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## Debriefing Teaching Strategies and Multimodal Narratives in ESL: Pedagogical Tools for Developing Agency, Making Meaning, and Confronting Racism<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

Over the years, there has been a rising interest in combining debriefing teaching approaches and multimodality in classrooms to promote superior critical thinking, reflective thinking, and comprehension (Reyes-Chua, 2018). Such practices have also been instrumental in facilitating L2 learning and identity development (Johnson & Kendrick, 2017). Although most research has focused on the potential of multimodality in enhancing language learning and identity construction, only a handful of studies have investigated how debriefing teaching strategies and multimodal narrative tactics can empower adult minoritized L2 learners to confront racism and develop agency. Using ethnographic and action-based research data, this study examines the role of debriefing teaching strategies and multimodal narrative practices in developing agency, creating meaning, and addressing linguistic racism. The study took place in an intermediate ESL class in the Mid-South region of the USA. Over a period of ten weeks, students wrote ten multimodal narratives in shared Google Docs about their experiences with the English language. During debriefing sessions, they reflected on the narratives and addressed issues of racism by answering 'what,' 'so what,' and 'now what' questions. This study finds that learners can acquire language, develop agency, and confront linguistic racism through multimodal narrative practices and debriefing teaching strategies.

**Keywords:** *Debriefing Teaching, Teaching Strategies, Agency, Linguistic Racism, Negotiating Meaning*

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## **Introduction**

The second language (L2) teaching field has made considerable strides over the last two decades in identifying teaching strategies and approaches that enhance language learning, such as critical pedagogy, multimodal pedagogy, and narrative practices. English as a second language (ESL) researcher (Uddin, 2019) argued that classroom teachers should incorporate critical pedagogy (Freire, 2020) in the curricula as this approach helps learners evaluate critically their lived experiences and create a just society. Dialogic instruction, one of the essential components of critical pedagogy, can be employed to investigate social issues related to learners' daily lives. When learners engage in dialogue, teachers can dig deeper by incorporating a debriefing teaching strategy, thereby creating a platform where learners can critically reflect on their own experiences. Debriefing is a type of teaching method that guides reflective learning (Fanning & Gaba, 2007).

Furthermore, the narrative approach, which relies on written, spoken, or visual representations and typically focuses on the lives of individuals as told through their own stories, plays an important role in supporting learners to retell and make sense of their lived experiences. Using multimodal narratives or digital storytelling about learners' lived experiences in the language classroom contributes to understanding learners' identities, which refer to their relationships with the world around them (Darvin & Norton, 2014). In real life, language learners often face preconceived public notions concerning their language proficiency rooted in a deficit view of using a second language that is based on how not only they speak, but also how they look in terms of race and ethnicity (Donner & Rodríguez, 2008; Marlowe & Bogen, 2015). As the learning environment, including the inside and outside the classroom, is critical to language learners' academic success, they need to be prepared to face challenges. More specifically, they need to have an agency to negotiate meaning in real-life interactions to ensure communication and confront linguisticism. The agency is a contextually mediated individual capacity that helps learners regulate or modify situations. Therefore, it is a call for language education to aid language learners in developing and enacting agency in negotiating meaning to confront racial prejudices in contexts outside the classroom. Within this context, less attention has been paid to how debriefing teaching strategies and multimodal narratives can support adult language learners in developing agency and confronting racism.

In the language classroom, dialogue between teachers and learners, grounded in principles of critical pedagogy, allows learners to become active agents of their learning (Kincheloe, 2011). Moreover, a debriefing teaching strategy that includes critical dialogue between teachers and learners assists them in identifying the challenges they face outside the classroom as Shor and Freire (1987) stated that teachers and learners can identify what they know and do not know through dialogue. Debriefing sessions in the classroom ensure learners' knowledge, rectify mistakes, and help learners incorporate experiences into other situations (Asakawa & Gilbert, 2003). Dialogue in the classroom not only works as a teaching technique but also works as a ground for critical reflection that leads to acts of social change (Tavares, 2023). In this context, social change is characterized by changes in unequal social status, power gap, and linguisticism, which are intertwined with the experiences of learning an additional language. Linguicism is a form of discrimination based on language and one's accent against linguistic minorities (Lippi-Green, 1997; Woodrow, 2006). It is important to note that critical pedagogy

is concerned with equality and justice, highlighting the liberation of people from social hegemony, including oppression, domination, and ignorance (Freire, 2020).

