking for my tribe. When I finally found them, they were like me, the outcasts, the hyphenated identities who did not fit

neatly into one racial category. As such, throughout our formative school years, we, those in the interstitial spaces, craved a sense of belonging which we were deprived of. All throughout school, I struggled with a sense of self. I loved words and would read widely and used the words in my essays to the delight of my convent teachers. They would praise me if I emulated the words of the British scholars or storytellers we read in school. The more praise I received, the more I diligently imitated these words in my writing. These words resulted in me getting slightly higher grades than I would have if I had not used them, but they felt empty to me because they did not belong to me. They did not reflect my experience. For instance, I tried to use words and phrases like “umpteen”, “lackadaisical” and “gallivant” when I could have easily used the Colloquial Singaporean English equivalent of: “again and again”; “boh-chap”; “ jalan-jalan” – which would have resonated so much more with me. But we had to use standard English (based on British English) in school and nothing else was accepted. We read Shakespeare: Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, MacBeth, King Henry VIII, A Midsummer’s Night Dream, Twelfth Night, etc. None of these plays resonated with me. However, my teachers kept stressing the importance of learning Shakespeare because his plays were part of the literary canon and being able to quote Shakespeare was a sign of a well read and educated person. I used to question who decided which books were included in the literary canon and was told that the great literary works in English originated from Britain, so that is where the literary canon was defined. It was stressful having to memorise verses from these Shakespearean plays for my examinations, but I struggled even more when reading Chaucer’s *Pardoner’s Tales* because Chaucer’s English was more antiquated than Shakespearean English. So, all I did was memorise the text to pass the examination. I understand that sometimes we have to learn to imagine things or places we

have never been to, but as an impressionable child growing up in post-World War II Singapore trying to figure out my subject position in the world, it was difficult to imagine a western culture (which was put on a pedestal) beyond the one I was currently living.

In addition to plays, we read British poetry by Keats, Wordsworth, Shelly and Byron which did not resonate with me. I read *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud* by William Wordsworth and could not imagine "a host of golden daffodils" "fluttering and dancing in the breeze" or "tossing their heads in sprightly dance" in sunny Singapore, a tropical island. Nor could I envision "the red breast [whistling] from the garden croft and gathering swallows twitter in the skies" or "with fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves; To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees…" from John Keats' *To Autumn* poem since we do not have autumn in Singapore. Reading these poems and stories based on white frames of references made me feel I was missing out on something. It made me think that my life in Singapore was subordinate to life in the western world since I hardly saw characters like myself in the texts I studied or read in school. In early elementary school, I was accustomed to the escapades of Peter and Jane, and their dog, Pat, written by William Murray published by Ladybird Books, a London-based publisher. We read the entire Peter and Jane reading series from Book 1a to 12c. The illustrations and the stories centred around the lives of two white British children and their white families. In *Play with Us*, Book 1a, Peter was illustrated wearing a pair of shorts with a shirt and a vest, and Jane, a dress with a cardigan. Both of them also wore shoes with socks. These were not typical of the clothing that children in Singapore wore because it is always humid in Singapore, so we lived in shorts and t-shirts and walked around in flip flops. Also, on the cover of Book 1a, Peter is wearing a Red Indian headdress, and he and Jane are peeking out

from a teepee. It was common to see them play Indians and Cowboys in the series. So, I normalised that it was acceptable for white people to dress up as Red Indians in the stories I read while growing up. I am embarrassed to admit that I never knew it was cultural appropriation until I moved to Canada when I was 30 years old.

While at university for my undergraduate degree, I specifically remember taking a course on Phonology and Phonetics as part of my English Studies program. I recall having to go to a language laboratory, wearing headphones and listening to Received Pronunciation (Queen's English) of individual words which I had to repeat. I hated those sessions because I could never reproduce the pronunciation that was expected of me. For example, I remember I had to repeat saying "poor" several times because I could not do it right. The "correct" pronunciation was /pɔːr/but I said /pʊr/ and was told it was incorrect. Those sessions in the laboratory reduced my self confidence in my ability to speak English.

Somehow as I progressed from elementary school to university, I began to normalise and accept whiteness as superior to my own Singaporean Asian culture. I began to accord white people a higher status than Asians. I believed that only whites could hold authority in a university or in an organisation. There is a phenomenon called the *Pinkerton Syndrome*[59], which is defined broadly "as the tendency for Asians to be prejudiced and to discriminate in favor of

[59] The term "pinkerton" originated from the opera *Madame Butterfly* by Giacomo Puccini. In the opera, Pinkerton is a white American Lieutenant who marries a Japanese girl to the delight of her Japanese family. However, when he leaves Nagasaki, he abandons her and remarries an upper class white American woman causing his Japanese wife to commit *sepukku* or suicide by disembowelment.

white people." (Chew, Young & Tan, 2019)[60]. Chew, Young and Tan's study examined the effects of race on a simulated hiring decision task in which they had 171 Singaporean Chinese participants from a private university rate job applicants. The results demonstrated that the participants discriminated against Malay applicants in favour of white applicants despite both groups having equal qualifications. Pinkerton Syndrome was rife during my teenage years with many multinational companies in Singapore hiring white expatriates as C-suite or executive level leaders over local Singaporeans in industries such as tourism and hospitality, fashion, advertising, etc. In the next section, I discuss how the Singapore government maintained and reified white supremacy, particularly white linguistic superiority, in the formation of the Speak Good English Movement.

The Speak Good English Movement

When I was living in Singapore, the government often reminded Singaporeans that speaking good English would safeguard our social, cultural, economic and financial stability since English is the language of trade, business, science and technology, and politics. Despite the diglossic situation in Singapore, where Singaporeans spoke two varieties of English – standard Singapore English and Singlish, or Colloquial Singapore English, the former was the variety valued by the Singapore government because it approximated British English. The latter, Singlish, was often disparaged and considered an uneducated person's language.

[60] Access article here: https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-pacific-rim-psychology/article/racism-and-the-pinkerton-syndrome-in-singapore-effects-of-race-on-hiring-decisions/5924D22CCF6F71558B5DE9002CDBA12F

Singapore's founding father, Lee Kwan Yew, sealed this notion of Singlish as a low variety when he stated, "The more the media makes Singlish socially acceptable, by popularising it in TV shows, the more we make people believe that they can get by with Singlish. This will be a disadvantage to the less educated half of the population." (Harbeck, 2016).[61] Lee made this statement when *Phua Chu Kang,* one of Singapore's most popular television series in the 1990s and 2000s, became a household hit because of its protagonist, a Singaporean everyman who spoke Singlish.

As a result, in April 2000, the Singapore government launched the Speak Good English Movement (SGEM) in an effort to influence Singaporeans to speak standard English and not Singlish. The Prime Minister then, Dr. Goh Chok Tong claimed that "If they [the younger generation] speak Singlish when they can speak good English, they are doing a disservice to Singapore" (Harbeck, 2016). He stressed "the importance of speaking standard English and reducing the use of Singlish, as Singapore is a hub city and an open economy with a need to interact with English-speaking foreigners…if we speak a corrupted form of English that is not understood by others, we will lose a key competitive advantage." However, Singlish started gaining popularity among the Singaporean youth who felt it integral to their cultural identity and cultural marker of being Singaporean. So, in 2001, the Singapore Government again made "fresh efforts to get people to speak standard English instead of [ ] Singlish." (Singapore Attack on Singlish, 2001).[62] "Launching the "Speak Good English" campaign, Deputy Prime Minister Lee

[61] Access article here: https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20160919-the-language-the-government-tried-to-suppress
[62] Access article here: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/1261986.stm

Hsien Loong said English was the global language of commerce, business and technology and had been further strengthened by the Internet. Singlish is unique to the multi-ethnic city state, and uses terms from Chinese dialects, as well as from Malay and Tamil… The government argues that it is virtually incomprehensible to outsiders." (Singapore Attack on Singlish, 2001). So laser focused was the government on ensuring that Singapore does not lose its key competitive advantage economically and financially globally, they launched annual year-long programs and activities to foreground to Singaporeans that speaking good English matters in their daily lives. As a result, a different theme was created for each annual campaign.

The themes that were used in the campaign were:

- *2000–2004: Speak Well. Be Understood.*
- *2005–06: Speak Up. Speak Out. Speak Well.*
- *2006–07: Be Understood. Not only in Singapore, Malaysia and Batam.*
- *2007–08: Rock Your World! Express Yourself.*
- *2008–09: I Can*
- *2009–10: Impress. Inspire. Intoxicate.*
- *2010–11: Get It Right*
- *2011–12: How You Speak Makes a Difference*
- *2012–13: Make Good English Stick*
- *2013–14: 10 Tips to Improve Your English*

- *2014-16: Grammar Rules Matter. Use Good English.*
- *2017–18: Learn Grammar Rules to Rule the English Language*
- *2019: Let's Connect. Let's Speak Good English.*

(Sim, March 4, 2015)

It is noteworthy that the Speak Good English Movement was created and composed of "academics, professionals and practitioners in Singapore as well as a secretariat." Below is an excerpt from their web page outlining their objectives:

> *The role of the Speak Good English Movement is to encourage Singaporeans to speak and write standard English and provide resources to learners who wish to improve their English.*
>
> *The Speak Good English Movement recognises the existence of Singlish as a cultural marker for many Singaporeans.*
>
> *We aim to help those who speak only Singlish, and those who think Singlish is English to speak standard English.*
>
> *It is important to understand the differences between standard English, broken English and Singlish.*
>
> *To achieve all this, we wish to create an environment of good English.*
>
> (https://www.languagecouncils.sg/goodenglish/about-us)

This webpage was last updated on: ©2025 © Speak Good English Movement; Last Updated on 17 Apr 2025

The Speak Good English Movement serves as a testament to the long-lasting effects of British colonialism in Singapore. Despite the prevalent discussions and research about linguistic racism and decolonisation, this movement continues to be cultivated. Singaporeans are still expected to speak "standard" English and not speak "broken" English to gain a competitive advantage. Because the Singapore government marketed the idea that speaking standard English would afford one success socially and economically, many parents in Singapore are willing to pay for private tutoring for their children to improve their English skills. My sister is an English teacher in the secondary school system in Singapore and is often hired as a private tutor and paid as much as S$90 per hour by parents to help their elementary school children polish their English to the level expected in schools.

Singlish

Pass up assignments.
Don't be so blur one.
This one spoil.
I send you to airport.
Can you help me buy some eggs?
Last time, I studied abroad.
Have you taken your lunch?
You so stone one.
Let's eat steamboat.
Aiyoh! Painlah!
I will revert to you tomorrow.
Please put in my car boot.

Don't talk rubbish.

Girl, girl, don't be rude ah.

Can or cannot lah?

- -------- Stephanie Samboo, 2023

Despite these campaigns to impede the use of Singlish, Singlish has gained a strong foothold among Singaporean youths and is still widely used in Singapore, and even overseas within Singaporean diaspora groups in Canada, the US and Australia. This is because Singlish is a carrier of our unique Singaporean identity which is composed of the cultures and languages of the Malays, Chinese, Tamils and Eurasians unlike "standard" English. As the Singapore government continued their SGEM campaign, there was vociferous opposition from Singaporeans who felt that the government was slowly eradicating Singlish which they believe forges social cohesion. A "Save Our Singlish Campaign" was launched by TalkingCock.com in 2002.

TalkingCock.com was created in 2000 by Colin Goh, a Singaporean filmmaker, satirist and cartoonist. It is "the first full-bore satirical website in Singapore's history. It ran from 2000 to around 2010, during which time it chalked up millions of page views, spawned a movie, a bestselling dictionary, video games, a series of spoken word events, got debated in Parliament and even made it into Wikileaks. Why did we decide to shutter the site? That's a tale for another time…" (http://colingoh.com/project/talkingcock-com/)

TalkingCock.com was rife with Singlish lexicon, expressions, humour and was a place for millions of Singaporeans to see themselves reflected in the language, humour and cultural

tropes that were shared by Colin Goh. I was a frequent visitor to this website whenever I felt homesick and needed to feel a sense of belonging. I especially enjoyed scanning through the Coxford Singlish Dictionary which was a treasure trove of uniquely Singlish lexicon. It was "a crowd-sourcing effort to document Singapore's vernacular English or "Singlish". Since its print publication in 2001, it has sold tens of thousands of copies, and been praised by both academics and the mainstream press." (http://colingoh.com/project/the-coxford-singlish-dictionary/). I am not sure why Colin's website was discontinued but could hazard a guess that it was because it did not serve to further the goals of the Speak Good English Movement. Nevertheless, it warms my heart to know that there are so many Singaporeans who are still using Singlish proudly as a badge of their Singaporean identity. Personally, using Singlish sustains and transmits my unique, hyphenated identity and so I began this section with an epigraph, *Pass up Assignments*, an original by me, as my homage to Singlish.

A Student in Canada

In 2000, I immigrated to Canada with my family and in 2014, after much consideration, I embarked on a PhD in English and Rhetoric at an Ontario university. Being a student after 15 years was challenging especially since I had never studied in a Canadian academic context. I had to learn how to be a student again after a career in Canada as a college professor and administrator. As expected, I was one of the oldest graduate students in my cohort and it took

me some time to understand the cultural jargon used amongst the younger students. In addition to navigating "being out of touch" in class, I also experienced microaggressions[63].

The first instance of microaggression I experienced even before I was formally accepted as a PhD student was when my application was rejected by the university graduate committee for PhD studies because my bachelor's degree transcript did not demonstrate that I had undertaken a sufficient number of English courses and my Master's degree transcript did not clearly reflect that I had undertaken academic research in the form of a thesis. I was quite shocked when I received this news from the then graduate officer. I immediately pointed out to them the title of my master's thesis on my transcript and also to the reference provided by my former master's supervisor who mentioned using the qualitative data generated from my thesis to teach his graduate course on Language Acquisition for a master's program in Singapore. The response I received was, "Let me call you back shortly." After an hour, the graduate officer called me back and told me that the graduate committee would reconsider my application if I supplied course outlines of all the English courses I had taken during my bachelor's degree, i.e. 22 in total[64], and secured an additional reference from another professor about my academic abilities. I had already submitted three references in the initial application as requested, so I could not understand why I had to provide a fourth reference. Nevertheless, I did as instructed

[63] A microaggression is a verbal or non-verbal slight that impacts a racially marginalised person which may manifest in a comment such as, "You speak English quite well" or in a dismissal of that person. The racially marginalised person who is on the receiving end of this slight may feel that certain aspects of who they are not respected or valued.

[64] To secure these 22 course outlines, I had to contact the English department at my former university in Singapore and ask them to search their archives for the outlines of courses offered between 1989-1992 by professors who had either retired, passed away, or left the university.

and submitted all the documents and the additional reference within a week of the request. I was eventually emailed the acceptance letter into the PhD program.

Upon reflection, I could not fathom why the graduate committee could not have asked me for clarification regarding my degree transcripts prior to rejecting my application. I now understand that my transcripts from the National University of Singapore are presented differently from those in Canadian universities and may require interpretation from me or someone familiar with the Singapore university system. I would have gladly secured any additional information needed to make sure the graduate committee understood the breadth and depth of my studies in both degrees. Instead, they unanimously decided to reject me and advise me to enrol in a master's program as a precursor to the PhD studies. I felt shocked, humiliated and angry in that order. The fourth reference I provided was from a much respected, well-known Applied Linguistics professor who taught me in Singapore during my undergraduate studies. He was furious for me and wrote a reference which sought to showcase the academic rigour of the degrees I was conferred in Singapore. Here is an excerpt of his reference:

> *I have known Stephanie Samboo from the time she was my student during my stay at the National University of Singapore as Visiting Professor in the Department of English Language and Literature...The National University of Singapore (NUS) is an institution which has always had high academic standards, selects its students along rigorous criteria and enjoys an excellent international reputation. In the most recent Times Higher Education World University Ranking (2013-2014) for Arts and Humanities the National*

University of Singapore is rated within the top 50. It also ranks as the second best Asian university in overall ratings (cf. QS World University Rankings).

Modelled on the tutoring practice of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, students at the National University of Singapore were carefully monitored in all the courses they followed and consequently I was able to appreciate the quality of work Stephanie produced on the regular assignments connected to my course on English linguistics. The range of courses on literature and linguistics offered in the English department were as demanding as in any of the universities I have worked in and compare well with those followed by my students in my two universities in Belgium and those I was involved with during my stay at UCLA, California and my stint as Visiting Professor at the University of Berkeley, California. *Moreover, the number of obligatory and elective courses was wide-ranging, extremely intensive and the final written examinations as demanding as any I am familiar with, both in Europe and North America. The M.A. programme I was involved in at N.U.S. requires stamina and consistency on the part of the students, as the work-load implies not only a heavy reading commitment but also the capacity to produce a final dissertation that is equal to any I have come across elsewhere at this level.* (B.H, personal communication, April 27, 2014).

Undoubtedly, his reference was the clincher that was needed to gain me acceptance into the PhD program. His reference letter very masterfully not only equated the academic standards of the National University of Singapore (NUS) to top universities in Europe and North America but demonstrated NUS's high global academic standing according to Times Higher

Education and QS World rankings for universities, outranking the university I was seeking admission into. Additionally, it helped that the reference came from a white male professor from Europe. Microaggression or systemic racism?

Another instance of microaggression I experienced was when a professor marked up my first essay because my syntax and lexicon did not conform to what they[65] expected: academic English. They thought that some of my sentences were too casual and not academic enough. Inwardly, I disagreed with them, but since this was my first academic essay after 15 years, I diligently revised my essay as per their feedback. As a precautionary measure, I also asked a friend who was a newly minted PhD to review my essay before I resubmitted it. The revision proved satisfactory to my professor who awarded me an A grade for my efforts. The next incident which discomfited me was when I asked the professor if I could do my oral presentation using PowerPoint instead of reading from my paper as I reasoned that reading from a paper was not really presenting. I was specifically told a firm *No*. When I asked for the reason, my professor stated that mandating that students read from their papers which they had taken the time to write eschewed any ad libbing which spared them from sitting through bad, ungrammatical presentations. I was not sure how to receive this. It was true that no one in class was allowed to present with PowerPoint, but the reason provided by the professor felt personal to me. I could not shake the feeling that they implemented this rule more so for people of colour, like me, who are assumed to have a low proficiency in academic English. Some

[65] I use "they", "them" and "theirs" to remove identifiers of gender or sex of the professor as my aim is not to publicly reveal this person but to share how their everyday classroom policies which have not been delinked from whiteness negatively affect BIPOC students like me in ways they could not fathom.

may claim that I am imagining this but as I reflected further on this situation, here is what I see: a white professor with individual privilege (i.e. as a professor) and institutional privilege (i.e. white and heterosexual) and me, an immigrant woman of (south) Asian heritage who lacks institutional privilege and lacks individual privilege as a student in a classroom. As a white professor, they should have interrogated the power dynamics in their classroom and recognized the power and authority they wielded in the classroom. They should have realised how their words had power and affected students like me. In "I Hope I Join the Band", Frankie Condon states, "I am trying all the time to teach without recentering whiteness." (2012, p.161). I did not see this effort in the professor at all. In fact, whiteness was always front and centre in their classroom. I knew I was not imagining this when I spoke to other graduate students of colour who had similar experiences as I did. It baffles me to see a professor at a renowned university teaching a graduate level course who was not open to listening to adult graduate students who bring such varied and substantial lived experiences. In fact, their classes were run like elementary school with little regard for student input. For instance, we were not allowed to use our computers to take notes during their class because they were afraid that we would get distracted, so only notes taken by hand were allowed. On the first day of class, when I, like many of my peers, opened our laptops to take notes, the professor professed, "This is a low-tech class." And we were in the 21st century! Until today, I regret that I never plucked up the courage to discuss with them how they made me feel in their class. I merely retreated and played nicely in the sandbox they created to get through the semester. I accepted whiteness as the operating system in their class because I did not think I could challenge it. It's been 10 years since; I think the person I am today would have responded differently to that professor.

In summary, these instances that I have experienced exemplify the impacts of white supremacy in education which students like me have to navigate day in and day out. The rejection and shaming we encounter because we look, talk and think differently may happen overtly at times, but in my experience, more often than not, it happens covertly because the deeply entrenched colonial systems and structures within education serve as lubrication for covert racism to occur. It takes courage to call out these acts of covert racism because they are usually only visible to the person on the receiving end without any other witnesses. This may cause discombobulation within persons who are on the receiving end of covert racism making them question their sanity and judgement. In the next section, I share more examples of how this form of racism snakes its way in and out of our socio-cultural and political systems undetected until it is called out.

2.1.2. I, the writing professor

As I transitioned from student to writing professor, I became more critical of the everyday racism I was witnessing, and yet, I still struggled with a double consciousness on how to be my authentic self and perform whiteness so I could belong in my adopted country, Canada. There are many reminders for people of colour to perform whiteness in their daily lives in order to fit in.

Performing whiteness

In 2004, when I was teaching writing to students taking English as a Second Language[66] (ESL) in Canada, I recall going into my classroom on the first day and facilitating a getting-to-know-you activity. I asked each student to tell me their names and something else about themselves that they wouldn't mind sharing with the class. One of my Chinese male students introduced himself as "Charlie" but his name on the class roster was actually Chong Wei[67]. I asked him why he did not just introduce himself as Chong Wei and he told me that a previous ESL teacher in China had given him the name Charlie because his Chinese name was challenging to pronounce. I could feel my heart racing and my face getting warm as anger started to spread throughout my body. I controlled my voice to make sure I did not sound angry. I asked him if he liked the name Charlie. He replied, "I guess, it's ok, especially if I want to be successful in Canada".

At this point, I asked the class if anyone else had been given English names and several other Chinese students in class raised their hands. They shared with me their English names which had been given to them by a white ESL teacher in China for the same reason Charlie had expressed. Then, I asked each one of these students to tell me their Chinese names and the meaning or significance behind each of their names. Once they had done this, I asked them if

[66] Even though ESL (English as a Second Language) is the common term used globally to denote English Language Training, it has over the years accrued a derogatory connotative meaning as ESL students are often perceived to be a deficit in the system because they lack English proficiency to communicate clearly. Currently, there is trend towards using EAL (English as an Additional Language) because it is difficult to know if English is indeed someone's second language or third or fourth. Moreover, EAL has a neutral connotation since it does not use the concept of "first language" as a reference standard like ESL does.

[67] All names in this narrative have been changed to protect privacy.

what the teacher had done by assigning them English names was appropriate. They shyly shook their heads from side to side indicating that it was not, and we launched into a discussion about the sacredness of our given birth names. We discussed how our names cannot be a source of shame for us and that if the other person finds it hard to pronounce it, we could help them pronounce it correctly, but ultimately, the onus lies with the other person to learn our given names.

I think it is outrageously racist to ask non-white students with "ethnic" names to adopt an English name so that everyone can pronounce it easily, because these students in turn have to labour to learn the English names of their teachers. In fact, Mary Bucholtz in her article, "On Being Called Out of One's Name", calls this an example of linguistic violence. She states that the phenomenon of being positioned as having "funny" names is so widespread in US educational institutions which require that personal names "be recognizable or at least pronounceable or adaptable to a form more familiar to institutional representatives". As such, "more ethnoracially marked names may be subject to extreme linguistic violence in the form of phonological mutilation or wholesale erasure." (Bucholtz as cited in Alim, Rickford & Ball, 2016 p.276). The experiences of my students were clear examples of linguistic violence and yet, these students were powerless to resist against this because they had to fit into Canadian society to be successful, so they were willing to have their birth names erased. I am not sure how much of this erasure happens in our classrooms today, but I know that there must still be instances of phonological mutilation of not only the names of students but also of professors who have ethnoracially marked names because the college I work in recently invested in a

digital application called “Namecoach[68]”. This application allows the user to record the preferred pronunciation of their names and include the link to that pronunciation in their email signatures and in the learning management system class list. So far, I have seen a big uptake for “Namecoach” among racialized faculty and students in my institution.

In 2016, an article in the Toronto Star revealed the racism inherent in hiring practices in Canada in which applicants with ethnic sounding names were not shortlisted or given an interview despite having similar or better credentials than white-sounding names. “Resume-whitening” is common amongst people of colour who are in the job market. “According to a two-year study led by University of Toronto researchers, as many as 40 percent of minority jobseekers “whiten” their resumes by adopting Anglicized names and downplaying experience with racial groups to bypass biased screeners and just get their foot in the door. It’s when “Lamar J. Smith” becomes “L. James Smith” or “Lei Zhang” morphs to “Luke Zhang”- and the callback rates soar.” (Keung, 2016)[69].

According to Harvard Business School's Working Knowledge, this strategy of resume whitening is paying off. “Twenty-five percent of black candidates received callbacks from their

[68] For more information, please read here: Namecoach - Personalized Naming Solutions for Your Business and Brand (name-coach.com)

[69] Access article here: https://www.thestar.com/news/immigration/jobseekers-resort-to-resum-whitening-to-get-a-foot-in-the-door-study-shows/article_240f1765-6f35-5618-b833-5858ba584d54.html

whitened resumes, while among Asians, 21 percent got calls if they used whitened resumes, even though the qualifications listed were identical." (Schwantes, 2019)[70].

It seems to me that the message we are telling our students in our classrooms is that their socio-cultural and linguistic heritage have no cultural capital. They have to whiten up, or risk their dreams of becoming successful, i.e. getting a job. All this megaphoning of equity and social justice for all in our educational institution is a farce if we continue to send this message to students in our classrooms.

Names are also used to signify to others where you come from. I recall when I immigrated to Canada and people used to ask me if "Stephanie" was my given name and I would reply in the affirmative. Then they would insist that surely I must have an ethnic name because of my skin colour. I would disappoint them by saying no and they would respond with a puzzled look because I look ethnically ambiguous, but have an Anglicised name, "Stephanie", which made it difficult for them to put me into an immigrant box: Chinese, Thai, Indian, Trinidadian, etc. I was asked this question numerous times so much so that I became immune to it and stopped explaining why my name is "Stephanie". It was exhausting having to justify the validity of my given name to people who wanted to put me in a defined racial box so they could determine how to relate to me.

[70] Access text here: https://www.inc.com/marcel-schwantes/why-minority-job-applicants-mask-their-race-identities-when-applying-for-jobs-according-to-this-harvard-study.html

English should be like wearing old shoes

> *Every time I say something the way I say it, she correct me until I say it some other way. Pretty soon it feel like I can't think. My mind run up on a thought, git confuse, run back and sort of lay down… Look like to me only a fool would want you to talk in a way that feel peculiar to your mind.* (Alice Walker 183-184 as cited in Elbow, 1999).

Throughout my time teaching in Canada, I can recall the many times I was told I made "errors" in my speech in terms of pronunciation and lexicon. These "errors" occurred because they departed from the Canadian English variety that was the standard here which my white colleagues and supervisor upheld. One such incident was when I was a contingent faculty in a GTA community college in 2003 teaching writing to ESL students. I was in the faculty staff room in between my classes conversing with some colleagues. Our conversation was about the Oscar ceremony that had just been televised the weekend before. I mentioned liking a particular film. A white colleague perked up his ears and said, "You mean movie?" I said, "Yes, film." He said, "No, we call it a movie here." In 2005, another similar incident happened to me at another GTA community college. I was having a conversation with a white faculty colleague who corrected my pronunciation of /deɪtə/ (day-tuh) and told me that the correct pronunciation was /dætə/ (dah-tuh). The next incident was with my direct supervisor who reacted to my use of "revert" when I replied to her email with: "I will revert to you with the answer tomorrow." My

supervisor, a white female, immediately replied to my email seconds later with, “Is that a Singaporeanism? Did you mean to say, *reply*?” Sheepishly, I replied, “Yes, I did. Sorry.”

A third instance of being corrected for an “error” was when a white female colleague told me to say (koe-lun-OS-kuh-pee) instead of (koe-le- nos-ko-pi). She went on to lecture me about stressed and unstressed syllables, not knowing that my “mispronunciation” of English words is due to a prominent feature of Singaporean English in which equal stress is placed on each syllable.

These incidents taught me that I had to Canadianize my English if I wanted to fit in. So, over the next few years, I made it a point to study how to pronounce words the Canadian way. For instance, I started to tap the “t” in the word “party” instead of saying /ˈpɑr. ti/. Hence, in an effort to speak English correctly in Canada, I practised saying disyllabic and multisyllabic words at home to ensure my syllable stress adhered to Canadian English pronunciation rules. For instance, I worked on words such as “purchase” and “station” reminding myself to place the stress on the first syllable. I became self-conscious and reticent to speak in large groups for fear of making an *error*. Every time I had to speak in front of a crowd, I would have multiple practice sessions pronouncing words which would inevitably increase my stress levels. I would practise in front of the mirror watching the physical formation of my lips or the placement of my tongue and teeth. The anxiety and stress I suffered because I pronounced words differently was so debilitating that it caused me to keep silent at times in the presence of a white professor or white colleagues.

A commonality present in all of the incidents in which I was corrected was that all my interlocutors were white women and men. It never occurred to me until I started replaying them in my mind. I have often wondered whether my white colleagues felt that they were doing me a favour as a new immigrant, or if they felt that as college professors/administrators it was incumbent on them to uphold standard English on campus. I will never know the answer because I did not have the courage to ask them then. I had even apologised for using "revert" which I have recently discovered is recognised and accepted by Oxford Dictionary and the New York Times as originating from India and used widely in Asian countries such as Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong.[71] However, no matter what their intentions were, these interactions made me feel disempowered and undervalued. It shook my confidence in my English language abilities and made me question if I should be a teacher at all because my interlocutors in all these instances had refused to negotiate with me but instead passed judgement.

If only my interlocutors had understood that "*error* is those items one or both members of the interaction refuse to negotiate – that is when one or more speakers, writers, readers refuse to engage, participate", then they would have understood that language acquisition as an emergent model, not a prescriptive one (Canagarajah, 2013, p.233). Perhaps then, they would have been less critical of my English and more open to a different way of expression. The premise in an emergent model is that language users are constantly making new meaning in each interaction, which was not how my colleagues and supervisor viewed our interactions. In

[71] The word "revert" is used as "reply" in Asian countries (Singaporean, Malaysia, Hong Kong). It originates from India. The truth about "revert" (myenglishmatters.com)The Oxford Dictionary has recognised "revert" as a synonym of "reply" revert verb - Definition, pictures, pronunciation and usage notes | Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary at OxfordLearnersDictionaries.com The New York Times also recognises "revert" in their article: Revert - The New York Times (nytimes.com)

"Lingua Franca English, Multilingual Communities, and Language Acquisition '', Canagarajah re-evaluates the underlying assumptions of Second Language Acquisition theory in light of the Translingual Approach[72]. He asks us to re-examine the many dichotomies that exists in language acquisition such as grammar versus pragmatics, determinism versus agency, individual versus community, purity versus hybridity, fixity versus fluidity, cognition versus context, and monolingual versus multilingual (Canagarajah, 2007, pp. 923-924). He calls for an abandonment of these dichotomies and a move towards a biosocial paradigm of language acquisition along with "more insider studies from multilingual (especially non-Western) communities and data from outside the classroom" (Canagarajah, 2007, p.924). To embrace this new paradigm of language acquisition, we must first acknowledge and accept that all varieties of English have social value and currency to open doors for employment, education and social ascent. To make this attitudinal shift, Canagarajah turns to Lingua Franca English (LFE) research studies which he claims has radically shifted the field of language acquisition by its focus on "transnational affiliations, diaspora communities, digital communication, fluid social boundaries, and the blurring of time-space distinctions [which] has generated more information about atypical communicative contexts, encouraged studies on contact situations, and created an urgency to understand acquisition outside homogeneous communities." (ibid). An example of LFE is Singaporean English (i.e. Singlish) which emerged as a contact language between non-native speakers of English within a multilingual context. LFE is not a language that can be described as

[72] The Translingual approach seeks to normalise the multiple linguistic codes used within an utterance – spoken or written. It sees communicative practice as transcending the boundaries of autonomous languages. Language acquisition is seen as dynamic and fluid contingent on various factors present within an interaction, and not as mastery of a predetermined set of rules. Translingualism does not ascribe to the standard language ideology which promotes a hierarchy between language varieties, but believes in the agency of all language users to marshal their full linguistic repertoire to communicate.

a priori because it "cannot be characterized outside the specific interaction and speakers in a communicative context" (Canagarajah, 2007, p. 926). LFE is hybrid in nature because "the language features words, grammatical patterns and discourse conventions from the diverse languages and English varieties that speakers bring to the interaction" (ibid). Therefore, LFE never achieves a stable form as it is constantly brought into being in each new context of communication where each interaction is dependent on the ecology of the context, i.e. the interlocutors, their LFE proficiency level, use of code-mixing, etc. To quote Heraclitus, "No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man." In addition, misunderstandings are rare in LFE interactions as these are resolved by topic changes, or by negotiation using communicative strategies such as rephrasing or repetition (Seidlhofer as cited in Canagarajah, 2007, p. 926). LFE speakers also employ Firth's *let it pass principle* in which interlocutors overlook idiosyncrasies as long as "a certain threshold of understanding is obtained" (Canagarajah, 2007, p. 926). I have witnessed the *let it pass principle* in action when I am conversing with friends who are from racially marginalised groups. There have been several occasions where I have uttered Singlish words or phrases in conversation without any interruption from my friends requesting an explanation of unfamiliar terminology because they know that an unfamiliar Singlish word or phrase would not obscure their understanding of my message by the end of my utterance. As such, I do not feel self-conscious when I am conversing with them; however, when conversing with white colleagues, I tend to edit everything I say in my mind before I say it because in my personal experience, they are not as tolerant of ambiguity as my friends of colour. I am usually asked to explain the meaning of a Singlish word or phrase I use at that specific point of utterance. Having had such experiences has taught me

to be acutely aware and conscious of not only the words and phrases I use, but how I pronounce them when I am with my white colleagues. I often play around with words in my mind before I release them from my mouth. This reminds me of Jeremy B. Jones, a professor of rhetoric at the University of Iowa, who shares in his 2011 article, "Fiddlin Tongue" that "Before speaking, I took extra moments to review and dust off the words on their way to my tongue." (2011, p.195 in "Code-meshing as World English"). He describes his internal conflict of whether he should reclaim his Appalachian tongue to be true to himself or continue to suppress his Appalachian accent to sound intelligent and more college-like so he would be accepted in the university. I understand this conflict since it also resides inside me. I agree with Jones that "the speech of home should be my backbone, my baseline" (p. 197). Instead, I engage in code-switching depending on the context and interlocutors I am with because "my code-switching worries are about how I'd like to be seen, or how I imagine I'm being perceived, rather than purposeful communication." (p. 200). This code-switching practice serves to reinforce the imposter syndrome I often feel. Despite attaining a master's degree in English Studies from the National University of Singapore[73], one of the best universities in the world, and having over 25 years of working experience in education and business, I often feel I am not good enough and need to make changes to fit in. I have a sense of hyper self-blame in which every problem becomes my own doing, not anyone else's. Aja Martinez puts it succinctly, "I still, at times, suffer an acute case of imposter syndrome, not an uncommon affliction to those of us whose

[73] NUS is ranked 19th according to the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2023 (World University Rankings 2023 | Times Higher Education (THE)) and 11th globally by QS rankings 2023(Top universities in the world 2023 | Top Universities).

bodies are in spaces not traditionally constructed for us." (Martinez, 2022, p. 107). This quote resonates deeply because I always feel like I have to perform whiteness or approximate whiteness to be accepted at work and in the society that I live in.

Teaching First Year Composition in Canada in a whitely way

Besides teaching writing to EAL students, I also taught First Year Composition (FYC) courses to undergraduate and diploma students in a Canadian community college. Despite having to grade hundreds of final essays, I have always loved teaching writing. The opportunity to read these essays gave me a window into a student's writing journey. Usually, I see tangible progression in a student's writing from the beginning to the end of the semester as their writing becomes more audacious and cogent because they have learned techniques which enhance their writing or more importantly, have discovered their voice as a writer.

For many years, I taught FYC according to institutional directives. I taught students the linear writing process from brainstorming, to creating essay plans, writing their first draft to final draft. Marks were allocated for each of these steps and if a student skipped any of them, they lost marks. Some of my students who were trained in a different academic culture and who spoke a different mother tongue found it challenging to follow this linear approach, so they would work backwards. They would produce their essay, then write out their essay plan and then fill out the brainstorming sheet just to get the marks allotted for each part of the process. Today as I look back on what I did then as a writing teacher, I shake my head and wonder why I had mandated that linearity in the writing process when I, myself, struggle with

it.[74] I told myself that I was helping my students gain entry into the marketplace by teaching them "that the linear discourse organisation of English expository writing, characterised by directness and deductive reasoning, therefore coherent and persuasive, that Kaplan (1966) attributed to the Platonic-Aristotelian tradition and Anglo-European culture" is the model they must follow to be successful. (Wei, 2022, p.179). In fact, I was simply perpetuating white epistemology as I had been taught. At that time, I did not think of questioning the methods of the academy and my institution, only to help my students master the rules. I only questioned these rules when I started researching Translingual Theory, Anti-racist Pedagogy, and Critical Race Theory while I was a doctoral student. Imbibing these theories opened my eyes to the sedimentation of whiteness inherent in the academy and inspired me into action to de-centre whiteness through awareness-raising workshops of white supremacy in education in an effort to change the system in service of marginalised students which I discuss in detail in the next chapter.

Whiten up teacher!

In 2010, when I was teaching First Year Composition to various groups of first year diploma students at my community college, I experienced an instance of microaggression from a white student. I use the whiteboard extensively when I teach to write out vocabulary which is

[74] I realised that I was forcing myself to follow the linear writing process ingrained in me and freed myself from that constraint during my PhD studies. I began to write in a non-linear, rhizomatic manner which is writing in multiple, non-hierarchical entry and exit points which connect each point to any other point. So, I would study the essay question and write the first draft in one day. Then, ponder on the essay question again and look at the previous draft which would spark another idea or point forming the basis for my next draft. I continued to do this for two weeks until I had four or five drafts of my essay which I would merge into one final draft. I found this process liberating for me as it allows my mind to wander freely in and out of ideas and points without the rigidity of adhering to a structured process.

critical to my lesson and which I think may be new to some of the ESL or multilingual students in my class. I wrote the word, “paralyse” on the whiteboard. A white student, let’s call him Chris, raised his hand up and when I nodded for him to speak, he said, “You spelled that word incorrectly. It should be with a “z”, not “s”. I smiled and told him to look up the spelling of the word in the online dictionary. Another student piped up and said that spelling it with an “s” was British and with a “z” was American. Chris did not look convinced and did not say anything. I continued with my lesson and wrote the next word on the board, “sepulchre”. Chris’ hand shot up again. I looked at him and said, “Yes?” He responded, “You should spell that with an “er”, not “re”. Now I was irritated. I once again said, “Please check your dictionary. Chris, please tell the class what you find out.” He looked up and said, “It says that you can spell it either way and that “re” is the British way of spelling.” I nodded and thanked him. I was about to continue my lesson, but Chris’ expression stopped me. I inquired “Chris, is there something you would like to say?” He nodded and then began, “Even if there are two ways of spelling a word, shouldn't you be using the Canadian way since you are in Canada?” I was not expecting that! A couple of students in the class looked shocked while others laughed nervously. I took a breath and tried to think how to respond. *Should I let it go and ask him to see me privately after class, or address it now?* I decided to address it there and then in front of the class because I was not sure if there were others who felt the same way as Chris but who did not feel comfortable asking. I felt that this was a teaching moment which I hope could make a difference. I asked Chris, “Why do you think that I should use the Canadian way of spelling since I was schooled in British English? Did you not understand the words I wrote on the whiteboard?” He replied, “I did understand them, but I just thought since we are in college and

you are a writing teacher, you should use standard English when teaching us." "What is standard English?" I asked. Chris replied, "The English that sounds Canadian. Like you hear on the CBC[75]." Another student who was non-white chimed in and said, "Chris, for your information, English originated from England, Britain. That is the benchmark for English. American or Canadian English is a version of that English. Anyway, what does it matter if she spells differently as long as you understand?" There was murmuring and nodding in the class as other students started to agree with this student. Chris responded, "I get that English came from England, but we are in Canada and there is a proper way to speak here. Isn't that why we are all in school? College? To speak and write properly?" A white female student shook her head and said, "Nope. I am here to get my credential in Early Childhood Education so I can find a job. I think we already speak and write properly or else how did we get into college? Also, why does it matter that someone speaks or writes differently as long as you understand their message?" Other students nodded in assent and soon there were conversations happening in small groups as other students weighed in on the discussion.

I realised that there was about 10 minutes of class time left, so I knew I couldn't delve deeper into this topic which I felt deserved an entire lesson. I thanked everyone for a great discussion, told them that I would post some resources on standard English on the learning management system and that we would discuss this topic in more depth at the next class. After class was adjourned, Chris approached me sheepishly. He apologised saying he did not mean to embarrass me in front of the class. I told him that I wasn't embarrassed but disappointed that

[75] Canadian Broadcasting Corporation

he could not be more open to different expressions. I accepted his apology and told him to read up more about this topic so we could discuss it next week. The following week we spent the entire class on standard English ideology and had a robust discussion about the different types of Englishes we speak. After that lesson, Chris seemed more open to the language differences I brought to class. Once on purpose, a few weeks after this incident, I used the word, "lorry" instead of "truck" during a discussion and out of the corner of my eye, I saw Chris look it up in the dictionary. He did not say anything to me. I carried on with my lesson.

Even though Chris' intent was not to be malicious, yet it had an impact on me. I felt that I was being asked to justify my English and my position as a writing teacher in a college. Imposter syndrome began to show up again. Should I be more careful and use only Canadian or American lexicon and spelling? Are students doubting my ability to teach them writing since I am non-white? The impact of his words had deep repercussions on my self-confidence and self-worth. At that time, I had not yet started my PhD studies and was not aware of the concepts of "linguistic racism", "performing whiteness", or "white innocence". I only knew how Chris' words made me feel and knew I had to address it with the class as best as I knew how. The visual below is borrowed from a LinkedIn post by Paul Ladipo, DEIJ Consultant, Anti-racist Advocate, Workshop Facilitator, and Founder, Critical Conversations Consulting, LLC. People of Colour sometimes tend to dismiss microaggressions which happen to them thinking they were overreacting or being too sensitive. In the visual below, the heading states, *"*Assuming positive intent is a dangerous approach that disproportionately disadvantages underrepresented employees." Initially, I told myself that Chris was just a boy who was ignorant and meant no harm, but his words still impacted me. He was blind to the systemic racism that was happening

to people like me. If I want to disrupt the status quo and de-centre whiteness, I must be courageous enough to call out racism when I see or experience it.

Figure 4: Impact versus Intent



(Borrowed from Paul Ladipo's LinkedIn post on September 30, 2023, figure 4 shows a weighing scale with the word "Impact" on the left of the scale and the word "Intent" on the right of the scale. There is a heading which reads:

"Assuming positive intent is a dangerous approach that disproportionately disadvantages underrepresented employees." The left scale showing" Impact" is shown to be heavier than the right scale showing"Intent". On the left side of the visual under the word "Impact" is a picture of three persons of colour (one who looks female and is yellow-skinned; two who look like males and are brown-skinned) with a word bubble above them which says, "I am offended." On the right side of the visual with the word "intent", there is a picture of five persons who look white-skinned (two who look female and three who look like males) with four word bubbles which say, "It was just a joke." I think you're being too sensitive." "He didn't mean it." "But she is a really nice girl, I don't think she meant it that way." One of the females is shown crying with the words, "White women's tears", arrowed at her.)

Intent versus Impact

An incident which comes to mind which demonstrates intent versus impact well was when I was teaching an elective class one summer titled, *The Impact of Culture on the Canadian Workplace.* In one particular class, we were discussing the concept of stereotypes. I had a diverse class of 40 students with about more than 25 different cultures represented. One of the activities I had them do was to put up sticky notes on the classroom walls sharing what they knew about stereotyping and its associated concepts/words. Once that was done, everyone was asked to walk around and read their classmates' work and comment on them. Lastly, we had a class debrief on the activity to share what they had learned. I had a Brazilian student who put up her hand and said, "I learned that Canadians are racist." You could have heard a pin drop as everyone kept silent, not knowing how to respond. There were five white Canadians in my class and eventually one of them responded with, "That's not true and that's racist of you to say that." Unfazed, the Brazilian student replied," Well, if Canadians are not racist, why do they always ask me, Where are you from?". The white student responded, "It's just out of curiosity.

No bad intention." The other four white students began to nod their heads in agreement. "When my husband opens his mouth, you will know immediately that English is not his first language. But they don't ask my husband the same question, and he is an immigrant from Poland. I'll tell you why. It's because he is blonde and blue eyed, and I am black skinned and brown-eyed," the Brazilian student retorted. Then one of the white students said, "I think you're being too sensitive. I'm sure it's out of curiosity or they just wanted to make conversation." That comment drew my Brazilian student's ire as she almost shouted her response, "No! It's because I look different. I am black, not white like my husband. But when he opens his mouth, he has a Polish accent. But I am judged immediately to be an alien because of how I look. Isn't that racist?" The five white students looked uncomfortable and did not know how to react. I stepped in and tried to bring calm to the classroom and talked about the importance of listening and validating each person's lived experiences. We took a five-minute break and then we discussed the difference between *racism* and *prejudice* as a class. We also tackled the *Where are you from* question with other students of colour sharing how being asked that question made them feel. By the end of the class, with emotions quelled, the atmosphere was amiable again. After class, I asked to speak to the Brazilian student and the five white students to gauge how they were feeling. The white students apologised to the Brazilian student for downplaying her lived experiences and she accepted their apology. They told me they never realised that asking a simple question such as *Where are you from* could have such an impact on a person of colour. They understood now how that question came across as racist. Then I spoke to the Brazilian student in private. Although she was upset by what transpired in class, she told me she felt safe enough to share her true feelings which was a

breakthrough moment for her. In the following class, all the students asked for time to engage in honest conversations about racism in Canada. So, I brought in video clips about the topic, and we deconstructed the videos in small groups. My student evaluations for that class were overwhelmingly positive with many students commenting on how much they had learned about the topic of racism and stereotypes. This empowered me further to not shy away from such difficult conversations in my classroom.

2.1.3. I, Writing Program Administrator/Associate Dean

In 2014, I was appointed as Associate Dean of the School of Communication and Literary Studies and with that title also came the role of Writing Program Administrator (WPA) for all first-year composition courses offered in my college. At that time, I was one of the few middle managers/administrators in my college who was non-white. I recall one instance walking into an in-person managers' meeting and seeing only one other person of colour, a Black man, in that room among a sea of white faces. I sat by myself at the back of the room feeling very self-conscious throughout that meeting. Although we were encouraged to ask questions, I did not utter a word. I just did not feel safe talking. This experience brings to mind Ian Williams' 2021 Scotiabank Giller prize-winning memoir, "Disorientation: Being Black in the World". In his chapter, "The Only", Williams expounds exactly how I felt being in that room:

> *Being the Only can be branded as an achievement, as an exceptionalism (in both senses), as an example to the race, as a condemnation of others in the race, as a data point. But the experience of being the Only is felt mostly as loneliness.* (p. 133).

While I felt lonely in that room, I was also aware that I stood out like a sore thumb. I was the token Asian woman representing all Asians at this meeting. What a heavy weight to carry. When I was appointed Associate Dean in the fall of 2014, I received so many warm congratulations from my peers across the college and from friends within my social circle. One particular comment which stood out to me was from a South Asian woman who told me that I had just cracked the glass ceiling for Asian women. I really did not know how to receive this comment. I felt unsettled at the thought of my appointment as Associate Dean being seen as a win for Asian women in general. I did not like being positioned as a poster child. I agree with Williams that this is "another way that race structures our lives: the cost of choosing a life that leads you through … respected jobs is lifelong alienation. You become a kind of [Asian] person who is kind of [Asian]." (ibid). I am glad that today my college employs more people of colour in management roles, so I am no longer the token Asian female manager.

Administration of first year composition

In this section, I share my internal conflict as a writing program administrator of our first-year composition program and as a woman of colour. As a writing program administrator, I have been complicit in upholding whiteness in my institution because of the preset writing curriculum we use in our writing program which is similar across community colleges in Ontario. There is a strong focus on teaching grammar and mechanics, argument and essay structure, and research methods in all our writing courses across the colleges. The premise of these courses is to focus on what students lack rather than to uncover what they already know. Thus, the writing courses are instructional and prescriptive, showing students how to write succinctly and

cogently according to accepted standards of academic English. But as a woman of colour who understands how it feels to be devalued and excluded, I know that something must be done to address the discrimination immanent in our courses which I attempt to do in Chapter 4.

As in every community college in Canada, all students in my college are mandated to take a first-year writing course unless they have taken an equivalent course elsewhere within North America or in an English-speaking country which is recognized by World Education Service (WES), a credential evaluation service. If the writing course they took previously matches 80% in course outcomes and assessments to my college's writing course, then students could receive an Advanced Standing[76] for our writing course and are exempted from taking the course. In my college, there are two types of FYC courses: at the degree level, students must take Composition and Rhetoric, a course focused on argumentation and research methods; and at the certificate or diploma level, they must take Essential Communication Skills, a course focused on academic research methods, to graduate from their vocational program. Students in a certificate or diploma program who are perceived as needing more time to brush up their academic English are placed in the remedial writing course, Communication Foundations which focuses on mastery of academic English grammar, mechanics, vocabulary, sentence construction and essay writing skills.

For all visa/international students, in addition to taking a FYC course, they are required to show proof of English language proficiency for admission into a postsecondary institution in

[76] Advanced standing = advanced credit for a course.

Canada. This proof of English language proficiency is usually their score in a standard test such as IELTS, TOEFL or PTE[77]. In my community college, if students achieve an overall band of 6 in IELTS, they can enrol in a certificate or diploma program. If they achieve a band of 6.5 in IELTS, they are admitted into a degree program. However, those who do not meet the minimum English language proficiency requirement for their degree or non-degree program are placed into an English Language Training (ELT) program called English for Academic Purpose (EAP), which teaches them how to communicate effectively in academic English. This is a separate program requiring an additional fee to meet the English language proficiency admission requirement for their program of choice.

In my ten years as an Associate Dean and WPA, I have observed that it is mostly the students who come from racially marginalised groups who get placed in the remedial writing course, Communication Foundations. Because they speak an English variety which is considered subordinate to standard academic English, they are assigned to this remedial course so we could "fix" their English. Students used to be placed in this remedial writing course through a post-admissions writing assessment facilitated by my college's assessment centre; however, in 2019, this protocol was abolished and replaced with the use of IELTS scores to place students in either Communication Foundations (remedial course) or Essential Communication Skills (required course for graduation).[78]Students with an IELTS score of 6.5 are automatically placed

[77] IELTS is the International English Language Testing System; TOEFL is the Test of English as a Foreign Language; PTE is the Pearson Test of English. These are three common language proficiency tests used by Canadian postsecondary institutions for visa/international student admissions.

[78] This change in protocol was with the aim of becoming more student centred because students would now know if they needed to take an additional writing course prior to starting their studies instead of finding out after they started their studies.

in Essential Communication Skills and those who score below 6.5 are automatically placed in Communication Foundations. Once students pass Communication Foundations, they are still required to pass Essential Communication Skills as a program graduation requirement. So, students placed in this remedial course not only have to spend an extra semester in their studies, but they also have to pay an extra fee to take the remedial course. I grapple with this policy because it clearly disadvantages students who do not speak English as their mother tongue, or those who speak a non-standard English variety. There is a stigma attached to students who are placed in Communication Foundations. They are known as the "stupid students". These words were told to me by the students themselves. Oftentimes, I receive appeals from students placed in Communication Foundations saying they are not stupid and refuse to be in the stupid class. There are many instances where this course acts as a barrier to graduation or progression in a student's academic program. This course is a clear example of how whiteness is centred in an educational institution which privileges white students who already have the advantage of speaking a language of power at home, English, which is much closer to the academic variety required in college. It breaks my heart that for students who grew up speaking English as an additional language, or a World English[79], the odds are already stacked against them even before they step foot on the college campus; their academic abilities are unfairly judged on their language proficiency.

[79] The indigenised varieties of English found in former British colonies or in countries influenced by the US. For example, Hinglish (Hindu + English), Manglish (Malay + English), Spanglish (Spanish + English).

As the writing program administrator, I am expected to uphold these institutional policies and protocols when I know that our writing courses are deficient in serving the needs of *all* students. I feel caught in between a rock and a hard place when I have to adjudicate a student's appeal for receiving a failing grade in their writing course, or an appeal to retake their writing course for the fourth time. (Our maximum course attempt policy in my institution allows a student to retake a course up to three times only). In most cases, these appeals are from students from marginalised groups who struggle with mastering academic English and citation rules, or who work a 40-hour week to pay their school fees. I usually try to help these students by working with my faculty to give them another opportunity to get a passing grade unless I know for sure that the failing grade was warranted or allow the students to attempt the course for the fourth time to prevent them being on academic probation or suspension in their program. Despite my efforts in trying to mitigate whiteness in our writing curriculum, I am aware that a better response would be to overhaul the writing courses to address the discriminatory elements and ensure the courses embrace diverse ways of knowing and being. My first attempt at this is to propose a writing syllabus in Chapter 4 which addresses the discriminatory elements in a current writing course offered in my college.

(Linguistic) Racism

In my capacity as Associate Dean, I am privileged to be able to attend conferences on English Language Training because I oversee both these programs in my Faculty. At a national English Language Training conference held in Niagara Falls about 8 years ago, I experienced a

racist encounter which deeply wounded my self-confidence. Included in the conference fee for this conference were three meals: breakfast, lunch and dinner. It was during lunch on day two of the conference that this unfortunate incident occurred. I had filled my plate from the lunch buffet and decided to sit at a table with colleagues I had not met yet. The table I chose had about five other people from different institutions. Juggling my plate and cup of water, I took my seat and introduced myself. We all wore lanyards displaying our names and institutions. As I was just about to put a forkful of salad in my mouth, I heard this question, "I see you're from Sheridan. What do you do there?" I halted what I was doing and replied, "I am the Associate Dean for the School of Communication and Literary Studies." Then the speaker, a white male asked, "What programs do you oversee?" I replied, "ESL, TESOL, first year writing courses and elective literature courses." Then the speaker responded in an incredulous tone, "You? In charge of English and Literature?" I was beyond shocked by his response. So, were the others sitting at the table. There was a moment of awkward silence before someone jumped in and changed the subject to an upcoming workshop that she would like to attend. That moment of silence felt like an eternity to me. I could feel my heart racing, my breathing was quickening, and sweat was pooling under my armpits. I did not know how to react or what to say in response. I merely kept quiet and carried on eating my lunch which I could not taste at all. I could not move although I wanted to get out of there. I was paralysed. My mind was racing with so many thoughts and questions. *Did I just experience outright racism? Shouldn't I call him out? Why is no one saying anything to him? Why is everyone pretending like it didn't happen? Is my face flushed? Can everyone see my discomfort?* Finally, after about 10 minutes, the speaker left the table and others followed suit. I got up, put my plate away and walked quickly to my

hotel room. I needed to be alone to process what just happened. In my room, I washed my face and sat on the bed for a while gathering my wits around me. The next workshop I was attending was in an hour, so I had time.

I had never felt so humiliated in my life. The speaker's response, though short, spoke volumes. His words clearly indicated he could not fathom how I could lead the English department because I am not white. Although he did not articulate the second part of the previous sentence out loud, that was exactly what he was thinking and those around the table understood that too. His assumptions that an Asian woman could not, or perhaps should not, lead an English department was based on white supremacist ideology. This incident cut my self-confidence down to shreds. It fed my imposter syndrome so much that I felt that I did not belong at that conference. I was in two minds about leaving that very night, but I stayed until the end of the conference because I did not want to give in to the victim mentality. It's been eight years since, and every time I recall that incident, my body feels the same sensations of humiliation and anxiety I felt during lunch that day. As I am writing this, I can feel my heart beating quicker, my breaths getting shallower, and an ache surfacing in the pit of my stomach. The body remembers. According to Swarnakshi Sharma, a mental health advocate and a writer for Calm Sage, an online platform dedicated to mental health, "traumatic experiences that are stored in the body are known as "somatic memory." Somatic memory refers to the way the body retains sensory and emotional responses from traumatic events. These somatic memories can be triggered by various cues, such as sights, sounds, smells, or physical sensations that resemble the traumatic experience. When trauma is triggered, the body can react as if the

trauma is happening again, even if you're no longer in danger."[80] Renowned trauma expert and bestselling author of the 2015 book, "The Body Keeps The Score", Dr. Bessel van der Kolk, subscribes to the fact that the body keeps score of all the traumatic events in a person's life which eventually manifests in their minds, emotions and biology. Hence, trauma can be passed down from mother to child. Dr. Kolk's book discusses therapeutic methods to rewire the brain to help trauma patients unfreeze the past cognitively so they can begin to re-engage in the present. Although, trauma is not the focus of this dissertation, nevertheless, I felt it important to demonstrate that the impacts of racism are not only felt in the present moment, but in fact, have far-reaching long term harmful consequences on the overall health and well-being of people of colour.

Another incident of racism, specifically linguistic racism, happened to a faculty member I hired to teach in our writing courses. He was a part time Communications professor from Bangladesh. He had a PhD from a reputable university from the US and was a seasoned teacher back in his country. During his first semester teaching in our writing program, I received countless complaints from students in his classes that he was incomprehensible when he spoke because he spoke English with a Bangladeshi accent. I advised these students to provide him this feedback directly so he could find ways to mitigate this; however, they were unhappy with my responses and asked for a change in teacher. I responded with a firm *No*. This made them more unhappy so some of them proceeded to transfer to another class with a different

[80]Access article here: https://www.calmsage.com/how-your-body-remembers-trauma/

instructor. As Associate Dean, it is my responsibility to approve any student transfer to another writing class. In this situation, although I hesitated to provide my approval, I could not take away a student's right to choose another instructor. So, I approved the transfers. There were others who withdrew from the course altogether in defiance. In the end, there were only a handful of students in the class. I felt awful for this teacher, so I invited him to a meeting to discuss this. He was very apologetic and said he understood why the students were complaining. He was open to trying out new ways of teaching to appease the students who remained in his class. Eventually, we came up with a plan of action which was to utilise PowerPoint strategically in his teaching, design sufficient breaks during class to allow students to ask clarifying questions, and to implement the exit card system where students could write down one thing they learned that day, or a muddy point they were still grappling with in their minds before they left the classroom. These strategies worked, and I never heard from his students again that semester.

What saddens me is that this teacher was perceived to be incompetent because of his accent despite his accuracy in speaking and writing English. In his article, "Multilingual Strategies of Negotiating English: From Conversation to Writing", Suresh Canagarajah states that "Mistakes lie in the eye of beholder – the eyes of people who refuse to negotiate and instead sit in judgement over other people's usage." (2009, p. 44). In the case of this professor, the students had certain expectations of the English he should speak and refused to allow space for negotiation in their interactions with him. They were not willing to put in the time and effort to try to understand his accent but expected him to understand their Canadian accent along with all their Canadianisms. This makes me recall Michelle Obama's experience at Princeton, a

predominantly white university, which she recounts in her book, “Becoming”. She writes “that the burden of assimilation is put largely on the shoulders of minority students” because white students were not willing to take the first step to get to know students of colour. (2018, p.74). Similarly, in this situation, the racialised professor is expected to assimilate and make the first move in a white dominant college which Obama states in her book, “It’s a lot to ask.” (ibid).

2.1.4. Everyday Racism

In this section, I share encounters which I experienced outside of education as a private citizen in Canada. Cognitive dissonance or psychological stress happens when a person participates in an action or interaction which goes against their feelings, ideas, beliefs or values. This perception of contradictory information takes a mental toll on the person because when two ideas or actions are not psychologically consistent, the person will do their utmost to resolve the contradiction to reduce their discomfort. They could agree with the other person or change their behaviour to reduce cognitive dissonance.

Playground Encounters

When we first immigrated to Ontario, Canada, we rented a side split house in North York in a beautiful neighbourhood near the Donalda Golf Club. In the year 2000, that neighbourhood was mainly white with some immigrants, like me, peppered throughout the street where our house was situated. My daughter was four years old and enrolled in Junior Kindergarten in a small public elementary school called TVPS. I walked her to and from school every day. For the first month or so, no one spoke to me in the courtyard as I was waiting to pick my daughter from school. There were many parents waiting in the courtyard, and I noticed

a large group of white mothers who seemed to know one another well. They smiled and nodded at me every time they caught my gaze but never spoke to me. One day, the same group of white mothers overheard me speaking to my daughter's kindergarten teacher and as soon as my conversation was done, one of them approached me and said, "Oh, you speak English!" I replied, "Yes, I do." She said, "We all thought you spoke Chinese." (Chinese isn't even a language!) "Your English is pretty good. Where did you learn it?" I smiled, took a breath and began to explain my heritage. I was just stereotyped. "Here, being "Asian" itself makes someone unable to interact with non-Asians". (Alim, Rickford & Ball, 2016, p. 107). They assumed I couldn't speak English because of how I looked until they heard me speak it. That was one of my first experiences of racism in Canada. After that day, these mothers started to speak to me and eventually, invited my daughter for play dates with their children. After some months, I was even invited to the parties they hosted. Even though there were many other Asian mothers at the school, I was the only Asian mother accepted into this white mothers' group. I surmised that this was because they felt comfortable with me because I spoke English compared to the other Asian mothers who spoke mainly Mandarin. Those Asian mothers were greeted politely on the playground by these white mothers but never invited to join outings or parties. Looking back at this period of my life in Canada, I now understand that I was accorded membership into this group based on my proximity to whiteness. I spoke an English variety which closely approximated their white middle-class variety; I was a college professor; and I lived on a street which was considered affluent. Based on these three aspects, I was deemed worthy to join their group.

Years later, when my daughter was in elementary school in another school in Oakville, another incident happened to me at the playground where my daughter was playing on the monkey-bars. I mentioned to a white parent that I had to put the school bags in the boot of my car. The parent looked up at me quizzically and said, “Boot? You mean trunk.” I said, “We call it car boot in Singapore as the British do.” She nodded and said, “Ah! I see, but you know here in Canada we call it the trunk. If you use “boot”, people will think you are referring to your shoes.” Then she laughed. I was embarrassed as there were other parents within earshot of our conversation. I smiled and said nothing. I found it interesting that even though “boot” originated from Britain, it is devalued here in Canada because those who hold power have determined that it is not appropriate English. This incident bothered me quite a bit. I am reminded of what a South Asian student once shared with me. “I never knew I was brown until I came to Canada. In India, I was considered white.” Similarly, I always thought I spoke good English until I came to Canada. That day I went home resolved to not use “boot” and looked up for the Canadian equivalents of words I would use in Singapore such as “lorry” (*truck*), “rubbish bin” (*garbage bin*), “gallivant” *(loiter*).

Where are you [REALLY] from?

Although this seems to be an innocuous question because people are just curious about where you come from, I can assure you that it is not. I have been at the receiving end of this question umpteen times, and I can tell you that it matters WHO asks it and in WHAT context. A month ago, I was going for a zumba class and an Asian woman I was meeting for the first time asked me this question. I hesitated for a second before responding. She is from Malaysia, a

neighbouring country of Singapore, so we were able to find commonalities in terms of our childhood experiences, the cuisines we enjoyed and the culture which both Malaysia and Singapore share. The question *Where are you from?* was asked here to establish connections and find kinship. I understood that clearly. Rewind to five months earlier when I was asked the same question by a white female receptionist in a doctor's office. Here is what happened. I walked in at 8.15am for my 8.30am appointment. I was greeted with a "Good morning" by the receptionist and asked to show my Ontario health card. After she confirmed my identity and appointment, I was told to take a seat until the doctor was ready to see me. As I sat down, she asked me, "Where are you from?" Groggily, I said, "Huh?" I am not typically a morning person so at 8.15 in the morning my brain was not fully awake yet. She repeated her question, "Where are you from? You have an accent." I was quite surprised but decided to answer her since I was in no mood to extend the conversation this early in the morning. So, I replied, "Singapore". She smiled and said, "Oh, I see". Then silence. I sat there trying to understand why she had asked me that question. *Was I being too sensitive? Maybe she was trying to place my accent? Maybe she was trying to make small talk?* A couple of minutes later, a blonde, white male walked into the doctor's office. He was asked to show his health card as I was. He started to speak, and I could hear that he had a non-Canadian accent when he spoke English. I think he was Polish, but I wasn't sure. However, I was curious to see if the white female receptionist would ask him the same question she asked me. I waited with bated breath, but she never asked him although he had an accent. I was baffled. *Why did she ask me but not him?* She seemed to be curious about non-Canadian accents and yet, she did not ask this man, where are you from? As the minutes passed, it dawned on me that she had asked me the question because I was not white. I could

feel my body temperature gradually rising. An internal debate started: *Should I call her out on this, or should I stay quiet?* So many thoughts and words raced around inside my head. *Isn't this a micro-aggression*[81]*?* Just by asking this question, she intimated that I do not belong in Canada. In a 2019 CBC documentary, "But where are you really from? A seemingly simple question, with a complicated answer"[82], three people (Ayesha Khan, 5th generation Canadian; Handel Wright, UBC[83] professor; and Christie Lee Charles, an Indigenous woman belonging to the Musqueam nation and Vancouver poet laureate) were interviewed about how they felt when they were asked this question: Where are you (really) from?" Ayesha Khan claims that when she answers that she is Canadian, "they give me this look because the answer is not what they are looking for. And it's defeating cause you feel like you're not enough…We're stuck in this periphery because we're not white, it's isolating." Professor Handel Wright, who teaches in the Centre for Culture, Identity and Education at UBC asserts, "The question seems to demand that you account for yourself. It places you outside the nation somehow, and that places the questioner within the nation, and that's why the question is really problematic." Christie Lee Charles shares how frustrating it is for her to repeat herself. "I'll explain I'm Musqueam and they are surprised. This was our home for thousands of years, I'm *really* from Vancouver." The documentary then goes on to discuss the right way to ask the question for people who are genuinely curious about ethnic backgrounds. However, Professor Wright maintains that

[81] A statement, action or incident regarded as an indirect or subtle discrimination against racialized or marginalized peoples.

[82] Click on this link to view the full program: But where are you really from? A seemingly simple question, with a complicated answer | CBC News

[83] University of British Columbia

"before we get into how to ask the question, we should consider why it is being asked. Can we start from a position of 'We all belong here?' We have to get to the point where the question becomes unnecessary."

I have Asian friends who were born and bred in Canada and are still asked this question even though they speak with a Canadian accent[84] (whatever that is). One of my colleagues who was born in Canada was asked this question and she replied, "Ontario". Then the questioner follows up with "Where are you REALLY from"? She replies "Scarborough". The questioner, not satisfied, asks a third time, "Where did your family emigrate from?" My friend then sighs and says," China". "There I knew it", replies the questioner implying that she wasn't a "real" Canadian.

White Canadians often forget that the only real people of this land are the Indigenous Peoples who were here first. Professor Wright declares, "It's ironic for Canada to be so very open about bringing other people into land that is in fact other people's land." White Canadians forget that their forefathers stole the land from Indigenous Peoples and claimed it as their own. Their forefathers conveniently rationalised this stealing based on the construction of "terra nullius", a Latin term which means "nobody's land" (Pennycook, 1998, p. 10). *Terra Nullius* was used widely by the European imperialists as a rationale to occupy "vacant" land as

[84]What actually is a Canadian accent? I have had visa/international students enrolled in my ELT program specifically tell me that their aim is to sound like a Canadian. I ask them, "What does Canadian sound like?" And they often reply, "Like the white people on TV." Then I say, "I am Canadian. The receptionist (a South Asian lady) who greeted you is Canadian. So, do we not sound like Canadians?" At this point, the students look at me blankly unsure how to respond. I usually end the conversation by assuring them that it is all right to speak English with an accent as long as they are comprehensible. This question about what constitutes a Canadian accent is a discussion for another day because it requires a level of consideration and discourse not achievable within the limitations of this dissertation.

seen when British imperialists used it to occupy Australia and other countries (Pennycook, 1998). *Terra nullius* was codified in the Doctrine of Discovery used by Europeans to steal lands in the 1400s in what is now known as Canada.

> *The Doctrine of Discovery was the principle used by European colonizers starting in the 1400s in order to stake claim to lands beyond the European continent. The doctrine gave them the right to claim land that was deemed vacant for their nation. Land was considered terra nullius (vacant land) if it had not yet been occupied by Christians. Such vacant lands could be defined as "discovered" and as a result sovereignty, title and jurisdiction could be claimed. In doing so the Doctrine of Discover invalidated the sovereignty of Indigenous nations and gave Christians the right to subjugate and confiscate the lands of Indigenous Peoples.* (Shah, n.d.)

Besides the socio-political and economic consequences that resulted from colonialism, Alastair Pennycook states that colonialism was also responsible for the construction of cultural discourses in the colonised countries. These cultural constructs are visible in the "standard of humanity" that is deemed normal, and in the English language which was forced upon the colonised peoples as a necessity for survival but also as a yardstick of success.

Mamta Motwani Accapadi discusses a "standard of humanity" rooted in white epistemologies/norms in her 2007 article, "When White Women Cry", written for the Student Affairs audience in higher education. She says that there are privileged behaviours in women such as crying, lower tone of voice and direct eye contact that are normalised, and there are behaviours which are punishable such as anger, raised voices, indirect eye contact. (Accapadi,

2007, p.214). Therefore, we see the emergence of the angry black women trope, or the widespread belief in hiring practices that anyone who doesn't look you directly in the eye is hiding something and is untrustworthy. Accapadi challenges us to reframe our standard of humanity by questioning which behaviours we are privileging and which ones we are shaming and punishing. She states, "Our responsibility as educators committed to social justice, is to reframe our "standard of humanity," so that we are asking different questions, treating the actual cause of the conflicts presented to us and not their external symptoms, and challenging our own notions of "normal." (Accapadi, 2007, p.214).

In April Baker-Bell's book, "Linguistic Justice" (2020), she outlines an Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy as a way to dismantle anti-black racism. In Chapter 4, she guides her high school students through consciousness raising activities to help them critically question what they are learning in the classroom. In one activity, she has them watch YouTube videos on linguistic profiling, particularly one which demonstrates housing and linguistic discrimination. Baker-Bell then asks the students: "Based on what you see in the videos, what might language have to do with race?" (p.85). Janel, one of the students, replies, "These clips show that it's not necessarily about the language, but who is speaking the language." (p. 86). This echoes what Laura Greenfield says that language is tied to the body. Once I was speaking at a meeting, and a white male came up to me and asked the dreaded question, "Where are you from?" I responded, "Singapore". He said, "I thought you were from the Caribbean Islands because your accent is so similar. You have a sing-song way of speaking." That was the first and only time I had been told that. I never knew my accent had a lyrical quality to it. Nevertheless, I was racially positioned because of my accent and my phenotype.

2.2. A Tale of Two Schools

I did not realise how suppressed I was until I came to Canada and started my doctoral studies in English and Rhetoric with a focus on antiracist pedagogy. As a new immigrant, I was continually reminded of my subject position as a person from a non-dominant, racialised group. I was a usurper, an imposter who did not belong here.

As I read and learned more about Canada's history, I began to see similarities between my indoctrination and internalisation of white supremacy and those of the Indigenous people who were the original inhabitants of this land. I began to see how a colonising education operates within certain patterns across a variety of sites. Residential and convent schooling are inflection points of colonisation. Just as Indigenous peoples are pushing for redemption of the damaging impacts of colonisation on individuals and culture on Turtle Island, the colonising education I faced in Singapore also had damaging psychological, cultural and linguistic impacts on me. My purpose in juxtaposing these two schooling systems which uphold whiteness as supreme and as the benchmark for academic success, is to demonstrate how colonial states, their systems, and their institutions across geopolitical contexts have taken common approaches toward the perpetuation of racism through colonisation. I hope this juxtaposition will demonstrate the perniciousness and pervasiveness of white supremacy which infiltrates every nook and cranny of our institutions, societies, and world. For those who profess they are

"colour blind"[85] and argue against affirmative action,[86] I want to show you that racism is in action all the time. It is especially dangerous and insidious when it is present in schools, which are instrumental in nurturing and moulding the minds and hearts of young and impressionable children. Children who have been schooled under such oppressive conditions grow up to become traumatised adults.

Before I start illustrating the institutional racism that was present, active, and virulent in residential and convent schooling such as my own, let me first describe a brief history of these two schools. According to Keith Thor Carlson[87], "under Canadian colonialism, Indigenous peoples were "a problem," because they obstructed settler access to lands and resources. Under British/Canadian law, Indigenous peoples held title and rights to the land. Residential schools became central to settler society's solution to the "Indian problem" as, in theory, the schools would transform Indigenous rights holders into assimilated ethnic minorities."[88] As a result, according to the Canadian Encyclopaedia, "over 130 residential schools operated in Canada between 1831 and 1996"[89] which were established by Christian churches and the Canadian government with the ultimate aim of erasing the Indianness from Indigenous children

[85] People who profess being colour blind are those who do not see race/colour, just people. The danger in this belief is that everyone should be treated equally and thus, ignores the historical systemic and structural oppression of people of colour who have not enjoyed the same benefits and privileges as whites. Therefore, treating people of colour equally with white people does not address systemic and structural oppression, but only serves to sustain and reproduce oppression.

[86] The practice of favouring marginalised groups who are subject to discrimination in the context of employment, education, or in the allocation of resources.

[87] Keith Thor Carlson is the Canada Research Chair in Indigenous and community-engaged history and the director of the Peace and Reconciliation Centre at the University of the Fraser Valley.

[88]Access article here: A Brief and Brutal History of Canadian Colonialism | The Tyee

[89] Access article here: Residential Schools in Canada | The Canadian Encyclopedia

so they could be subsumed into the white created country of Canada as minority second-class citizens. The last federally funded school, The Gordon Residential School in Punnichy, Saskatchewan, only closed in 1996. Approximately, 150,000 children attended residential schools and it is estimated that about 6,000 children died at these residential schools. Indigenous peoples argue that there were more than 6,000 deaths because many records were incomplete or lost. Therefore, in summary, it seemed that the aim of residential schools was not only to educate and convert Indigenous children into Christianity for their assimilation into Canadian society, but, if possible, eradicate the Indigenous peoples from this land.

Moving on to the history of convent schools, it is well documented that the impetus for the birth of convent schools was primarily as a civilising and evangelising mechanism. According to Encyclopedia.com "Convent schools (also called monastic schools) emerged in Europe during the Early Middle Ages (c. 500–1000). With the disappearance of classical Roman culture in western Europe, monasteries became sites for education."[90]Initially, these schools were reserved for novices who were being trained to become monks or nuns, but in the 16th century following the Catholic and Protestant reformations, these schools began educating people other than potential religious members. The first convent school in Canada can be traced back to the year 1620 in Quebec which was started by the Catholic Recollet Order to assimilate indigenous children into Catholicism and French culture.[91] Similarly, the ideologies and practices of the convent schools were exported to America in the 19th and 20th centuries, with

[90] Access text here: Convent Schools (Cathedral Schools) | Encyclopedia.com.

[91] For more information on schooling in Canada, please click on this link: https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/history-of-education

a focus on Catholic education intended to fashion devout Christians by bringing "Christ to Children". It was also during this time that the Catholic church operated residential schools in the US and Canada as part of their participation in colonisation globally. Convent or mission schools, as they were called, were also exported to other countries of the world such as India[92], Zimbabwe[93], Democratic Republic of Congo[94] and Nigeria[95]. My convent school in Singapore was administered by The Good Shepherd Sisters, whose order was founded by Sr. Mary Euphrasia in France in 1835. The Good Shepherd Sisters arrived in Singapore in 1939, a British colony at that time, with the primary intention of evangelising by "[opening] their doors to women and girls who were troubled or abused and in need of healing and reconciliation."[96] From my research, I cannot help but see a clear line drawn through both types of schooling which sought to save the heathens from damnation through the saving grace of a Christian education. The white saviour complex[97] was in stark display here.

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[92] Read an account of Indian convent schooling by Ann Andrews here: https://medium.com/middle-pause/the-paradox-of-education-indias-convent-school-chronicles-269f0b5f860e

[93] Paul Gundani writes, "The Mission School as Locus of Evangelisation of Children in Zimbabwean Historiography (1859-1969)" https://www.academia.edu/29852285/The_mission_school_as_locus_of_evangelisation_of_children_in_Zimbabwean_historiography_1859_1969_

[94] An article about faith-based organisations which run schools are help or hindrance. unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000380074

[95] Uyilawa Usuanlele published an article, "No Fiancé, No Baptism": Historicizing the Education of Girls through a 1953 Episode in the RCM Convent Girls School, Benin City, Nigeria. (2023) https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/14/2/213

[96] For more details, read here: https://www.mcsalumnae.org/our-school-history

[97] The "white saviour complex" describes white people who act from a place of superiority in their attempt to uplift and liberate Black, Indigenous and Peoples of Colour (BIPOC) to fulfil their own needs to feel good about themselves. In fact, they do more harm than good to BIPOC. The term "white saviour" first appeared in Rudyard Kipling's poem, "The White Man's Burden", in 1899. In the poem, the term was used in the context of the Philippines, but it has since become associated with Africa and the rest of the racialized world.

In this next section, I discuss the shared modus operandi of residential and convent schools in the policing and muting of non-white epistemologies and languages in three ways: "the rinse and repeat" inculcation of Christianity; White Christian morality; and the mandatory use of standard "white" English. To illustrate this, I will share my personal experiences of being in a convent school alongside the memoirs of Theodore Fontaine, Bev Sellars and Maria Campbell who were residential school survivors in Canada.

2.2.1. Rinse and Repeat

Inculcation of Christianity was a huge part of both convent education. At my convent school, we prayed The Lord's Prayer during assembly every morning before school started and attended mass in our school chapel during important church celebrations. If we had celebrated our First Holy Communion, then we were expected to receive communion at every mass. We were expected to be in a state of piety, sing the hymns, and follow the orders of the nuns. We had to kneel when the nuns told us to during mass and although our knees ached, we were not allowed to get up until we were given the signal by the nuns. We also had weekly religion classes taught by a nun. During these classes, we had to learn the Catechism, a summary of doctrine covering the sacraments and truths about the Catholic faith in the form of questions followed by answers which were to be memorised. The nun would ask us, "Who made you?" And we would answer, "God made me." Then she would ask, "Who is God?" and we would reply, "The Creator of Heaven and Earth and of all things." She asked again, "Where is God?" And we would reply, "God is everywhere." This type of rote learning would go on for the entire lesson. It's not surprising that the catechism is still etched in my memory. When I was in high

school, I also had to take a Bible Studies course for credit which was taught by a nun. The course trained us to memorise Bible verses through quizzes which tested how much we could quote from the bible and remember the parables. Critical analysis was not allowed nor encouraged, so we could not question the Bible even though I wanted to ask why the God in the Old Testament was so angry and vindictive yet was called a loving and fatherly God. As such, I could relate to Bev Sellar's remark, "I learned that speaking my mind or questioning anything would only get me into trouble." (p. 37). So, I refrained from asking questions.

There was a constant rinse and repeat of Christian indoctrination throughout my convent schooling similar to what Sellars, Fontaine and Campbell experienced in their residential schools. Campbell shares in her memoir, "We prayed endlessly, but I cannot recall ever doing much reading and school-work as Momma said I would – just the prayers and my job, which was cleaning the dorms and hallways." (p.48). Sellars recalls having to "kneel in the centre aisle of the dorm and say our nightly prayers. We usually recited ten decades of the rosary, which took a long time to do." (p. 43). Through the daily practice of prayers, mass, catechism and singing of hymns, we learned to become Christians.

2.2.2. White Christian morality

There was a skittishness with anything to do with sexual intercourse during my time at the convent school. I recall one day when we were being taught the reproductive organs during Human Biology, our teacher made us close the windows and doors of our classroom since we had one member of the teaching staff who was male. Our teacher was worried that he would walk past the class while she was teaching us about reproduction and see the drawings she had

put up on the white board. Instances such as this taught me to view anything to do with sexual intercourse as shameful, and to feel guilty about my female body.

When I began my menstrual period at the tender age of 13, I felt disgusted. I was under the notion that menstruation was unclean because of the Bible stories we learned in which menstruating women and girls were banished into a red tent away from the men as they were considered unclean. At 13 years old, I hated my body and hated being a female. I was made to believe that God punished women with the burden of menstruation and later, childbirth because of what Eve had done to Adam[98]. This shame for the female body was also felt by Bev Sellars who began her menstrual period at the age of 12. She recounts in her memoir, "They Called Me Number One", "the time at the Mission dictated to me that even if I was innocent of something, I still felt guilty… I also felt ashamed to talk about my body." (Sellars, 2013, p.108). Sellars felt guilty for having her menstrual period, so she tried to hide it.