I will frame this study within a discussion of debriefing teaching strategy- a dialogue between teacher and learners- as a fundamental part of critical pedagogy that addresses the empowerment of culturally marginalized and disenfranchised learners and the transformation of classroom practices to promote democratic life (Kincheloe, 2011). This study explores how L2 classroom practices like debriefing strategies and multimodal narrative practices can help learners develop agencies with the aim of removing the veils between the privileged and deprived groups of society. As such, this study is based on the following questions:

**RQ1:** In what ways can a debriefing teaching strategy and multimodal narrative practices help adult L2 learners develop an agency?

**RQ2:** In what ways can a debriefing teaching strategy and multimodal narrative practices empower immigrant adult L2 learners to negotiate meaning and confront linguisticism outside the classroom?

Critical pedagogy can potentially increase learner agency and promote social change; therefore, language classrooms require significant scaffolding for learners. One of the vehicles for social change is literacy, which means the ability to read and write well and understand one's own social status by using these skills (Degener, 2001). Critical adult education programs not only focus on literacy but also emphasize how students can use those skills to reshape their lives and the society in which they live. According to critical theorists, literacy does not only mean how to read and write but also critically examines one's identity or position in life, including socioeconomic status, educational background, and race (Freire, 2020). In the old literacy version, learners were the passive recipients and the best agents of reproduction of received knowledge. However, we are in the midst of a shift in communication from the medium of writing to the medium of visual communication. Therefore, multiliteracies that include multimodality are essential for the present contemporary communications environment. Through multiliteracies, individuals can make sense of information through linguistic, visual, aural, spatial, and gestural means. This study asked learners to produce multimodal narratives that required linguistic, visual, spatial, and gestural modes to equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary to become active citizens in the current world in which the means of communication and access to information are constantly changing.

### **Possible Roles of a Debriefing Strategy: Supporting Learners through Dialogue**

The debriefing teaching strategy, which usually includes self-reflective discourse, an open-ended questioning technique, direct discourse, silent pause, dialogue, and informative feedback has been widely used to foster students' reflective thinking and prepare them for practical tasks (Mohammad, 2023). During debriefing sessions, offering specific feedback helps learners reflect on their performance effectively. It helps learners analyze and evaluate their strengths and weaknesses, identify areas for improvement, and gain insights into their learning progress. Moreover, dialogue in the L2 classroom can serve as a gateway for learners to receive feedback, express themselves by answering open-ended questions, and contribute to changing the world around them. A dialogical conversation is one of the essential aspects of critical pedagogy, as the strategy values everyone's voice. One of the most crucial aspects of dialogue in education is that it helps bridge the gap in authority between teachers and learners, making their

relationship more equal and respectful. However, the dialogic conversation between instructors and learners is not merely a simple exchange of open-ended questions. Instead, debriefing involves a meaningful dialogue that is grounded in a robust narrative pedagogy. Dialogic education needs to be rooted in learners' lived experiences comprised of culture, language, and politics. Mohammad's (2023) study noted that debriefers should use effective linguistic and communication strategies to guide debriefing sessions. In order to achieve critical thinking and genuine education, effective communication through dialogue is imperative.