It was at convent school that I developed an overly scrupulous conscience known as Catholic guilt. We were always reminded about the "beguiling female" trope and the message of "don't try to be better than anyone else". (Sellars, p.49). We were told that if we behaved like good Catholic girls by dressing modestly; speaking softly and demurely; being obedient to authority; never bringing attention to ourselves and never being impolite that God would love us. Today, I know that this teaching is not true. I now know that God loves us unconditionally

[98] In the Bible, Eve manipulated Adam into eating the forbidden fruit and thus, had both of them thrown out of the Garden of Eden. Although the story of Adam and Eve is a parable, a story told to teach a moral or spiritual lesson, I was taught to believe that it actually happened. I believe that the trope of the beguiling female which was ever present throughout my convent schooling originated from this biblical story.

despite our imperfections. We do not have to do anything to receive His love; we just have to accept it. As I reflect today, I am convinced that the version of the Bible I was taught in school was a means of controlling us to ensure we conformed to authority.

As such, a punishment system was strictly implemented. Any girl who flouted the Christian moral code that was expected of us was caned by the principal or was publicly shamed by being made to walk around the school wearing a sign around her neck which read something like, “I am sorry I was rude to my teacher”, or “I will remember to memorise my catechism.” This strict punishment system mirrors what Bev Sellars described in her memoir when she was in St Joseph’s Mission school and how she and the other children were punished if they broke the rules. They were severely punished such as having their heads shaved or being starved (p.68).

To ensure we complied with the dress code imposed by the convent school, every week the nuns would do a spot check to see if our uniform skirts were too short, i.e. above our knees, or if we had long nails, or if our hair was too long and had to be tied up. All long hair had to be tied up in only black, white or green ribbons. Black, white and green were the official school colours. Any jewellery worn was immediately confiscated because there was a huge emphasis on uniformity, not individuality. I recall a time when one of the girls in my year was screamed at by the principal across the school courtyard for having her skirt above her knees. The principal, an Irish nun, called her a “strumpet” and a “trollop” and she was given detention for a week. Those of us who witnessed this incident had no idea what those words meant, so we looked them up in the dictionary and gasped in shock when we found out that they were

synonyms for “prostitute.” That was how we were conditioned into feeling guilty for even the slightest immodesty at school. I was told that if a boy made eyes at me, it was my fault for encouraging his advances because the trope of the beguiling female was in operation. In her memoir, Bev Sellars recounts an incident when she did not wear jeans underneath her dress, as was expected by the nuns, for dinner. She was in line waiting to go to the dining room when she was yanked out of line. “The nun started strapping my bare legs and accusing me of wanting to show them off to boys.” (Sellars, p. 86). Although Christian morality was indoctrinated in students in different ways in convent and residential schools, the message we received was: The more invisible we were, the better. “Don’t strive to be the best, strive to be the least.” (Sellars, 2013, p.50). Individuality was eschewed in favour of collective compliance to authority. Also, the punishment that was meted out in our schools signalled to children that they could not be loved if they disobeyed rules. I know personally that internalisation of such a limiting belief causes psychological trauma which stays with the child until adulthood.

When Sellars writes that “the fear of being punished for the smallest things took years of hard work to overcome” (p.85), I know how she felt. It took me a long time to get over the fear of punishment from any authority figure. Once when I had already been living in Canada for two years, I was driving in Toronto and took a wrong turn. I had to make a U-turn to get to my destination, but I feared making a U-turn since I could not see any traffic signs which allowed U-turns. In Singapore, U-turns were only allowed if there was a traffic sign. So, I kept driving on and on looking for one until my husband told me to just make a U-turn anywhere when it was safe as we were going further away from our destination. He gently assured me that I would not get a traffic ticket. Eventually, I plucked up the courage to make a U-turn but

kept looking over my shoulder for the police to come after me. This is just one of the many memories I have of being afraid of authority.

2.2.3. "White" English only

Growing up in post-colonial Singapore in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, I had been indoctrinated that Standard Singapore English was the gold standard. Standard Singapore English (SSE) was based predominantly on Standard British English with similar rules. The only difference would be the unique lexical items found in SSE which reflect Singaporean culture. For instance, we use "steam-boat" in Singapore to refer to a "hot-pot" meal. It was drummed into me and my classmates that if we spoke and wrote in SSE, we were almost guaranteed social and economic success since it is a sign of the "language of the educated" (Lippi-Green). What does it mean to be an educated person? Lippi-Green states that the educated are "those who have achieved a high level of skill with the written language or those who control the written and the broadcast media" (Lippi-Green, 2012, p. 59). In addition, speaking Standard English is "acceptable wherever English is spoken and understood" (Lippi-Green, 2012, p. 57) and a signal of the educated.

At home, I spoke a mixture of Malay and Colloquial Singapore English (CSE) or known affectionately as Singlish. Colloquial Singapore English (CSE) or Singlish is "a contact variety which has emerged from a situation of contact between speakers of different languages, and from a community in which individual bilingualism is usual." (Gupta, 1994). CSE originated from a mixture of languages found in Singapore. Its basic structure is English with lexical items borrowed from Malay, Chinese dialects such as Hokkien and Teochew, and Tamil. Examples are

“alamak” borrowed from Malay to mean “Oh dear”; “kiasu” borrowed from Hokkien to mean “afraid to lose out”; and “mama” used in “mama shop” to borrowed from Tamil to denote a shop owned by an Indian man. CSE is therefore very lexically rich.

The rules in CSE when contrasted with Standard Singapore English (SSE) are simpler to use. For example, in SSE suffixes such as *-ed, -t, -en* are used to denote the past tense. A learner of SSE would have to know which one of these suffixes to use depending on certain rules. However, in CSE, the past tense is denoted by using the aspectual marker “already”. For example,

SSE- I have written a letter to my father.

CSE- I already write a letter to my father.

Therefore, given that CSE rules are simpler, it is not surprising that Singaporean children usually acquire CSE before SSE. When I was in convent school, my teachers tried extremely hard to erase CSE from me and my classmates. We were told that to be considered educated and to be respected, we had to speak SSE. So, they made it their mission to teach us proper pronunciation of words as spoken by the British. We were also not allowed to use any local or heritage languages or CSE at school except during our mother tongue courses.

So, during my ten years in convent school, everything British was considered good. As I had already shared previously in this chapter, the textbooks I read were mostly from Britain reflecting British culture with its four seasons of winter, spring, summer and autumn which were alien to me, a child growing up in tropical Singapore with its lush rainforests and monsoon

seasons. At residential school, Bev Sellars shared that she was read stories of white people from Rin Tin Tin, The Hardy Boys, Nancy Drew and others (p.36) every afternoon by her teacher.

At school, we were reprimanded and sometimes punished if the teachers overheard us speaking Singlish or a language other than English. We were told that only good English was allowed in school and if we spoke Singlish, we sounded crass and uneducated. Maria Campbell in her memoir," Halfbreed", shares a similar story of not being allowed to use her heritage language or any language at residential school. "We weren't allowed to speak Cree, … and for disobeying this, I was pushed into a small closet with no windows or light and locked in for what seemed like hours." (Campbell,2019, p.48). Similarly in Theodore Fontaine's memoir, "Broken Circle: The Dark Legacy of Indian Residential Schools: A Memoir", he was "shoved into a closet behind [the nun's] chair" for speaking Ojibwe at the residential school by Sr. S. The closet was under the stairs …and used to store brooms and other cleaning materials." (Fontaine, 2010, p.83). This incident resulted in Fontaine's fear of being "unable to sleep or be in complete darkness" for many years into his adult life. Here, I take a slight detour to Kenya to show how colonial education permeated their schooling system too. In his text, "Decolonising the Mind", Ngugi wa Tiongo, a prominent Kenyan author, reminisces about a time in Kenya when the language of the home and school was the same until colonial education took root. Ngugi claims that during the times of colonisation any child who was found speaking Gikuyu, their mother tongue, was either physically beaten or had to wear a sign around their necks saying, "I am stupid" or "I am a donkey."

What is noteworthy here is that the languages children have been taught from birth, which are carriers and markers of their culture and heritage, were erased in these schools and replaced with a language which was unable to convey their individual and cultural experiences of the world. The imposition of white English and the presence of linguistic racism stunted these children's spiritual and emotional growth causing unimaginable trauma and pain. In their memoirs, Sellars, Fontaine and Campbell share the trauma they endured as adults and the therapy they had to undertake to mitigate the trauma caused by residential schooling. Sellars writes, "I couldn't speak up for myself. I also suffered from many phobias during my younger years. I had panic attacks if I thought I might be late for anything and I had panic attacks in social situations. I couldn't even handle the slightest compliment with any grace. Nightmares were a regular part of my existence, and I couldn't sleep with the lights out until my early thirties" (p.112). She says that she was "emotionally and socially crippled" with her ability to deal with the world.

Additionally, being exposed to white stories as the benchmark of civility and culture with little or no regard for our home cultures and languages eventually resulted in the partial erasure of Indigenous peoples' identity and a feeling of shame for who they were. Sellars writes "I believed in every way that White people were superior to "Indians". If I was walking down a sidewalk and White people came from the opposite direction, I would automatically step aside to allow them to pass… I withdrew from any kind of white authority." (p. 112). In a similar vein, Fontaine shares that he internalised the belief that he was "less capable of doing what white people could do, as the nuns and priests had taught us that we could not ever have the jobs of bosses. My confidence plummeted as I was exposed to more and more of these superior

attitudes." (p. 112). Likewise, I was ashamed of my cultural and linguistic roots. After many years of institutionalisation in a British-based education system, I was programmed into thinking that my own ways of knowing and being were not valuable and not needed in the world. It was only recently after engaging in much self-work through meditation and healing circles and consuming texts on self-worth that I have become brave enough to embrace some aspects of my Singaporean identity in my writing and in my speeches at my college, even in the presence of my white colleagues.

On the last page of Maria Campbell's memoir, she shares her hope for a better future:

> *I believe an armed revolution of Native people will never come about; even if such a thing were possible what would we achieve? We would only end up oppressing someone else. I believe one day, very soon, people will set aside their differences and come together as one. Maybe not because we love one another, but because we will need each other to survive. Then together we will fight our common enemies. Change will come because this time we won't give up. There is growing evidence of that today.*
>
> (1973, p. 189).

Campbell's words resonate with me fully because I believe to combat hate and prejudice, we must all come together as a collective force for good. The stories I have shared here are for the sole purpose of finding lines of solidarity between Indigenous peoples and peoples of colour, like me, who are casualties of colonisation with the aim that this shared history of oppression would forge a shared vision and mission in our efforts to disrupt colonisation.

2.2.4. Resisting so I can embrace who I am

I am focused on moving from feeling powerless to empowered. The microaggressions I have faced here in Canada have opened my eyes to how the dominant group perceive me, an immigrant woman of colour. The courses and texts I consumed during my PhD studies have helped me see and locate manifestations of systemic racism within academia. For instance, I now see how writing courses in my institution sustain a Eurocentric ideology by upholding Habits of White Language (Inoue). HOWL is such an integral part of our curriculum that I have to keep asking myself this question: Who are we excluding in our writing courses? How do our courses need to be reimagined to truly be inclusive? How can whiteness be dismantled in our courses?

My lived experience as someone who in my professional life in Canada has been relegated to the margins but who also occupy space in the centre as an associate dean has given me the discernment and passion to labour in anti-racist work. I am gradually seeing myself less and less through the white gaze. I am learning to question things that I had previously accepted as normal or typical of everyday life. For instance, after the incident at the doctor's office, I interrogated the whole incident realising that the receptionist's question was far from innocent curiosity, but more of an assertion that she belonged in Canada, and I did not. Being critically aware of my subject position in Canada necessitates that I take the time to reflect and learn from these experiences.

The insight I have gained from reflection is that my difference unsettles the dominant group in Canada. In the past, I would have shrunk smaller so as not to take up space in the

room so that the person from the dominant group could feel safe. Nowadays, I try to take up the space in a room without shrinking or making any apologies. I want people to see and hear me as I am. I am still becoming. As Michelle Obama puts it so eloquently in her book "Becoming",

> *Becoming isn't about arriving somewhere or achieving a certain aim. I see it instead as forward motion, a means of evolving, a way to reach continuously toward a better self.* (2018, p.419).

In the next chapter, I share how I am becoming an anti-racist champion by sharing the initiatives and activities I have been engaging in my institution by working with others to de-centre whiteness which is a constant work in progress.

End of Chapter

Chapter 3: De-centring Whiteness

Becoming isn't about arriving somewhere or achieving a certain aim. I see it instead as forward motion, a means of evolving, a way to reach continuously toward a better self. The journey doesn't end… It's a process, steps along a path. Becoming requires equal parts patience and rigor. Becoming is never giving up on the idea that there's more growing to be done.

(Obama, 2018)

Anti-racist work requires constant tending and nurturing. We will never arrive at an endpoint because our work is never done. As long as there are people who are denied equity and oppressed in our society, we are always engaged in becoming more inclusive and less racist in our attitudes, thoughts and actions. In this chapter, I use autoethnography, narrative inquiry and counterstory to trace the efforts, successes, and learning-ful failures of my current institution, a Canadian community college, in my attempt to develop a pedagogical praxis informed by current scholarship on how to de-centre whiteness. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, de-centring whiteness means foregrounding and centring people of colour in spaces traditionally occupied by white people. We purposefully make space to welcome and value BIPOC ways of knowing and being as legitimate in our systems and structures.

In order to be able to de-centre whiteness, we need to develop a praxis. In the "Pedagogy of the Oppressed", *praxis* is defined by Paulo Freire as "reflection and action directed at the structures to be transformed." (2014, p.126). He states that deep critical reflection of the world must be done in conjunction with taking concrete actions in the world

for transformation to occur. It is this action of praxis that helps oppressed people acquire a critical awareness of their own condition and engage in a struggle for liberation with their allies. This chapter is a demonstration of the praxis I have been engaging in with some allies to change the narrative in my institution regarding multilingual learners, English as an Additional Learners (EAL), and visa/international students who are often perceived by mainstream educators, i.e. Western educated administrators and faculty in colleges and universities, as not being ready to study in a Canadian postsecondary institution because of their lack of English proficiency which is often used as a gauge for their academic abilities. Hence, these students are often seen as deficits, not assets to an institution. As such, institutions have started to provide additional support such as tutoring help in an effort to mitigate the frustrations from faculty members who complain that students do not understand referencing and citation rules, breach academic integrity and struggle to understand the English texts used in courses. Despite the best intentions of institutions in providing these supports, tutoring support is a band aid solution which does not deal with the real issues at hand. The real issue at hand is the need for a change in the attitudes of tutors, faculty members, administrators and staff towards non-mainstream students. Vershawn Young said it best when he stated:

> *But dont nobody's language, dialect, or style make them "vulnerable to preju-dice." It's ATTITUDES. It be the way folks with some power perceive other people's language. Like the way some view, say, black English when used in school or at work. Black English dont make it own-self oppressed. It be negative views about other people usin they own language….* (Young, 2009, p.110)

It all comes down to the attitudes toward the differences these students bring to our institution. They bring a different variety of English, a different orientation towards education, and a different cultural belief in how society should organize itself. These differences disrupt Canadian academic culture instigating those in power to tighten the reins of Canadian academic expectations in their institutions resulting in a preservation of normative standards such as standard language ideology; a Eurocentric writing process; and emphasis on academic integrity which does not take into consideration the collectivist cultures our students come from. Difference is eschewed because it is messy, unknown and un-replicable and in direct opposition to the six tenets of "Habits of White Language" (HOWL)[99] which I enumerated in Chapter 1.

In the next section, I share "stories of becoming" to describe the work I have been engaging in with allies to change the narrative regarding multilingual, EAL and visa learners in my institution.

3.1. Stories of Becoming a Translingual Champion

Stories of becoming are stories of struggle, hard work and hope for a better future. They are stories of my efforts to de-centre whiteness in my institution. Because changing attitudes takes time and patience, the endeavours I share on de-centring whiteness is a constant work in progress because I am continually engaged in a process of reflection, refinement and

[99] Habits of White Language are: unseen, naturalized orientation to the world; hyperindividualism; stance of neutrality, objectivity and apoliticality; individualized, rational, controlled self; rule-governed, contractual relationships; clarity, order and control. (Inoue, 2019a; 2019c; 2021; 2022; 2023).

renovation towards the goal of engendering a translingual disposition in everyone in my institution.

3.1.1. Translingualism vs Multilingualism

Before I discuss what having a translingual disposition necessitates, it is important to explain Translingualism and Translingual theory which is the basis for translingual disposition. As Canadians, we are familiar with the term "multilingualism" because we have a Multilingualism Act which supports and protects multiculturalism and the inclusion of diversity. In Section 3 of the Act under point (i), it states that the policy will "preserve and enhance the use of languages other than English and French, while strengthening the status and use of the official languages of Canada…"[100] (Canadian Multiculturalism Act). While there are numerous benefits of having this Act, it does not really protect the rights of visible minorities to use their heritage languages or mother tongues without censure or discrimination in Canada because multilingualism creates a linguistic hierarchy leading to language dominance. This is clearly demonstrated in our classrooms where English (i.e. standard English) is the dominant language used. In our classrooms, students are mandated and trained to uphold this standard English and penalised when they use their mother tongue or a World English in the classroom.

If you speak English as an additional language, you know that there are limitations in how the English language can convey your lived experiences because language is a product of

[100] For more information on Canadian Multiculturalism Act, read here: https://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-18.7/page-1.html#h-73130

its land, people and cultures. The "Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis", also known as linguistic relativity, named after anthropologist and linguist Edward Sapir and his student, Benjamin Lee Whorf, refers to the concept that the language a person speaks is shaped by their worldview, thought and their experiences and understanding of the world. (Green, 2023). For example, different languages express colours differently. While in English we have distinct categories for blue and green, in the Korean language there is one word for both blue and green. It does not mean that they do 5not see blue, but that they see it as a variant of green. However, in Russian, the colour blue is further subdivided in light blue (*siniy)* and dark blue (*goluboy*) which they see as two distinct colours like black and orange. As Ngugi Wa Thiong'o laments in *Decolonising the Mind*, "the language of my education was no longer the language of my culture." (1986, p.11). He goes on to state that language is "both a means of communication and a carrier of culture" (1986, p. 13). He also makes the case for World Englishes and code meshing[101] by questioning: "Why shouldn't there be a Nigerian or West African English which we can use to express our own ideas, thinking and philosophy in our own way?" (1986, p. 9). Therefore, I argue that embracing multilingualism in our classrooms is not enough. We should look to translingualism if we are genuine in progressing equity, diversity and inclusion.

Translingualism refers to the "more flexible use of resources from more than one 'language' within a single system, transcending traditional understandings of separate languages" while multilingualism focuses on "the notion of languages as separate, largely

[101] According to Vershawn Young in *Should Writers Use They Own English*, code-meshing is "multidialectalism and pluralingualism in one speech act, in one paper… Code-meshing blends dialects, international languages, local idioms, chat-room lingo, and the rhetorical styles of various ethnic and cultural groups in both formal and informal speech acts" (Young, 2010, p. 67).

immutable entities" (Anderson, 2018). In my presentations of translingualism either at TESOL conferences or within my institution to new, probationary full-time faculty enrolled in our Teaching and Learning Academy, I use the visuals below to explain how these two concepts differ.

Figure 5: Multilingualism vs Translingualism

Multilingualism



This photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC

Translingualism



This photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC

From the visuals, we can understand that translingualism perceives multiple languages within a person as conjoining, not having a clear demarcation of where one language begins and another ends. This is how multilinguals employ their rich linguistic resources when communicating or when making knowledge. For instance, when I am communicating, I employ all the languages I have within me all at once to speak or write so much so that sometimes when I am speaking to a Canadian friend or colleague, I have uttered unconsciously some Singaporeanisms such as "Alamak" or "Aiyoh" to respond to a narrative they have just shared.

The closest English equivalent is “Oh dear” and “Ouch!” but these are still unable to convey the degree of pathos inherent in those Singaporean expressions which only Singaporeans understand.

In contrast, the concept of multilingualism is predicated on the belief that the languages within a multilingual user are separated and thus, can be employed separately in different situations. This gives rise to code switching in which multilinguals would be expected to use certain languages or varieties of English in particular contexts. As previously mentioned, students are expected to conform to standard English in the Canadian classroom and are discouraged from using their mother tongue, or a World English, which is usually relegated to their home environments. Many of my colleagues believe that code switching is an expression of inclusion of diversity and equitable rights for all peoples in Canada. They believe that students benefit from learning how to code switch so they can be successful in the marketplace, a euphemism for upholding white linguistic supremacy. However, forcing a student to use a language which is not able to carry any of their sociocultural experiences and to abandon their own mother tongue is linguistic violence. Having now lived in Canada for 24 years, I have read and heard the stories of linguistic violence endured by Indigenous peoples in residential schools. It is clear to me that Canada’s history of linguistic violence is in service of nurturing and maintaining the western project of white supremacy in our world. As such, one of the ways we can dismantle white linguistic supremacy is through the adoption of translingual

theory[102] which aligns with Jerry Lee and Christopher Jenks' concept of *translingual disposition* as "having a general openness toward language and language differences… [This] allows individuals to move beyond preconceived, limited notions of standardness and correctness, and it therefore facilitates interactions involving different Englishes… [Given] the historical marginalization of 'nonstandard' varieties and dialects of English in various social and institutional contexts, translingual dispositions are essential for all users of English in a globalized society, regardless of whether they are 'native' or 'nonnative' speakers of English" (Lee & Jenks, 2016, p. 319).

Once I understood the value of translingual theory and translingual disposition in de-centring whiteness, I felt impassioned to share these concepts with my faculty and institution at large. I started taking small steps in de-centring whiteness by decolonising my School's English and literature curriculum; in how I was adjudicating academic breaches; and by introducing translingualism to my institution.

3.1.2. Becoming more Global and Inclusive in English and Literature

As Associate Dean of the School of Communication and Literary Studies, I oversee the English communication (First Year Composition) and literature curriculum. In collaboration with my faculty team, and in alignment with our commitment to fostering inclusive and equitable learning environments, we revised our assessment strategies to better reflect the diversity of

[102] For ease of access, I reiterate the definition of Translingual theory as presented on page 78 of chapter 1. "Translingual theory argues for honoring the power of all language users to shape language to specific ends; recognizing the linguistic heterogeneity of all users of language both in the United States and globally; directly confronting English monolingualist expectations by researching and teaching how writers can work with and against, not simply within, those expectations." (Horner, Lu, Royster, & Trimbur, 2011, p. 305).

our student body. We made changes to assessment types by incorporating more creative assignments such as social media assignments, visual essays, etc. to give students flexibility and choice in how they wanted to demonstrate their applied knowledge from the course instead of writing an academic essay, which has its roots in Eurocentric epistemology[103].

In my experience as both a woman of color and an educator in a Canadian community college, I have witnessed how the academic essay functions as a Eurocentric gatekeeping tool. Within First-Year Composition (FYC) courses, students, particularly those from BIPOC and immigrant backgrounds, are expected to conform to rigid norms grounded in white, Western epistemologies. The essay form—with its straight structure, formal tone, and focus on individual argument—follows Enlightenment ideas that often don't match the real-life experiences, ways of communicating, or cultural backgrounds of the students we teach. In our college classrooms, I've seen students who speak multiple languages and come from strong storytelling traditions struggle to fit their ideas into the "standard" essay format. Their voices—full of code-switching, stories, emotion, and connection—are often seen as "confusing," "off-topic," or "needing improvement" by institutional standards. The ways they make sense of the world don't fit a system that values disembodied analysis and Standard Academic English. What concerns me most is that the essay is often seen as neutral, universal, and naturally academic. But in truth, it's a cultural form that reflects white, middle-class norms. When educational

[103] The root of the academic essay was invented by Michel de Montaigne,a French philosopher, in 1571 and later developed in English by Francis Bacon who published his first essays in 1597. The essay grew in popularity and during the Age of Enlightenment, essays were the preferred tools used by polemicists to persuade their readers. Essays were also used in periodical literature as seen in the works of Samuel Johnson, Joseph Addison and Richard Steele.Essay writing: Its Origin and Growth – Brewminate: A Bold Blend of News and Ideas; English Essay: Origin, Development and Growth (englishliterature.info); The Essay: History and Definition (thoughtco.com)

institutions require students to master this form to succeed "in the marketplace," they not only reinforce systemic racism but also take away students' power to express themselves in their own ways. Decolonising writing pedagogy requires that we question not just *what* we teach, but *how* we ask students to communicate. It means creating space for other ways of knowing—story, orality, circular structure, multilingual expression—and validating them as intellectually rigorous. This is not about lowering standards; it is about challenging which standards we uphold, and for whom.

In addition to revising our assessments, we globalised the curriculum by incorporating texts by writers of colour from diverse regions. My aim was for students to see themselves reflected in the literature they engaged with—an experience I was denied in my own education in Singapore, where the curriculum was dominated by British texts that bore little resemblance to my lived reality. One of the courses we restructured was a degree breadth elective, *World Literature*, which was originally structured around texts exclusively by European writers. We included texts from Chinua Achebe, Arundati Roy, Jean Rhys and Thomas King.

New courses developed from 2020 onwards received my approval if they included a diverse range of authors to reflect our student body, considered accessibility in course design and offered alternative assessments for students to demonstrate their knowledge of course concepts. Below are a sample of our newly developed courses which embody these principles of inclusivity and diversity:

1. *Crime Fiction* is an online, multimodal elective course that examines crime narratives across literature, film, and video games, drawing from diverse historical periods, stylistic

traditions, and cultural contexts. Grounded in a multicultural and translingual pedagogical approach, the course emphasises inclusivity and accessibility through the use of video, audio, and annotated texts. Particular emphasis is placed on works by minoritised authors such as *The Railway Aunty* by Mohan Sikka and *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas to centre diverse voices and challenge dominant narratives within the crime fiction genre. Instead of relying on traditional academic essays, assessments prioritise critical reflection, analytical thinking, and the application of course concepts through varied formats. Evaluation methods include film and textual analyses, quizzes, and creative projects, allowing students to demonstrate their learning in multiple ways. A highlight of the course is the Crime Fiction Narrative Project (worth 20%), in which students may select from a range of expressive formats, such as:

a. Designing an interactive online “escape room”
b. Filming a short crime narrative
c. Writing a “choose your own adventure” story
d. Producing a radio drama
e. Using dolls, LEGO, or action figures to stage a murder scene
f. Performing a murder mystery puppet show
g. Writing a traditional mystery short story
h. Creating a short comic or graphic novel

Assessment criteria include the effectiveness of narrative design, integration of course concepts and themes, thoughtful use of genre and conventions, creativity and originality, and the technical execution of the final product. (Crime Fiction)

2. *Diverse Genders and Sexualities Around the World* is a hybrid, multimodal elective course that explores contemporary representations of diverse gender identities and sexualities globally. The course examines key figures and events that have advanced the struggles for equality and justice for LGBTQ2S+ communities, drawing on a range of texts and visual media by artists and writers from Asia, Africa, Europe, South America, and North America. Student evaluation is based on written responses, quizzes, and a final creative project. For the creative project, students may choose from the following formats:

    a. A painting
    b. A drawing
    c. A mixed media piece or collage
    d. A short story or memoir excerpt
    e. Two poems
    f. A recorded or written song
    g. Alternate medium, in consultation with the professor

    Evaluation criteria emphasize creativity, originality, and thoughtful engagement with the themes, images, and ideas that inspired the work. (Diverse Genders and Sexualities)

3. *Demons, Monsters & Magical Warrior Princesses: Discovering Manga* is an asynchronous, multimodal online elective that explores prominent manga genres such as science fiction, fantasy, romance, and coming-of-age narratives. The course also examines Korean Webtoons and Hollywood adaptations, as well as critically engaging with manga's influence on global popular culture. To honour manga's roots, multimedia content is presented in both English and Japanese to foster an appreciation for the form's linguistic and cultural specificity. Assessment strategies in this course extend beyond traditional academic writing and include activities such as discussions, film reviews, and a final project, which accounts for 30% of the course grade. For the final project, students may choose from the following options:

    a. Your Five Favourite Images: A curated selection of five images accompanied by a written analysis (not a formal essay).

    b. Concept Art: An original artwork, such as a manga cover or film poster.

    c. Adaptation Pitch: A multimedia adaptation of one of the mangas studied in the course, such as a film episode, video game, escape room, or board game.

Final projects are evaluated based on labour and completion, the coherence and richness of analysis, and the thoughtful engagement with the project's objectives and format. (Magical Warrior Princesses)

Although I am proud of the progress my faculty and I have made in reimagining our literary curriculum to de-centre whiteness, there is still much to be done in our institution to enact meaningful change. The courses shared above mark the first steps in our ongoing efforts to decolonise the literary curriculum and foster a more inclusive learning environment. However, tensions exist between the individual courses we design and the wider institutional structures. These structures reinforce traditional pedagogical frameworks and disciplinary boundaries that may not fully support or reflect the goals we aim to achieve. Balancing these tensions requires ongoing discussion, advocacy, and collective action to change not only our individual courses, but the institution's mindset toward a more inclusive and decolonial future.

De-centring whiteness is akin to trying to solve a wicked problem, a problem which is almost impossible to solve due to its ever-changing requirements and interconnected nature. Wicked problems (i.e. climate change, homelessness, etc.) have a "no stopping rule" because there are no signals to indicate when they have been solved. Wicked problems are also symptoms of other problems and there is no end to the number of solutions to a wicked problem[104]. However difficult and frustrating it is to labour in de-centring whiteness, I know I must remain committed to doing the work despite setbacks and disappointments. Looking ahead, one key step is to introduce labour-based grading or grading contracts[105], which will

[104] Read, What's a Wicked Problem?: https://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/wicked-problem/about/What-is-a-wicked-problem

[105] Grading Contracts are a system of grading that "decouple[s] evaluation from grades" (Elbow and Danielewicz, 10), and instead, gives students grades based on their work or labors. Students' labors might include completing homework

help further our efforts to promote equity and diversity, particularly for our multilingual students in literature courses.

3.1.3. Becoming more Translingual when adjudicating academic integrity breaches

In our institution, first level (or first occurrence) academic integrity breaches are adjudicated by faculty members. Second level (or second occurrence) and higher breaches are adjudicated by me, as Associate Dean. Although my institution has an academic integrity facilitator, their role is to help students, faculty and administrators navigate the policy and procedure, not levy sanctions. If a student appeals the faculty member's decision on a breach, their appeal is escalated up to me as Associate Dean who then has to decide to accept or reject the appeal.

Since I have oversight of the cross-college English and Literature curriculum, which almost every student at my institution takes, the occurrences of academic integrity breaches and student appeals that come across my desk every semester are frequent due to the large number of students who enrol in our Literature courses. As someone who is a minoritized person and who pledges to do antiracist work, I strove hard to adopt a translingual disposition in my adjudication process. It disturbed me that there was a disproportionately high number of students from minoritized groups, mainly visa or international students, breaching academic integrity. Out of that group, approximately three-quarters of them, in my estimation, do not understand the expectations of the Canadian academic culture. They do not understand the

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assignments, attending and participating in class, turning in assignments, drafts and revisions on time, and turning in a specific page-requirement for each assignment. Microsoft Word - Grading Contracts Handout.docx (cortland.edu)

meaning of *academic integrity* nor *plagiarism,* nor why breaching academic integrity seems almost like committing a crime because in their own cultures academic integrity was not the focus of their education.

In North America [Canada], text ownership encompasses issues such as plagiarism, documentation of sources and authorship. (Ramanathan and Atkinson, 2011). Individual expression is valued and the gravity of borrowing others' language and passing it off as one's own is considered a criminal act of cheating. In India and China, memorisation of texts is important as part of socialisation at home and in school. Students are expected to memorise famous texts from prominent authors in their exams. They must show how they have internalised transmittable traditions of their culture. In such collectivist cultures, the aim of writing is not to produce an original piece but to continue the legacy left by their scholars. According to Scollon, "the purpose of student writing [in Taiwanese Chinese culture] is to learn to take on a scholarly voice in the role of commentator on the classics and on the scholarship of others. One is writing to pass on what one has received." (as cited in Ramanathan and Atkinson, 2011, p. 172). Thus, writing something new is not as valued. Good writing therefore is the ability to regurgitate ideas and concepts from seminal, traditional texts with little attribution as it is expected that the reader, i.e. teacher, is a scholar who knows it. Thus, we see that collectivist cultures have a different orientation to learning – intellectual property was meant to be shared to benefit the community, not an individual. There is little emphasis on individualism

as a philosophy of life. “I am because we are”, an Ubuntu[106] philosophy from Africa, captures the foundational tenet of collectivism clearly. It means that your sense of self is shaped by your relationships with other people, so the benefit to the community is more important than the benefit of the individual.

An important aspect of Canadian (or individualist) academic culture is the promotion of critical thinking skills. Argumentative skills are taught and encouraged in children who live in individualist cultures. Shirley Brice Heath (1983) who conducted an ethnographic study with three different social groups in the US states: “Through questioning, they (children) test their propositions [about the nature of the world] on their parents, who value their children’s display of knowledge about the world”. They learn to argue at home, not in school. Contrary to this, in collectivist cultures, children are not taught to argue and question someone in authority which is deemed unrespectful. In fact, they are taught not to question their elders and those in authority as a sign of respect. So, when students from collectivist cultures are asked by their North American teachers to write a text showcasing their personal voice, or to critique a scholar, they are understandably confused because they have not been encouraged to have an independent opinion. (Ramanathan and Atkinson, 2011, pp. 171-172).

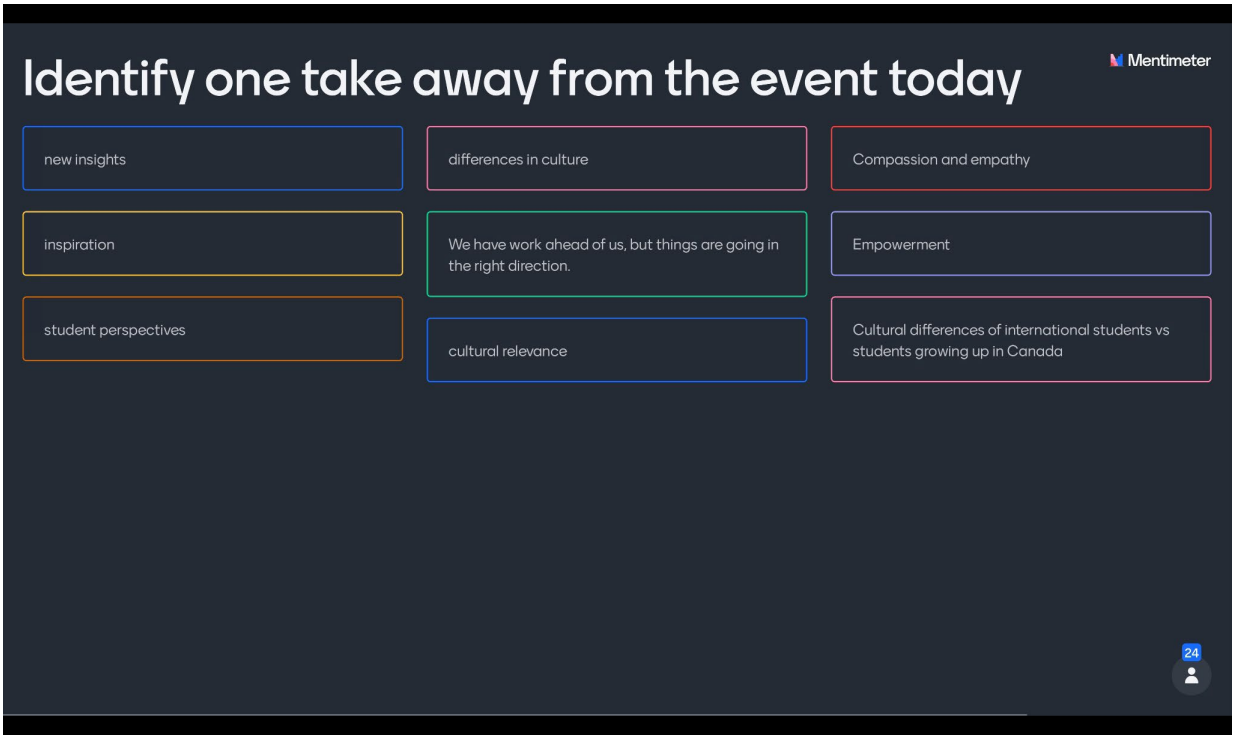
Given this background, I was determined to find a way to help my faculty understand why our multilingual, visa students struggle with the concept of academic integrity. As such, I organised “Hindsight 20/20”, an Academic Integrity forum, with some Sheridan colleagues to

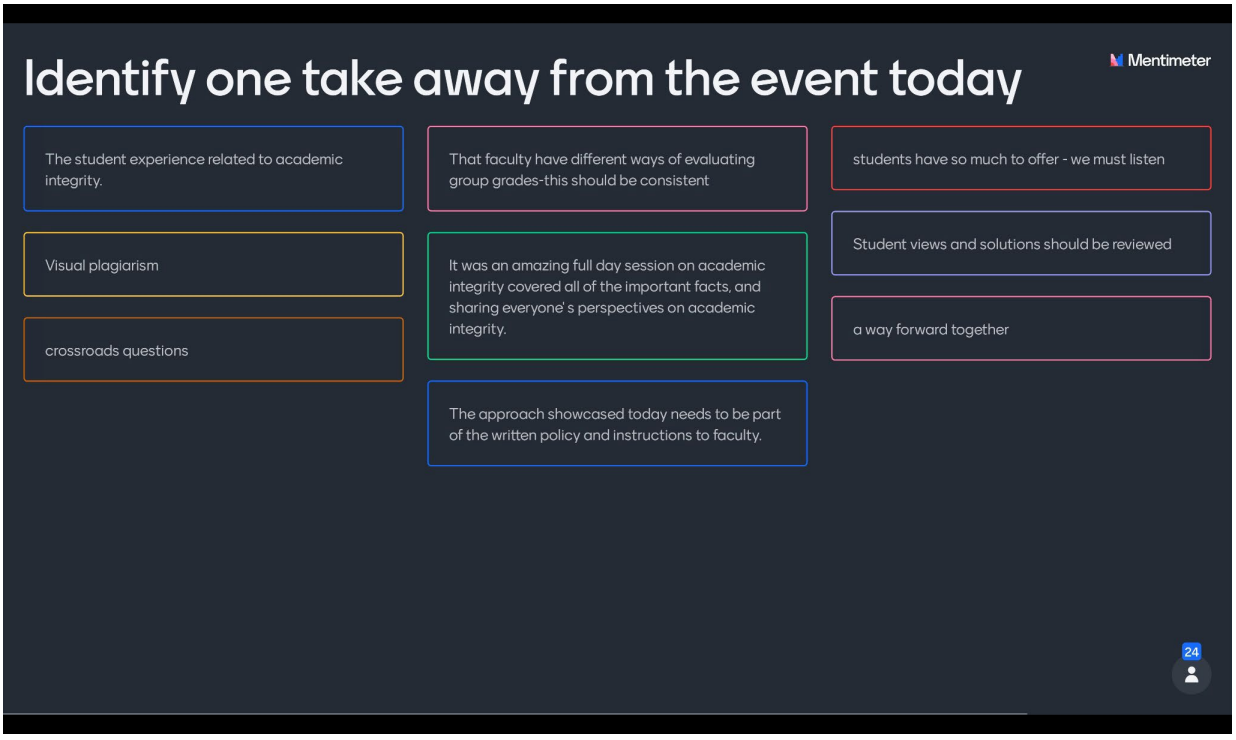
[106] For more information on ubuntu, read, ‘I Am Because We Are’: The African Philosophy of Ubuntu: https://www.ttbook.org/interview/i-am-because-we-are-african-philosophy-ubuntu

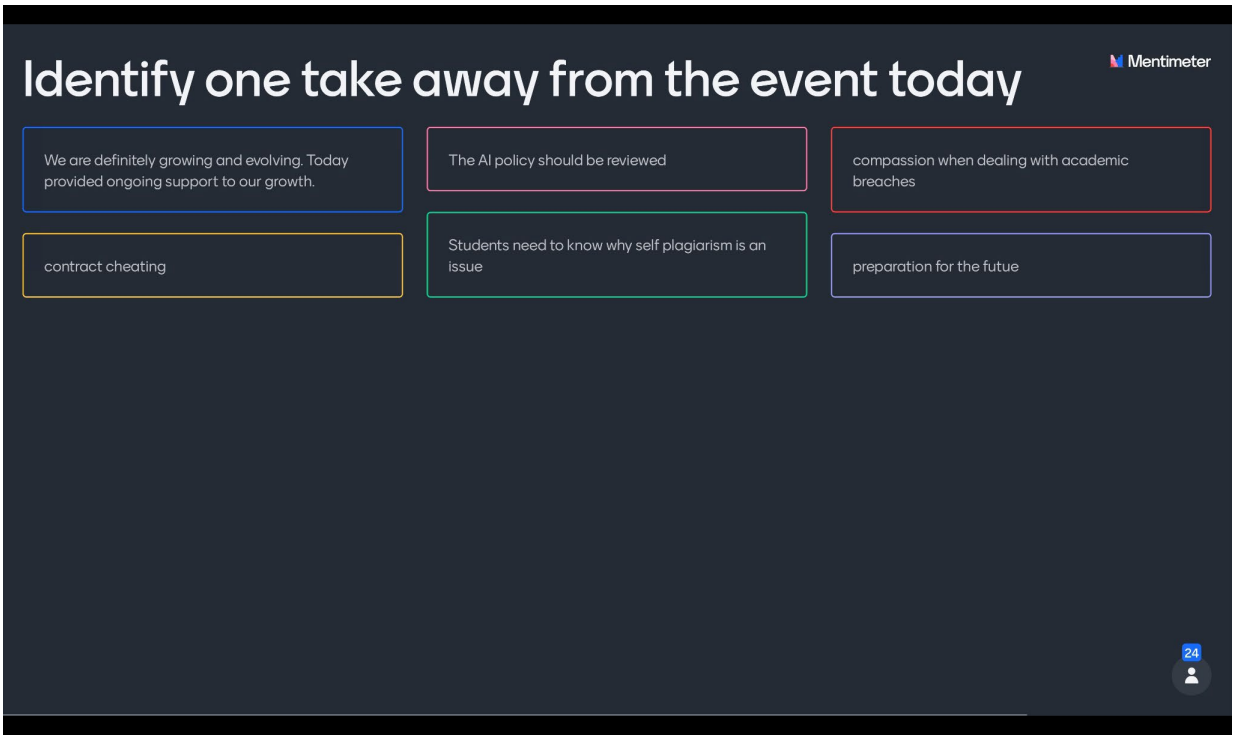
provide students and faculty an avenue to discuss and share their lived experiences on academic integrity. This forum was held online on Microsoft Teams on September 8th, 2020. We had over 75 attendees from across the institution which included faculty, students, student affairs staff, librarians and administrators. There were individual sessions on topics such as *Seeing the Whole Student When Adjudicating Academic Integrity Breaches; Scarcity and Compassion in the Culture of Academic Integrity; Academic Integrity: Lost in Translation; Authentic Assessment by Design* as well as a student-faculty panel to hear their lived experiences on maintaining a culture of academic integrity. (See Appendix A for the agenda and session descriptions).

Through this one-day Academic Integrity Forum, the faculty became more aware of student struggles with understanding and maintaining academic integrity especially those who come from collectivist cultures. The students shared their struggles with learning citation styles; understanding expectations of professors; hearing the word “plagiarism” for the first time; and writing in academic English, a variety foreign to them. On the other hand, students also were made aware of the importance of academic integrity in the Canadian academic culture and how they could avoid plagiarism. We received positive feedback from all participants. See below for three screenshots of the participants’ feedback of the forum on Mentimeter.

Figure 6: Screenshots of participant feedback via Mentimeter







The themes prevalent in the feedback were compassion and empathy, listening to our students, being open to cultural differences and awareness that the concept of academic integrity is not a universal one. It was heartening to see that the forum helped faculty and administrators become more empathetic towards visa or international students as we strive to create a culture of respect for difference in our institution. Some of my own English faculty reported that they have started engaging students in conversation to hear their stories prior to adjudicating a first level breach instead of merely levying a sanction based on the submitted paper. The faculty now realise that there could be more than what meets the eye, and engaging in dialogue with the student affords the student an opportunity to explain what happened and helps the faculty understand the struggles the student faces. For me, this is a win. There is still

work to be done to engage all my faculty to be compassionate and open to difference, but at least some of them have taken the first step and I hope this will permeate throughout my department. This was one way I hoped to de-centre whiteness in my institution. I wanted my faculty to move from using *a priori* knowledge (knowledge derived independent from the world through reasoning, logical analysis and introspection) to using *a posteriori* knowledge (knowledge derived from the world around us based on observations, sensory evidence and empiricism) when adjudicating academic breaches. My aim was for faculty to not assume that students come to class intending to cheat but to be curious and ask questions before issuing a penalty. Some of the reasons students breach academic integrity could be due to their collectivist thinking that collaboration on an assignment with their peers is acceptable; a lack of citation or referencing knowledge; self-plagiarism; and not understanding that even ideas, not simply sentences, have to be cited. Now, my faculty seem to be more open to listening and educating over judging students who breach academic integrity.

3.1.4. Becoming a Translingualism Mouthpiece

In this section, I share my efforts in becoming a mouthpiece for translingualism in my institution particularly through workshops, presentations and projects.

Teaching and Learning Academy

Since Fall 2021, I have been providing workshops for our new full-time professors in our Teaching and Learning Academy (TLA) within our Centre for Academic Excellence. To date, I have offered four workshops for new professors in TLA. These workshops aim to do three things:

1. Reflect on the concept of Standard English

2. Explore Translingual practice and its relationship to Anti-Racist pedagogy

3. Discuss ways to support linguistic diversity using a translingual lens.

The main takeaway from this workshop is for the participants to learn to celebrate and accept differences; question *What is an error?* and understand that upholding a standard English is participation in racism and linguistic violence. Oftentimes after my workshop, there is a Q & A session which gets heated as some participants firmly believe that maintaining a standard English in academic work is necessary to ensure that students are successful in the marketplace. They argue that their job is to be gatekeepers for the institution especially in highly regulated professions such as engineering, nursing and pharmacy. While I agree that in such highly regulated occupations it is imperative that effective communication and competence in the industry technical requirements and lexicon is necessary, I question them on why other types of Englishes could not also be accepted in those professions if students are competent in the technical requirements and lexicon needed to do their jobs. We also debate on the merits of focusing on effectiveness over accuracy in communication. (Please see Appendix B for the slide deck used for the workshops.)

These workshops have led to a greater awareness of translingualism and acceptance of linguistic diversity among our new professors. They have also been a catalyst for assessment overhauls in programs such as the Child and Youth Worker, and Social Service Worker diploma programs at my college. I was invited by faculty members in these two programs who had participated in my workshops to review their assignment types and assessment rubrics in their

efforts to de-centre whiteness. The conversation with these programs is continuing and I hope to consult with more programs in my institution on affirming and accepting linguistic differences.

Annual Orientation for Part time Professors

I have also offered presentations for our part time professors in our Faculty who teach first year writing courses in Sheridan. The title of my presentation is *Who are our Students?* (Please see Appendix C for my slide deck). The focus here is to make them aware that most of our students come from collectivist cultures where the philosophy of learning is different from Canada. For example, I discuss social hierarchy in collectivist cultures and why most students eschew peer editing in writing classes due to their belief that it would be impudent to criticise a peer's written work when they both occupy the same rung on the social ladder. Additionally, students from collectivist cultures prefer to have the teacher, the expert, edit their work, not another peer, a non-expert. We also discuss the concept of "good writing" and if our perception differs from our students' notions of good writing. Lastly, we discuss the concept of text ownership. I also offer some tips and strategies on how to create an inclusive classroom. One way is by making sure their assignment instructions are clear and not ambiguous. Here I bring in the idea of hidden pedagogy. Hidden or invisible pedagogy is rife within our institutions. Hidden pedagogy refers to the "non-directive nature of educational ways of acting and being that are covertly based on middle-class, mainstream social practices and are enshrined and publicly justified in a "progressivist" pedagogy and philosophy of education." (Ramanathan and Atkinson, 2011, p. 183). Such seemingly anti-authoritarian questions such as "Would you like to

do this next?" confuses students who are not exposed to such indirect authoritarianism. This question means that they are supposed to do something next, but to students who have not been exposed to this hidden pedagogy, they will miss this cue. In assignment instructions, asking students to "Talk about X" is unclear. They do not know what is expected of them. Having clear guidelines will help multilingual students produce work that aligns with what teachers expect. The aim of this presentation is to build empathy and compassion in our first-year writing faculty. I encourage my faculty to be open to different writing processes and styles in their classrooms; to focus on what the student is saying and allow room for negotiation with their students. I often share a quote adapted from Aimee Krall-Lanoue which crystallises my entire presentation: *Do we read what is on the page rather than what ought to be on the page*. (2013, p. 234).

The question, *"Do we read what is on the page rather than what ought to be on the page?"* offers a critical provocation for writing teachers. It asks us, writing teachers, to reflect on how our reading practices are often shaped by institutionalised norms—expectations grounded in whiteness, monolingualism, and standardised language ideology. As Asao B. Inoue (2019, 2022, 2023) explains, writing assessment is never neutral—it often supports systems of power by favouring white language standards disguised as clarity or correctness. When we read student writing primarily through the lens of what *ought* to be present such as a clearly stated thesis, linear argumentation, or adherence to Standard Academic English, we risk silencing the rhetorical practices, cultural literacies, and embodied knowledges that are actually present in the work. Scholars like Vershawn Young (2009) and Geneva Smitherman (1999) remind us that language is deeply tied to identity, and that honouring linguistic diversity in the classroom is

central to racial justice. This question urges us, as writing instructors, to move from a deficit lens to one that values rhetorical agency, to read with openness and curiosity rather than prescription, and to embrace difference not as error, but as a meaningful resource.

Min Zhan Lu in her 1994 article, “Professing Multiculturalism: The Politics of Styles in the Contact Zone”, views student writing as sites of linguistic and ideological struggle rather than errors to be corrected. She uses the example of a student’s phrase "can be able to," traditionally seen as redundant. Instead of marking it as a mistake, Lu suggests it could reflect the student’s desire to express not just ability, but the potential for empowerment, shaped by their multilingual background and experience. This then is how we begin to cultivate writing classrooms that are not only more inclusive, but more critically engaged.

3.2. Moving towards tutoring multilingual learners using a Translingual lens

Another way I have been working towards bringing a translingual disposition to my institution is through the Translingualism project: *Moving towards Tutoring Multilingual Learner using a Translingual Lens.* This Translingualism project was conceived in 2018 to address issues faced by multilingual students and English Tutors who seemed to have differing ideas on the kind of English support and help students needed in our tutoring centres. Feedback from our multilingual students (i.e. mostly ESL students) showed that they didn’t find tutoring helpful, and our tutors were reporting that students wanted an editing service and specific help with discrete grammar points and syntax issues. This was in direct opposition to the philosophy of the tutoring centre which had a no-pen-to-paper policy and was focused on helping students with globalised writing errors. This project aligned well with my institution’s

2024 Strategic Plan, especially the goal to “advance the development of intercultural competencies in the context of teaching and learning to support internationalization, inclusion and equity.” (Sheridan 2024 Strategic Plan, p. 11).

The impetus and rationale for this project adoption arose from three sources:

- *Strategic Enrolment Management committee feedback:* our audit repeatedly indicates that multilingual learners lack sufficient support
- *Increase in Requests from Faculty*: professors are reaching out more to the Tutoring Centre to support multilingual students, especially at our Brampton campus
- *Current Tutor Training Gap:* sessions address equity and diversity, accessibility, academic integrity, but we know that there is a gap in the direct support and strategies for multilingual learner needs.

The inspiration for this project came from the work shared in the article “Building a House for Linguistic Diversity” (2016) by Frankie Condon & Bobbi Olson. The article describes their work in the University of Nebraska-Lincoln project wherein the Writing Centre Tutors chose to use scholarship to:

- enrich their practice
- deepen their understanding of student needs
- develop personal pedagogy and philosophy statement

- advocate for a culture shift in how Tutoring Centres approach learners, i.e. tutors advise on global writing issues (organisation) vs learners requesting support for specific grammatical needs (i.e. preposition use)

This initiative at University of Nebraska-Lincoln Writing Centre was in response to incidents of racism that the authors witnessed against minoritised faculty and students at the institution. There were instances of students articulating that they specifically did not register for a particular professor's course because of their accent or students belittling students who did not speak English as a mother tongue.

After reading this article by Condon and Olson, I knew that this was a project that could and should be replicated at my institution because we were accepting more international/visa students into our institution who spoke English as an additional language. Some of these students whom I met for breaches of academic integrity were becoming demoralised due to their "poor" English; hence, a mindset change in how we supported them in our tutoring centres was very much needed. The Translingualism project in my institution was in operation for 5 years beginning in Fall 2018 until Winter 2022. Since then, this project has been on hiatus, but I hope to kickstart it again in 2025.

Initially when the project began in Fall 2018, it was based on Condon's and Olson's article and other articles on tutoring multilingual students which had been sourced by our librarians. It was managed more like a seminar course with the tutors reading the articles and meeting with me biweekly to discuss their reflections and opinions. Their final project stemmed from our discussions and the readings they did. This is reflected in the final projects of the Fall

2018, Winter 2019 and Winter 2020 tutors. (The project took a hiatus for two semesters between Winter 2019 and Winter 2020 due to institutional restructuring within the library and tutoring centres).[107]

From Spring-Summer 2020 until Winter 2022, I incorporated a personal reflection piece in the project because I wanted to understand if engaging in this project had any impact on the tutors personally in their tutoring practice but also in their mindsets about standard English. As the project continued, I also incorporated multimodal resources such as TED Talks by various experts and people on "Embracing Multilingualism and Eradicating Linguistic Bias" by Karen Leung; "The Significance of Linguistic Profiling" by John Baugh; "5-min definitions for teachers in a hurry: Kachru's Concentric Circles of English"; and "3 Ways to Speak English" by Jamila Lysicott.[108]

Below is a list of the final projects from the Translingualism project generated from the English Tutors which have been shared publicly across the institution and on social media:

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[107] For an overview of the project, please access our presentation at a conference in 2019: Samboo, Stephanie; Palombi, Danielle; Sinclair, Sarah; and Oakey, Kathleen, "Tutoring Through the Lens of Translingualism" (2019). *Publications and Scholarship*. 9. https://source.sheridancollege.ca/fhass_publications/9

[108] Access the Tedtalks here:

Embracing Multilingualism and Eradicating Linguistic Bias | Karen Leung | TEDxWWU - YouTube

5-min definitions for teachers in a hurry: KACHRU'S CIRCLES - YouTube

The Significance of Linguistic Profiling | John Baugh | TEDxEmory - YouTube

(22) Jamila Lyiscott: 3 ways to speak English | TED - YouTube

- Fall 2018 tutors created the first edition of “tutor manual” that would be expanded and edited by future tutors to reflect a truly responsive text that evolves with student experience. (see Appendix D)
- Winter 2019 tutors created an infographic on Translingualism. (see Appendix E)
- Winter 2020 tutors created a 30 min podcast to reflect their learnings for the project. (see Appendix F)
- Spring-Summer 2020 tutors created an Instagram and Facebook post which was shared under the institution’s Library social media account. (see Appendix G)
- Fall 2020 tutors created how-to videos for incoming tutors on how to practice Translingual strategies during tutoring appointments.
- Winter 2021 tutors created a document on Translingualism targeting the entire institutional community, specifically faculty, which was disseminated via an internal institutional weekly digital newsletter. (see Appendix H)
- Spring-Summer 2021 tutors created a pre-recorded presentation on Linguistic Diversity which was shared in the institution’s internal weekly digital newsletter. The presentation was based on scholarly articles and a survey of 40 students who shared their lived experiences as multilingual students. The presentation was aimed at all educators – tutors, faculty, etc. (see Appendix I)
- Fall 2021 tutors created a Canva presentation on Translingualism and its tenets showing how it could help provide a safe space for multilingual students. (see Appendix J)

- Winter 2022 tutors created a document for incoming tutors on what they have learned about Translingualism. (see Appendix K)

The reception we received from our immediate institutional community has been positive, albeit sparse, since it is challenging to be heard above the noise present within a busy institution. The faculty members and the community members who have reviewed our work have been very appreciative and positive in their responses. The faculty members who were interested in our work and amenable to the tenets of translingualism were mostly from minoritised groups, or those who sincerely wanted to de-centre whiteness. The main challenge we face is how to influence the other faculty members and the wider institutional community to adopt a translingual disposition in their daily lives. As the project continued from semester to semester, it became clear to me and the tutors that we needed to expand this work to include *all* faculty and student-facing staff at the institution to effect an inclusive and safe learning environment for our multilingual students whose numbers have increased exponentially over the years. Confining it to Tutoring was not enough to enact widespread disruption to the established institutional ideology of upholding standard English and devaluing all other Englishes. So, in Winter 2021, Spring-Summer 2021 and Fall 2021, the tutors created final projects targeting the entire institutional community. Their work was shared publicly across institutional channels in our weekly online newsletter, the Insider, which is disseminated to all staff and faculty, and on social media such as Instagram and Facebook. Despite this effort to share the tenets and benefits of adopting a translingual disposition, the impact made to faculty's classroom practices was minimal since it was perceived as one more thing to do in the already busy workloads of faculty during a global pandemic.

Additionally, it is also important to note that our Translingualism project was initiated by me and some faculty members in my department in collaboration with the library who has oversight on the English Tutors. As there was very little institutional support given, I had to carve out time from my busy Associate Dean schedule to make time for this project to collaborate and learn alongside the English tutors. When I reactivate this project, I plan to ask for more institutional support to achieve the goal of reaching all faculty members and staff.[109]

3.2.1. Reflections and Learnings from the Project

In this next section, I will share the insights I gained from the countless conversations and discussions I engaged in with the English tutors who collaborated on the Translingualism project with me from 2018 until 2022. In an effort to capture the themes which emerged from these conversations, I have created a composite counterstory which foregrounds the general perceptions and impacts this project has had on the tutors.

3.2.2. Composite Counterstory

My counterstory is predicated on the work of Aja Martinez, the author of "Counterstory: The Rhetoric and Writing of Critical Race Theory", who makes the case for counterstory as methodology in rhetoric and writing studies and argues that counterstory affords opportunities for marginalised voices to contribute to conversations about dominant ideology.[110] Martinez claims that counterstory is a tool in CRT which "characterizes as "a kind of

[109] It would be remiss of me to not acknowledge two of my faculty members who helped me kick start this project: Sarah Sinclair and Julie Warkentin. They are the translingual advocates in my department. I also have to acknowledge the work of our library liaison, Kathleen Oakey, who helped to expand our scholarly resources on tutoring multilingual students.

[110] Paraphrased from the backjacket of the book, Counterstory: The Rhetoric and Writing of Critical Race Theory.

counter-reality" created/experienced by "outgroups" subordinate to those atop the racial and gendered hierarchy". (2017, p.69). Those in power, or the "ingroup", "craft stock stories to establish a shared sense of identity, reality, and naturalization of their superior position." (2017, p.69-70). These stock stories or hegemonic narratives are characterized by Solórzano and Yosso as "majoritarian" stories "that generate from a legacy of racial privilege and are stories in which racial privilege seems "natural". (Solórzano and Yosso, 2006, p. 27 as cited in Martinez, 2017. p.81). "These stories privilege whites, men, the middle and/or upper class, and heterosexuals by naming these social locations as natural or normative points of reference." (Martinez, 2017, p.81). In this counterstory, I create composite characters which do not represent any single individual but represent a cultural or political ideology showing particular stereotypes prevalent in our academic institutions. For example, the white English tutor who is fixated on fixing the English of an underrepresented person of colour student, the underrepresented student of colour who believes that their English needs fixing, the person of colour tutor who is questioned for being an English tutor in the writing centre. According to Yosso, "composite characters are written into "social, historical, and political situations that allow the dialogue to speak to the research findings and creatively challenge racism and other forms of subordination" (Yosso, 2006, p. 11 qtd in Martinez, 2017, p. 70). These composite characters will bring to light the pervasiveness of racism in our academic institutions, particularly in our writing centres, which are tasked to aid and support students who need additional help with their course work to succeed in their programs.

3.2.3. Becoming more Translingual as tutors

Setting: This is an online Microsoft Teams meeting amongst the four English tutors who are undergraduate students studying at the same university. They have all been hired as English tutors for their co-op work term at S. College for the fall semester. They are discussing their tutoring practice and the Translingualism project they are working on with the Associate Dean from the English department at S. College.

Participants:

- Frank, a white, Canadian-born male majoring in Psychology
- Karolina, a Polish-born immigrant female majoring in English and Rhetoric
- Priya, a South Asian, Canadian-born female majoring in English and Rhetoric
- Wai Leng, a Chinese born female international/visa student from China majoring in History and Political Science.

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The meeting begins as four participants enter the virtual Teams meeting room. One by one, each of them turn on their cameras and unmute themselves.

Frank *(smiling widely)*: Hi, everyone! Hope you all are having a good week. I can't believe it's already Wednesday!

Karolina *(nodding)*: Yes! Me too. I had so many tutoring appointments yesterday. I guess midterm assignments are due since it's a week before reading week.

Priya *(stifling a yawn)*: Hi! I was busy too yesterday with students asking for help with their essays. I'm quite tired.

Wai Leng *(directing her gaze at Priya*): Me too! I was "on" the whole day yesterday. I missed my lunch.

Frank: I hear you all. I had an anxious student yesterday who insisted that I correct her whole essay. I kept telling her that we have a no-pen-to-paper rule in our Writing Centre, but she refused to listen. She just kept saying she needed to do well in this essay because her professor told her she had poor grammar and his rubric assigns 40% to Grammar and Mechanics. I felt sorry for her because she was clearly stressed out. Her content was pretty good; she just had some awkward phrases and made some errors in her syntax which I corrected. 40% for grammar? Isn't that too much?

Wai Leng *(shaking her head in disapproval)*: That is unfair. Students like me who are ESL (English as a Second Language) students would already be disadvantaged before we submit the assignment. Is that even allowed in this institution?

Priya: I think it is up to each professor's discretion how much they would like to assign to grammar, but I agree that this is unfair. I would also do poorly if I was graded with this type of rubric because I often make mistakes in my writing even though I was born in Canada.

Karolina *(looking surprised)*: I have never had a professor assign 40% for grammar in an essay. I too would not do well since I often think in Polish and then translate to English.

Frank (*speaking pensively*): I think these students who are non-native speakers of English just need to spend more time learning English grammar and their writing will be fine.

Wai Leng (*pursing her lips)*: I don't think you understand how difficult it is for someone who speaks English as a second language to write an academic essay in English. I struggle to write down my thoughts. Even though I know English grammar, I have to think in Mandarin first and then translate into English. Many times, there are words and phrases in Mandarin which have no English equivalent. So, I have to figure out how to express my ideas on paper in English. (*Wai Leng pauses to catch breath)* It's not like you can just switch off your mother tongue, a language you learned from birth. Plus, English is a complicated language. It has so many exceptions to their grammar rules. Drives me crazy. *(she says this rolling her eyes)*

Priya *(nodding in agreement)*: I hear you, Wai Leng. I especially hate the silent /b/ in *doubt* and /w/ in *sword.* I used to pronounce them and was corrected by my teachers. Why don't we spell it the way we say it? (*Shaking her head)*. Even though I was born in Canada and I am fluent in English, I sometimes have to stop and think before I write my thoughts down in English because my family speaks mainly Punjabi at home with some English peppered here and there. I learned formal English only when I attended Junior Kindergarten at the age of 4 years old.

Frank (*looking surprised*): Oh, I didn't realise that writing was difficult for both of you. I guess it's like if you asked me to write in French, I would find that challenging too. I took French in school, but I am definitely not fluent in it. I hated it.

Wai Leng: Frank, you had a choice, but I didn't. I had to learn English to be able to further my studies in Canada. Also, English is the global language of commerce, technology and politics. If I

don't learn it, I will be shut out of opportunities. That's what my father told me. (*Wai Leng says in an exasperated tone)*

Priya: Yup. In Canada, if you don't speak or write standard English you will not be successful. Despite speaking fluent English, I was put into ESL classes in elementary school until Grade 6 because I couldn't write standard English. That's what the teachers told my parents. Can you believe it? (*Priya facepalms herself*)

Karolina *(looking quizzical*): What is standard English? Who decides?

Priya: Good question. I think it's the English that any white person speaks because when I speak English, people still ask me: *Where are you from*? And I have a Canadian accent. Go figure. *(Priya makes an eye roll*)

Wai Leng: Really! (*Wai Leng looks shocked*) If you called me on the phone, I would think you were a white Canadian, Priya. You don't sound like an immigrant at all.

Priya: Ha! Ha! (l*aughing out loud*) The other day I accompanied my mom to the hospital for a day surgery she was having and the nurse at the counter asked me, *Where are you from? You speak such good English?* I was about to roll my eyes and respond, but my mom beat me to it. She told the nurse that I was born here in Canada and went to school here. The nurse just smiled and said, I *see. But you must speak another language. A language from your country*. My mom responded defiantly: *Yes, we do. But my daughter is Canadian, so this is her country.* The nurse looked quizzically at my mom and was about to say something else to my mom when the doctor called us into the surgery room. I was like, My mom rocks! *(Priya says punching her right fist in the air in a sign of victory)*

Frank: That nurse was something else. *(Frank utters in a tone of disbelief)* I guess to her a Canadian is being white like me.

Karolina: Yes, I think many Canadians think if you are not white, then you are an immigrant which is weird because I am white and an immigrant, right? (*looking at the others for confirmation*).

Priya nods at Karolina.

Wai Leng *(feeling annoyed*): Isn't that racist though? Priya is Canadian but just looks different, but you, Karolina, are an immigrant but look white. Why does the colour of your skin have to determine your identity as a Canadian? What *is* Canadian anyway?

Priya: I have been asked this question: *Where are you from?* all my life. I always felt uncomfortable but never understood why until now. Wai Leng, you are right. It is racist. I speak very fluent English and just because I am brown, they see me as different and not Canadian.

Frank: I never knew that *Where are you from?* made you all feel bad. I always thought white people ask it out of curiosity. (*in a sheepish voice*)

Wai Leng: If you close your eyes and hear Priya speak, you would think she's Canadian and yet when people see her, they ask her, *Where are you from*? Why? (*pausing here to look at Frank)* Because she is brown. Can you understand how we people of colour see this?

Frank (*in a quiet, contemplative voice)*: I think I see your point. Society says that to succeed you need to speak good or Standard English and yet Priya who speaks perfect English is still othered. People still see her difference and do not accept that someone who looks like her is

Canadian. Wow! This is deep. I never thought about this. *(Frank looks away from the computer screen presumably at the scenery outside his window*.)

Karolina: I want to circle back to what is standard English. (*Karolina says in earnest*). Which is standard: American or Canadian or British English? Priya, you said any English that white people speak, but which one? I am confused.

Priya: I think it depends on your geographical location. If you are in England, then it will be the English speakers who wield the most power in that society. So, perhaps the monarchy? In America and Canada, it's the English of the middle-class white people which is considered the benchmark. I read this in an article.

Karolina: So, what you are saying is that the standard is associated with the group which has the most power?

Wai Leng: Yes! Have you never heard this phrase by Max Weinrich that "a language is a dialect with an army and navy"? It's about who possesses the most power; they call the shots.

Priya: Karolina, did you ever read Lippi-Green's text, "English with an Accent", for Dr.C's Composition Studies class? I think this quote from the text is powerful: "People in power are perceived as speaking normal, unaccented English. Any speech that is different from that constructed norm is called an accent." (Matsuda as cited in Lippi-Green, 2012, p.81).

Karolina: Yes, I recall that now. (*closing her eyes in an effort to recall that text*) I never thought of it like that. But you are right. I read an article for my Rhetoric class last semester, and it mentioned that Black English is a dialect not a language. But I know that Black English has rules

such as they use “be” instead of “am” or “is” or “are” to communicate that something is habitual. So, why isn’t it accepted in schools? *(Karolina tilts her head to the left as she waits for a response from Priya)*

Priya: That’s because Black people hold no power in America or Canada. It’s the whites with all the power. Has anyone ever asked you *Where are you from?* Karolina?

Karolina: Come to think of it sometimes when I start to speak some people may ask me where I came from. But I don’t get this question as often as you and Wai Leng.

Wai Leng (*interjects*): That’s because you are blonde and blue eyed. You look like one of them.

Karolina: I guess so. (*she says slowly)*. Now, I am seeing what you both are experiencing. Just because you look different, you have been marked or othered even before you speak.

Frank *(who has been listening intently finally speaks up*): I am sorry. I never really understood why my Asian friends used to get annoyed when I asked them this question. Now I get it.

Wai Leng *(speaks in a reassuring tone as she knows that Frank is feeling uncomfortable)*: Frank, we just want you to understand how we feel and what we experience on a daily basis. “As an international student in Canada, I have had my own share of eyes looked at me when I tried to say something normal (to me) but abnormal to people in the west. People have been surprised when I tell them I am an English tutor at S. College, because they cannot believe how an immigrant like me can achieve that position. They are surprised when I do not speak in a “stereotypical [Chinese] accent”. They are astonished when I get better grades than native

speakers in essays or various other assignments. I do get tired of all this, but I cannot blame them as they are raised in an environment where immigrants are believed to have poor English.

Frank: I see. *(Frank says tentatively, unsure of what to say next).*

There is an awkward pause in the conversation before Frank restarts the conversation.

Frank: I am really glad we are doing this Translingualism project with Stephanie (Associate Dean). I have an understanding of standard English, but my privilege has kept me in the dark about non-native English speakers and the struggles that they would face in the classroom. The translingualism project and the articles that I've read have helped me open my eyes and become aware of the problems in our education system revolving around English and identity.

Priya (*nodding and smiling at Frank*): Yes, I am glad we are involved in this Translingualism project because we need to create a safe space for our multilingual students whether they be international/visa students or immigrants.

Wai Leng: This project has made me realise how rigged the system is against People of Colour. That video that Stephanie showed us by Karen Leung on *"*Embracing Multilingualism and Eradicating Linguistic Bias*"* is so powerful. It resonated so much with me because it talks about how people stereotyped her parents as less than for speaking "broken" English and asked them to "speak American". LOL! That's not even a language. (*Here Wai Leng looks at Priya and they both laugh)*. She also talks about the benefits of multilingualism which has been proven scientifically.

Priya: Yes, that video also resonated with me. I "speak Canadian" but am still not good enough. "Does my proficiency in one language (i.e. English) define my intelligence?... If we can value the different expressions in art, I know we can come to embrace diversity in the different expressions in all languages and dialects." (Leung, 2018, "Embracing Multilingualism and Eradicating Linguistic Bias"). I wrote these quotes down from the video because they serve as a powerful reminder to be open to difference.

Karolina (*who has been quiet suddenly pipes up)*: Her talk clearly showed how much discrimination immigrants face in the US which I think happens here in Canada too. Even though I look white, when I speak, people immediately know I am an immigrant and treat me as such. The "you are not from here" label follows me any time I open my mouth. I tend to use wrong prepositions when I write or speak in English because in Polish preposition usage is very different. The other day I told one of my Canadian friends to "drop by my textbook at my home" and she was like, "what do you mean? Did you mean "drop off"?" I nodded to her and was embarrassed because I made a mistake.

Priya (feeling *annoyed*): That is not nice of her. Why did she have to correct you and make you feel bad? She understood what you meant.

Frank: I agree with Priya. (*Frank's body language seems to show him as being more comfortable at this point of the conversation*) She understood you and yet she proceeded to correct you. Remember what Karen Leung said in her talk? "We have a shared communicative burden. It is our responsibility to communicate with each other and try to understand the messages that are being conveyed. We cannot simply expect one group to assimilate as the rest of us sit idly by."

(Leung, 2018, Embracing Multilingualism and Eradicating Linguistic Bias). I guess she is speaking more to me, the white person, because we always assume that all immigrants should assimilate and learn our ways.

Wai Leng: It's interesting that when the whites came to Canada, they did not try to learn the ways of the Indigenous peoples, who were the first here, but trampled on their land and stole it from them. Then they created a society which disadvantaged the Indigenous peoples by instituting white ways of thinking, being and knowing as the norm. That is how white power and privilege works — they make the rules, and everyone has to follow them.

Frank: (*Nodding*). Yes, you are right. If we had only listened and worked with them, we wouldn't be in the mess we are in today in Canada. *(shakes his head)* Sometimes I feel so ashamed of my white history.

Priya (*in a soothing and encouraging voice*): Frank, I think this project is helping all of us become aware of the discriminatory systems in place so we can be agents of change especially for the students who come to us for tutoring.

Karolina: That's so true, Priya. Karen Leung ends her talk with: "So the next time that you hear a person say something in a way that you don't understand. Lean in. Listen closely. Try to understand because what we say is far more important than how we say it." (Leung, 2018, "Embracing Multilingualism and Eradicating Linguistic Bias"). That is what we need to do: lean in and listen. Suspend judgement. Because what these students have to say is more important than how they say it. I wish the professors understood this.

Frank: Remember we read Stephanie's article on "Why I'm Hype About Translingualism?" She asked teachers this question: "do we read what is on the page or what ought to be on the page?" (Samboo, April 2018, TESL Ontario Contact Magazine). I think as tutors we need to be mindful of that question too.

Karolina: I try to not make assumptions about anything I read and ask the students to tell me what they mean. Asking questions and being curious is a good way to help students because you cannot be judgmental when you are curious, right?

Wai Leng *(looking at Karolina with a smile)*: You are so right, Karolina. If my teacher had only asked me what I meant when I meshed up my Mandarin and English, I would not have felt bad. I once wrote, "Perseverance in academic integrity is the unique path to students' spotless marks" and was docked marks for this sentence. My teacher said that it sounded awkward and that we do not collocate "spotless" with "marks".

Frank *(excitedly*): That combination is great. So creative! I would have accepted it. Isn't that what we have been reading in this project? Having a translingual disposition is embracing differences. Embracing linguistic diversity. Why wouldn't a teacher want to encourage students to be inventive in their writing? It shows that students are not parroting but thinking.

Priya (*nodding furiously*): I agree. That sentence you wrote Wai Leng is so interesting and original. I would have enjoyed reading your essay if you wrote like that. The professors seem to want us to write boring, standard and lifeless prose just like what AI produces. I would think they would encourage us to mesh our mother tongue and English into creative and colourful

prose that would be a delight to read. Why do they accept differences in art, but not differences in writing?

Karolina: That is just bias on your teacher's part, Wai Leng. Why didn't she just try to understand why you wrote it that way before she graded you down? I remember reading an article on what is an error and how errors are determined by those who hold the most power. The article also says that sometimes what we consider as a grammatical or lexical error could be the choice that students make in adapting the underlying linguistic structure of their mother-tongue in writing their second language which makes complete sense to me.

Frank: I also recall reading that article for this project. Yes, we need to give students agency in their writing, especially multilingual students, who speak different languages and thus, bring a new and unique perspective. Whenever a multilingual student comes to me for tutoring now, I ask questions if I see a sentence which is different. I do not offer up any solutions but engage them in conversation about what their intended message is about. I have found that this way of engaging them in conversation allows them to feel safer with me. Often, they will ask me to correct their grammar because they see that I am white and Canadian. But I am very conscious of correcting them now.

Karolina: Hmmm. The way I see it, Frank, is that if a student asks you for the "correct" grammar, then you could share it with them. After all they should have agency over their writing. I think we just have to remember not to make them feel that they are deficient because English is not their mother tongue. We should celebrate them and their differences.

Wai Leng: Agreed. I also ask questions when they come to see me for tutoring help. I try to find out what they are trying to achieve in this piece of writing and help them make decisions about their writing.

Priya: I agree with all of you, but we still have to help them write clearly since some professors are still marking them for grammar. I am always torn by this conflict between allowing students to express themselves freely and helping them write acceptable academic writing so they can be successful in their program. It is difficult to change the system, but we need to take baby steps and yet, we need to make sure we do not prevent these students from being successful.

Frank: Ya. I think of that too, Priya. How do we do both? Give them the autonomy to write the way they want and yet help them be successful?

Karolina *(looking intently at Frank*): I think we cannot change the system overnight, but we could plant seeds to ignite that change. If we continue tutoring the way we all are by not making assumptions, asking questions, showing empathy and encouragement, and reminding these students the value they bring, we will slowly build their confidence. I hope they will start to realise that their multilingualism is a gift that the world needs.

(Wai Leng, Frank and Priya nodding in assent at the same time)

Karolina: Wai Leng, was the teacher who docked your grades white?

Wai Leng: No, she was from Iran, but she spoke with a British accent.

Priya: She was probably educated in the UK. Sometimes I think the most demanding teachers are those who are not white, but people of colour who uphold standard English because of

their indoctrination. My cousin was educated in the UK and identifies as British. Whenever she visits us in Canada, she makes fun of some members of our extended family who speak "broken" English. She says it's embarrassing to hear such bad English from educated people. I was always angry when I heard her say this but said nothing to her because I just didn't know what to say. But now after being involved in this project, I have lots of ammunition. I cannot wait until my next encounter with her. (*Priya rubs her hands together in anticipation*)

Wai Leng: Isn't it interesting when Asians uphold "whiteliness" believing that everyone has to speak and write standard English the way the British do? I just don't understand why. (*shaking her head)*

Priya: India was a British colony, so we do have people who profess all things British as good despite being brown. They also thrived under British rule, so it was advantageous for them to sing the praises of their coloniser. My grandfather told me so many stories of Indians who worked for the British during the British Raj years and how they started to mimic British ways.

Wai Leng: Even though China has never been colonised, our government strongly encourages us to learn English. There is much cultural capital in speaking and writing English nowadays. Why do you think teaching English is such a thriving industry? (*rhetorical question*)

Karolina: Even in Poland, everyone was learning English. We learned a little English in school, but I took some classes after high school to brush up my English.

Frank (*musing*): I think I want to teach English as a Second Language after I graduate. Being part of this project has opened my eyes to the injustices that multilingual and ESL learners face, and I would like to plant the seeds that Priya mentioned to help change the system.

Priya (*eyes wide open*): That's great, Frank. I think you would make an excellent teacher.

Frank: I hope so. I am aware of the injustices you all have been facing because you are non-white, but I know there is a lot more for me to learn about racism, particularly linguistic racism.

Wai Leng (*in a serious tone*): My advice to you is to learn and read all the literature on this but do something about it. Don't be like some other white people I know who tell me they are "colour-blind" or that they are not racist because they have a Korean boyfriend or girlfriend. That is BS. I want you to see and acknowledge my colour because that's who I am. And you can still be racist if you have friends who are POC. It's not who you hang out with, but what you are doing to create a more just society for equity-denied people. (*Wai Leng says this with much conviction*)

Priya: Hear! Hear! I agree with you. I am tired of my white friends who tell me they are not racist because they are friends with someone brown or their sister married a black guy. What are you doing intentionally to disrupt racism in your daily life? That is what they should be focusing on.

Karolina: Yes, I agree. It's not enough to understand and tolerate other people's cultures and variety of English but are they doing deep work to change their own mindsets and perceptions towards people who are different from them?

Frank: I get it. Thank you for sharing that with me. I guess I have a lot to think about and learn about how to be an ally to you all.

Priya (*gently*): We don't want you to feel bad, Frank, but to be involved in disrupting the status quo which is prejudiced against us. Perhaps instead of being an ally, you could consider being an accomplice. Karolina, do you remember that Dr. C said this in class one day? That white people should be accomplices in EDID work. She said being an ally is not as powerful as being an accomplice because allies advocate and support the rights and freedoms of marginalised peoples but revert to the status quo which privileges them. However, accomplices are willing to use their power and privilege to dismantle systems and structures which oppress marginalised peoples, and, at the expense of their own well-being and discomfort, they are willing to share the burdens and risks associated with those who are oppressed.

Karolina: Yes, I recall that conversation. That was such an eye opener for so many white students in our class.

Wai Leng: I wish I was present. She's right. An accomplice is way more action oriented than spewing empty promises of support for EDID work.

Frank: An accomplice? That sounds negative because of the social connotation of the word which is always connected with a criminal activity but in this case, it seems appropriate and if we are to disrupt the status quo, then I will work towards being an accomplice.

Wai Leng: Guys, I think we need to move on to discussing our final artefact for this Translingualism project. Stephanie would like us to send her an idea of what we are thinking of.
Karolina: I think we should target the whole college community, especially professors instead of creating something only for the next set of incoming English tutors. I would like our work to have a further reach than the tutors because this is important and necessary work.

Priya: That's great. I agree. We see students who are stressed out and lacking in confidence because their first-year writing classrooms are sites of oppression. I am not sure if the professors are aware that by upholding a monolingual, whitely system of education that they are prejudicing students who do not speak or write English as a mother tongue. If we could disseminate some of the lessons we learned from this project and provide some suggestions on how to adopt a Translingual disposition in the classroom, that would be sowing the seeds of change we talked about earlier, right?

Wai Leng: I like this. *(she says excitedly)* I agree that we need to go beyond the tutors and reach the writing classrooms. But how do we do that without coming across as telling the professors what to do since we are only tutors?

Frank: Think accomplice mindset! (*Frank interjects passionately*) We will feel uncomfortable and perhaps may even get some finger wagging at us from some professors, but we need to plant the seed for change and here's our chance.