When learners engage in dialogue with teachers and their peers, teachers can dig deeper into the topic by incorporating a debriefing teaching strategy. In L2 classrooms, learners benefit most from well-structured debriefing activities that occur at the end of an activity. The process of reflecting on lived experiences is a powerful tool for learners. Educators can guide this process by addressing 'what happened, why it happened, and what next' questions. This reflective process encourages critical thinking and empowers learners to better understand their experiences. During debriefing sessions, it's vital to incorporate reflections and a narrative approach besides including meaningful dialogue to achieve a successful outcome. The true value of learning lies in the ability to convert a learner's reflections into actionable knowledge. This kind of engagement can develop learners' awareness, which they can utilize in their future experiences. More importantly, reflections help learners connect real-life experiences with learning habits. Recent studies suggest that to enhance learning outcomes, educators can integrate reflective practices into their teaching (Yoke & Jamil, 2023). Particularly, practicing reflection in the classroom is crucial for improving English language skills at the tertiary level. Therefore, debriefing sessions can greatly benefit from incorporating reflection into the process, as it is essential to ensure effective and productive sessions. An effective debriefing strategy benefits learners in gathering knowledge, fixing mistakes, and incorporating knowledge and experiences into other situations that ultimately reinforce learning (Bilgin et al., 2015). In addition to that, prior studies noticed a significant improvement in performance scores of participants who participated in a debriefing group compared to the participants who did not participate in a debriefing group (Savoldelli et al., 2006; Shinnick et al., 2011). The debriefing teaching strategy has recently been implemented in teacher education and ESL classrooms, where more attention has been given to the affordances of the strategy in fostering language learning. For instance, Rif and Hua (2021) revealed that debriefing helped strengthen ESL learners' critical thinking while enhancing oral and written proficiency. However, debriefing strategies have not adequately been used to equip learners to overcome language, color, or race challenges. This study aims to explore how a debriefing strategy, utilizing multimodal narrative reflection and dialogue, can aid in developing and negotiating meaning and confronting linguistic racism.

### **Multimodal Narrative Practices**

Although the debriefing strategy needs to be grounded in narrative pedagogy, the contemporary communication environment demands a shift in pedagogical approaches, including multimodality. Understanding multimodality involves comprehending how visual, gestural, spatial, and linguistic modes function and are structured. Past research has indicated that multimodality can aid English language learners in expressing personal experiences and developing their identities and agency (Johnson & Kendrick, 2017). According to Zakaria et

al. (2016), web-based language teaching, digital storytelling, and multimodal literacy can assist immigrant learners with language learning and identity development in the classroom. Moreover, using multimodal text enhanced English language learners' levels of engagement, understanding, and critical skills (Ganapathy & Seetharam, 2016; Anderson et al., 2017). In addition to that, including multimodal digital composition tasks in the language classroom increases learners' motivation and confidence in expressing themselves in English (Jiang & Gao, 2020). Researchers in the field of teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) utilized a digital tool called Story Bird in the classroom to introduce students to 21st-century skills (Zakaria et al., 2016). The main objective of their study was to investigate the experiences of English language learners who used Story Bird to write narrative texts. Their findings demonstrated that language learners had a positive experience in using Story Bird to write narrative texts. They suggested that it can be an effective pedagogical tool for teaching narrative writing. In addition, Conrad (2013) found digital storytelling, blogs, and videos helpful in expressing one's experiences.

Incorporating multimodality into learners' diverse lived experiences, which is called culturally responsive multimodal pedagogy (Kiss & Weninger, 2017), can bring new perspectives, and enhance language learning. This type of multimodal pedagogies can help learners make the connection between the classroom and their lifeworld. Previous research aimed to determine the effectiveness of multimodal teaching methods in enhancing language learning. For instance, when learners were instructed to capture images of various elements showcasing their identities and preferred activities, it was found to be potent in terms of language learning (Early et al., 2015). Further, integrating learners' communities into the classroom can improve authentic communication. For instance, translanguaging, which involves using both L1 and L2 in the English classroom, helps develop learners' representation skills, creativity, and critical thinking towards migration (Takaki, 2019). Thus, previous studies have shown that culturally responsive multimodal teaching strategies effectively promote language and literacy skills and help students comprehend their daily experiences. However, the role of multimodal narrative practices in addressing various challenges learners face in their daily lives is yet to be identified. Learners may come to the language classroom with high motivation but face power gaps and linguistic discrimination in real-life situations; therefore, high motivation may only sometimes guarantee language learning. Learners' desire to learn the language or learners' investment in language learning depends on the negotiations of power between interlocutors (Darvin, 2020). Keeping that in mind, this current study combines debriefing teaching strategy and multimodal narrative practices—linguistic, visual, and oral—in adult ESL classrooms to see the teaching strategies' affordance in preparing learners to develop agency, negotiate meaning, and confront linguistic discrimination in real-life situations.