Priya: *(Laughing)* You are a quick learner, Frank! Yes, the accomplice mindset.

Karolina: Now that we all agree, can we create a presentation on Linguistic Diversity and Translingualism and share it through the Insider e-newsletter? That reaches everyone, right?

Wai Leng: Yes, it does.

Frank: I like the topic, Karolina. How should we divide up the work? Should we first create a plan of what we want to include in the artefact?

Priya: Yup. which medium should we use? PowerPoint or Canva?

Wai Leng: I like Canva. There are more choices in visuals and backgrounds. Everyone agree?

(Priya, Frank and Karolina all nod in unison)

Karolina: Ok. Canva it is. Now, who does what?

Priya: I think we should each write up some ideas for the artefact and then come together next week to share and decide which ones we want to include.

Frank: Yes, I need some time to process what we discussed today. There is so much for me to digest and ponder on.

Wai Leng: Agreed, let's take some time to think what we would each like to contribute and reconvene next week.

Karolina: Sounds good. Let's meet next Wednesday, same time. I will send you the Teams link.

Frank: Thanks Karolina! I have to run. I have an appointment with a student.

Priya: Me too. Thanks for the great discussion.

Wai Leng: Thanks everyone for an enlightening discussion.

Karolina: Yes, thanks!

Frank: Have a good day, guys!

Priya: Goodbye!

As the Microsoft Teams meeting ends, each tutor rushes off to their next student appointment thinking about what was said and what was unsaid. Frank is already thinking about how to

become an accomplice and if he is up for the challenge. Wai Leng is reminiscing back to the day she cowered in silence when told that "spotless" and "marks" do not collocate and what she would say to that teacher today. Priya is imagining what she might say to the next person who asked her Where are you from? Karolina is wondering if she would have enough courage to foreground her Polishness by speaking up instead of keeping silent to pass for a white Canadian.

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From the Counterstory above, you will note that several themes have emerged: the importance of student agency; the awareness of intersectional identities; the danger of "othering" based on phenotype; the importance of having a translingual disposition towards difference; correction versus negotiation of "error"; the awareness of internalised oppression in POC; the recognition of white privilege and white power in our systems and structures in education; and the role of an *ally* versus an *accomplice* in social justice work.

While these themes emerged from my numerous conversations with the various groups of tutors I worked with, some of them also stemmed from my own learning and awakening while I was engaging in EDID and social justice work. For instance, the *ally* versus *accomplice* was something I learned in the past two years after attending conferences and engaging in scholarly texts and social media posts from diversity experts I follow on LinkedIn. There is much to learn about racism outside of academia because many stories of oppression of People of Colour are shared through social media and in real time conversations. Therefore, during this Translingual project, the tutors were encouraged to learn a little bit about each student's history and identity before they started the formal tutoring session. To reiterate Richard

Wagamese's wisdom, when "we take the time to share those stories with each other, we get bigger inside, we see each other, we recognize our kinship – we change the world, one story at a time…" This is the way forward for us to build an equitable and just education system for all students who walk into our institutions. In fact, Michelle Obama in her book, *Becoming,* echoes Richard Wagamese's words when she states, "I've learned that it's harder to hate up close." This statement resonates so much with me because if we remain curious about people we meet — once we gain perspective of their histories, identities and struggles — we stop judging them. It is difficult to judge and be curious at the same time. The next chapter demonstrates how as educators we can maintain our curiosity about our students through a translingual writing syllabus for post-secondary.

End of Chapter

Chapter 4: Possibilities: Decolonial Options

> *You do not have to be me in order for us to fight alongside each other. I do not have to be you to recognize that our wars are the same. What we must do is commit ourselves to some future that can include each other and to work toward that future with the particular strengths of our individual identities. And in order for us to do this, we must allow each other our differences at the same time as we recognize our sameness.*
>
> (Lorde, 1984)

Audre Lorde's quote from "Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches" reverberates deeply within me because I truly believe that in order to engage in antiracist work and to change education one story at a time, we need *everyone* on board to fight systemic and structural racism. It does not matter that we come from difference, but that we have the same desire for a more equitable and just world which fuels our commitment to fight for a decolonial future.

It was only recently while auditing a course on "Decolonization in Language Education"[111] that I learned the difference between "decolonisation" and "decoloniality". In their 2012 article, "Decolonization is not a Metaphor", Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang resolutely claim that "Decolonization doesn't have a synonym" (p.3). Decolonisation refers to the recovery and recognition of Indigenous Peoples' sovereignty in our socio-political and economic structures and systems. True decolonisation is the giving back of land to its original inhabitants.

[111] Once again, I am grateful to Dr. Barbara Schmenk for allowing me to audit her course in Winter 2024 at the University of Waterloo.

Decoloniality on the other hand is "epistemic disobedience" (Mignolo, 2011)[112], "epistemic delinking" (Mignolo, 2007)[113], "epistemic reconstruction" (Quijano, 2007).[114] Decoloniality is a school of thought which rejects the universality and supremacy of Western culture, knowledge and thought. It aims to delink from Eurocentric epistemologies and knowledge hierarchies to enable other forms of existence in our world. A decolonial perspective understands that colonialism is the basis for the everyday functions of our systems and structures such as capitalist modernity. Modernism is colonialism. A useful concept to understand is the "coloniality of power", which "identifies a racial, political and social hierarchical order imposed by European colonialism in Latin America prescribing value to some societies/peoples while disenfranchising others." (Quijano, 2000).[115] This coloniality of power is not confined to Latin America but is globally operative as seen in my birth country, Singapore, which is considered part of the Global South[116]. In education, colonialism forms the root of our academic thinking. The very idea of

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[112] Mignolo (2011). Access the article here: doi:10.1215/9780822394501. ISBN 978-0-8223-5060-6.

[113] Mignolo(2007). Access the article here: doi:10.1080/09502380601162647. S2CID 218547810.

[114] Quijano (2007). Access the article here:doi:10.1080/09502380601164353. S2CID 144975976.

[115] Quijano (2000). Access the article here: https://web.archive.org/web/20120616205408/http:/www.unc.edu/~aescobar/wan/wanquijano.pdf

[116] It is important to note that the "Global South" is not a geographical term since it does not include countries such as Australia and New Zealand which are geographically south but includes countries in the northern hemisphere such as India, China and all of those in the northern half of Africa. The "Global South"was "first coined by progressive social activist Carl Oglesby in 1969, [and] [ ] is a synonym for terms such as developing countries, least-developed countries, underdeveloped countries, low-income economies, or the out-of-favor third world countries."Global South Countries 2024 (worldpopulationreview.com). Today the Global South is much more complex than its original concept. "The Global South is a geographical, geopolitical, historical and developmental concept, all at the same time — with exceptions," says Happymon Jacob, founder of the New Delhi-based Council for Strategic and Defense Research.G20: Everyone's talking about the Global South. But what is it? | AP News. It refers to the Group of 77 countries which comprise 134 countries. Although these countries are primarily considered developing countries, it includes Singapore, China and several wealthy Gulf states which further complicates the concept of "Global South". In essence, the "Global South" is an exclusionary term to define those countries that are not in Braj Kachru's inner circle. It is another constructed and superficial concept based upon white epistemology of who belongs and who does not.

schooling is founded upon a Eurocentric ideology as demonstrated in the six characteristics of Habits of White Language (HOWL) discussed in Chapter 1.

I understand that while we would like to decolonise education and other socio-political and economic systems and structures, we cannot do so without erasing all the achievements of humankind to date since 1492 when Christopher Columbus landed in the Americas, and the global migration that has taken place in our world. True decolonisation would displace the peoples who have migrated to a new place to escape war and persecution in their homeland, or those who have left their original homeland in search of a better life for themselves and their families.

In Canada, decolonisation work is tied inextricably with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission[117] (TRC) whose mandate is to inform all Canadians of the truth of what happened in residential schools to Indigenous peoples (as was discussed in Chapter 2) through documentation of survivor stories and the impact of residential schools on survivors' families and communities. The TRC lists 94 calls to action for reparation of the wrongs done to the Indigenous peoples, but also for a decolonial future for Canada. "Even though you didn't create the wreckage that we inherited, you get to be part of the solution. And that's the incredible gift that's been given to us...Where schools and policies and programs were once used as weapons against Indigenous people, we get to carve out a new future for education, one in which all our

[117] For more information on the TRC, please read: https://nctr.ca/about/history-of-the-trc/truth-and-reconciliation-commission-of-canada/ and https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1450124405592/1529106060525#chp1

students belong and one in which all of our children are safe moving into the future." (Kevin Lamoureux, November 16, 2023)[118]

We can never truly decolonise our systems because we cannot replace what has been deeply embedded in our world for thousands of years, but as Kevin Lamoureux states we can be part of the solution. To do this, first we must engage in self-reflection. I recognise that I am a product of white epistemology and ontology through my schooling and my upbringing in postcolonial Singapore which makes it sometimes difficult for me to extricate myself from whiteness. As I try to engage in antiracist work, I must remind myself that I am a migrant settler in Canada who lives here only because I was permitted to do so by the Canadian government, the colonisers who stole the land from the Indigenous peoples of this land and displaced them through creation of white systems and structures. These colonisers gave me permission to live on land which does not belong to them. This is an act of colonialism.

Sometimes I question why I am labouring in antiracist work when I cannot change the colonial systems and structures that have already taken root in our world, but then I realise that if I do not do this work, I become complicit in the oppression of BIPOC people. I do this work because I know how it feels to be a casualty of injustice and discrimination in my society: when an Asian woman is told to speak English at a grocery store in London, Ontario because this is Canada; when an Arabic woman is advised by her friends to take off her hijab for job interviews in Toronto, Canada; when an Ontario college professor grades down a South Asian student's paper for

[118] This quote was from a webinar Kevin Lamoureux presented on zoom as part of the Four Seasons of Indigenous Learning certificate I was enrolled in from October 2023 to May 2024. Kevin is an award-winning Indigenous scholar and well-known public speaker. He formerly served as Education Lead for the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation.

"broken" English. These incidents fuel my commitment to engage in decolonial work to ensure a better world for marginalised peoples. It will not erase the transgressions that have been done to them (us) as a consequence of colonialism, but I hope it will make them feel valued because someone is fighting for and with them towards a more egalitarian world.

4.1. Decoloniality through a Pedagogy of abundance

As a writing program administrator and a former writing teacher, I often reflect on how we might embrace other ways of knowing and being within our Canadian writing classes. Drawing inspiration from the Two Row Wampum[119] belt which symbolizes the parallel coexistence of an Indigenous canoe and a European canoe moving side by side across the ocean, I believe our courses could be grounded in a pedagogy of abundance rather than scarcity.

My use of "pedagogy of abundance" differs from the conventional interpretation in the field of education. Steve Mintz from the University of Texas describes it as "using unconventional sources to make learning active" (2002, *Inside Higher Ed*),[120] while Martin Weller asserts that "with a digital, open, networked approach, we are witnessing a shift to abundance of content…which has profound implications for education" (2011, *Abstract*)[121]. However, I view a "pedagogy of abundance" as an epistemological stance: an openness to complexity, multiplicity,

[119] For more information, read Parmenter, J. (2013). The Meaning of *Kaswentha* and the Two Row Wampum Belt in Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) History: Can Indigenous Oral Tradition be Reconciled with the Documentary Record? *Journal of Early American History* 3, 82–109, at p. 83–84. http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com/content/journals/10.1163/18770703-00301005.

[120] Access article here: https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/higher-ed-gamma/pedagogy-abundance

[121] Access article here: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264873960_A_pedagogy_of_abundance#fullTextFileContent

and difference in all its forms. It "leaves the door ajar"[122] for new ways of thinking and being, maintaining an unwavering curiosity and openness. This requires a deliberate dismantling of scarcity mindsets that limit what counts as legitimate knowledge or language in academic spaces.

Translingual Theory, as articulated by scholars such as Horner, Lu, Royster, and Trimbur (2011), affirms the fluid, dynamic nature of language and calls on educators to recognise the rhetorical agency of multilingual writers. Rather than treating linguistic difference as error, translingualism encourages us to value how students negotiate meaning across languages, registers, and identities. Such a perspective disrupts the colonial expectation of linguistic conformity and opens up writing classrooms to the rich plurality of student voices.

A pedagogy of abundance also necessitates a critical examination of how whiteness and race shape language education. Critical Race Theory reminds us that language is never neutral; it is entangled with histories of racialisation, power, and exclusion (Crenshaw, 1991; Delpit, 1995). To teach writing without addressing these dynamics is to risk perpetuating a system in which standardised English operates as a proxy for whiteness—a gatekeeping mechanism that privileges some voices while marginalizing others. By contrast, a pedagogy of abundance centres the lived experiences and linguistic resources of racialised students, making space for their full identities to inform and transform the learning process.

To imagine abundance is to embrace imperfection, complexity, and relationality. It requires a shift away from deficit thinking and toward a mindset that values contradiction and

[122] See Frankie Condon, *I Hope I Join the Band: Narrative, Affiliation, and Antiracist Rhetoric* (2012).

ambiguity. **I**t is through the cracks—those moments when dominant pedagogical frameworks falter—that light and learning are allowed to enter. A pedagogy of abundance views these openings not as flaws to be repaired, but as generative sites where alternative epistemologies and ways of knowing can emerge. Educators must learn to identify and tend to these fractures, recognising them as opportunities to reimagine the classroom as a space where diverse forms of knowledge and expression are not only acknowledged but centred.

This ethos resonates with the Japanese concept of *wabi sabi*—a worldview grounded in the appreciation of transience and imperfection (Koren, 1994). Often illustrated through the practice of repairing broken pottery with gold, *wabi sabi* teaches us to see cracks not as damage, but as part of the object's beauty and history (Walther, 2021). Similarly, in writing instruction, embracing the spirit of *wabi sabi* invites us to value the imperfect and incomplete, fostering a classroom culture of compassion, openness, and growth. It encourages us to move away from rigid notions of mastery and toward a pedagogy that honours process and transformation.

Such a pedagogy does not coerce learners into mastering a fixed set of grammatical rules. Instead, it invites them on a journey of self-discovery, where they can reclaim their voices and choose how they wish to be represented through writing. It creates space for students to bring their full cultural and linguistic selves into the classroom, treating difference not as deviation but as a vital source of knowledge. In doing so, it nurtures the capacity to live and write ethically, in relation with others, rather than simply reproducing dominant linguistic norms.

Both Translingual Theory and Critical Race Theory emphasise that language and identity are fluid, constantly shaped by power, race, and belonging. As such, writing instruction should not

aim to conform students to standardised English, but to empower them to develop rhetorical agency across diverse contexts. This work is far more urgent—and far more human—than training students to conform to norms that sustain a white-dominated status quo.

4.1.1. The Danger of a Single Story

One way we adopt a pedagogy of abundance which leads the way towards decoloniality in education is to heed Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's warning of "The Danger of a Single Story"[123]. In her 2009 TED Talk which has now garnered over 13 million views on YouTube, Adichie warns us of stereotyping or forming perceptions of a person, or a culture, or a place based on a single story we have heard or seen in the media. She shares how her American roommate at university was shocked that she spoke such good English and "was consequently very disappointed when [she] produced [her] tape of Mariah Carey" instead of African tribal music. Her roommate had consumed different versions of the same story about African people – that they do not speak English well and only listen to tribal music. Adichie states that it is impossible to talk about the single story without talking about power. In the Igbo language, according to Adichie, there is a word, "nkali", a noun that loosely translates to "to be greater than another." Below is a powerful excerpt from Adichie's Ted Talk on how those who have power control how stories are told:

> *Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person. The Palestinian poet Mourid Barghouti writes that if you want to dispossess a people, the simplest way to do it is to tell their story, and to start*

[123]You can watch, "The Danger of a Single Story" here: https://youtu.be/D9Ihs241zeg?si=F46tMnWUs4--Nflj

with, "secondly." Start the story with the arrows of the Native Americans, and not with the arrival of the British, and you have an entirely different story. Start the story with the failure of the African state, and not with the colonial creation of the African state, and you have an entirely different story.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009)

The single story creates stereotypes which are untrue and also presents incomplete stories. “They make one story become the only story…The consequence of the single story is this: It robs people of dignity. It makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult.” (Adichie, 2009). It foregrounds our differences instead of our similarities. For instance, for people to know who I am, they need to know the many stories which form me. I am formed by the intersection of my life in Singapore and Canada; my heritage from my Indian father and my Chinese mother; my academic experiences as a writing teacher, an Associate Dean and a graduate student. As I mentioned in the Introduction chapter, understanding the intersectionality of a person helps in the work towards dismantling discrimination and exclusion. If we begin to reject the single story of marginalised peoples told by the media, the government and those in power, we move beyond a dichotomous world view and become open to learning more about the multiple stories that form a person, a culture, and a place. “That when we reject the single story, when we realize that there is never a single story about any place, we regain a kind of paradise.” (Adichie).

To bring Adichie’s wisdom to education, especially the writing classroom, we need to teach students to be self-reflexive by questioning how they fit in the world and to trace their familial and societal histories to understand how they arrived at their subject position

today. As educators, we need to train students to question the single story of educational practices we accept as the norm today such as adoption of a Eurocentric writing process; the valuing of rationalism and objectivity over lived experiences; the use of grades as an indicator of learning, etc. Once we create space for a plurality of views and knowledges in the classroom, we begin to shift students away from binary or dichotomous thinking that controls our world today: North vs South; Europe vs Asia; West vs East. We can help them move towards adopting what Boaventura De Sousa Santos calls "post-abyssal thinking[124]" towards an "ecology of knowledges". This is non-binary thinking, the "enabling of third and fourth and fifth spaces that come from the juxtaposition of multiple worldviews" (Luke, 2018, p. 7 as cited in Porto & Byram, 2022, p. 408). "The ecology of knowledges is founded on the idea that knowledge is interknowledge. (De Sousa Santos, 2007, p. 66). "Interknowledge" refers to reciprocal or mutual knowledge where we come into contact with other ways of being and knowing and are constantly building upon our own epistemologies. To do this requires us to think beyond binaries. To think outside the box of binaries requires…

- *being self-consciously aware of one's epistemic location[125];*

[124] Abyssal thinking is a "hegemonic thinking [that] creates a line establishing that which is considered "civil society," and declares as nonexistent those colonized knowledges and lifeways positioned on the other side of the line, thus relegating them to an existential abyss." (García, O., Flores, N., Seltzer, K., Wei, L., Otheguy, R., & Rosa, J., 2021, p.203). Post-abyssal thinking challenges this imaginary line born out of a "universal logic and matrix of power produced by colonialism" (ibid, p. 205) and centres the language practices of racialised students.

[125] Epistemic location refers to our understanding, beliefs and knowledge of the world around us and the conditions that govern them. I

- *unmasking one's loci of enunciation[126] and those of others;*

- *provincializing the (apparently) universal[127];*

- *troubling the singularity of the narrative (one sole episteme);*

- *changing the 'terms of the conversation' by engaging 'artisanal knowledges', i.e. 'practical, empirical, popular knowledges, vernacular knowledges' (De Sousa Santos, 2018, p. 43);[128]*

- *cultivating pluriversal (rather than universal) imaginaries and decolonial imagination[129].*

(De Sousa Santos, 2010; Lobo, 2020; Mignolo, 2007; Pennycook & Makoni, 2020 as cited in Porto and Byram, 2022, p. 409).

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[126] It is essential that as educators we encourage our students to reflect on their past and present to understand their locus of enunciation. "Locus of enunciation" is defined by Ramon Grosfoguel (2011, p. 5) as "the geo-political and body-political location of the subject that speaks". Diniz de Figueiredo and Martinez (2021, p. 2) extend Grosfoguel's definition by saying it comprises "the geographical, historical, bodily, and ideological context from which one is speaking". It was initially developed by Mignolo (1999) and is used in decolonial and Southern theories. The locus of enunciation is a place from which one speaks and from which one produces knowledge. "Menezes de Souza (2019, p. 29) argues that 'this location need not be geographical or literal; it may be metaphoric, but it is always epistemic' (his emphasis)." (Porto & Byram, 2022, p.407). In Applied Linguistics, the locus of enunciation is used by researchers to resist the hegemony of the "Global North". Teaching our students to write from their locus enunciation, which is always evolving contingent on their collection of experiences and knowledge will help them build a path of empathy to others and from others towards them. To build empathy, we need understanding of being in another's shoes.

[127] "Provincializing" refers to foregrounding non-dominant experiences and de-centring whiteness.

[128] "Artisanal knowledges" refers to knowledges that are individual and traditional, unlike the mass produced and mechanised Western knowledge inherent in academia today.

[129] "Pluriversal" thinking is "border thinking" which embraces non-Western values, perspectives and societies. "Each worldview has its own significance and value, and acknowledging the interconnectedness between all worldviews allows for the connection of your own well-being with the well-being of other beings with other perspectives." https://www.thecollector.com/introducing-pluriverse-multiple-realities/

Thus, to cultivate Boaventura De Sousa Santos' idea of an "ecology of knowledges" which is closely related to border-thinking[130], we must be aware of where we are coming from in terms of how we understand the world (our epistemic location); we must recognise and question how we speak and think about knowledge (our loci of enunciation) and do the same for others; we must question the idea that Western knowledge is universal by showing its local and situated nature (provincializing the universal); we must challenge the idea that there is only one valid form of knowledge or story; we must shift the conversation to include "artisanal knowledges" —everyday, practical, lived forms of knowledge that come from people's experiences, communities and cultures; and we must imagine a pluriverse where many ways of knowing can thrive, not just one dominant narrative.

One way this theory can be translated into practice is through classroom-based examples that embody its principles. A powerful example comes from Dr. Paul Meighan, a Scottish Gael sociolinguist whose research on "colonialingualism" [131] and "transepistemic" education centres the deep connection between language and place. Meighan describes transepistemic language education as "a way of learning, teaching, knowing, being which enables respectful and non-hierarchical knowledge co-creation while we engage with languages, peoples, cultures, and lands" (Meighan, 2024).

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[130]Gloria Anzaldúa in her book 'Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza' first used the term "border thinking" which has subsequently been developed by decolonial thinkers such as Walter Mignolo. It is thinking from the outside, using alternative knowledge traditions and alternative languages of expression in response and resistance to the oppression of the colonial matrix of power. https://globalsocialtheory.org/concepts/border-thinking/

[131] Colonialingualism privileges "dominant colonial histories, knowledges, languages, and "neoliberal valorizations of diversity" (Meighan 2023)

Our North American education system has decontextualised and disembodied language in the classroom. The language students use in the classroom are ahistorical and acultural as in the term “native speaker” which is often used without any thought to its etymology and its effects on equity-denied peoples. According to Meighan, a transepistemic education allows for multiple epistemologies in the classroom; uses texts from non-dominant authors; gets students to discuss and reflect on the *how* of the text (bias, purpose, choice of words (etymology of word, cultural significance) and its sentence structure (for example, questioning the use of passive and nominalization in which the agent is missing in a text). Transepistemic education allows students to personally reflect and compare the text to their cultures and how it impacts their worldview or beliefs, or how it does not and why. Meighan proposes a heritage language pedagogy as part of transepistemic education to action the unlearning of western epistemologies. In his 2023 article, “Colonialingualism: Colonial Legacies, Imperial Mindsets, and Inequitable Practices in English Language Education”, Meighan shares his “worldviewer” lesson in which he brings in epistemologies and knowledges from across the world to stimulate knowledge sharing and co-creation. For instance, he facilitates lessons on languages being more than just words. He brings in texts about the whistle languages across the globe and lessons on learning Indigenous names of places in Canada. He disrupts the idea of a single story, a single pedagogy, a single epistemology, a single ontology, a single worldview in his classroom.

To foster students’ sense of criticality, we need to help students adopt an attitude of contestation or questioning. Teachers should help students feel comfortable challenging norms so that these norms can be resisted, reevaluated and reimagined. Having a questioning

mindset is foundational in a "problem-posing" education (Paulo Freire) which is another step towards decoloniality in education.

4.1.2. Problem-posing Education

Paulo Freire in his seminal text, "Pedagogy of the Oppressed", asks us, the oppressed, to disrupt the status quo, and rise up as one through "conscientization", or raising one's critical consciousness, by adopting a process of reflection and action. He advocates for a "problem-posing" education as opposed to the "banking concept" of education. He espouses a liberatory pedagogy in education, one not just for individual fulfilment but for radical social change and democratisation in an effort to uplift the oppressed. Freire understood that as a teacher he must recognise and be aware of the deplorable lived experiences of his students, who were peasants in Brazil, to create a democratic classroom. The teacher should not teach from the pulpit but needs to co-create knowledge with the students if social justice is truly at the core of a liberatory education. Although Freire's book was aimed at teaching students who were oppressed and marginalised, many teachers and philosophers such as Tracey Nicholls, have seen the benefit of using Freire's "problem-posing" education within elite classrooms with students who are privileged. "While Freire viewed the purpose of education as the liberation of the oppressed, in elite classrooms, [ ] the challenge for a liberatory pedagogy is to teach empathy and solidarity with the oppressed—who, in many cases, are not in the room."(as cited in Featherstone, 2020).[132] As such, enacting a decolonial, liberatory, problem-posing pedagogy in education, specifically the writing classroom, does not only benefit racially marginalised or BIPOC students but white

[132] Access article here: https://daily.jstor.org/paulo-freires-pedagogy-of-the-oppressed-at-fifty/

students who get to learn how 80% of the world's people navigate a white dominated world each day. I hope that understanding the lived experiences of the marginalised will engender empathy in these privileged students which would in turn lead to them becoming *allies and accomplices* [133] to help us labour in anti-racist work.

To adopt a critical consciousness and a problem-posing education, I propose that teachers and students question and rethink the uncritical use of terminology in the classroom which has effects on marginalised peoples. The "native speaker" is one such term/label often used not only in education but also in business. In his text, "The Invention of the Native Speaker", Thomas Paul Bonfiglio, professor at the University of Richmond, historizes the emergence of the term "native speaker" from the 18th century until the present. He traces the origin of "native speaker" in the 18th century through influential artists and intellectuals which coincided with the rise of the concept of nation-hood. The word "native" is closely connected to "nature" and "nation". Bonfiglio shows us that the construct of "native speaker" is predicated on monolingualism. In the 18th century as Europe began to organise itself into nation states to accumulate economic and political power and wealth, the idea of a monolingual living in a particular geography using a defined language with finite syntax, orthography, grammar, and lexicon was beneficial to Europe. It was easier to control a homogenous group of people with one language and one identity than a multitude of multilinguals with multiple identities. Hence,

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[133] "An ally is anyone from a dominant or majority group that is working towards ending oppression by supporting and advocating for those in marginalised and oppressed groups. All accomplices are allies, but not all allies are accomplices. While an ally is willing to stand in support of a marginalised voice, risk is rarely involved. An accomplice uses the power and privilege they have to challenge the status quo, often risking their physical and social well being in the process." https://pitt.libguides.com/antiracism/ally

"native speaker" became a label which defined where you belonged to and to whom you belonged to. Trying to define "native speaker" is a difficult task since no one definition is able to fully encompass what that term means. Bonfiglio shows us that multilingualism was the norm in our world before monolingualism was manufactured as the default lingual status by the Europeans.

In his 2004 article," The Native Speaker in Applied Linguistics", linguist Alan Davies attempts to define the concept of "native speaker" with much difficulty because "native speaker" cannot and does not account for the anomalies which exist in our world today due to the effects of colonisation and migration patterns. For instance, the first definition is "The native speaker acquires the L1 of which she/he is a native speaker in childhood." (2004, p. 435). I acquired English from the cradle and yet I am still not considered a native speaker of English because I was born in Singapore, a country in which English is not considered a native tongue. Oftentimes when people meet me for the first time, I am asked where I learned English because I speak it so well. Another definition of the native speaker is that they have "a unique capacity to produce fluent spontaneous discourse, which exhibits pauses mainly at clause boundaries (the "one clause at a time" facility) and which is facilitated by a huge memory stock of complete lexical items (Pawley & Syder, 1983). In both production and comprehension, the native speaker exhibits a wide range of communicative competence." (p. 435). Although it is difficult for a non-native speaker to gain control of discourse and pragmatic control of English, it is not impossible. I have a colleague who I would say is "perfectly bilingual" in both her mother tongue, Mandarin, and her second language, English. It is difficult to pinpoint her as a non-native speaker of English because she speaks and writes English without a marked accent and with much sophistication (unless of course you see

her physically). Another definition is "The native speaker has a unique capacity to write creatively (and this includes, of course, literature at all levels from jokes to epics, metaphor to novels." (p. 435). This definition can be easily debunked if we look at the proliferation of novels, texts, and articles created by non-native writers and speakers of English. For example, Souvankham Thammavongsa[134], and Arundhati Roy[135], are two writers who have won awards for their masterful writing despite not being "native speakers" of English. In fact, the term "native speaker" is most frequently defined by its opposite, the non-native speaker, as it is difficult to isolate specific characteristics of a native speaker as proven by Davies. Besides this complexity in defining "native speaker", it is controversial because the term "native speaker" is always attributed to white people who enjoy an "invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools and blank checks" (McIntosh, 2010; 1989)[136] that will never be afforded to me.

Therefore, a decolonial option in the classroom is to sensitise teachers and students to the use of the labels and terminology which have been normalised such as "native speaker" by developing problem-posing lessons about its etymology and its effects on equity-denied peoples to understand the exclusionary ideology it embraces and how multilingualism was deliberately devalued and supplanted by monolingualism to become the norm in our society. An exercise on critical discourse analysis on how "native speaker" is used in education, business or job

[134] Souvankham's first language is Vietnamese. Her novel, "How to Pronounce Knife" won the 2020 Scotiabank Giller Prize.

[135] Arundhati's first language is Malayalam. Her novel, "The God of Small Things", won the Booker Prize in 1997.

[136] Access article here: https://www.nationalseedproject.org/key-seed-texts/white-privilege-unpacking-the-invisible-knapsack

advertisements or official documents would aid in this sensitization. Once we understand how that the phrase “native speaker” is a euphemism for white or monolingual or having a high proficiency in English, we can dismantle its importance in our daily lives and find appropriate words to express what we mean.

4.1.3. Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Writing Classes

If we embrace a pedagogy of abundance, then we are also open to new technologies in education. With the recent boom in large language models such as ChatGPT or Microsoft Co-Pilot, I have witnessed institutions scrambling to create new policies and rules on how students may use generative AI in their courses. While some institutions have provided strict guidelines on its usage for students, others have prohibited AI for the time being, buying time to determine what to do next. There are many Writing Studies faculty in my institution who are worried about their jobs because they fear AI could make them redundant. While I empathise with them, I am confident that if we offer students a writing course which does not merely teach grammar, syntax, argumentation and research methods, we will be able to survive in academia. This focus of writing as instruction to master Standard Written English is generally the gist of most first-year writing courses in Canadian universities and colleges.

Recently, I attended an in-person workshop by Dr. Aimee Morrison[137], an associate professor at the University of Waterloo on “Artificial Intelligence and Writing”. Morrison labels

[137] Aimee Morrison is an associate professor in the English and Literature department at the University of Waterloo, Ontario. Her research “engages with emergent forms of social media as a set of complex and consequential rhetorical, literary, and social practices undertaken by ordinary people across the full spectrum of daily life.”Aimée Morrison | English Language and Literature | University of Waterloo (uwaterloo.ca). She facilitated an in-person workshop for graduate students on September 8, 2023, on Artificial Intelligence and Writing.

Chat GPT, an artificial intelligence software, “a plausible sentence generator.” (Morrison, Artificial Intelligence and Writing workshop at University Waterloo, September 8, 2023). Morrison’s recent article in Composition Studies, “Meta-Writing: AI and Writing” brilliantly explains the difference between AI writing and writing:

> *Generative AI pretends that there can be writing without writers, which is as nonsensical as suggesting there can be swimming without swimmers, or breathing without breathers. The advantage that human writers have—beyond our crystallized knowledge, contextual understanding, desire to connect, and gift for linguistic and syntactical innovation—is that we seek, produce, and discern meaning. The mirage of sufficiently advanced AI blinds us to the fact that it is nothing more than an imitation game, an infinite number of monkeys, a stochastic parrot.* (Morrison, 2023, p. 160).

The quote above is ironic for me because as we now see postsecondary institutions prohibit or limit students' use of AI in their assignments and papers, it occurred to me that up until now the academy had actually expected its students to imitate the type of writing that AI actually produces! This is writing that adheres to a rigid templated structure with a defined beginning, middle and end written in grammatical, unimaginative, sterile Standard Written English. If we want to put writers back into writing, then we need to allow writers to imbue their own identities into their writing. We should encourage student writers to experiment with and insert their voices into their writing with their artisanal syntax, lexis and lived experiences. Morrison says that we should allow students to write so it sounds like them and “that’s how that differs from what others would write is what makes up the scholarly conversation…Most of

my writing instruction is now oriented toward teaching my students that their own ideas are worth expressing, that they're not "writing up results" so much as "writing into understanding," that their language is valuable, and their experiences relevant, that I am a real reader ready to learn from what they write." (Morrison, 2023, pp. 160-161). When a student asked her how he could get higher grades, she simply answered: "Delight me." The student took it upon himself to meet her to discuss his writing and soon understood the difference between writing that got the job done and writing that was delightful. Morrison states that "...he was really developing a sense of what writing can be and do. We were both delighted." (2023, p. 160). Human writers have an advantage over AI in that "we seek, produce, and discern meaning" (ibid). So, if we want our students to produce their own original writing, we need to afford them the freedom to bring themselves into their writing – their linguistic resources, identities, lived experiences and yes, imperfections – and stop grading them down for their differences. I agree wholeheartedly with Morrison that we need to stop grading students down for their differences in expressions and argumentation on their papers but adopt a wabi sabi mindset of allowing them to submit imperfect papers which allows room for dialogue and negotiation with the student. We must see our students as writers who come into our classrooms with stories and perspectives which are valuable and need to be heard. I also think we need to teach our students the ethical use of AI in our writing classrooms which will shift how we teach writing as instruction to writing as a tool of inquiry and discovery. This shift from writing as instruction to inquiry is demonstrated in the next part of this chapter where I present an annotated commentary of the current writing syllabus in my community college showing how it utilises the banking concept of education which leaves very little room for students to be critical

thinkers, to my proposed writing syllabus which eschews a single story and embraces a problem-posing education by foregrounding the non-dominant stories seldom told in academia and giving our students agency to decide how they want to show up as writers.

4.2. Annotated commentary: first year writing course in a community college

In this section, I offer a comprehensive analysis of a current first-year writing/composition course at the community college where I am employed, examining its course learning outcomes, evaluation plan, assessment instructions and rubrics, as well as the course text. (For a detailed analysis, please see Appendix M).

Context:

The course that I am analysing is a course which non-degree students usually enrol in their first semester in their first year to fulfil graduation requirements. I selected this course because it is taken by approximately 4,500 students annually in my institution which is the largest number of students in a writing course. We have two other writing courses: a compensatory course for non-degree students and a course for degree students, but their numbers are not as large as this particular course I am about to analyse. Please see the full course syllabi here: https://ulysses.sheridanc.on.ca/coutline/coutlineview_sal.jsp?appver=sal&s

This is a 14-week face-to-face or synchronous online course which meets 3 hours per week. Students are first year community college students who are direct entries, i.e. students who have just completed high school, or non-direct entries, i.e. students who have worked for a

couple of years after high school or mature students seeking a career change. The class is usually capped at 30[138] with students who hail from diverse countries of origin: India, China, Vietnam, Uganda, Nigeria, Iran, Columbia, Canada, Venezuela, Korea, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Some are Canadian citizens and Permanent Residents while others are international students on a study visa. Some speak English as a mother tongue while the rest speak it as an additional language which could be English as a Foreign Language such as in China and Russia, or English as a Lingua Franca if they come from former British colonies such as India or Jamaica.

As I analysed and reflected on the current writing course: the textbook used, course outcomes, weekly topical, assessment design and grading rubric, I asked myself a list of critical questions:

1. Whose experiences are foregrounded? Who does it exclude?
2. What is the underlying ideology? Monolingual or Multilingual? Is there room for other types of Englishes besides Edited American English?
3. Are students' personal lived experiences valued in the course?
4. Are students afforded agency in the course?
5. Is there room for different writing heuristic or is there only one master template for how writing should be done?
6. Are writing assignments authentic and relevant to students' lives?

[138] As of Summer 2024, the class cap has been increased to 40.

(For a detailed analysis of the curriculum, please see Appendix L).

In this next section, I discuss the themes that emerged from my analysis of the current writing syllabi which are founded on white epistemology and ontology. There is little or no indication of the inclusion of other epistemologies and ontologies in the syllabi. It is evident that the course condones and supports white epistemology as demonstrated in its course learning outcomes, assignments and Open Access textbook.

4.2.1. Themes from an in-depth analysis

1. Monocultural and monolingual foundation

The course is grounded in a monocultural and monolingual ideology that privileges white, Western, and particularly North American academic norms. This is evident in both the stated learning outcomes and the unspoken assumptions embedded in the course design and assessment tools. For example, Course Learning Outcome #5, "Formulate organized and well-reasoned argumentative and expository essays," centres white epistemology by positioning organization and reason as the primary markers of intellectual competence. This emphasis aligns with what Asao B. Inoue (2023) refers to as the *Habits of White Language*, a framework that critiques how dominant writing pedagogies prioritise qualities such as control, clarity, logic, and order—values historically rooted in white, male, Enlightenment traditions. Inoue argues that this framework marginalises other valid rhetorical approaches that draw on emotion, relationality, spirituality, or storytelling—modes of knowing and communicating deeply embedded in many Indigenous, African, and Asian traditions.

Moreover, the outcome's exclusive focus on Western argument styles erases culturally diverse approaches to argumentation. For example, in East Asian rhetorical traditions, indirectness and circular reasoning are often used to promote harmony and avoid confrontation. In many Indigenous epistemologies, knowledge is shared through narrative and the inclusion of personal, ancestral, and community wisdom rather than by asserting a singular "thesis" in opposition to a counterclaim. Yet, the course assumes a default to the Aristotelian model—claim, evidence, and rebuttal—without acknowledging these alternative structures or inviting students to explore and draw from their own cultural rhetorical resources.

Course Learning Outcome #6, "Select appropriate research documents and document them correctly using APA format," further entrenches this monocultural approach by requiring adherence to a citation style that originated in 1929 from a committee of psychologists, anthropologists, and business managers—figures who operated within the logic of scientific positivism. (About APA Style")[139]. The APA manual was designed to streamline scientific writing and make it more "objective" and efficient, but it also privileges a particular worldview where knowledge is decontextualized, disembodied, and "neutral." This emphasis on a "universal" style of citation reinforces the colonial legacy of privileging Western knowledge systems over localized or oral traditions, which may not fit neatly into APA conventions.

The expectation that students' work be written in EAE further underscores the course's monolingual assumptions. For instance, instructions such as, *"Answer each of the questions*

[139] It is important to note that the authors of the APA style are white men: Bentley, M., Peerenboom, C. A., Hodge, F. W., Passano, E. B., Warren, H. C., & Washburn, M. F. Instructions in regard to preparation of manuscript. *Psychological Bulletin, 26*(2), 57–63. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0071487

below in complete, coherent, and grammatically correct sentences," place grammatical correctness above meaning-making or rhetorical effectiveness. Students who deviate from standard grammar—such as multilingual learners who may translanguage or use non-standard varieties of English—are penalised under the "Mechanics" category in assessment rubrics, reinforcing linguistic hierarchies that devalue linguistic diversity.

Moreover, the rubrics specify the exact number of APA in-text citations required for assignments, linking "academic credibility" to one's ability to follow rigid formatting rules rather than to the quality of one's ideas or engagement with the material. This communicates to students—especially those from non-dominant cultures—that success in the course depends on imitation and compliance with a white-coded academic model rather than critical inquiry or knowledge co-creation.

A pedagogy of abundance would challenge these monocultural and monolingual assumptions by inviting multiple forms of expression and citation. For instance, students could be encouraged to use citation styles from other cultural traditions (e.g., storytelling-based attribution, oral sources, or Indigenous knowledge protocols) alongside APA. Rather than assuming a single correct way to structure argumentation, the course could open space for diverse rhetorical strategies—such as using metaphor, dialogue, proverbs, or community voices—to make meaning. By doing so, the course would begin to reflect a decolonial orientation, one that acknowledges the legitimacy of multiple epistemologies and affirms students' linguistic and cultural identities as assets rather than deficiencies.