### **Addressing Linguistic Racism and Stereotyping in Educational Setting**

Language learning has expanded beyond the classroom, now encompassing race, class, power dynamics, and social norms. Being members of different linguistic communities, immigrant language learners often face challenges like power gaps and linguistic racism. In this study, the concept of linguistic racism refers to ideologies or actions that violate human rights based on the way language learners use language (Dovchin, 2019). Skuntnabb-Kangas (1988) defines

linguicism as the unequal distribution of power and resources based on language. According to Dovchin (2020), "linguistic racism" includes two more aspects - "ethnic accent bullying," which is mocking someone's language usage or accent, and "linguistic stereotyping," which is a form of aggression that can result in exclusion from the dominant group. Based on Piller's (2016) findings, English language learners can be stereotyped based on their race and ethnicity, leading to incorrect assumptions about their language proficiency. Stereotyping people based on their pronunciation, voice, accent, and paralinguistic signs is common among different linguistic communities. Language learners often struggle in both institutional and non-institutional settings. For example, Corona and Block (2020) reported that language learners have experienced racial microaggressions from their teachers based on their color, race, and language. In many contexts, students of different races, not just language learners only, experience racism, for instance, African-American students receive more negative feedback from their teachers than their White peers (Scott et al., 2019). Furthermore, in an experimental study conducted by Copur-Gencturk et al. (2020), it was discovered that teachers tended to give higher ratings to white students compared to students of color, despite both groups performing similarly on a math task. Language educators and curricula have prioritized pedagogical tools aimed at addressing complex issues related to racism for many years. A recent research study suggests a race-conscious approach to teaching pedagogy, allowing teachers to navigate social, institutional, and individual obstacles (Pagán, 2022). In addition, Seo (2023) revealed what and how to teach antiracist teaching pedagogy to students in EFL contexts. Although previous studies suggest integrating antiracist teaching pedagogy in language classrooms, a few studies have explored how educators can help language learners confront racism.

While efforts to integrate antiracist pedagogies in language teaching are crucial, understanding the experiences of language learners through theoretical frameworks like Critical Race Theory (CRT) is equally important as it offers deeper insights into the challenges they face in both institutional and noninstitutional settings. Given the complexities surrounding language learning issues, this study emphasizes the necessity of applying CRT to understand and address the challenges immigrant language learners face. CRT is a suitable framework for understanding the experiences of immigrants, as it emphasizes the experiential knowledge of historically marginalized individuals (Charles, 2019). Immigrant people are marginalized because of how they use language; thus, CRT can help understand and analyze the ideology, hierarchical structure, or class power in the dominant society and immigrant learners' real-life experiences. Therefore, by applying CRT, this study not only highlights the unique linguistics challenges faced by immigrants but also sheds light on broader societal structures that shape their language learning journey, offering a comprehensive understanding that is essential for developing more inclusive and effective antiracist language teaching practices.

## **Method**

In this study, a qualitative ethnographic approach was taken. The study was conducted using the principles of action research, which is a method of self-reflective inquiry that aims to enhance the rationality and fairness of participants' practices, their comprehension of these practices, and the situation in which they are enacted (Carr & Kemmis, 2003). This study examined students' production of multimodal narratives in an ESL class and debriefing

practices to describe learners’ agency and understanding of linguistic discrimination. The study utilized a narrative approach to investigate the everyday experiences of English language learners. The aim was to identify techniques and solutions to common problems immigrant language learners face.

*Participants and their Relationship with the Researcher*

I had experience teaching immigrant adult language learners enrolled in a course called “Speaking Well in the US.” The course aimed to prepare learners to communicate effectively in their real-world lives. While teaching this language course, I had the opportunity to resonate with my students. My identity as a language teacher and a woman of color allowed me to realize the challenges language learners often face. Thus, the classroom environment offered a comfortable zone where all learners could spontaneously share their experiences, leading to a good rapport between teachers and learners. This relationship allowed students to share their experiences and ideologies in the classroom without feeling pressured. Through action research, teachers can analyze learners’ behavior and challenges, allowing them to adjust teaching strategies based on learners’ needs. While teaching the ‘Speaking Well in the US’ course, I could analyze learners’ behavior and challenges in using language inside and outside the classroom.