2. Prevalence of North American and European culture.

The course's reliance on a narrow, Eurocentric and North American cultural frame sustains its monocultural foundations, silencing alternative global perspectives and epistemologies. In Module 3, which focuses on Media Literacy, Media Awareness, and Evaluating Media, the materials assume familiarity with English-dominant, Western media ecosystems. There is no mention of non-English or non-Western media platforms, which reflects a missed opportunity to recognise the rich diversity of students' cultural contexts. For instance, while students may be asked to analyse the role of platforms like Facebook or YouTube, there is no invitation to explore popular media platforms such as WeChat in China, KakaoTalk in Korea, or Taringa in Latin America. Each of these platforms operates within specific cultural logics, user behaviors, and national policies on censorship, surveillance, and ethics. Imagine the depth and dynamism of classroom discussion if students were encouraged to bring in examples from their own media landscapes and analyse how cultural norms influence media use—how fake news circulates in different regions, how algorithms privilege certain voices over others, or how humour, protest, or community-building looks in diverse digital ecologies.

This absence of cultural plurality also shows up in the course's assignments. One task requires students to evaluate a North American or European advertisement—such as an ad from Adidas or Lincoln MKC—through rhetorical concepts like ethos, pathos, and logos. This task assumes shared familiarity with Western consumer culture and brand aesthetics. Yet for many international students or newcomers to Canada, the cultural codes embedded in these

advertisements may be opaque or irrelevant. A student unfamiliar with the aspirational identity marketed by Lincoln MKC, for instance, may struggle to analyse the ad's message or tone, not because of a lack of critical thinking skills, but because the assignment presumes a cultural fluency they do not yet possess. This results in a hidden curriculum that privileges North American cultural capital as a prerequisite for success.

A pedagogy of abundance would instead begin from the premise that all students arrive with valuable cultural knowledge and should be encouraged to draw on these knowledges to make meaning. Rather than analysing a pre-selected ad from a Western brand, students could be invited to choose advertisements or media texts from their own cultures and critically examine how they construct meaning, convey values, and engage audiences. This approach would not only affirm the students' identities and lived realities but also promote cross-cultural learning in the classroom. It would move the course from a model of knowledge transmission to one of knowledge co-creation, embodying the kind of pluriversal, transepistemic, and decolonial pedagogy that thinkers like Adichie, de Sousa Santos, and Meighan advocate.

3. Lack of student agency.

A significant limitation of the current writing course is the lack of student agency, particularly in how writing is taught and assessed. Students are expected to conform to a rigid, linear writing process that privileges a standardised model of academic discourse, often rooted in Eurocentric traditions. For instance, the course emphasizes a step-by-step writing process—prewriting, outlining, drafting, revising, and editing—as outlined on page 43 of the course textbook. This model reflects the classical (Aristotelian) mode of argumentation, which centres

logic, objectivity, and a linear progression of thought. While useful in some contexts, this singular approach fails to acknowledge other culturally grounded writing processes that may be recursive, oral-based, reflective, or collaborative in nature.

Moreover, the structural focus of the course reinforces whiteness through its prioritisation of genres such as the literature review, expository essay, and argumentative essay—forms historically embedded in Western academic traditions. For example, students are taught to write argumentative essays by adopting the classical rhetorical appeals of ethos, logos, and pathos, with little attention to narrative, dialogic, or community-centered forms of persuasion found in other epistemological traditions. Indigenous, diasporic, or feminist writing practices, which may rely on storytelling, relationality, or circular reasoning, are absent from the curriculum.

Student choice is also severely restricted when it comes to content. Course readings and videos assigned for analysis are selected exclusively by the instructor, often without opportunities for students to bring in texts that are personally meaningful or culturally relevant. By not allowing students to select their own texts, the course limits opportunities for learners to explore and apply course concepts to their lived experiences, thereby undermining the development of authentic voice and rhetorical agency.

In sum, this lack of flexibility in both process and content reflects a pedagogy of scarcity—one that privileges mastery of dominant forms over exploration, creativity, and epistemic diversity. A pedagogy of abundance, by contrast, would recognise multiple pathways

to meaning-making and position students as co-constructors of knowledge, not just consumers of a fixed academic tradition.

4. Lip service paid to inclusion and diversity.

Despite the rhetoric around inclusion and diversity in academic institutions, many course materials and pedagogical practices continue to centre Western epistemologies and uphold white, colonial standards as neutral or universal. Academic integrity, for example, is framed in strictly Western terms. The course textbook states, “Your research paper presents your thinking about a topic, supported and developed by other people’s ideas and information. It is crucial to always distinguish between the two—as you conduct research, as you plan your paper, and as you write. Failure to do so can lead to plagiarism” (p. 243). This framing does not account for cultural differences in how students from non-Western traditions understand authorship and intellectual ownership. In Chapter 2 of this dissertation, I examine how “good writing” is defined differently in Asian contexts compared to North America. In collectivist traditions such as those found in China and India, imitation of scholars is not seen as intellectual theft but as a sign of deep respect and learning—a way to show reverence for the knowledge and wisdom of established thinkers. Within these traditions, the act of reproducing the language of scholars can signify academic proficiency, not dishonesty.

Additionally, the course's conditional endorsement of code-meshing—allowing students to mix dialects or languages in their writing—is telling of the unequal power dynamics at play. As stated in the textbook, “In some cases, professors may allow code-meshing as long as the student provides a footnote with an English translation” (p. 218). This framing reinforces the

idea that English remains the default, the standard, and the legitimate language of academic discourse. The requirement for translation places the burden of justification on the student, subtly reinforcing the professor's linguistic authority. This performative gesture toward inclusivity—"you can code-mesh, but only if you explain yourself"—reeks of a magnanimous white saviour complex, where gatekeepers of academia benevolently "allow" deviations from standard English, so long as these deviations are rendered legible and acceptable within the dominant discourse.

The double standard is clearer when professors' own lack of clarity is seen as an opportunity for character-building. One section of the course text declares, "They think figuring it out yourself is good for you. Because your professors often succeeded in a much less supportive environment, they appreciate how learning to thrive in those conditions gave them life-long problem-solving skills. Many think you should be able to figure it out yourself and that it would be good practice for you to do so" (p. 7). This assumption that "struggling builds character" may reflect the personal experiences of certain professors, but it is not a universal truth. For students of colour, especially those navigating a system not built for them, such an approach can create additional barriers. It assumes a level playing field where none exists and glorifies resilience at the expense of equity. These pedagogical ideologies ultimately reinforce the very hierarchies they claim to disrupt, paying lip service to inclusion and diversity while maintaining systems that privilege Western norms and values.

5. Scholarly and empirical evidence over personal stories to build credibility.

The course textbook teaches students to evaluate an author's trustworthiness almost exclusively through institutional markers such as academic degrees, professional titles, or publication venue, implicitly centring a white, Western model of authority. It directs students: "To examine the author's credibility—that is, how much you can believe of what the author has to say—examine his or her credentials. What career experience or academic study shows that the author has the expertise to write about this topic?" (p. 95).

By treating peer-reviewed journals and academic press publications as the "gold-standard" of evidence (p. 109) and relegating personal narrative or community knowledge to the margins, the course reinforces a narrow view of knowledge, one which equates credibility with proximity to elite institutions. Students are instructed to "search research databases/library services" for their sources, with no acknowledgement that such databases often exclude Indigenous, oral-history, or grassroots publications. This approach not only treats lived experience as less valid but also positions APA referencing—based in Eurocentric norms—as the only legitimate way to cite knowledge.

From a decolonial perspective, this hierarchy of evidence constitutes a form of epistemic violence, silencing the very voices that scholarship on intersectionality and narrative inquiry (e.g., Crenshaw 1991; Delpit 1995) has shown to be crucial for addressing systemic injustice. By insisting on "objective" distance, the course ignores the fact that all knowledge is shaped by social and political contexts. In a world with many ways of knowing, true credibility must include testimonial knowledge, the stories and truths that communities of colour have

long used to record their resistance, survival, and joy. Without this broader understanding of knowledge, students are taught to value a narrow, institutional voice and overlook the very perspectives that decolonial education aims to uplift.

6. *Power dynamics is foregrounded and maintained by the professor.*

In this course, the professor is positioned as the ultimate enforcer of knowledge and assessment, a role that both reflects and reinforces the centring of whiteness in the classroom. By granting professors unchecked power over whether to use transparent, criterion-based rubrics or opaque, holistic grading, the text normalises an authoritarian teaching style rather than a student-centred one. As the course text explains:

"Not all professors use rubrics: some mark 'holistically' (which means that they evaluate the paper as a whole, versus 'analytically' where they break down the marks by criteria)." (p. 10)

This approach treats grading as a matter of personal choice instead of a shared teaching responsibility. When professors opt out of common rubrics, they reassert unilateral control over students' work, making it hard for students to understand what's expected and why. This lack of clarity recreates colonial classroom dynamics, where the teacher's unspoken rules become the standard, and students must figure out invisible expectations to succeed.

From a decolonial standpoint, both analytic and holistic grading can act as colonial tools if they're based on Western ideas of objectivity and mastery. A truly liberatory pedagogy would challenge these power imbalances by involving students in co-creating grading criteria, valuing different ways of showing knowledge, and making assessment more transparent. Holistic

grading, when paired with reflective conversations, can focus on student growth instead of just tallying right or wrong answers.

By leaving the choice of grading method solely in the professor's hands—without critical reflection on how that choice affects marginalised learners—the course text upholds a pedagogy of authority rather than one of partnership. Power is concentrated in the professor's hands, even as diversity is celebrated at the surface. A decolonial pedagogy asks us to redistribute that power: to shift from "professor knows best" toward a co-created classroom where assessment itself becomes a tool for liberation rather than control.

7. *Use of first-person pronoun is to be used sparingly because it is not academic enough.*

The textbook cautions that "using 'I' can diminish the paper's credibility by sounding overly biased" (p. 79), yet this perspective overlooks how first-person pronouns serve a crucial organisational purpose for English as an Additional Language (EAL) writers. These pronouns—such as "I" and "we"—act as signposts that guide readers through the writer's argument or explanation. For many EAL students, using "I argue," "I suggest," or "we observe" helps clarify who is making a claim, which is especially important when their first language may not emphasize authorial stance in the same way as Western academic English. Phrases like "In this section, I will describe…" or "Next, we turn to…" help structure ideas clearly and ease transitions between sections, providing a sense of coherence and direction that can be difficult to achieve when navigating unfamiliar rhetorical norms. In methodological writing, statements such as "I conducted interviews…" or "we analysed the data…" make the writer's role explicit and transparent. As MacIntyre (2019) observed, EAL students most often use first-person

pronouns to state a purpose or explain a procedure—functional, low-risk uses that enhance clarity rather than introduce bias.

By discouraging the use of "I" altogether, the course text not only disregards these valid rhetorical strategies but also reinforces a narrow, Western conception of academic voice that excludes multilingual and culturally diverse approaches to meaning making. A decolonial pedagogy would instead value these signposting moves as tools of accessibility and clarity.

Rather than policing the use of "I," educators should support all students in learning when and how personal pronouns can strengthen their writing, embracing a diversity of rhetorical practices while still maintaining academic rigour.

Overall, this course is designed to train students in both theoretical and practical rhetoric—specifically, how to identify rhetorical strategies within white, Eurocentric texts and how to craft a persuasive argument modelled on those conventions. Grounded in monocultural and monolingual assumptions, the course reinforces standard language ideology and a Eurocentric understanding of writing, while maintaining hierarchical power dynamics that centre the professor as the primary authority. Opportunities for students to question the course content or critically engage with the pedagogy are minimal, and there is little space for students to draw on their own cultural, linguistic, or social epistemologies. Despite engaging in interrogation of the rhetorical moves within texts, the course falls short of the liberatory, problem-posing pedagogy espoused by Paulo Freire which encourages students to reflect on their own positionality in relation to knowledge production and dominant ideologies. This course is one of many found in Canadian postsecondary institutions which works to socialise

students into a narrowly defined, Eurocentric model of academic writing, thereby sustaining the dominance of whiteness in educational spaces.

4.3. Course proposal for first year writing: Writing to Transgress

In the next section, I propose a writing course titled, “Writing to Transgress”, which has the following objectives:

1. embrace of trans-lingual, -cultural, -epistemic writing education.
2. cultivate critical awareness of the learner's positionality in their society.
3. provide learners self-agency to work within but also to push beyond a monocultural and monolingual writing system.
4. provide opportunities for learners to write their lived experiences into their work which could result in counterstories.

In a nutshell, this course aims to empower students to critically question their subject position in the world and to contest information and texts they consume from the point of view of their own lived experiences. The title, “Writing to Transgress” is based upon bell hooks’ text, “Teaching to Transgress”, which advocates for a transgressive education whereby education is a practice of freedom helping students to transgress against boundaries of racism, sexism, classicism, etc. to achieve liberation. In addition, I use this title to denote a syllabus which transgresses white epistemologies, and the single stories told by the majoritarian storytellers in academia about BIPOC.

Context:[140]

This is a 14-week face-to-face or synchronous online course which meets 3 hours per week. Students are first year community college students who are direct entries, i.e. students who have just completed high school, or non-direct entries, i.e. students who have worked for a couple of years after high school or mature students. The class is usually capped at 30 with students who hail from various countries of origin: India, China, Vietnam, Uganda, Nigeria, Iran, Columbia, Canada, Venezuela, Korea, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Some are Canadian citizens and PR while others are visa, international students. Some speak English as a mother tongue while the rest speak it as an additional language.

Writing to Transgress

(Please see Appendix M for full course which includes weekly topical outline, text and readings, assignments and labour-based grading rubric)

Detailed Course Description:

Mary Pipher (2007) asserts that "All writing is designed to change the world, at least a small part of the world, or in some small way perhaps a change in a reader's mood or in his appreciation of a certain kind of beauty." Why do we write? What compels us to write? What are the barriers to writing? How are students' voices encouraged to flourish in their writing? This course seeks to help students recognise and affirm their voices through writing as a tool for

[140] The context is similar to the context for the first-year writing course I analysed earlier. My hope is that this proposed course would replace the existing writing course.

inquiry for personal development and dialogue. Students review traditional (Eurocentric) writing conventions and analyse their own writing in consideration of these conventions. As such, students develop critical awareness of themselves as writers and are encouraged to make choices in their writing which sustain and nourish, not suppress, their voices and identities. Ultimately, this course hopes to empower students to transgress boundaries and limitations imposed by themselves and/or by society to embrace a pluriversal world. There will be opportunities to read, analyse and appreciate writing from writers from diverse cultural and social backgrounds. Evaluation in this course involves producing a portfolio of course work which includes a variety of learning experiences such as journaling, creative responses, online discussion posts, and collaborative assignments. A final grade will be awarded based on the amount of labour/work performed in the course rather than on approximation of the student's writing skill to a standardised, predefined ideal of good writing. (Inoue, 2022).[141]

Critical Performance: By the end of this course, students would have demonstrated the ability to use writing as a tool of inquiry to broaden their worldview and to develop their writing identity.

Learning Outcomes:

To achieve the critical performance, students will have demonstrated the ability to:

1. Explore their identity as a writer.

[141] Access article here: https://wac.colostate.edu/books/perspectives/labor

2. Analyse and respond to a variety of texts from diverse authors.
3. Integrate ideas and feedback from their peers into their writing.
4. Explore how race intersects with gender, sexuality and other identities in writing.
5. Collaborate with their peers on a research project.
6. Synthesize research to develop an argument on a social issue.

4.3.1. Rationale for course

I developed this course as an antithesis to the current first year writing courses that are in existence today at several GTA community colleges. These current writing courses focus on the deficit model, i.e. students do not have the requisite skills to write; hence, it is the job of the teacher to train them in the instruction of writing to conform to the established writing conventions in North America. This is called the "banking model of education" according to Paulo Freire.

Having taught writing for more than 15 years, I have witnessed firsthand how such courses marginalise and demoralise students, especially those who come from a multicultural, multilingual background. There is a prefabricated model of writing and language which is shown to students on the first of class and every student is expected to fit that mould. For students who speak English as a mother tongue or first language, often their barriers to writing a cogent piece of text is due to errors in register or mechanics. However, for students who speak English as an Additional or Foreign or Second language, their barriers are often due to the burden of learning another language which is culturally and ideologically different from their mother tongue.

In his seminal work, “Pedagogy of the Oppressed”, Paulo Freire was critical of the banking concept of education in which students were empty vessels or ‘accounts’ into which teachers make deposits. Freire opined that this philosophy of education led to the bureaucratisation of the mind. Instead, he wanted his students to see themselves in relation to a shared systemic and institutional world, and to discover how to assert their voices in such a world. I agree with Freire that we have to help our students see their subject position, their locus of enunciation, in relation to their society. I feel that with the current system of teaching writing, we are forcing our students to use language and prefabricated structures that in many instances cannot communicate their experiences. bell hooks and Geneva Smitherman were also opponents of the banking concept of education. Smitherman states that “students have a wealth of ‘lived experience’ that we can capitalize on.” (Smitherman, 2000, p. 159).

I believe that developing a writing course which allows students to discover their voices and identities empowers them to become better writers. When students have the freedom to write in their voices without the constriction of rules and to care about what they are writing about, their writing becomes powerful and loud. In “Teaching to Transgress”, bell hooks states that there is a “difference between education as the practice of freedom and education that merely strives to reinforce domination” (hooks, 1994, p. 4). I choose to adopt the former view of education as a “practice of freedom.” I chose to become a teacher who liberates students from the bondage of being uncritical and unanalytical because it is easy to get drawn into the collective rhetoric of the majority if you cannot think critically. hooks’ philosophy resonated so much with me that I took the liberty of naming my course “Writing to Transgress” because

transgressing limitations and boundaries is the ultimate objective of this course. In this course, students are encouraged to write in their voices and not solely focus on the academic writing conventions. Writing conventions are introduced to students not simply as rules to follow, but as frameworks that shape how writing is received within institutional and systemic contexts. Understanding these conventions helps students locate their writing in relation to dominant discourses and recognise their own subject positions within them. With this awareness, they can make informed rhetorical choices—either adopting, adapting, or resisting these conventions—to amplify their voices. In this way, students become critical and purposeful users of writing norms, rather than passive adherents. As Canagarajah states in "Decolonization as Pedagogy" (2023), "It bears emphasizing that decolonial scholars consider it an "enabling contradiction (Santos 2016: 238) that the colonized must work with the dominant ideologies, languages and norms for pluriversal alternatives." (p.10) This framing echoes Audre Lorde's provocation: while the master's tools cannot dismantle the master's house entirely, they can be repurposed to weaken its foundations and make space for something new.

In order to instil a critical consciousness in students' writing, the course requires them to look for patterns in their writing. These patterns could be patterns of "errors" throughout their work, patterns of word choice, punctuation, sentence structure, argument structure, etc. As Mina Shaughnessy states in "Errors and Expectations", "All codes become codes by doing some things regularly and not others and it is not so much the ultimate logic of these regularities that makes them obligatory but rather the fact that, logical or no, they have become habitual to those who communicate within that code." (Shaughnessy, 1977, p. 12). Once students are aware of their habits, they can choose to unlearn them if these habits do not

serve their writing. The power of choice seems to be absent in writing courses today and by giving students choice, a writing teacher can be sure that the student writing that is submitted will be more purposeful and powerful.

Suresh Canagarajah's article, "Codemeshing in Academic Writing: Identifying Teachable Strategies of Translanguaging", an ethnographic study of his student, Buthainah, who employs code-meshing strategies in her writing is an example of how giving choice to students empowers and emboldens them. Throughout the writing process in Canagarajah's class, Buthainah's voice grew louder and stronger. In fact, Canagarajah states that, "Buthainah's choices [became] more effective, daring, and creative in successive drafts." (Canagarajah, 2011, p. 413). This example indicates that when teachers deliberately create conditions in the classroom which allow students the power of choice, it allows for student voices to be celebrated, not stifled. For when students can articulate the "whys" of their choices, they write with purpose and meaning, and in their own voices. In designing this course, I prioritised student choice, which led me to adopt labour-based grading instead of traditional grading. This approach gives students the agency to decide what grade they would like to earn, based on their completion of the required labour associated with that grade. The grading contract I've adapted comes from Dr. Asao B. Inoue from his 2023 book, "Cripping Labor-Based Grading for More Equity in Literacy Courses". In this latest book, Inoue expands his earlier work on labour-based assessment by bringing in a disability justice lens. While his 2019 book framed labour-based grading as a way to resist white language supremacy, the 2023 text deepens this work by "cripping" the model—challenging ableist assumptions about time, effort, and productivity.

Inoue argues that even antiracist grading can reinforce norms that exclude students with disabilities, mental health challenges, or neurodivergence. By reimagining labour as flexible, contextual, and co-constructed, he invites educators to centre access, care, and relationality in writing assessment. This move aligns with the pedagogy of “Writing to Transgress”, which not only challenges white normative standards, but also actively affirms and values multiple ways of knowing, doing, and being in the classroom. As long as students fulfil their part of the contract, they are guaranteed an A+ grade. While the contract offers clear expectations, it also allows space for negotiation and flexibility. One feature of the contract is the "Please" Plea, adapted from Inoue’s “One Gimme”, which allows students to request accommodations for missed work due to extenuating circumstances. Overall, this grading framework supports self-determination and equity for all students, regardless of their linguistic or socio-cultural backgrounds, aligning with Freire’s vision of liberatory pedagogy where self-determination is essential.

4.3.2. Labour-based grading[142]

Below is an excerpt taken from the course outline (in Appendix M) which describes the grading contract for this course:

[142]I have adapted this contract from Asao B. Inoue’s 2023 book, “Cripping Labor-Based Grading for More Equity in Literacy Courses”. lbg.pdf

A “A+” grade (GPA of 4.0)[143] in the course is guaranteed if you meet all of the following conditions:

1. **Participate in good faith.** You agree to fully participate in good faith in our scheduled classes, activities, and assignments, including online discussions on SLATE (the Learning Management System). Engagement is not a one-size-fits-all expectation, and what participation looks like may vary based on your individual learning style and needs, as long as it reflects consistent, meaningful involvement for you. This includes collaborating with peers and helping foster a respectful, inclusive learning environment where all voices are welcomed and valued.

2. **Practice Compassion.** You agree to engage with our course community with care—for yourself and others. This includes working respectfully with peers, offering thoughtful feedback, and valuing diverse perspectives. Compassionate participation means recognizing different capacities and honouring our shared class charter—our co-created agreement on how we will learn and grow together.

3. **Timeliness and Completion**. You agree to submit all work on time and in full, following the labour instructions for each assignment. If you need to turn something in late, it will only count against your contract if it affects your peers (i.e. pair or group work). These “fixed due date” assignments are critical and turning them in late will impact your grade. Late work is defined as anything submitted after the due date but before the last class of the

[143]Please see here for grading policy: https://myotr.sheridancollege.ca/grading_systems.html#Grades3

term. Keep in mind that late submissions may not receive feedback from peers or me, limiting your learning opportunities. Complete all work on time, in the spirit it is assigned, and in good faith. You agree to submit all assignments on time and in the appropriate manner, following the given instructions and being mindful of how much time you need to dedicate to each task.

4. **Missed Work.** You agree to complete all required work by the last class of the term. "Missed work" refers to any assignments that are not submitted or accounted for by that deadline. Missing work hinders your growth as a learner in our community, and accumulating missed assignments will prevent you from meeting the expectations outlined in our contract (see the table below).

5. **“Please” plea.** You can use your “Please” plea only once in the semester. In the event you submit an assignment late or are not able to submit an assignment due to an *unforeseen and exceptional reason*, you are allowed to use this plea. Your plea will be assessed and considered by the instructor with the aim of maintaining fairness to other students in the class. This plea is not a way to bypass the labour contract expectations but is intended for exceptional circumstances beyond your control.

The table below outlines the key components that determine how well you meet our labour-based grading contract. The grades shown in the first column are the only possible final grades for this course—there are no partial grades like C+ or B-. Some assignments are marked “fixed due date” on SLATE. These include the online discussion forums, the position paper, and the visual essay. If these are turned in late, they will affect your final grade. Other assignments are

more flexible. While they don't count against your contract if submitted late, they must still be completed by the final class of the term. If they are not submitted by then, they will count as "missed labours."

Please note: The visual essay is especially important to your learning in this course. If it is not submitted, it will count as two missed assignments and result in a final grade of D.

Figure 7: Snapshot of how labour-based grading contract works

Grade	Non-participation days	Late or incomplete assignments or work	Missed assignments
A+ (4.0)	3	2	0
A (4.0)	3	3	0
B (3.0)	4	4	0
C (2.0)	5	5	1
D (1.0)	6	6	2
F (0.0)	7	7	3

4.3.3. Engaged Pedagogy

Another feature of “Writing to Transgress” which aligns with hooks' philosophy of teaching and one which resonates strongly with me, is that of “engaged pedagogy”. I truly believe that a classroom is a space for intellectual rigour and a space for fun. Both are not mutually exclusive. If teachers perceive our students as unique individuals, we will make every effort to learn and embrace different cultural codes that are present in our classes and adopt a pedagogy of abundance in terms of content, methodologies, knowledges, etc. Often, I have had students from more than ten different cultures in my writing class and my aim is always to ensure that my class is inclusive and personalised enough for each student to be able to engage authentically in the course. One of the ways I ensure an engaged pedagogy in my class is to design a multimedia and experiential learning experience. “Writing to Transgress” incorporates journaling, online discussions, collaborative work, reflections, and an encounter with a Canadian immigrant writer (for example, Ian Williams, Kamal Al-Solaylee, Souvankham Thammavongsa or Shyam Selvadurai) who discusses the struggles of discovering their authentic identities and voices. Al-Solaylee seeks to begin a conversation on “issues of race and skin colour that have been interpreted along black and white lines, leaving out millions of people whose stories of migration and racial experiences have shaped our modern world.” (Solaylee, blurb). Al-Solaylee also reflects on his own identity and experiences as a brown-skinned person (in his case from Yemen) who has grown up with images of whiteness as the only indicators of beauty and desire. Williams’ autobiography expounds on his experiences as a Black man navigating a white world living in Canada. His aim is to foreground everyday racism, “to create a conversational space for us to talk about race in Canada in ways that are not punitive or

didactic, but just open, transparent and sincere…".Thammavongsa's collection of short stories "vividly captures the day-to-day lives of immigrants and refugees, illuminating their hopes, disappointments, love affairs, acts of defiance — and, above all, their pursuit of a place to belong." Selvadurai's coming of age novel foregrounds a boy's sexual awakening and maturity in a large Tamil family amidst a civil war in Sri Lanka. The novel knits together the struggles of sexuality, ethnicity and class.

Having any one of these guest authors share their stories with students in this writing class provides a platform for the often-hushed non-dominant voices but also nurtures empathy and solidarity in students who come from dominant groups.

Finally, I hope that this course helps students in their journey towards self-actualization. hooks reminds us that Thich Nhat Hanh speaks of "the teacher as a healer" (hooks, 1994, p.14) responsible for creating a holistic learning space that nurtures mind, body, and spirit. Education is not just about acquiring knowledge from books, but also to gain "knowledge about how to live [meaningfully] in the world." (hooks, 1994, p. 15). The practices embedded in this course—journaling, reflection papers, peer feedback, class dialogue, reading and analysing diverse texts, and identifying writing patterns—are all part of this journey. Metacognitive tools like journaling and reflection have been shown to help students transfer and adapt learning to new contexts (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000, p. 12). These tools empower students to navigate and eventually challenge the institutional rules around them, using those rules strategically—and even breaking them with confidence—to meet their own goals.

In summary, this chapter has explored what a pedagogy of abundance might look like in practice through the proposed course, "Writing to Transgress". It also highlights the ways in which current writing courses often lack abundance in their curriculum, pedagogy, and purpose. Rooted in the Habits of White Language (HOWL),[144]these courses tend to promote a narrow, prescriptive view of good writing—one grounded in Standard English ideology and a Eurocentric writing process. My hope is that this chapter encourages writing instructors and program administrators to widen the door—to make space for multiple epistemologies and ways of knowing—so we can interrupt the single story that continues to dominate writing classrooms and academic discourse.

End of Chapter

[144] For a refresher on HOWL, please see Chapter 1.

Chapter 5: Storying Abundance Beyond Whiteness

This final chapter gathers the threads of this dissertation into a forward-looking reflection on what it means to imagine and enact decolonial futures in education. While much of this work has centred on critique of linguistic imperialism, the colonisation of minds, and the pervasive dominance of whiteness, this chapter deliberately shifts toward possibility. It is grounded in the stories shared throughout and embraces abundance not as a utopian ideal, but as a pedagogical and epistemic stance that resists deficit-based thinking.

Abundance is found in voice, in multiplicity, and in the collective effort to imagine just and liberatory ways of knowing, teaching, and being. This chapter affirms that transformation does not begin within systems but through the courage to tell a different, more inclusive story. It marks both a conclusion and a beginning—an offering of hope, complexity, and invitation to continue the work, one story at a time.

To this end, this chapter revisits the six goals outlined in the introduction, tracing how each has been explored and realised throughout the dissertation. It reflects on their broader implications for educators, scholars, and practitioners committed to decolonial change. In closing, it offers a glimpse of future possibilities for research and practice, suggesting new avenues that extend from the work already done.

5.1. Reflecting on the six goals

This dissertation fulfils the **first goal** by tracing my long and layered journey toward the decolonisation of self, spanning my upbringing in Singapore to my current role as a woman of

colour, educator, and writing program administrator in Canada. Through the Introduction and Chapters 1 to 4, I map how I was institutionalised into whiteness through colonial education systems in both Asia and North America, and how this shaped my perceptions, practices, and pedagogical stance. By critically reflecting on my experiences across three subject positions—student, teacher, and administrator—I uncover how the internalisation of white norms operates across borders and how I have begun the recursive, nonlinear work of unlearning and resisting these forces.

This autoethnographic exploration not only highlights the personal dimensions of decolonial work but also models a pedagogy of reflexivity that is essential for educators. It underscores that decolonising education begins with the self, requiring educators to interrogate their own complicity, listen to counterstories, and challenge institutional norms that marginalise difference. My journey illustrates that real change in education must be rooted in a willingness to engage discomfort, embrace complexity, and reimagine identity beyond the dominant frameworks of whiteness.

The **second goal**—to show how educational systems across geographic and cultural contexts uphold and reproduce white supremacy—is addressed through the cross-contextual analysis in Chapter 2. I juxtapose my own experiences of convent schooling in Singapore with the testimonies of Indigenous residential school survivors in Canada to reveal the common colonial logic underpinning both institutions.

Despite their different locations and histories, both educational systems functioned as tools of assimilation, privileging Western knowledge systems while erasing local, cultural, and

Indigenous epistemologies. This comparative analysis illustrates how white supremacy in education is a global phenomenon, manifested through standardised curricula, linguistic hierarchies, and pedagogies of conformity.

For educators, this calls for a reckoning with the transnational reach of coloniality in our classrooms. It calls for a shift toward practices that centre multiplicity, validate diverse cultural knowledges, and actively dismantle the legacy of colonial education—regardless of where one teaches.

The **third goal**—to interrogate the everyday pervasiveness of racist ideology embedded in systems and structures of postsecondary writing education—is fulfilled in Chapters 1, 2, and 4. These chapters expose how whiteness operates as the invisible norm, shaping pedagogical practices, curriculum design, and definitions of credibility and academic voice. Through autoethnographic reflection, critical race theory, and a close analysis of a first-year writing course, I demonstrate how white epistemology is upheld as neutral and universal, thereby marginalising the lived realities, linguistic practices, and intellectual contributions of minoritised students. This ideology is so deeply ingrained that it often goes unnoticed—even by racialised individuals who have been conditioned to accept it as standard.

For educators, this interrogation is a call to critically examine the taken-for-granted norms that govern their classrooms. It asks them to reflect on how their own practices might reinforce *epistemic exclusion*—the systematic marginalisation of non-dominant ways of knowing—and to commit to pedagogies that make visible and disrupt the privileging of

whiteness. Recognising and naming these invisible structures is a necessary first step toward creating writing classrooms that are equitable, pluralistic, and truly inclusive.

The **fourth goal**—to explore how students and teachers might gain awareness of this embedded racism and disrupt it—is realised through the collaborative work of the five-year Translingualism project discussed in Chapter 3. This partnership with English tutors created a shared anti-racist community of practice where educators and students could critically reflect on their roles within systems of racialised power. Using the framework of Translingualism, this project challenged monolingual assumptions and emphasised the value of linguistic diversity in academic contexts.

Chapter 3 also presents a composite counterstory that centres marginalised voices and illustrates how personal narrative, grounded in lived experience, can serve as a powerful tool for resisting dominant ideologies. In Chapter 4, I extend this analysis by critically examining a first-year writing course rooted in white epistemology, revealing how exclusionary practices are embedded in its very structure.

For educators, this work underscores the importance of building communities of critical inquiry and reflection. It shows that engaging with anti-racist scholarship, valuing lived experience, and fostering spaces for counterstorytelling are essential to disrupting the normative whiteness that underpins much of postsecondary writing education.

The **fifth goal**—to share the labour of shifting institutional attitudes and culture toward inclusivity—is achieved through the intentional and sustained efforts documented in Chapter 3. By curating and sharing "stories of becoming"—narratives that trace personal and collective

journeys of racial and epistemological awakening—I demonstrate how storytelling can function as a powerful pedagogical and activist tool to de-centre whiteness and validate multiple ways of knowing and being. These stories were not offered as isolated reflections, but as deliberate interventions aimed at fostering empathy, building community, and promoting institutional change.

For educators, this work underscores the necessity of recognising and engaging in the often invisible labour required to dismantle dominant ideologies in educational institutions. It signals that meaningful change involves more than policy shifts; it demands personal investment, critical reflection, and a willingness to challenge norms. My approach illustrates how educators can use their positionality and praxis to foster environments that are more accepting of difference and supportive of epistemic justice.

The **sixth goal**—to propose alternate, empowering methods for teaching writing—is fulfilled in Chapter 4 through the articulation of a counter-hegemonic writing pedagogy. Drawing on Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's "danger of a single story," Paulo Freire's problem-posing model, and my own conceptualisation of a "pedagogy of abundance," I offer a reimagined first-year writing course titled, "Writing to Transgress". This course, still a work in progress, is designed to create intentional space for students—especially those from minoritised communities—to write from their lived experiences, resist assimilation into dominant discourses, and embrace writing as a tool for self-discovery, resistance, and liberation.

For educators, this work calls for a fundamental shift in how writing is taught. It challenges the notion of a neutral, universal standard and instead encourages pedagogies that validate multiple ways of knowing, being, and expressing. Educators are urged to move beyond simply including diverse content and toward creating structural changes that allow all students, not just those who already feel they belong, to see themselves as legitimate knowledge producers. The proposed methods invite educators to reflect on their own complicity in maintaining dominant narratives and to consider how they might co-create classrooms that are more inclusive, dialogic, and affirming of students' full identities.

Together, these six goals reflect a praxis of critical hope and institutional disruption. They show how decolonial change begins with the personal, but must ultimately extend into pedagogical, curricular, and institutional transformation. The following section offers reflections on future research and practice that can emerge from this work.

5.2. Future opportunities and research

The work explored in this dissertation opens multiple pathways for further research, pedagogical innovation, and institutional transformation. Each of the goals revisited above does not signal an end, but rather a beginning—a horizon of possibility where educators, researchers, and students continue the ongoing labour of challenging dominant narratives and building educational spaces that are inclusive, liberatory, and abundant. The following areas represent key opportunities for further development:

1. *Publishing More Stories from the Margins to Counter Stories at the Centre*

One of the most meaningful contributions of this dissertation is the use of (counter)storytelling to highlight the voices and knowledge of people who have been historically marginalised. There is a clear need for more stories that push back against dominant narratives, especially in academic and institutional spaces. Future research could explore how (counter)story can be used not just as a research method, but also as a teaching tool in student writing, course design, and public work. These stories are a form of reclamation: they challenge assumptions about who holds knowledge and what kinds of knowledge are seen as legitimate.

2. *Enhancing the Recognition and Acceptance of Counterstory as a Valid Form of Research*

Even though there is growing interest in different ways of doing research, many educational institutions still hold on tightly to traditional, scientific approaches. Counterstory, rooted in real-life experiences and critical race theory, offers a powerful alternative by bringing personal voices and identities to the forefront. It challenges the idea that only certain types of knowledge matter. Moving forward, we need to make space for counterstory as real, valuable work, especially for racialised scholars and students whose stories have often been ignored. This means we need to rethink how we write dissertations, how research is reviewed, and how we define and recognise scholarly contribution, so that storytelling is not seen as antithetical to research.

3. *Advancing Transepistemic and Pluriversal Approaches in Teacher Education*

The theories of Boaventura de Sousa Santos and Paul Meighan open up exciting possibilities for rethinking how we design courses, especially in teacher education. Future research could explore what it really looks like to build classes around an ecology of knowledges, where Indigenous, local, ancestral, and embodied knowledge aren't just add-ons, but part of the foundation. Transepistemic education pushes us to go beyond simply including difference. It's about building real relationships, learning from each other, and creating knowledge together. This is especially important when it comes to preparing future teachers, since they'll shape the classrooms that either challenge or reinforce unfair systems of knowledge.

4. *Researching the Classroom Application of a Pedagogy of Abundance*

The concept of a "pedagogy of abundance," as I have articulated in this dissertation, is all about seeing the classroom as a space full of potential, not a place where students are lacking or needing to be fixed. It's about building learning environments grounded in care, creativity, and possibility. Future research could include case studies of teachers using this pedagogy in various classroom contexts by examining how abundance shapes curriculum design, classroom dynamics, assessment practices, and student engagement. There are some important questions for us to keep asking: What happens when we treat students' lived experiences as the heart of learning? How does a pedagogy of abundance change the power dynamics in the classroom? What are the barriers of implementing such a model within existing academic structures?

5. *Creating First-Year Writing Courses that Centre Writing as Self-Discovery and Actualization*

As proposed in chapter 4, the "Writing to Transgress" course reimagines first-year writing as a space for abundance and freedom, not conformity. This course views writing as a tool for self-expression, critical thinking, and social change instead of focusing on strict academic norms. In the future, efforts could focus on testing and refining these types of courses, gathering student feedback, and establishing a community of educators committed to decolonial and liberatory writing practices. This approach also provides valuable opportunities to explore how writing can empower students to take control of their own stories, both within the classroom and beyond.

These future directions highlight the ongoing effort to transform educational systems from within. They encourage educators, scholars, and leaders to envision more inclusive futures and work together with courage, creativity, and care.

5.3. A Note on Incompleteness

This dissertation foregrounds one story —my own. While that might seem like a limitation, it's actually an invitation for others to share their stories too. My story, though personal, echoes the experiences of many other BIPOC individuals with similar journeys. It's a starting point, a thread in the larger, collective effort toward decolonial transformation. Throughout this work, there is space for the stories still untold, the voices not yet heard, and the knowledge still waiting to be shared. A pedagogy of abundance reminds us that no single voice holds all the wisdom. What matters is the space we create for many voices to enter, to

shape, to challenge, and to grow. This work, then, is intentionally incomplete. It is a call—an invitation to keep weaving a future rich with diversity, possibility, and care.

5.4. Closing Reflection

Changing Education One Story at a Time is a call to action—especially for people of colour—to courageously share their lived experiences and speak their truths. There is space for the full complexity of our stories in education. And now, more than ever, these stories must be voiced. As equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts face mounting resistance across institutions and the nation, storytelling becomes an act of defiance—a radical tool of disruption. When we dare to tell different stories—ones that resist, reimagine, and reorient—we begin to create a rip, a tear, in the carefully stitched canvas of whiteness and whiteliness that shapes our educational systems. And through that tear, something new, something abundant, can begin to emerge.

End of Chapter

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Appendices

APPENDIX A: Hindsight 2020: Academic Integrity Forum, Tuesday, September 8, 2020

Please see agenda and descriptions of each session below:

Agenda

9.00-9.15 am	***Welcome and Background to Hindsight 2020***	
9.15-9.45am	Session 1A- ***Academic Integrity Across the Disciplines: Insights from the Literature & Research-*** Janet Shuh	Session 1B - ***Seeing the Whole Student When Adjudicating Academic Integrity Breaches***- Stephanie Samboo
10.00-10.30am	Session 2A- ***The Professor's Guide to Dealing with Plagiarism in Academic Writing-*** Sandra Shoufani & Nicole Zhang	Session 2B- ***Visual Plagiarism***- Sam Cheng
10.45- 11.15am	Session 3A- ***Scarcity and Compassion in the Culture of Academic Integrity***- Julie Warkentin	
11.30- 12noon	Session 4A- ***Contract Cheating: Strategies for Detection and Prevention-*** Angela Clark	Session 4B- ***Academic Integrity: Lost in Translation***- Patrice Esson
12.00-1.00pm	Break for lunch	
1.00-1.30pm	Session 5A- ***Authentic Assessment by Design***- Paula Ogg & Kathleen Oakey	
2.00-3.00pm	***Student-Faculty Panel***	
3.00-3.15pm	***Thank you and Closing***	

Descriptions of each Session

Session 1A: Academic Integrity Across the Disciplines: Insights from the Literature & Research

Janet Shuh, Associate Dean, Educational Development & Technology, CTL

This session will explore how academic integrity has been defined in the literature as well as examine how integrity and dishonesty manifest across diverse academic disciplines. Selected findings from a large research project, conducted at the University of Toronto, will be shared to show how professors from the arts/humanities versus applied sciences understand and experience academic integrity differently – or the same. Insights from the literature on how dominant assessment approaches in specific academic disciplines influence the types of integrity breaches experienced (i.e. cheating, plagiarism, falsification of lab data etc.) will be explored. Lastly, strategies and approaches for discussing and fostering a culture of academic integrity that is authentic to one's academic discipline and teaching pedagogy will be suggested.

Session 1B: Seeing the Whole Student When Adjudicating Academic Integrity Breaches

Stephanie Samboo, Associate Dean, FHASS

As an Associate Dean, one of my responsibilities is adjudicating second and higher-level breaches of Academic Integrity. Over the years, I have come into contact with a countless number of students from whom I have learnt that oftentimes breaching Academic Integrity is usually a symptom of an issue they are facing in their lives.

As such, I have learnt the importance of seeing the whole student and hearing their stories before making a decision on the sanction. Indigenous author, Richard Wagamese, puts it beautifully: "All that we are is story. From the moment we are born to the time we continue on our spirit journey, we are involved in the creation of the story of our time here. … and [when] we take the time to share those stories with each other, we get bigger inside, we see each other, we recognize our kinship – we change the world, one story at a time…"

I believe that by listening to our students' stories and sharing ours, we will not only be able to facilitate our students' academic growth in a safe and compassionate environment, but also effect a positive change. During this session, I will share my process on how I adjudicate a breach, specifically, the questions I ask myself and the student. I will also share with you a student's story which has affected me deeply.

Session 2A: The Professor's Guide to Dealing with Plagiarism in Academic Writing

Sandra Shoufani, Liaison Librarian, CAPS & PSB Finance and HR Programs, LLS &

Nicole Zhang, Liaison Librarian, PSB, LLS

This session will focus on plagiarism as it relates to written assignments with an emphasis on first year students. We will discuss what constitutes plagiarism, frame why plagiarism happens in your classes, offer practical tips on what you can do to reduce the gap between what you expect and what your students produce, and show how Library and Learning Services can support you and your students.

Session 2B: Visual plagiarism

Sam Cheng, Copyright Coordinator, LLS

Visual plagiarism refers to students copying and using images and other visual-based materials when their assignments require them to do original creative work. In the modern digital environment where it is easy to copy and manipulate images, some students may not understand the differences between inspiration/interpretation and copying.

This session will engage participants in a discussion about visual plagiarism. Faculty will be encouraged to share their experiences and thoughts on the visual plagiarism problems that they have encountered with students. Some of the questions we will explore include:

- What is visual plagiarism?
- What are the different expectations in the academic, professional and legal environments?
- How does the Canadian Copyright Act address visual copying?

Real-world scenarios will be used as springboards for discussion. The information gathered from this session will help the presenter, the Academic Integrity Office and other stakeholders to develop educational resources for students in the near future.

Session 3A: Scarcity and Compassion in the Culture of Academic Integrity

Julie Warkentin, English Coordinator and Professor, FHASS

Scarcity thrives in a culture where everyone is hyperaware of lack. Everything from safety and love to money and resources feels restricted or lacking […] The greatest casualties of a scarcity culture are our willingness to own our vulnerabilities and our ability to engage with the world from a place of worthiness – Brené Brown

Many faculty members are familiar with "The Talk" – that is, that awkward discussion that occurs with a student when a breach of academic integrity (AI) happens. At the root of these discussions seems to be a common thread: vulnerability. While AI breach conversations are a vulnerable encounter for both the student and the professor, this session will focus predominantly on understanding and dealing with these scenarios from a faculty perspective in the hopes of providing better insight into student paradigms of academic misconduct. By understanding concepts of scarcity and exposing the legacy traumas that faculty may be carrying unwittingly into the classroom, we can become better equipped to confront cognitive biases and avoidance tactics that may be hindering their abilities to have engaged and productive conversations with students around concerns related to academic integrity.

Session 4A: Contract Cheating: Strategies for Detection and Prevention

Angela Clark, Academic Integrity Facilitator, LLS

Although it is widely acknowledged that contract cheating is a serious problem in higher education today, little is known about how to combat the problem. Contract cheating occurs when a student outsources their academic work to a third party and then submits this work as their own. The work is typically original in nature, and therefore, contract cheating is difficult to detect and to prove. Students who engage in the practice of contract cheating are not meeting required learning outcomes, and as a result, contract cheating works to ultimately erode academic standards and academic quality. This session will present the latest research on contract cheating and will provide practical strategies to faculty members for detecting contracted work, as well as assessment design and teaching strategies that can be applied in order to prevent contract cheating from occurring.

Session 4B: Academic Integrity – Lost in Translation
Patrice Esson, Associate Director, International Centre

International students face many new, exciting and sometimes daunting experiences when they begin their educational journeys in Canada. For many of them the Canadian classroom is their first introduction to the term academic integrity, and for some the guidelines, rules and regulations that guide our approach to academic Integrity simply get lost in translation.

We invite you to come on a journey with us. Stops will be made along the way to learn about some international students' experiences and perceptions of academic integrity. We will also explore how some cultures view behaviours such as providing help to peers and the use and repetition of the words of wise persons. Our final stop will take us into the land of classroom

pedagogy where we will learn how some Sheridan professors are helping international students bridge the gap between the known and unknown in order to facilitate their understanding and practice of Canadian academic integrity rules and guidelines. We hope you leave the session with a better understanding of the international student experience and with some strategies that you can employ in explaining academic integrity and its related actions to international students.

Session 5A: Authentic Assessment by Design

Paula Ogg, Professor, CTL & Kathleen Oakey, Liaison Librarian, FHASS, LLS

Have you ever considered how changing your assessment design could increase academic integrity?

Would you like to explore how to design authentic assessments across the curriculum using creativity and choice to engage students in original and contemporary assignments? Do you know how to scaffold assignments to support students as they learn academic, disciplinary, and global skills?

Would you like to explore how to design high quality rubrics for common skills to support assignments, projects, and group work? Do you know how to select criteria, write descriptors, and scaffold levels of progression?

Would you like to explore how to design high quality multiple choice questions that target higher order thinking? Do you know how to use the SLATE Quiz features to randomize questions, provide feedback and hints, grade quickly, create mathematical equations, write case study text scenarios, or add images, video, or embed code.

Have you ever considered open book quizzes, collaborative quizzes, or collaborative writing?

Student-Faculty panel moderated by Alia Somani, Professor, FHASS

During this panel discussion, we hope to gain insights from both students and faculty on their lived experiences with academic integrity. How do faculty educate students on Academic Integrity? What best practices could be shared with other faculty? Are breaches of Academic Integrity seen as an opportunity to educate? Do students understand academic expectations? What are some of the barriers which hinder students from understanding academic integrity? What are some of the struggles students face when trying to comply with Academic Integrity expectations? What could we do better as a community to facilitate academic integrity in a safe and compassionate way?

APPENDIX B: Translingualism Presentation (Winter 2022)

Please access presentation here:

https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:us:c2c6d630-e382-43e4-a514-244f9239a1e7

APPENDIX C: Who are our learners? (Fall 2019)

Please access presentation here:

https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:US:7c9e83c9-2c15-4a1a-a84d-0d303686311e

APPENDIX D: Tutor manual created by 2018 English Tutors

WHAT A WRITER WANTS Summary:

The model of non-directive , writer based peer-tutoring is where tutors focus on making the students the primary agent in their sessions. Tutors attempt to refrain from giving directive and perspective advice but rather act as 'soundboards' for their students, in order to echo and foster the writing voice they already have. It is important that tutors move the student's self view towards 'participants' and away from 'observers'. In addition tutors should guide sessions in a way that fulfills current goals but fosters long term development. Research finds that the top concern for writers/students was grammar, a more local concern and issues premised in the mechanics of the text. Whereas tutors' top concerns are argument centred, closely related to thought process and considered a global concern. A local suggestion works within paragraphs, sentence structure, transitions, introductions and conclusions. Local suggestions address the larger scale, including 'content, focus, organization, point of view, and tone'. Thirdly, proofreading suggestions cater to more specific issues like grammar, citation, word choice etc. Formal writing centre discipline emphasizes that tutors should follow the hierarchy addressing global first, local and then proofreading last.

○ When working with a student remember to **take a step back and encourage the writer to take control**. This way the students can you see a personable partner instead of an 'expert'.

○ try to stay away from strictly grammatical revision but instead redirect and **"engage in a discussion about which choices most effectively convey the writer's meaning"**, this will lend to the session going beyond the sentence level.

Apply It!

Test Your Understanding! One of your regular ESL students comes in and has specific sentences highlighted that he wants you to correct. The mistakes you observe are the same as usual and you're hoping to help him beyond these simple grammatical revisions. Identify how you would gear the session to address :

1) A proofreading concern:

2) A Local concern:

3) A Global concern:

Raymond, L., & Quinn, Z. (2012). What a writer wants: Assessing fulfillment of student goals in writing

center tutoring sessions. *The Writing Center Journal, 32*(1), 64-77.

Bell, D. C., & Elledge, S. R. (2008). Dominance and peer tutoring sessions with English language learners. *The Learning Assistance Review, 13*(1), 17.

MOTIVATIONAL SCAFFOLDING Summary:

Motivational scaffolding is a phenomenon and strategy developed from collaborative mother and child experiments in the late 70s. When providing young children with the difficult task to build towers with blocks, one-to-one assistance was provided to help achieve this task. This assistance is referred to as 'scaffolding'. The adult structures and motivates the child to participate and

sometimes helps them perform, guaranteeing success and gradually allow the child to perform the task on their own.

A student's 'region of sensitivity to instruction' and 'zone of proximal development' is important to note, as scaffolding only works well within these parameters. This refers to a student's readiness to take on a particular task , taking into account their current learning potential, cognitive range and boundaries.

There are 5 types of motivational scaffolding:

1. Praise - praise them for specific achievements

PRO TIP: Focus on Process Praise (a student's performance) and not Person Praise (their innate unchangeable characteristics such as 'you're smart')

2. Statements of encouragement or optimism about student's possibilities for success - directly encourage agency with reference to effort and persistence

3. Demonstrations of concern for students - by showing care you're creating a safe and positive environment

4. Expressions of sympathy and empathy- show that you understand the difficulty of the task, this can include confession of your own academic struggles

5. Reinforcement of Student's feelings of ownership and control - to help develop self-regulation

○ Educators and tutors must discern **what a student can do independently versus what tasks require assistance**.

○ **Make the writing task more manageable** for each individual student "without simplifying the outcome"

○ Encourage student's persistence towards certain tasks outside of their range

Apply It!

○ **Use motivational language** and active participation to reduce a student's frustration and anxiety towards harder tasks

Test Your Understanding! Give an example of how you would respond to the following monologue using each of the 5 motivational types:

Student: This assignment is really difficult for me! I don't even know where to begin even though it's very similar to the last paper we wrote in this class. I mean... yeah, I guess I did well on that last paper, but this just seems so much harder. I have a feeling that I'm going to have to stay up all night and I haven't gotten a full night of rest in what seems like forever.

Tutor (Praise) :

Tutor (Statements of Encouragement) :

Tutor (Demonstration of concern) :

Tutor (Expressions of Sympathy Or Empathy) :

Tutor (Reinforcement of Ownership and Control) :

Mackiewicz, J., & Thompson, I. (2013). Motivational scaffolding, politeness, and writing center tutoring. *The Writing Center Journal, 33*(1), 38-73.

LINGUISTIC POLITENESS AND PEER TUTORING

Summary:

Politeness theory describes how individuals typically strive to preserve the self-image of those with whom they socially interact, as there exists a mutual vulnerability between participants of most conversations. The theory separates politeness into positive and negative categories. Positive politeness is used to describe a speaker's utterances that support the listeners ego, such as compliments, agreement, and optimism. Negative politeness is the opposite; it refers to utterances that hinder the free will of the listener, and in doing so, do not comply with the ego of the listener.

Apply It!

To use negative politeness in a socially acceptable manner, we need to be indirect, passive, use hedges, and weave apologetic sentiments into our utterances as to not over-impose our advice and/or direction onto our student. After all, we as tutors, are attempting to delicately balance our roles as a peer and as an authoritative figure, and this is by no means an easy feat. Thus, we can have a tendency to over-embellish our negative politeness, which can lead to very complex utterances that will ultimately confuse ESL students. Thus, when working with ESL students,

clarity is the priority, and so we ought to be direct with the linguistic aspect of both our compliments and constructive criticisms. To soften the impact of negative politeness, instead of hedging our statements with superfluous words, we can adjust our tone of voice to reflect the positive and constructive nature of our advice.

Test Your Understanding!

During a conversation practice session, a student is consistently using the wrong pronouns when referring to men and women. As a tutor, you should tell them:

a) “Um, sorry to interrupt you, you’re doing really well and all, but I just thought that maybe I should remind you to pay attention to the pronouns you’re using, and try to make sure that they match the gender of the person you’re referring to”

b) “Try to keep an eye on your pronoun usage”

Incorrect because of the over-embellishment of negative politeness, which causes the tutor’s utterance to be unnecessarily long, difficult to follow, and ultimately unclear.

Incorrect because of the figurative phrase “keep an eye on”, which can confuse ESL students.

Correct because it presents the concept of pronouns in a formulaic and clear way that is ideal for ESL students. Notice how the word “talking” is used instead of “referring to” or “discussing”--this is a deliberately straightforward word choice for the sake of optimizing

c) “Remember, when talking about women, use the pronoun she, and when talking about men, use the pronoun he”

Bell, D. C., Arnold, H., & Haddock, R. (2009). Linguistic politeness and peer tutoring. The Learning Assistance Review, 14(1), 37.

COMPARATIVE MULTI- LINGUAL TUTORING Summary:

Often the international students attending higher education institutions have never had conduct what we would call ‘research’ or had to write any reflective, personal papers. In addition, English idiomatic language and a grounding in the syntactic and lexical (which native speakers take for granted) are often foreign to ESL students. As a result, these student’s papers sometimes have awkward phrasing, and at times, a loss of semantic meaning. “ This literacy is more than the sum of its parts: bilingual competence consists of a gestalt knowledge of both languages, not just monolingual competence”(Canagarajah, p.591). Canagarajah suggests a “shuttle” between the native language and learned language, in his ‘negotiation model’. This model gave way to the next and most applicable practice--Comparative Multilingual Tutoring, or CMT. CMT proposed that tutors who gain an understanding of that language can use it to compare and contrast concepts in English; “ By highlighting how each language system expresses a certain idea and comparing the syntactic, lexical, or idiomatic reasons behind the expressions” it teaches “how English is used in relation to how the native language is used” and not just grammar points. CMT avoids the translation trap -explaining how to say one or two particular phrases- and help explains the strategy behind a concept.

In addition, CMT avoids diminishing the native tongue, but rather uses the primary language to help learn the secondary language. As native speakers know a lot of meaning comes from the context ,"where something is said" and "proscriptive grammar does not equal language".

Apply It!

Answer: Logically, *a cause de* would fulfill the role of "because of" in the correct sentence "He fled the house because of the flames". To best explain this to your student you could differentiate the difference between because and because of stating that it would be like using *porque* to mean "because of" instead of using *a causa de.*

○ Writers need **"tutorial interaction"** - the role of writing instructors and tutors is to act as a **'cultural informants"** who not only teach roles and **engage in socialization but the use of language**

○ Study your audience , understand the demographics of the students you have and **take note of common themes** to better serve them

○ Pick up a textbook and try to understand other language structure!

○ Invest in having an "intense descriptive linguistic knowledge" of both languages , not necessarily conversational understanding

Test Your Understanding! Correct and explain this sentence drawing on this linguistic knowledge :

In Spanish *a causa de* means "because of" and *porque* means "because"

A spanish speaking student comes in with the sentence :

“ He fled the house because the flames”

Brendel, C. (2012). Tutoring between language with comparative multilingual tutoring. *The Writing Center Journal, 32*(1), 78-91.

○ Facilitating the expansion of the breadth and depth of an ESL students vocabulary is one of the most important roles of English tutors.

○ As fluent English speakers and strong writers, we are able to strategically introduce our students to new words and phrases in a way that helps their vocabularies gain both breadth and depth.

○ During any appointment with an ESL student, especially during conversation practice appointments, creating a vocabulary list for a student is one of the best ways to help them develop and strengthen their vocabulary.

EMPOWERING L2 TUTORING: A CASE STUDY Summary:

Vocabulary is the foundation upon which writers build their compositions. Grammar and syntax errors can oftentimes be directly attributed to a students lack of breadth and depth in their vocabulary. Breadth refers to the scope or diversity of a person’s vocabulary, while depth refers to one’s knowledge about their vocabulary. To possess an in-depth understanding of words, a person would need to understand the families from which these words branch out from, their evolving historical context and cultural relevance, so on and so forth. Lexical depth is a necessary tool for academic success in an English-speaking country, as “college students must

know between 8000 and 9000 word families in order to function academically" (Severino & Deifell, 2011, p.28)--this leads to international students feeling immense amounts of pressure to absorb as many new words as possible without building an in-depth understanding of their vocabulary, or conversely, to feel intimidated by the prospect of using a new word incorrectly and thus resorting to re-using the sentences and words with which they are most comfortable.

Apply It!

PRO TIP: Keep a notebook or notepad on your desk during an appointment with an ESL student, this way, whenever a new word or phrase is introduced during the session, you can write it down along with a brief definition and relevant example sentence (see below) that highlights how the word is used. If the word can be used in many contexts, time permitting, show the student some additional relevant example sentences, and perhaps even prompt the student to use the word themselves to get a feel for it.

Relevant Example Sentence: To help facilitate a students memory, use their name or your name in example sentence, or incorporate some memorable aspect of your appointment.

Example: I have a student named Akiko who is from Japan, and so in an example sentence for the word "native", I could write, "Akiko is a native Japanese speaker".

Test Your Understanding!

Stefani is a student from Croatia. After a few conversation practice appointments, you have learnt the following about Stefani:

● Her favourite season is winter, because her favourite holiday is New Years Eve

● She is afraid of sharks and the deep ocean

● She loves to eat spicy food

Knowing this, write some relevant example sentences for the following words that you have introduced to her during your most recent conversation practice appointment:

● Eerie

● Excessive

● Iridescent

Severino, C., & Deifell, E. (2011). Empowering L2 tutoring: A case study of a second language writers vocabulary learning. The Writing Center Journal, 31(1), 25-54.

GUILT FREE TUTORING Summary:

For English Learning assistants, it is extremely beneficial to have an understanding of the different kinds of rhetorical traditions that dictate our student's writing so that we can better understand the underlying logic behind their compositions. For example, Japanese writers tend to be indirect as to avoid patronizing the reader, Chinese writers tend to prioritize "saving face" (avoiding bragging and defending one's opinion) and rely on proverbs to express conceptual ideas, Spanish writers use highly descriptive and oftentimes poetic language, while Arabic writers have a tendency to write in an emphatic style. Understanding culturally-specific rhetoric

may also help tutors to understand the behaviour of their students, and what kinds of expectations they may have when visiting the tutoring centre. For example, in some Asian cultures, tutors are seen as individuals who ought to be treated with reverence just based on the fact that they possess the set of knowledge that the tutee desires to obtain. Meanwhile, in North America, tutors are seen as peers who provide a collaborative learning service.

Apply It!

When reviewing a student's work we must keep in mind, along with a students rhetorical background, t**o prioritize higher-order concerns (these are global issues that impact the entire composition) over later-order concerns (these are local issues that may affect a single sentence or clause) to avoid line-by-line proofreading**. However, with ESL students, it is better to deal with global and local concerns simultaneously, as ESL students are often preoccupied with surface-level errors (grammar, syntax, etc.), and may become frustrated with a tutors avoidance of proofreading.

Test Your Understanding!

A student creates an appointment with you without any description or indication of what they need help with. Once the student arrives for their scheduled tutoring session, it becomes

A) Correct because it clearly establishes the conditions that must be abided by both students and tutors in the Tutoring Centre (i.e. that the Tutoring Centre does not provide proofreading services) and clearly presents what the tutor can do to help the student. Regardless of a student's rhetorical background, clarity is should be the priority when communicating with ESL students, as many of them may feel shy to ask for clarification.

B) Incorrect because the phrase “general advice for how to improve your essay writing skills” will disappoint students who are anxious about the surface-level errors in their writing.

apparent that English is not their first language. They explain to you that they struggle with writing and would like you to proofread their essay. As a tutor, you should tell them:

a) “At the Tutoring Centre, we do not provide proofreading services. However, we can read over 30% of your essay and I can show you how to fix any issues that we may find. I’ll let you choose the 30% that you would like for us to work on, but before we start that, could you tell me about your professor’s expectations for this assignment...”

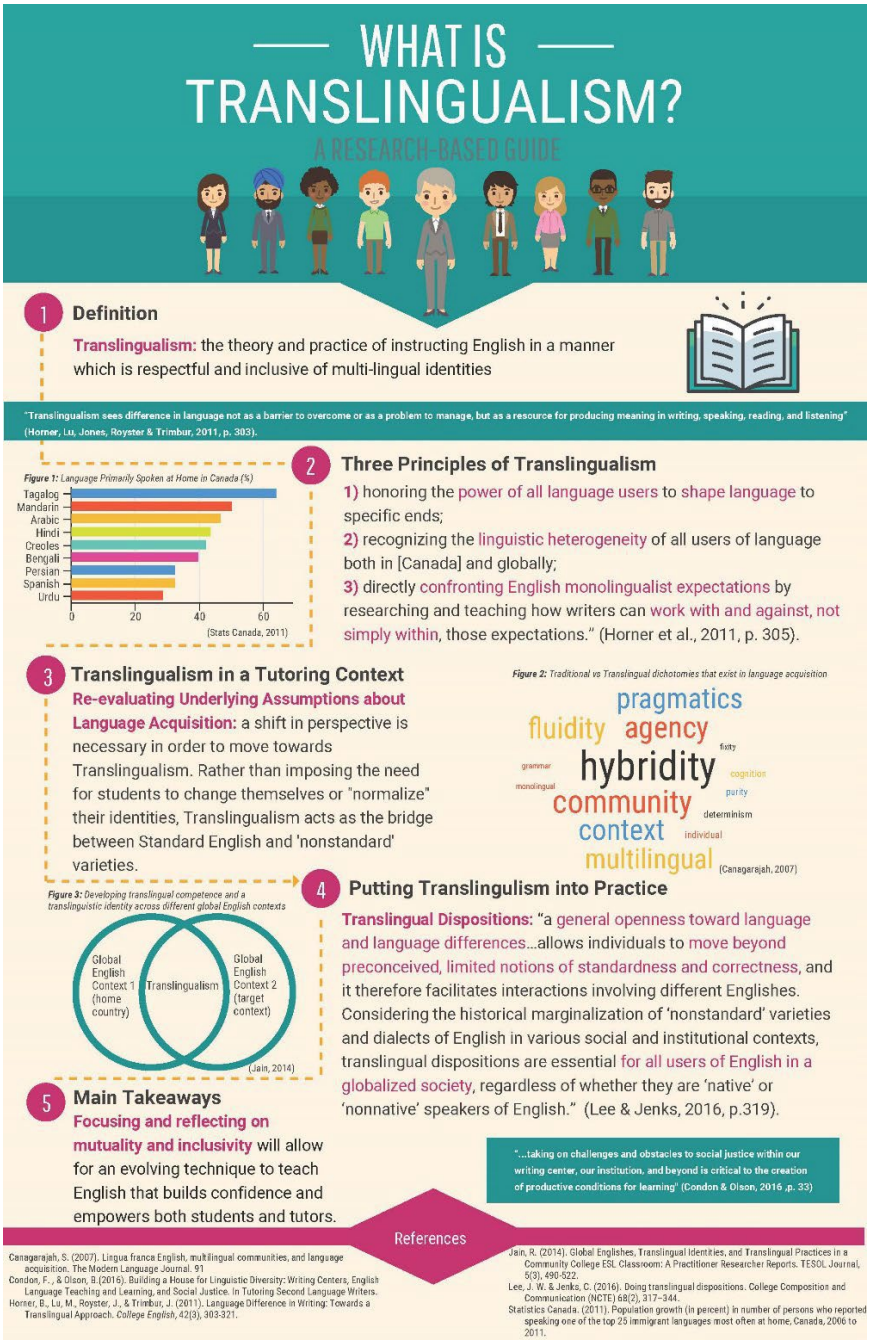
b) “Sorry, we don’t do proofreading here, but I can look over 30% of your essay and give you general advice for how to improve your essay writing skills”

c) “Sure, I can proofread 30% of your essay, and I’ll make sure that the 30% is perfect so at least you’ll know that you won’t lose any marks on that part”

Blau, S., Hall, J., & Sparks, S. (2002). Guilt-free tutoring: Rethinking how we tutor

non-native-english-speaking students. The Writing Center Journal, 23(1), 23-44.

APPENDIX E: Winter 2019 tutors created an infographic on Translingualism.



APPENDIX F: Winter 2020 tutors created a 30 min podcast to reflect their learnings for the project.

Please access podcast here: Tutoring through a Translingualism Lens Podcast.mp4

APPENDIX G: Spring-Summer 2020 tutors created an Instagram and Facebook post which was shared publicly under the institution's Library social media account.

Please access social media post titled, "Translingualism" here:

Sheridan Library (@sheridanlibrary) • Instagram photos and videos

APPENDIX H: Winter 2021 tutors created a document on Translingualism targeting the entire institutional community, specifically faculty, which was disseminated via an internal institutional weekly digital newsletter.

Please access document here:

https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:US:e5cf59fb-b5b1-471c-ba03-34f6ba1b26cb

APPENDIX I: Spring-Summer 2021 tutors created a pre-recorded presentation on Linguistic Diversity which was shared in the institution's internal weekly digital newsletter.

Please access presentation here: Linguistic Diversity and Translingualism.mp4

APPENDIX J: Fall 2021 tutors created an interactive training module for future English tutors using Canva.

Please access the module here:

https://www.mentimeter.com/s/78a78dbb4b259aec6efa9f4a84b6ab0d/4c8f5c202775

APPENDIX K: Winter 2022 tutors created a document for incoming tutors on what they have learned about Translingualism.

A Message to Tutors: Adopting a Translingual Approach to Pedagogy

This document has been produced by Sheridan's Winter 2022 English & Writing Tutors. The content within this document is directed toward the next set of tutors with some key bits of knowledge to ease your transition into the role. We hope that you're able to take this information and apply it to your own tutoring practices. Adapting a translingual approach to your pedagogy won't just help your students learn – it'll serve as a developmental tool that you may implement into your own personal lives. We sincerely hope you find value in doing so, just as we have.

Defining Errors

It's time to rethink what "errors" are.

When someone wants feedback on their English writing, our first instinct is usually to go for error-correction, where we start pointing out the places where the tense should have been different or sentences which did not adhere to the standard sentence structure. The issue with this is that when we think of these errors, we do not take the linguistic diversity of the students into consideration. We label these as *errors*, but what if these errors were not mistakes but stylistic choices?

In her article "Why I am hyped about translingualism", Samboo (2018) shared an experience with one of her multilingual students who was confused to see so many error-corrections on her assignment. According to Samboo (2018), the student did not agree with her

comments on improving her assignment. When she sat down to have a discussion with the student, she realized that the *errors* such as the words, sentence structure, and organization of content were deliberate choices by the student, and they reflected the diverse multilingual writing practices. At the end, Samboo decided to let the student keep those *choices*, even if they did not conform to the rules of standard English, and instead focused on the content of the assignment.

Another issue with error-correction is the intense focus on grammatical rules instead of the content and meaning. Let's take this example from Krall-Lanoue (2013):

Sentence: I knew I felt bad but I want him to feel worse.

If we were to point out an "error" in this sentence, we would say that *want* should be changed to *wanted* to maintain the past tense of the sentence. But what if this was the writer's choice? There could be a possibility that the writer chose to switch to present tense in order to communicate that they still want him to feel bad. In this case, if we focus too much on the grammatical rules and correct the error, we risk losing the true intended meaning of the writer.

As Krall-Lanoue (2013) said, an error "is not breaking a rule."

Hence, this practice of error-correction that has been continually used by teachers and tutors perpetuates the idea of "standard English" that focuses too much on rules and perfection while focusing too little on the actual content and idea that is to be communicated. Not to mention, these error-corrections could be discouraging. It makes English learners scared of writing down their thoughts and ideas because they are more concerned about making grammatical errors.

Don't "Fix" Your Tutees

"I'm lovin it". You have probably heard it before or seen it around. It is McDonalds' legendary slogan. You have probably seen it and thought nothing of it but there's more to it than meets the eye. This slogan uses a feature of African American English, known as consonant variation. Think of it this way: if a student were to use "I'm lovin it" in their essay, they would be told that they are incorrect; however, a billion-dollar corporation such as McDonalds can use this slogan and make money of this African American feature. Unfortunately, this is a common contradiction.

Corporations such as McDonalds and KFC who have slogans that use African American Variation for appeal make a huge profit. To put it simply, this is quite unjust and plain wrong. So, how is it fair that while individuals who speak this way put are at a disadvantage while these corporations are benefitting? This is an important question to keep in mind as an English Tutor. It is important that as tutors, we remain aware when we are trying to help students. As tutors, we are put in this mindset that to help students we must "fix" them; however, by "fixing" them we might be doing more harm than good. Engaging in this practice of fixing students of colourism is in fact silencing them. Tutoring students is more than just fixing them. Being aware, and asking questions, are steps that many of us can take to make sure that we are not ignorant. An additional step that you can take is to further educate yourself by perhaps watching a TEDtalk titled *Why English Class is Silencing Students of Colour* by Jamila Lyiscott.

Tailored Learning

In order to effectively tutor students in the development of their written and oral English, you'll need to connect with them on a personal level first. This isn't to say that you need to become their new best friend, nor do you need to grasp obscure details like their favourite colour or personal hobbies. You do, however, need to establish key aspects of the language learning process; these can include their country of origin, mother tongue, and general learning style. Now, before you ask yourself why these factors matter to begin with, consider this: everyone has their own unique learning needs and pedagogical preferences. Why, then, should it be any different in the context of teaching ESL (English as a Second Language)?

In asking ourselves this, it becomes clear that students deserve to have educational experiences that are tailored to their own strengths and weaknesses for optimal knowledge retention and overall confidence – especially throughout the trials and tribulations of learning an additional language. For example, the way you would teach English to a student from China would have some drastic differences in comparison to a Korean student. Aside from the cultural differences that may come into play, paying close attention to language disparities such as sentence structure and honorifics could mean the difference between a smooth learning process and a seemingly impossible one for both the student and tutor alike. It's important to be cognisant of these factors and ensure that they are not overlooked.

Individuality is a powerful thing, and it'd be naïve to think that it simply has no effect in pedagogical methodology. Above all else, having a strong sense of empathy and understanding for your students throughout your upcoming term as a tutor cannot be understated. More notably, this is much easier said than done. There is no such thing as 'the perfect tutor', but striving toward this status can only lead to positive outcomes. As such, I encourage you to refine your

teaching practices each and every day with the goal of creating a safe, inclusive, and tailored experience for those that come to you for help. While tutoring may just be a temporary job, the skills you pass on to your students will change their lives forever. Ultimately, make sure these changes are nothing but efficacious.

Sincerely,

S M,

YG,

& SG.

APPENDIX L: Annotated commentary: first year writing course in a community college

Context:

The course that I am analysing is a course which non-degree students usually enrol in their first semester in their first year to fulfil graduation requirements. I selected this course because it is taken by approximately 4,500 students annually in my institution which is the largest number of students in a writing course. We have two other writing courses: a compensatory course for non-degree students and a course for degree students, but their numbers are not as large as this particular course I am about to analyse. Please see the full course syllabi here:

https://ulysses.sheridanc.on.ca/coutline/coutlineview_sal.jsp?appver=sal&subjectCode=COMM&courseCode=19999&version=202309

0500&sec=0&reload=true

This is a 14-week face-to-face or synchronous online course which meets 3 hours per week. Students are first year community college students who are direct entries, i.e. students who have just completed high school, or non-direct entries, i.e. students who have worked for a couple of years after high school or mature students seeking a career change. The class is usually capped at 30 with students who hail from diverse countries of origin: India, China, Vietnam, Uganda, Nigeria, Iran, Columbia, Canada, Venezuela, Korea,

Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Some are Canadian citizens and Permanent Residents while others are international students on a study visa. Some speak English as a mother tongue while the rest speak it as an additional language which could be English as a Foreign Language such as in China and Russia, or English as a Lingua Franca if they come from former British colonies such as India or Jamaica.

Here is the critical framework I used to analyse and reflect on the current writing course:

By examining the textbook used, course outcomes, weekly topical, assessment design and grading rubric, the following questions are asked:

1. Whose experiences are foregrounded? Who does it exclude?
2. What is the underlying ideology? Monolingual or Multilingual? Is there room for other types of Englishes besides Edited American English?
3. Are students' personal lived experiences valued in the course?
4. Are students afforded agency in the course?
5. Is there room for different writing heuristic or is there only one master template for how writing should be done?
6. Are writing assignments authentic and relevant to students" lives?

Current First Year Writing course (Fall 2023)	*My comments and analysis*
Course Overview	
Detailed Course Description Students develop transferable communication skills required for both academic and professional success, including writing, reading, speaking, presenting, listening, visual and media literacy. Through course work, students become familiar with various writing styles, structures, and formats, including citation and referencing. NOTE: Basic keyboarding skills are required to complete in-class assignments. Access to the Open Access Labs at the Davis or Trafalgar Campuses are available, if needed. This is not an English as a Second Language (ESL) course. For information on ESL courses, refer to the ESL program under Communications and Language.	1. It is important to see that it is taken for granted that "transferable communication skills" is taught in the service of a monocultural academic and professional success ideal since there is no mention of criticality of diverse socio-cultural and political norms. 2. "various writing styles" here does not mean socio-cultural and political differences but in terms of different genres within a white academic structure. 3. Clear distinction that this is not an ESL course which suggests that this course is taught using mainstream writing pedagogies.
Critical Performance: By the end of this course, students would have demonstrated the ability to communicate through academic writing and presentations.	This statement clearly states that a student is being evaluated on whether they can fulfill the rigid confines of academic requirements for writing and presentations regardless of whether they are effective communicators in other genres. This also implies a mastery towards a standard of communication is expected.
Learning Outcomes:	1. What is considered "college level" materials? Who decides this? Do students have agency to decide?

To achieve the critical performance, students will have demonstrated the ability to: 1. Analyze college level materials. 2. Evaluate the ideas of others. 3. Address different purposes and audiences in their writing. 4. Edit written work competently and independently. 5. Formulate organized and well reasoned argumentative and expository essays. 6. Select appropriate research documents and document them correctly using APA format. 7. Incorporate research information correctly and effectively into their own writing. 8. Present information orally with clarity and competence using appropriate visual aids. 9. Examine various types of media to increase media literacy and awareness.	2. This is wonderful that there is a consideration of difference. Perhaps we could tweak it to say, "evaluate and consider different and alternate ideas to your own." 3. Addressing registers in communication is important but do we consider cultural or social differences? This is not clear here. 4. Editing is an important skill in writing. How does one edit competently? There seems to be a value judgment tied to this outcome. The editing process is not finite. You could keep on editing for as long as you want. Editing "independently" presupposes that we all write in a vacuum. I usually have someone else look at my writing to give me a different perspective. This outcome excludes students who come from collectivist cultures- who see value in collaboration and communal work. 5. This outcome foregrounds white epistemology with its focus on organization and reason. See discussion of Habits of White Language (Inoue) which discusses how paramount reason and logic is outweighing emotion and intuition. Also, it lacks mention of argument styles and structures from different cultures. 6. "APA Style provides a foundation for effective scholarly communication because it helps writers present their ideas in a clear, precise, and inclusive manner. APA Style originated in 1929, when a group of psychologists, anthropologists, and business managers convened and sought to establish a simple set of procedures, or style guidelines, that would codify the many components of scientific writing to increase the ease of reading comprehension." https://apastyle.apa.org/about-apa-style

	This system in itself is a testament to white supremacy having its roots in white Eurocentric epistemology developed by white scholars: Bentley, Peerenboom, Hodge, Passano, Warren and Washburn in 1929. No choice is offered for students to engage in alternate formats of citation or attribution. 7. While research is an essential skill for writing, who decides if research is incorporated correctly and effectively? The student or the teacher? Also, what type of research is valued? Scientific? Personal experiences? 8. Another essential skill for students. Clarity and competence is socio-culturally dependent. So, who decides this? What are appropriate visual aids? Who decides this? 9. An essential outcome for today's student is increasing media literacy and awareness, but how do we help students use that awareness in an ethical and inclusive manner? Do "various types of media" include non-English ones?
Evaluation Plan In-Class Assignments (3x10%) 30.0% Midterm Exam 20.0% Final Research Project (Research Component) 15.0%	This evaluation plan reflects a traditional assessment plan with midterm exams and research project. There doesn't seem to be an element of choice for students to decide how they would like to demonstrate their learning.

Final Research Project (Written Component) 25.0% Final Research Project (Oral/Visual Component) 10.0% Total= 100.0%	
Weekly Topical Outline	
Course Materials: Writing for Academic and Professional Contexts: An Introduction., Warkentin, J., Filipovic, J., Oakey, K., & Crew M. (Eds.), Sheridan College, CC BY-NC-SA, 2019, (e-text provided by the Professor via Learning Management System), Open Educational Resource.	This text is an Open Educational Resource written and curated by white faculty and staff. Link to text : https://acrobat.adobe.com/link/review?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:f91e4e79-0ae5-3298-bd33-36145dcfbe34 **Strengths of the textbook:** 1. It is an Open Educational Resource which means it is publicly accessible and free for all. 2. It is customizable and thus, responsive to new trends in education. In Fall 2021, Module IV on "Mental and Emotional Health in Postsecondary Studies" was added in response to a greater call for mental health supports for students. This module contains three chapters: Coping with Workload and

	Course Load Stress; Approaching your Professor; Dealing with Disappointing Feedback and Grades. 3. The textbook attempts to focus on authentic texts from the institution's faculty and students by including authentic newspaper articles, research articles and reports with some from BIPOC faculty. (pp.320 – 416). Topics range from "Sheridan Grad Wins Oscar for Bao" to "The Intersectional Oppressions of South Asian Immigrant Women and Vulnerability in Relation to Domestic Violence" to "Vitamin D Status of Older Adults of Diverse Ancestry Living in the Greater Toronto Area." 4. Code-meshing is tentatively allowed. "While English grammatical rules are still important in academic writing, more professors are beginning to recognize the value of allowing students to bring their own voices into their writing. In some cases, professors may allow code meshing as long as the student provides a footnote with an English translation." (p. 218). 5. The use of the first pronoun is discussed, and reasons are provided for why it could appear to make a student's paper biased. "Be mindful of the use of *I* in your writing because it can make your argument sound overly biased…" (p. 79).

	Room for Improvement: 1. The textbook upholds standard language ideology with its section on "Correctness" in Chapter 21 on Writing Mechanics (p. 217). It states, "Most students with middle class and non-immigrant backgrounds use informal vernaculars that closely parallel Standard Written English. Students with working-class or more modest backgrounds or who are members of transnational and multi-lingual communities may use informal variants of English in their everyday lives that are quite different from Standard Written English. It's an unfortunate reality of social inequality that such students have to expend more effort than their middle-class English-speaking counterparts to master the standard conventions." (p. 218). If this is the reality, what is being done to mitigate this "social inequality"? 2. The exception for "code-meshing" with a caveat conveys the power dynamic in the classroom and the demonstration of the magnanimous white saviour complex. "In some cases, professors may allow code-meshing as long as the student provides a footnote with an English translation." (p.218). It also reeks of a double standard because the student must explain to the professor if they use a non-English word in their paper, but the student is encouraged to sit in ambiguity if the professor deems it will be helpful for the student's development. *"They think figuring it out yourself is good for you*. Because your professors often succeeded in a much less supportive environment, they appreciate how learning to thrive in those conditions gave them life-long problem-solving

skills. Many think you *should* be able to figure it out yourself and that it would be good practice for you to do so." (p. 7). This refers to the amount of power held by the professor in the classroom.