Five immigrant adult participants participated in this study. Three participants came from Brazil, and two of them were Venezuelan. Participants’ range of residency in the US was from two weeks to ten years. All participants had been living here for a short time except one who came to the US ten years ago during data collection. Three participants had not taken any English language courses, while two had previously enrolled in other English Language courses before joining the ‘Speaking Well in the US’ course. Their real names were not disclosed due to the Institution Review Board protocol; therefore, pseudonyms were used to protect participants’ confidentiality. Table 1 below presents the demographic data of the participants.

**Table 1**  
*Participants’ Data*

Pseudonyms	Length of Residence in U. S	Age	From
Molly	2 weeks	32	Brazil
Amy	1 year	28	Brazil
Camelia	10 years	48	Brazil
Genia	10 months	35	Venezuela
Arena	4 years	25	Venezuela

*Data Collection*

As part of the study, the learners were assigned a task to write ten multimodal narratives in a shared Google document describing their experiences of using English outside of their classroom. Once they completed each narrative, the learners had to recount and reflect on their stories in class. During the reflection session, the researcher displayed the Google document on a projected screen, enabling all learners to view the narratives visually. This helped learners share their experiences of using English in detail while responding to the researcher's questions. The study used a debriefing strategy to answer what happened, why it happened, and what's

next. Additionally, learners were asked to explain the photo they had used in their written narratives. They shared their reasons for selecting specific photos and explained the relationship between the photo mode and the narratives. If there was any character, place, or object in the photo, they introduced it.

### *Data Analysis*

The study utilized NVivo 12 Plus, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software, to examine the learners' written multimodal narratives. The analysis aimed to understand the learners' agency and how they overcame challenges. Additionally, the researcher video-recorded and transcribed the reflections and debriefing sessions to identify the major themes. The video recordings of the Reflection and Debriefing sessions helped to understand how learners dealt with racism in different language learning contexts.

## **Results and Discussion**

The findings demonstrate that learners often experience racism in real-life settings because of their appearance and the way they use language. This often leads to feelings of frustration and exclusion from society, primarily due to linguisticism. Linguistic stereotypes are based on one's appearance, leading to the assumption that it determines one's language proficiency or speaking ability. However, the debriefing teaching strategy has proven to be effective in helping learners apply their classroom knowledge in real-life situations, empowering them to confront linguisticism and develop agencies.

### *Linguistic Stereotypes Start from the Face Value*

Molly, who completed her bachelor's degree and worked as a teacher at a school in Brazil, enrolled in a community-based English language program after coming to the USA. One of her narratives showed how she negotiated the implicit language ideology that people have regarding immigrants' language proficiency. During the narrative reflection and debriefing session, Molly said:

#### **Excerpt 1**

##### *Preconceived Notion about Language Learners' Proficiency*

- 1 Molly: One day, I was in a dinner with a friend and was looking at the menu. The clerk asked
- 2 me what my order and I said wait a moment, then my friend turned to him, and she
- 3 was going to order food.
- 4 R: Your friend was going to order food when you asked the waiter to wait for a while.
- 5 Is that correct? If yes, why that happened? What do you think?
- 6 Molly: Yes. It was because she thought I could not speak English. Patience. I immediately
- 7 corrected her. I asked her to wait because I was just choosing the menu, but knew
- 8 how to order...
- 9 R: Okay. Great! How did you feel when you noticed that your friend failed to understand
- 10 your ability of speaking English?
- 11 Molly: I felt like a disability. But it was my friend who went wrong.

(DEBRIEFING AND NARRATIVE REFLECTION IN THE CLASSROOM, AUGUST 7TH)



Excerpt 1 portrays how Molly took the initiative to correct her friend, who had a preconceived notion about the language proficiency of immigrant language learners. Molly's friend thought Molly might not know how to order food in the restaurant: 'It was because she thought I could not speak English' (line 6), an example of a linguistic stereotype. Molly was expected to have less English proficiency and not speak well because of her ethnic identity. This type of implicit language ideology may cause social withdrawal and mental health problems, including depression, inferiority complex, and suicidal ideation (Dovchin, 2020). Although Molly raised her voice and corrected her friend, Molly still felt "like a disability," indicating a loss of belonging. Molly felt disabled after being critically judged by her American friend, who viewed her as less intelligent. Such ideology blocks learners' entry into the external community since learners remain under pressure when they speak and face discrimination because of their language, color, and race. Dovchin also noticed that negative psychological impacts, such as frustration, depression, and worthless feelings, further increase language learners' suicidal ideation. CRT acknowledges that these types of microaggressions have serious mental health implications as they reinforce feelings of alienation and inferiority.

It is important to note that, usually, learners remove themselves from opportunities for social interaction when they face racism; however, Molly did not remove herself from the interaction and did not stop investing in language learning: "Patience, I immediately corrected her. I asked her to wait because I was just choosing the menu but knew how to order" (line 6-7). The statement 'I immediately corrected her' shows how she negotiated the hidden language ideology preserved by the host nation. Rather than withdrawing, she asserted her linguistics capabilities, challenging the implicit language ideology. This resistance aligns with CRT's emphasis on marginalized individuals' agency in reshaping-imposed stereotypes. Furthermore, this example highlights how CRT emphasizes the notion of 'voice' through Molly's use of her own voice to challenge and negotiate racial and linguistic biases.

Examining the above excerpt through the lens of Critical Race Theory provides valuable insight into the intersection of race, language, and power dynamics in social interactions. The scenario of Molly facing linguistic stereotyping from her friend exemplifies how racial and ethnic identities can influence societal structures and individual perceptions. Critical Race Theory argues that society's fabric is woven with racism. This is exemplified by how Molly's English proficiency is underestimated due to her immigrant status. This example demonstrates the prevalent societal attitudes towards individuals with minority ethnic backgrounds.

Moreover, the role of the debriefing session in the excerpt is crucial. The debriefing session allows Molly to reflect critically on her experiences and the underlying racial dynamics. During the conversation, Molly began by explaining what had happened in the restaurant (line 1). The researcher then prompted her to further elaborate on her explanation by asking why she thought that had happened. This type of question served as a valuable tool to help learners consider the context in greater detail. Molly explained in line 6 why her friend prevented her from ordering food in the restaurant. She believed that her friend's preconceived notion about immigrants' language proficiency was the reason why she didn't allow her to order food. Molly explained the reason behind it and expressed how she negotiated the situation by raising her voice and proving herself a legitimate member of the community. Molly's response worked as a paradigm for the language learners in the classroom. During reflection and debriefing sessions, learners addressed racism's detrimental effect on Molly, who expressed feeling like a disability. CRT

always stresses the importance of comprehending the context and mechanisms of racial discrimination.

The excerpt above sheds light on how language can be used to discriminate against marginalized communities and how individuals from those communities deal with these challenges. It also emphasizes the importance of having a voice, resisting discrimination, and critically reflecting upon racial prejudices in everyday interactions. All these factors are critical in combating racial bias and promoting social justice.

In addition, Amy, who used to work at a hospital in Brazil, moved to the US for better opportunities. She noticed that native English speakers lack patience during communication breakdowns.

## **Excerpt 2**

### *People do not Have Patience*

- 1 R: Amy, why do you think that people are not patient?  
2 Amy: People do not have patience. Molly had that luck because people are patient, patient  
3 with her. I cannot find people have patience with me. I don't have.  
4 R: What did you notice?  
5 Amy: I try. When I walk in the street people come and talk a little bit. But when they see I  
6 don't speak well then okay see you. Bye-bye.  
7 R: So, what we can do if that happens again.  
8 Amy: I do not know what I should do.  
9 R: My suggestion would be to never give up. If you do not get the point during  
10 conversation, you can ask them to repeat. Like hey would you please repeat, or would  
11 you please speak slowly? Even I ask a question if I do not get the point. There is no  
12 problem in asking questions. It is okay if we do not understand. We can ask them to  
13 explain.  
14 Amy: Molly had luck because people are patient with her. I cannot find people have  
15 patience with me. I don't have. But I try when I walk in the street people come and  
16 talk a little bit.