3. The text universalizes that there is a right way to ask for clarification which is the "white way". "Asking for clarification is a good thing but try to ask your questions in a way that demonstrates that you're thinking critically. Before you ask, try to determine what information you need and *why*:" (p. 8). Instead of "How many sources do we have to cite?", it recommends using, " Is there a typical range for the number of sources a well written paper would cite for this assignment?" (p. 8). Personally, I find that expecting students to ask the latter question does not reflect the reality of the diversity in the college classroom which includes EAL students. The second question is long winded, overly formal, and misleading because a well written paper is dependent on much more than the number of sources used. I much rather a student asks me the first question which is direct and succinct. Also, as long as the point made is clear, it doesn't matter how students ask the question to me.

4. The text excuses professors from creating a rubric for grading which is necessary in a student-centred learning environment. "Not all professors use rubrics: some mark "holistically" (which means that they evaluate the paper as a whole, versus "analytically" where they break down the marks by criteria)." (p. 10).

5. The text embraces a linear writing process which is based on white epistemology. On page 43, it lists the different stages of writing from prewriting to outlining to writing a rough draft to

	revising to editing. It doesn't leave room for other types of writing processes which are non-linear.
MODULE 1: CRITICAL READING AND ANALYSIS (WEEKS 1-3) Topics Include: - Artificial Intelligence and the writing process - The ethics of using artificial intelligence in writing - Misinformation in the digital age	The inclusion of Artificial Intelligence is fairly recent. There is no content on AI in the textbook yet, so professors source materials individually. There is much work to be done still on the topic of AI.

- Annotation and Summary - Bias - Audience/Purpose - Credibility - Types of Evidence - Understanding assignment outlines/instructions - Review Basics of Paragraph Writing/Structure Assessments: o In Class Assignment 1 - 10% (week 3)	From the textbook, this course views bias and credibility from a white perspective as it teaches students to analyse credibility in terms of educational credentials, subject matter expertise, etc. "To examine the **author's credibility**—that is, how much you can believe of what the author has to say—examine his or her credentials. What career experience or academic study shows that the author has the expertise to write about this topic?" (p. 95). The text also condones scholarly and empirical evidence as opposed to personal stories and experiences. On page 109, a list of preferred sources is listed in priority: peer reviewed academic publications are at the top of the list.
<u>MODULE 2: DOCUMENTATION/RESEARCH STRATEGIES (WEEKS 4-7)</u> Topics Include: - How to begin the research process - Research questions - APA style (title page, citations, reference pages) - Sheridan research databases/library services - Organizing data - Integrating Evidence - Academic Integrity Assessments:	The research process is taught to the student based on Eurocentric norms. For example, the use of APA referencing is based on white epistemology. Limitations are placed on the types of sources students could use for their research- "research databases/library services". Real lived experiences and popular knowledge are not welcome. Academic integrity is a western concept. "Your research paper presents your thinking about a topic, supported and developed by other people's ideas and information. It is crucial to always distinguish between the two—as you conduct research, as you plan your paper, and as you write. Failure to do so can lead to plagiarism." (p. 243). No mention of

o In Class Assignment 2 - 10% (week 5) o Midterm Exam - 20% (Week 7)	cultural norms in how students perceive academic integrity. In Chapter 2 of this dissertation, I discuss how "good writing" is perceived differently in Asia from North America and how Chinese and Indian traditions embrace the mimicking of scholars as a sign of being educated and also as a way to respect scholars in their culture.
MODULE 3: ACADEMIC WRITING STRATEGIES (WEEKS 8-10) Topics Include: - Media Literacy - Media Awareness - Evaluating Media - Literature Review - Thesis Writing Strategies - Academic Paragraph Writing - Expository Essays - Argumentative Essay - Editing and Revising Strategies - Research Assignments Assessments: o In Class Assignment 3 - 10% (week 8) o Research Project - Research Component - 15% (week 10)	There is no mention of non-English media. For example, in China, WeChat, is a common social networking site equivalent to Facebook; in Korea, there is a chat app called KakaoTalk; in Spain and Latin America, there is Taringa, a social networking app similar to Facebook; etc. 13 Social Networks That Are a Big Deal in Non-English Speaking Regions - VII Digital Imagine how rich the class discussions could be if students were encouraged to share social media apps from their cultures in class. Discussions could be on how differences in cultures govern ethical use of these social media apps, how news and "fake news" is distributed, the content posted, etc. The centring of whiteness in the course is demonstrated by following an academic structure of literature review, expository and argumentative essays. The course teaches the classical (Aristotelian) argument style. The text cautions students about the use of "I" in an argumentative essay as it can diminish the paper's credibility by sounding overly biased. (p. 79). Yet, for students who speak and write English as an Additional language using "I" helps them in the organizational structure of their essay. "…the two most frequent uses of personal pronouns in the student

	reports were stating a purpose and explaining a procedure. Hyland states these functions are less risky as they are simply organizing the text or presenting their methodological procedure." (MacIntyre, R. (2019). The Use of Personal Pronouns in the Writing of Argumentative Essays by EFL Writers. *RELC Journal*, *50*(1), 6-19. https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688217730139
MODULE 4: ACADEMIC PRESENTATION SKILLS (WEEKS 11-14) Topics Include: - Presentation style, tone, and professionalism - Presentation anxiety and coping strategies - Formatting academic presentations - Using presentation mediums Assessments: o Final Research Project: Oral/Visual Component - 10% (weeks 11-13) o Final Research Project: Written Component - 25% (week 12)	The focus on anxiety and coping strategies is noteworthy here because it addresses the emotions/ pathos of an argument and also the individual. The textbook acknowledges that there may be students who are not comfortable speaking in front of others and provides some tips. (pp. 227-228). This is where using a trauma-informed pedagogy is important. Discussions about what triggers anxiety for students not accustomed to presenting in front of large groups is essential. There is an alternative assignment in this course for students who have severe stage fright. The idea of professionalism in presentations in Chapter 22 of the textbook is based on the dominant white ideology of what is a good presentation- don't use filler words such as "uh", make constant eye contact, and "Be sure you can pronounce all new words and technical terms correctly." (p. 232). Because there is only one way to pronounce these words! Again, a nod to the functioning of standard language ideology in the classroom. It would have been interesting for students to interrogate the idea of "professionalism". Who decides who and what behaviours are professional? Discussion of the power dynamics inherent in such a

	judgement would allow students to think critically and dismantle discrimination against non-white cultures.

Detailed Explanation of Assessments

<u>In Class Assignment 1 : ANNOTATION & SUMMARY (10%)</u> This assignment requires you to demonstrate two invaluable research/study skills: annotation and summary. Watch the video posted on SLATE (LMS) in Week 2 and answer the following questions: 1. Who is the source of the video? Are they credible? Why or why not (3 marks) 2. What is the main point or idea in the video? What message does the speaker want you to take away from watching this video? Is it conveyed effectively? (3 marks) 3. What is the tone of the video? How is this established? (2 marks) 4. Who is the target audience for the video? How do you know? (2 marks) 5. What is the bias presented by the video? (2 marks) _____	This assignment trains students to adhere to a rigid template to showcase their understanding of course concepts -- credibility, bias, summary and paraphrase skills. If students respond to each of the questions posed, they receive marks. The writing instructor is given agency to decide which video to use for this assignment. Since a majority of the instructors are contract, they generally use a video which has been tried and tested by a fulltime permanent instructor. <u>Here are some popular videos used by instructors:</u> 1. The Terrifying Moment That Taught Dwayne Johnson How Precious Life Is https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CVuj6MqoVUo

6. Summarize the entire video in 5-6 sentences using the steps provided in the slides from WEEK 2 on Slate. Be sure to include the following (each point is worth 1 mark) ➢ Source is formally introduced (1 mark) ➢ Proper tenses and attribution phrases are used (1 mark) ➢ All points are paraphrased in your own words (1 mark) ➢ Thesis is identified (1 mark) ➢ 3-4 supporting points are included (3 marks) ➢ Speaker's conclusions/recommendations are provided (1 mark) Total /20	2. What we're getting wrong in the fight to end hunger (Jasmine Crowe | TEDWomen 2019) https://go.ted.com/6WBz 3. Why You Feel Lonely, Explained https://youtu.be/NIYBoey2BeA?si=7vlRzQ01UzMeP09- There lacks clear guidelines to help instructors choose videos which are diverse and global to appeal to diverse student groups.
In Class Assignment 2: APA CITATION & REFERENCING (10%)	This assignment uses a text based on North American pop culture: Katy Perry or Robin Thicke/Marvin Gaye.

This version is based on this article: A jury said Katy Perry's "Dark Horse" copied another song. The $2.8 million verdict is alarming by By Alex Abad-Santos, August 2, 2019. Vox.com https://www.vox.com/culture/2019/7/30/20747100/katy-perry-dark-horse-joyful-noise-copyright-2-8-million There are two (2) parts to this assignment. The first part requires you to create an APA style title page and References page for the assignment. Follow the guidelines and samples from Week 4 on Slate. For the second part, read the article posted on SLATE (LMS) and answer the following questions to determine if this is a valid case of plagiarism. You will need to include paraphrases and quotes from the article with APA style citations in some of your responses. --- PART 1: ➢ Create an APA style title page (1 point) ➢ Create an APA style entry for the article posted on SLATE (LMS) on a References page (2 points) PART 2:	The purpose of this assignment is to assess students' understanding and application of APA referencing and citation rules, and their ability to paraphrase and quote correctly. It also requires students to think critically about whether plagiarism occurred. As long students are able to blindly follow the APA rules, they will pass this assignment. The level of critical thinking skills required is not high. This text caters to a younger student demographic who enjoys pop culture, but not to a more mature demographic in college. Current educational research has shown that there are more mature students attending a community college nowadays than students who come directly from high school.

1. Who is accused of copyright infringement in the article? (1 point)
2. What Marcus Gray song are they accused of copying? (1 point)
3. What aspects of the songs did Gray and his co-writers file their lawsuit over? Use a direct quote in your response along with an APA style citation for the quote (3 points)
4. Who is Charlie Harding and what is his opinion on the case? What evidence does he present in support of his position? Use a direct quote in your response along with an APA style citation for the quote. (3 points)
5. Who is Katy Perry's lawyer in the case? Paraphrase their argument and include the APA style citation for the paraphrase (3 points)
6. What were the total damages awarded in the case? (1 point)
7. What interesting point was raised by website Musicologize? (2 points)
8. Listen to all 3 songs. Do you think the ruling in the case was fair? Why or why not? (3 points)

Total: /20

Note: An alternate version of this assignment is based on the article below:

'Blurred Lines' Infringed on Marvin Gaye Copyright, Jury Rules By Ben Sisario and Noah Smith, March 10, 2015, nytimes.com https://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/11/business/media/blurred-lines-infringed-on-marvin-gaye-copyright-jury-rules.html?module=inline	
In Class Assignment 3: CRITICAL EVALUATION OF SOURCE (10%) There are two (2) parts to this assignment. The first part requires you to create an APA style title page and References page for the assignment. Follow the guidelines and samples from Week 4 on SLATE (LMS). For the second part, take a look at the advertisement posted on SLATE (LMS) and answer the following questions. *Instructors choose one advertisement from below:* Adidas "Hello Tomorrow", commercial directed by Spike Jonze, Executive Producer Jennifer Golub, https://vimeo.com/30215155	This assignment tests students' critical evaluation of a North American/Western advertisement. Students are asked to evaluate its effectiveness in terms of message for its audience in terms of pathos, ethos and logos. This assignment could pose challenges to students who are newcomers to Canada and unfamiliar with the brand personality of Adidas and Lincoln MKC. A more equitable assignment would allow students agency to choose their own advertisement from their own country/culture to showcase their knowledge of course concepts. Having students critique the advertisement from two different points of view is a valuable in fostering critical thinking skills. If students were able to choose advertisements from their own culture, it would be

"Bull" Matthew McConaughey and the MKC: Official Commercial | Lincoln, commercial directed by Nicolas Winding Refn, https://youtu.be/SWz_C8uNY2g?si=z6kslTm3N6ArwG8g --- PART 1: ➢ Create an APA style title page (1 point) ➢ Create an APA style entry for the advertisement posted on SLATE on a References page (2 points) PART 2: 1. What is the message of the advertisement? Is it clearly communicated to the viewer? Why or why not? (3 points) 2. Evaluate the text used in the advertisement. Does it effectively communicate the message to the audience? Why or why not? (2 points) 3. Evaluate the use of colour and music in the advertisement. What thoughts, feelings or opinions does it evoke for the viewer? (4 points) 4. Briefly argue that this is an effective advertisement for the product that it is trying to sell (4 points) 5. Briefly argue that this is not an effective advertisement for the product that it is trying to sell (4 points)	worthwhile getting their peers to argue for or against the effectiveness of the advertisement to nurture dialogue across cultures.

Total: /20	
<u>Sample Midterm exam (20%)</u> This exam represents an opportunity for you to demonstrate the skills you have acquired in the first half of this semester. The exam is divided into the following parts, both of which are based on the attached article, *Transhumanism is Inevitable,* by Ronald Bailey. Transhumanism Is Inevitable (reason.com) **PART A: READING COMPREHENSION & CRITICAL THINKING (20 marks)** This section of the midterm is designed to test your understanding of the article and to prepare you for answering the long answer question in Part B. **FORMATTING (4 points)** Create an APA cover page (1 point) for your assignment as well as an APA style reference page (3 points) **PART 1 (16 points)**	There is a generic template for the midterm exam specifying that instructors test students' ability to use APA referencing and formatting correctly; the types of reading comprehension (inference, critical thinking skills) instructors should create; and the expectations for the written response with a preset rubric. Instructors have the freedom to select any text they deem appropriate for their students. This is a sample from one instructor. This exam tests students' application of APA formatting, reading comprehension and ability to write a critical and comprehensive written response to a prompt given by the instructor. Once again, students have to adhere to a templated format to write their responses with little agency to choose how to respond. There is a clear expectation for students' responses to conform to a standard language ideology, Edited American English (EAE) with instructions such as, "Answer each of the questions below in complete, coherent, and grammatically correct sentences." Students who do not write in EAE would be graded down under the "Mechanics" section in the rubric for the written response.

Answer each of the questions below in complete, coherent, and grammatically correct sentences. 1. What is difference between big 'T' Transhumanism, and small 't' transhumanism? (2 points) 2. Who is Victor Saurez? *Include an APA citation and paraphrase.* (3 points) 3. How might economics be a factor in the availability of many of the advances mentioned in the article? (2 points) 4. What potential legal issues could arise if technological implants become more widespread? (2 points) 5. What are some of the negative effects of widespread dependence on technology mentioned in the article? *Include an APA citation and paraphrase.* (2 points) 6. Is there any bias in the article? (2 points) 7. The article focuses on the book "Beyond Human". Based on what you have read, would you consider "Beyond Human" a good source if you were to write a paper on the topic of Transhumanism? (3 points) **PART 2: Written Response (30 points)** Respond to the following writing prompt with an approximately *600-word* response that includes two (2) direct quotes or paraphrases from the text accompanied by APA style citations. Consult the Marking rubric below to make sure you have included all necessary aspects of your answer.	

The notion of cyborgs is often interconnected with the Transhumanist movement. Considering the definition for cyborgs as: <u>a person whose physiological functioning is aided by or dependent upon a mechanical or electronic device</u>. *Are we cyborgs?* **WRITTEN RESPONSE EVALUATION CRITERIA** Content (answers prompt critically) /10 Secondary Sources (in text citation/formatting) /10 Mechanics (spelling/ grammar/paragraphing) / 10	In the rubric, while there are clear guidelines for what is expected in the written response (i.e. 2 direct quotes or paraphrases with APA citations), yet the instructor has the final say on whether the written response meets expectations in terms of adherence to standard language ideology - grammar, mechanics, paragraphing- and to judge if a student demonstrates critical thinking skills on a topic which the student may not find engaging nor care about.
<u>Research Project (50%)</u> There are 3 parts to this research project: **A RESEARCH COMPONENT**, a **WRITTEN COMPONENT** and an **A PRESENTATION COMPONENT**. Each part will focus on the	This assignment is worth 50% of the course grades. Once again mastering the APA format and referencing is essential in this assignment.

topic you have chosen and build upon the research you conduct in the second half of the semester.

PART 1 – THE RESEARCH COMPONENT (15%)

Using the topic that you selected in class, find **5 sources of information**. List them on an **APA style References page** and then answer the questions that follow.

SECTION 1: Description

• What is your research question?

• What are the first 3 steps you will take to get started on this project? Why have you selected this approach to your research? What benefits come starting here?

• Write down **2 possible thesis statements** – which one do you like better? Why?

SECTION 2: Rationale

• Why are you interested in or passionate about this project?

• What bias do you think you have as a researcher? What things might you have to watch out for because of this bias?

• Do you have previous experience in this area of study? If so, please describe.

SECTION 3: Project Goals & Research

This is the latest version of the research assignment which was introduced in Fall 2023. There are 3 parts to this assignment:

Research Component (15%) – Students explain why they chose the topic, how they are going to research it, if they have any bias as a researcher, and their research objectives.

Written Component (25%) – Students are expected to write a 1000-word argumentative essay with an introduction, 3 body paragraphs and a conclusion.

Audio/Visual Presentation Component (10%) – Students present individually to their peers and instructor in 3 minutes the gist of their research project and then engage in a Q& A arising from their presentation.

This assignment moves towards engaging students metacognitively by asking them to articulate why they chose their research topic and to reflect on each step of the research process. After writing the essay, students can journal or produce video reflections on their research journey. While this assignment allows students to choose their own topic, there are very clear expectations on how they should write their essay to meet academic standards.

• What is your **purpose**—what do you hope to accomplish? (Do you want to change your reader's mind on a controversial issue, get them to take a specific action, consider a viewpoint they might not have before...?) • Is your research going to be more formal (academic sources), or professional (news, media)? What impact will that type of source have on your project? • What is one source that you found that surprised you with the information, perspectives or expert opinions it provided? Why was it such a surprise? **PART 2 – THE WRITTEN COMPONENT (25%)** **SECTION 1: Essay** • Write a **1000-word** argumentative research essay on the topic you have chosen. The essay should include an introduction, a body with around 3 paragraphs and a conclusion. The essay should also include **5 direct quotes** and **10 total citations**. You can also use images for support. Use APA formatting for the entire research essay and citations. If you include resources not on your initial references page, include them here in a new References page. **SECTION 2: Reflection**	The grading rubric found in the Appendix is an attempt at labour-based grading. For the essay, the rubric lists the amount of labour required in order to achieve each grade with some descriptors pertaining to quality of content. For instance, the criteria to achieve an A to A+ are: **A to A+ (20-25 points)** • Hands in the Essay and Reflection on time. • Essay is approximately 1000 words in correct APA format. • **ESSAY** – contains an introduction, body (at least 3 paragraphs) and conclusion with at least 5 direct quotes and 10 total citations for support (and a References page if new sources not from your Bibliography are included) in correct APA format or with minimal errors. A clear thesis is provided to start with multiple specific examples for support and final recommendations and thoughts on the topic. • **REFLECTION** – 3 journal entries/logs (200 words each) or 3 videos (2-3 minutes each) that describe the steps you took to complete your project with an explanation of what when well, any setbacks, and student skills that were strengths or areas for improvement. • **Writing/Videos** – is clear and detailed with examples from the research for support and uses multiple sources for examples. Quotes and paraphrases are formally introduced and examined. Complete sentences are used with only a few errors with sentence structure or

You will also write a personal reflection that describes how you have achieved your goals and explain the process that you went through to complete the project. You can document your leaning in ONE of these ways: • **Journal entries or logs** – write **3 journal entries** or logs (**200 words each**) that describe the steps you took to complete your project. Explain the following in your entries – what went well, what setbacks occurred, what skills you realized were strengths as you completed the project and what areas you realized you need to continue to improve. • **Video** – record **3 videos** (**2-3 minutes each**) that describe the steps you took to complete your project. Explain the following in your entries – what went well, what setbacks occurred, what skills you realized were strengths as you completed the project and what areas you realized you need to continue to improve. **PART 3 – THE AUDIO/VISUAL PRESENTATION COMPONENT (10%)** **SECTION 1: Summary**	grammar that do not impact the clarity of the assignment. • **Analysis** – offers detailed analysis in the examination of the topic. Examples and quotes are analysed for significance and meaning. Analysis is prominently featured rather than just summarizing, although some summarizing may exist.

• Prepare a **3-minute (maximum) presentation** where you provide a brief overview of your research project. Include your research question, thesis statement, 2 key ideas that you discovered in your research and 1 recommendation you had as part of your conclusion. This should be **4 slides** in length. You should post your presentation by Week 12 and will present your summary in class in Weeks 12-13. **SECTION 2: Reflection** • The remainder of your presentation time will be a discussion on your topic where students and the instructor will join in a discussion about completing this project and other interesting ideas raised in your summary for 5-10 minute	

Appendix M: Course Proposal: First Year Writing: Writing to Transgress

In the next section, in an effort to address current gaps in our FYC courses in my institution, I propose a problem-solving writing course titled, “Writing to Transgress”, which has the following objectives:

5. embrace of trans-lingual, -cultural, -epistemic writing education.
6. cultivate critical awareness of the learner's positionality in their society.
7. provide learners self-agency to work within but also to push beyond a monocultural and monolingual writing system.
8. provide opportunities for learners to write their lived experiences into their work which could result in counterstories.

In a nutshell, this course aims to empower students to critically question their subject position in the world and to contest information and texts they consume from the point of view of their own lived experiences. The title, “Writing to Transgress” is based upon bell hooks’ text, “Teaching to Transgress”, which advocates for a transgressive education whereby education is a practice of freedom helping students to transgress against boundaries of racism, sexism, classicism, etc. to achieve liberation. In addition, I use this title to denote a syllabus which

transgresses white epistemologies and the single stories told by the majoritarian storytellers in academia about BIPOC.

Context:[145]

This is a 14-week face-to-face or synchronous online course which meets 3 hours per week. Students are first year community college students who are direct entries, i.e. students who have just completed high school, or non-direct entries, i.e. students who have worked for a couple of years after high school or mature students. The class is usually capped at 30 with students who hail from various countries of origin: India, China, Vietnam, Uganda, Nigeria, Iran, Columbia, Canada, Venezuela, Korea, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Some are Canadian citizens and PR while others are visa, international students. Some speak English as a mother tongue while the rest speak it as an additional language.

Writing to Transgress

Detailed Course Description:

Mary Pipher (2007) asserts that "All writing is designed to change the world, at least a small part of the world, or in some small way perhaps a change in a reader's mood or in his appreciation of a certain kind of beauty." Why do we write? What compels us to write? What are the barriers to writing? How are students' voices encouraged to flourish in their writing?

[145] The context is similar to the context for the first-year writing course I analysed earlier. My hope is that this proposed course would replace the existing writing course.

This course seeks to help students recognise and affirm their voices through writing as a tool for inquiry for personal development and dialogue. Students review traditional (Eurocentric) writing conventions and analyse their own writing in consideration of these conventions. As such, students develop critical awareness of themselves as writers and are encouraged to make choices in their writing which sustain and nourish, not suppress, their voices and identities. Ultimately, this course hopes to empower students to transgress boundaries and limitations imposed by themselves and/or by society to embrace a pluriversal world. There will be opportunities to read, analyse and appreciate writing from writers from diverse cultural and social backgrounds. Evaluation in this course involves producing a portfolio of course work which includes a variety of learning experiences such as journaling, creative responses, online discussion posts, and collaborative assignments. A final grade will be awarded based on the amount of labour/work performed in the course rather than on approximation of the student's writing skill to a standardised, predefined ideal of good writing. (Inoue, 2022).

Critical Performance: By the end of this course, students would have demonstrated the ability to use writing as a tool of inquiry to broaden their worldview and realise/develop their writing identity.

Learning Outcomes:

To achieve the critical performance, students will have demonstrated the ability to:

1. Explore their identity as a writer.
2. Analyse and respond to a variety of texts from diverse authors.

3. Integrate ideas and feedback from their peers into their writing.
4. Explore how race intersects with gender, sexuality and other identities in writing.
5. Collaborate with their peers on a research project.
6. Synthesize research to develop an argument on a social issue.

Course Materials:

Required:

- Karpinski, Eva C. (2002). Pens of Many Colours: A Canadian Reader (3rd Edition). Thomson-Nelson, Canada. Pens of many colours : a Canadian reader : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive
- Wysocki, A., Lynch, D. & Doyle, S. (2015). The DK Handbook. Second Canadian edition. Pearson, Canada. (available in library)
- Videos used in course will be made available on Learning Management System (LMS).

Optional:

- Al-Solaylee, Kamal. (2016). *Brown: What Being Brown in the World Today Means (to Everyone).* HarperCollins Publishers Ltd, Canada.
- Selvadurai, Shyam. (1994). *Funny Boy.* McClelland and Stewart Publishers, Canada.
- Thammavongsa, Souvankham. (2002). *How to Pronounce Knife*. McClelland and Stewart: Penguin Random House, Canada.

- Williams, Ian. (2021). *Disorientation: Being Black in the World*. Random House Canada.

NOTE: Supplementary readings will be made available on the institution's Learning Management System (LMS).

Evaluation/Assessments

(Final grade will be based on the completion of assigned labour as outlined in the contract, which includes submitting all assignments in the portfolio and participating in class activities)

Portfolio of work include the following:

Journals x 7
Online discussion forums x 4
Reflections x 2
Collaborative Visual Essay x 1
Position paper on a social issue X 1

Weekly Topical Outline:

MODULE 1: Why do we write? Where do I write from? (WEEKS 1-3)

- Introduction- course, assignments, classmates, co-creation of a class charter
- In class: watch the documentary, **Âsônamâtowin - a Sharing of Indigenous Knowledge** (available on the LMS) and discuss the following questions with your peers:

- *How do Indigenous peoples see land?*
- *Why is land important to them?*
- *"Never forget who you and where you come from." Discuss this advice from an elder.*

- Write a paragraph about yourself and share with one other person. Consider the following questions:

  What is your story of how you came to be where you are? Where did your parents and ancestors come from? What is your relationship with the land you are now on?

  (from Jo Chrona, Wayi Wah! Indigenous Pedagogies). *How does knowing your heritage/history impact your writing?*

- Why we write. Here's 33 writers on why they write. ‹ Literary Hub (lithub.com)
- Video: **Why write?** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nvdsu2KMhno
- In- class discussions: *What is your relationship with writing? Do you enjoy writing? Why or why not? Is writing important in your culture/society? What compels you to write? Share some pieces of writing that affected you. Why?* (It does not have to be in English)
- Video: **How can writing change the world?** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oh_foqBkggs
- In–class discussions: *How can your writing change the world?*

- Oral traditions of storytelling- **Read "One Generation from Extinction" by Basil H. Johnson (from Pens of Many Colours)**. Write a one-paragraph response to share with your classmates with the following in mind:
    - *Language as oral transmission as opposed to writing*
    - *The author claims that the loss of language leads to the demeaning of the culture. Do you agree?*
- Sign up for group presentation of Visual Essays[146]

Assignments:

- Online Discussion Forum 1 on LMS – *Write about the importance of land to you and your culture. Select a post from one of your peers and respond to them*. (due week 3)
- Creative response to "Why write?" video: It could be a poem, a drawing, a comic, anything you want. (include this in your journal)
- Weekly Journaling (suggested theme: barriers to writing)

MODULE 2: How Culture Shapes Our Writing (Weeks 4-5)

[146] This assignment is explained in detail under the section, "Assignments Explained".

- Watch Video: **Writing Across Borders** (created by Oregon State University's Center for Writing and Learning)

Part 1: https://youtu.be/Cv3uRPsskv0?si=kjIFboiMctD3SvyI

Part 2: https://youtu.be/vabyE1a2I7E?si=xXs_FKqmGEEW00e0

- Class discussion and then write a journal reflection:
    - *How does culture play out in writing, and how are our expectations shaped by cultural preferences?*
    - *Is this video helpful or does it create stereotypes?*
    - *What is an "error"?*
    - *Interrogate the use of "native speaker" in this video. Who is a "native speaker" of English?*
- Video: **The Danger of a Single Story**, a TED Talk by Chimamanda Adichie https://youtu.be/D9Ihs241zeg?si=90RZoGeIltfYAjHO
    - Respond to this video in your journal focusing on power and storytelling. *Consider what does Adichie means when she says, "That when we reject the single story, when we realize that there is never a single story about any place, we regain a kind of paradise."*
- Read and then class discussion of **Yo White Boy** by Michelle La Flamme (from Pens of Many Colours):

- W*hat stereotypes are evoked through the images of "brown skinned beauty," Aunt Jemima, Pocahontas, etc.?*
- *How does the poem foreground "white" as a colour and as the unmarked race? What are the connotations of "whiteness"? (p.77)*
- *What is the single story being told in this text?*
- *Is there a single story being told about you? How do you dismantle that story?*

Assignments:

- Online Discussion Forum 2: *How do your culture, race, gender, sexuality influence your writing voice? How do they celebrate and/or suppress your voice? How do you propose to transgress the limitations, if any, that society imposes on your voice?* Respond to a post from one of your peers. (due week 5).
- Weekly Journalling

MODULE 3: Learning to choose (WEEKS 6-7)

- Interactive Lecture: What is the writing process? What is *your* writing process?
- Interactive Lecture: Review of academic writing conventions.
  - Audience, context, purpose, strategies (DK handbook, Part 1)

- Understanding Persuasion (ethos, pathos, logos); Analyzing Arguments; What counts as Evidence. (DK handbook, Part 2)
- Finding sources: credibility, relevance, etc. (DK handbook, Part 3)
- Organizing texts: From the sentence to the paragraph to the essay. (DK handbook, Part 4)
- Documenting sources. (DK handbook, Part 6)
- Writing exercises on sentence structure, grammar, cohesive devices, reformulation, editing, citation.

- In-class writing: Analyse your response from Week 2 to **One Generation from Extinction** and explain how it meets or does not meet these writing conventions and why?
- In-class workshopping: Have peers edit your work. *How do the "errors" in your work impede meaning or detract readers from understanding your content/message? Discuss what is an "error". Who decides that something is an "error"?*
- Read and reflect on **Upside Down and Backwards** by Richard Wagamese (from One Native Life). (Available on LMS)
    - *How did he compensate for his astigmatism?*
    - *"Unlearning something is a lot harder than learning it" (Wagamese, p.33). Discuss this quote.*

Assignments:

- Reflection Paper 1: *Write 2 -3 paragraphs reflecting on what you need to unlearn in your life.* (due week 6)
- Online Discussion Forum 3 on LMS: *How do you make choices in your writing, i.e. word, sentence, paragraph, organisational choices? What factors influence these choices?* (due week 7)
- Weekly Journaling (submit in Week 7)
- Select a social issue for your position paper[147] (individual conferencing is in weeks 8 and 9)

MODULE 4: Discerning my voice (WEEKS 8-12)

- In-class discussion: **In Service** by Maxine Tynes (from Pens of Many Colours).
    - *Tynes' story is a brief vignette offering an insight into the lives of "armies of Black women in the sea of domestic service." Discuss how, despite its short length, it manages to produce a powerful effect of oppression based on race, class and gender.*

[147] Details on position paper found in the section, "Assignments Explained".

- *Why does the narrator say in her tribute to Black Women who went "In service" that they were all "saving" her?* (Pens of Many Colours, p. 273)

- Write a one-page response to **In Service**. Consider these questions: *Have you ever been discriminated against or been treated unfairly? How? Why? How would you use your voice to prevent others from experiencing what you had experienced?*
- In-class peer response: *Read two classmates' responses to **In Service** and identify rhetorical elements which reflect the author's voice.*

- Discerning the Writer's Voice:
  - You have a choice of either reading the poem Funeral Blues by W.H. Auden (on LMS) and watching the poem performed in "Four Weddings and a Funeral": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b_a-eXIoyYA
  - Or Choose a poem of your own.
    - In class discussion: *What elements in a piece of writing convey the author's voice? Word choice (idioms, phrases in mother tongue, etc.) imagery, tone, sentence structure, punctuation, content, etc.*
    - *How can you begin to employ these devices in your own writing?*

- Guest Lecture by **any one** of the following Canadian authors followed by a Question-and-Answer session on how they navigated their BIPOC identities in their writing[148].

    - Ian Williams, author of "Disorientation: Being Black in the World."
    - Souvankham Thammavongsa, author of "How to Pronounce Knife."
    - Kamal Solaylee, author of "Brown: What Being Brown in the World Today Means (to Everyone)."
    - Selvadurai, Shyam. (1994). "Funny Boy".

Assignments

- Reflection Paper 2: *Reflect on one of the guest authors above. Research their personal life, culture and work. How do their ethnicity, race, religion, gender and culture influence their writing voice and style? How did their writing transform over the years? How did they transgress boundaries to show up authentically in their writing?* (due Week 11)
- Online Discussion Forum 4 on SLATE: *What rhetorical elements do you use in your writing to express your voice and purpose? Do you think they are effective? Respond to a post from one of your peers.* (due week 12)
- Individual consultations on your position paper in Weeks 8 and 9 if you desire

[148] The guest speaker would be informed of the purpose of this lecture which will be followed by an organic discussion with students allowing students the agency to ask questions which matter to them as emerging writers.

- Weekly Journaling

MODULE 5: Changing the world as a writer (WEEKS 13-14)

- Journal entry: *What compels you to write? Does writing help you make sense of the world and of who you are? Have you found your voice as a writer? How can you change the world as a writer?*
- Visual Essay Presentations in class.

Assignments:

- Submit Position Paper on *Changing the World as a Writer* (due week 13)
- Weekly Journaling (submit in Week 14)

Assignments Explained

- Weekly Journals (7 entries-ongoing reflections throughout the course would contribute towards earning of an A+ grade). (Submission in Week 7 and Week 14)
    - Journaling is a way to reflect on what you have read and learnt about your own writing journey during this course. Do not worry about grammatical accuracy; just write or draw or doodle. You have the freedom to code mesh in your mother tongue and English as some cultural concepts cannot be expressed accurately in English. Reflective journaling is a metacognitive tool. Metacognition is simply

thinking about one's thinking. It refers to tools used to help and assess one's understanding and performance. Use journaling to discover your writing identity/persona, to critique or appraise course content, or share thoughts that come up for you during this course. 7 journal entries will help you earn an A+ grade in this course. At the end of the course, you are welcome to publish your entire journal or parts of it in an online repository for public viewing (created by your instructor).

- Online Discussion Forum on LMS (X 4) (Weeks 3, 5, 7, 12)

  (This is a "fixed due date" as it impacts your peers)

  - This is an opportunity to engage in dialogue with your peers and the instructor. Please note that respectful language and dialogue is expected so please ensure your comments are constructive and thoughtful.

- Reflection papers X 2 (due Weeks 6 and 11)

  - The reflection questions serve as a guide for you to write your papers.
  - You should integrate the course content into your reflections.
  - You are welcome to submit first drafts of your papers to the instructor for help.
  - Your paper should be about 500 words.

- You may use the first-person pronoun. Slang words and jargon are permitted.
- You may code mesh – use your own heritage language along with English.
- In your papers, feel free to break academic writing conventions and reflect on how it benefits your writing in terms of showcasing your voice and identity.

- Visual Essay (due Weeks 13 & 14)

(This is a "fixed due date" as it impacts your peers)

- Working in groups of three, you will identify a social issue (i.e. cost of education, Indigenous rights, modern slavery, human rights, etc.) you wish to address in your community.
- Identify the problem; identify who you should be targeting this presentation to you (who is the person or agency who could enact a positive change); argue your point; provide counterarguments; propose a solution; substantiate with credible research (primary and secondary).
- Your audience will be a person/agency you identify who can enact a positive change in the social issue you identify, i.e. Minister of Education, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Prime Minister's Office, etc.)
- Submit a visual essay. See links below for explanation and examples:
    - https://letterpile.com/writing/How-to-Write-a-Visual-Essay

- https://vimeo.com/channels/visualessay

- Consider the following factors as you work on your visual essay:
    - on research quality (provide scholarly and non-scholarly references such as personal testimonials and stories.)
    - persuasiveness of argument
    - use of graphics, animation, music, voice, etc. to enhance your points
    - impact and delivery of visual essay
    - Length – maximum 10 slides/ visuals; Time – 10 minutes
    - You may use Prezi, PowerPoint, iMovie, etc. to create your visual essay
    - In addition to research work, each person must present a portion of the essay to signify completion of this assignment
    - Please show up for your presentation on the day you signed up for or this will impact your final grade for this course

- Position Paper on *Changing the World as a Writer* due Week 13.

(This is a "fixed due date" as it impacts your peers)

Write a position paper on a social issue you would like to effect a change. You could select the same issue you presented in your group or on a new one. Guidelines for your paper:

- Identify the problem.
- Make your argument.
- Present counterarguments.
- Propose solutions or ideas to mitigate the issue.
- Substantiate with scholarly and non-scholarly research.
- Flout at least one writing convention we reviewed in Weeks 6-7.
- Length: approximately 1500-2000 words.
- Your audience will be your college peers as we will submit papers (with your permission) to the college student newspaper for publishing. The college student newspaper will have final say on which papers get published.
- In a separate reflection paragraph from your paper, explain why you flout that writing convention and how it benefits your paper or how it underscores your writing voice.
- Individual consultations are recommended prior to final submission.

Note: A large part of this course relies on your good faith participation in the classes with your peers and instructor. Missed classes and labours will impact your final grade. More details will be provided in the Grading Contract.

4.3.2 Labour-based grading (adapted from Asao B. Inoue)[149]

Below is an excerpt taken from the course outline (in Appendix M) which describes the grading contract for this course:

A "A+" grade (GPA of 4.0)[150] in the course is guaranteed if you meet all of the following conditions:

1. **Participate in good faith.** You agree to fully participate in good faith in our scheduled classes, activities, and assignments, including online discussions on SLATE (the Learning Management System). Engagement is not a one-size-fits-all expectation, and what participation looks like may vary based on your individual learning style and needs, as long as it reflects consistent, meaningful involvement for you. This includes collaborating with

[149]Access Asao B. Inoue's 2023 book, "Cripping Labor-Based Grading for More Equity in Literacy Courses" lbg.pdf

[150]Please see here for grading policy: https://myotr.sheridancollege.ca/grading_systems.html#Grades3

peers and helping foster a respectful, inclusive learning environment where all voices are welcomed and valued.

2. **Practice Compassion.** You agree to engage with our course community with care—for yourself and others. This includes working respectfully with peers, offering thoughtful feedback, and valuing diverse perspectives. Compassionate participation means recognizing different capacities and honouring our shared class charter—our co-created agreement on how we will learn and grow together.

3. **Timeliness and Completion***.* You agree to submit all work on time and in full, following the labour instructions for each assignment. If you need to turn something in late, it will only count against your contract if it affects your peers (i.e. pair or group work). These “fixed due date” assignments are critical and turning them in late will impact your grade. Late work is defined as anything submitted after the due date but before the last day of the term. Keep in mind that late submissions may not receive feedback from peers or me, limiting your learning opportunities. Complete all work on time, in the spirit it is assigned, and in good faith. You agree to submit all assignments on time and in the appropriate manner, following the given instructions and being mindful of how much time you need to dedicate to each task.

4. **Missed Work.** You agree to complete all required work by the last class of the term. "Missed work" refers to any assignments that are not submitted or accounted for by that deadline. Missing work hinders your growth as a learner in our community, and

accumulating missed assignments will prevent you from meeting the expectations outlined in our contract (see the table below).

5. **"Please" plea.** You can use your "Please" plea only once in the semester. In the event you submit an assignment late or are not able to submit an assignment due to an *unforeseen and exceptional reason*, you are allowed to use this plea. Your plea will be assessed and considered by the instructor with the aim of maintaining fairness to other students in the class. This plea is not a way to bypass the labour contract expectations but is intended for exceptional circumstances beyond your control.

The table below outlines the key components that determine how well you meet our labour-based grading contract. The grades shown in the first column are the only possible final grades for this course—there are no partial grades like C+ or B-. Some assignments are marked "fixed due date" on SLATE. These include the online discussion forums, the position paper, and the visual essay. If these are turned in late, they will affect your final grade. Other assignments are more flexible. While they don't count against your contract if submitted late, they must still be completed by the final class of the term. If they are not submitted by then, they will count as "missed labours."

Please note: The visual essay is especially important to your learning in this course. If it is not submitted, it will count as two missed assignments and result in a final grade of D.

Figure 7: Snapshot of how labour-based grading contract works

Grade	Non-participation days	Late or incomplete assignments or work	Missed assignments
A+ (4.0)	3	2	0
A (4.0)	3	3	0
B (3.0)	4	4	0
C (2.0)	5	5	1
D (1.0)	6	6	2
F (0.0)	7	7	3

End