(AMY'S REFLECTION ON NARRATIVE AND DEBRIEFING SESSION, AUGUST 14<sup>TH</sup>)

The above passage reveals Amy's experiences and mental state when interacting with people outside her immediate community. Amy's statement "I cannot find people who have patience with me" indicates her frustration as she believed that no one had time to listen to her. Based on her observations, she concluded that "people do not have patience" (line 2). Amy saw herself as an outsider who was unworthy and incapable of fitting in with the target community. Learners who are positioned as inadequate or unworthy in a classroom or social setting may not feel valued or welcomed (Darvin, 2019). Narrative reflection and debriefing sessions in the language classroom provided a space for learners to critically reflect, monitor, and analyze their own and their peers' experiences. Amy compared her experiences to Molly's, noting that Molly received more patience from people. The debriefing session allowed Amy to think more critically about the event from various perspectives. She not only described what she faced but also realized that native speakers of English tend to avoid immigrant language learners if they fail to follow existing norms while speaking. This statement highlights covert discrimination

against non-native speakers of English, as native speakers often hold hegemonic ideologies about immigrants and reinforce power structures. The debriefing teaching strategy also helped language learners feel confident in broader contexts. The researcher suggested learners 'ask a question' if needed since asking questions can help learners negotiate meaning and ensure successful communication.

CRT can be applied to understand how linguistic racism and societal power dynamics impact Amy. Amy's feeling of being an outsider is an example of systemic racism, where certain dominant groups hold power and set norms that implicitly exclude or disadvantage others. CRT would highlight how English speakers' avoidance of immigrant language learners perpetuates power imbalances. The use of narrative reflection and debriefing sessions also empowered Amy as she could critically analyze her experiences and understand those experiences with a broader societal context. Teaching strategies such as debriefing sessions, critical reflection, and encouraging questioning can scaffold and support language learners in a system inherently biased against them.

### *Demonstrate the Knowledge in Real Life Context*

It is worth noting that in the real world, learners can apply the knowledge acquired from narrative reflection and debriefing sessions. For instance, Amy shared her experience of negotiating meaning by asking questions in a real-life situation where she encountered a language barrier because she did not understand the point. For instance, Amy mentioned,

#### **Excerpt 3**

##### *Demonstrating Classroom knowledge in Real Life*

- 1 Amy: Last Sunday, in the morning my husband, daughter and I went to the zoo. When we  
2 arrived there, we soon went to see the lions and a thing caught our attention. I was  
3 taking a picture when a woman approached, and she asked me something. I had  
4 understood that she had asked me the following question: "could you take a picture?"  
5 but in fact I only understood the word 'photo'. So, I answered: "yes". I saw that she  
6 looked at me weird and walked away. I apologized to her, and I said I didn't  
7 understand English very well and I asked her to repeat the question again. Then she  
8 asked me again: "Am I on the way of your picture?" I said no and we smiled. My  
9 husband was by my side but just watching, so I told him that I didn't understand the  
10 first time she spoke. Then we smiled at what had happened.
- 11 R: Interesting! It is good that you asked her to repeat. How did you feel?
- 12 Amy: I felt a little embarrassed that I gave an answer without understanding the whole  
13 sentence. But finally, it went well.

(Debriefing and Narrative Reflection in the classroom, August 28<sup>th</sup>)

It is worth mentioning that when Amy asked the lady to repeat the question in line 7, she was demonstrating an example of Negotiation for Meaning. This term refers to the process in which two or more people who are communicating try to identify and resolve a breakdown in communication. Although it is rare for native speakers to repair communication breakdowns (Norton, 2013), Amy's willingness to ask a question showed her desire to communicate with the lady and resolve the issue. When Amy was unable to comprehend what the lady said, the lady gave her a perplexing expression. This expression was a form of feedback that helped

Amy understand that there was a language barrier between them. This sort of feedback is called a paralinguistic feature, which encompasses body language, gestures, and facial expressions. It is important to identify whether a communication breakdown is caused by linguistic or racial misunderstanding, considering the impact of societal power structures on interactions. For example, we can analyze the 'weird look' of the woman to determine if it was due to a language barrier or underlying racial prejudices affecting the conversation. Recognizing this, Amy knew the communication was unclear and immediately acted to repair the breakdown. Amy's initiative to ask a question to solve the problem is consistent with Kazemi & Kiamarsi's (2017) study, which found that advanced language learners often use cognitive strategies to comprehend meaning and solve problems. As stated in the excerpt, sharing real-life experiences can aid learners in comprehending the challenges they encounter, their root causes, and the ways to tackle them. Additionally, language educators can improve their ability to meet students' needs in the language classroom by acknowledging the consequences of different challenging situations. Genia, a Venezuelan economic analyst who used to work at a bank, came to the US with the aim of finding better opportunities. However, after her arrival, she found challenges in communication, leading to her enrolling in a language program. One of her narrative reflections showed how she negotiated meaning in a real-life context.

#### **Excerpt 4**

##### *Negotiating Meaning in Real-Life Situations*

- 1 R: Genia, in your narrative, you talked about your experiences in the restaurant.
- 2 Could you please tell us what happened?
- 3 Genia: On Saturday I felt very bad because of the flu I have had for several days.
- 4 Take my children to eat at KFC. They had craving days. I had to place the
- 5 order with the cashier, which was a good afternoon, how are you?
- 6 Cashier: Very well and what will your order be today?
- 7 Genia: Okay I want two services of 6 which are 3 pieces of chicken, salad, bread,
- 8 mashed potatoes or drink please. Pepsi! I do not like Dr. Pepper.
- 9 Cashier: Okay very good. Anything else?
- 10 Genia: A service of 17 of 2 chicken burgers and fries.
- 11 Cashier: Fried or Roasted chicken?
- 12 Genia: I do not understand what he said.
- 13 R: Okay then what you said when you did not understand.
- 14 Genia: I said, what? I do not understand fried or what? Then, he approached an oven
- 15 and showed me the two types of chicken. Then, I said haa, okay I liked fried
- 16 chicken!
- 17 Cashier: Okay anything else?
- 18 Genia: Yes, 3 chicken tenders with French fries for my youngest son.
- 19 Cashier: Okay, your order is \$30.59
- 20 R: Great. So, how did you feel about the overall conversation?
- 21 Genia: On occasion, my English was fluent until he named me roast chicken. I did
- 22 not know that word in my vocabulary. I must practice and study more.

(GENIA'S NARRATIVE REFLECTION AND DEBRIEFING SESSION, SEPT. 9<sup>TH</sup>)

In the given excerpt, we can see that Genia struggled to understand the meaning of "fried and roasted chicken." She expresses her confusion by saying "What? I do not understand fried or what" (line 14). To help her understand, the person at the restaurant showed her a tray of fried and roasted chicken. This real-life example acted as a tool for Genia to grasp the meaning of the words. After seeing the actual fried chicken, Genia was able to repeat the words "fried chicken" and even expressed her liking for it by saying "Ha, okay, I liked fried chicken" (line 16). This process of understanding a new idea is called "uptake." Genia struggled to understand the meaning of 'fried and roasted chicken,' highlighting how language is deeply embedded in cultural context. The process of language learning uptake, as seen in Genia's experience, highlights the need to tailor educational approaches for learners from diverse backgrounds.

In the above excerpt, Genia displayed her agency, ability to negotiate meaning by asking questions, language awareness, and capacity to identify gaps in her language. Her interaction was vital in facilitating her lexical learning in this context. In the field of Second Language Acquisition, researchers have noted that when language learners struggle to communicate, they tend to shift their focus from meaning to solving the problem (White, 1987). When Genia faced difficulty during the conversation, she attempted to solve the problem, which helped her adjust the interaction and facilitate acquisition. Based on the above reflection and debriefing session, other learners and teachers can learn from her strategies to overcome language barriers and negotiate meaning effectively. Genia's questioning agency is a critical aspect of Critical Race Theory, which emphasizes the empowerment of marginalized groups through their own agency.

#### *Multimodal Narrative as Scaffolding*

During their narrative writing activities in the classroom, students utilized photo modes and shared their reasoning behind selecting specific images. They also noted how the photo mode improved their language learning experience. For example, Molly included a picture of a story from the Bible in one of her narratives but did not describe the story in her written work. However, during the narrative reflection and debriefing session, she clarified why she had chosen the photo mode.

## Figure 1

### *Molly's Written Multimodal Narrative*

#### *I like my new Class*

Last week I attended a new English class at the Baptist church. But my beginning was not very good, because the church test is so different. These are just questions about a picture. It's not a problem for me, but I didn't understand the first question and the person in charge put me at the basic level. People in the class are studying "My name is ...", object names and colors. So I talked to him about class change and he changed last week. I like my new class, but in the last class my teacher told me about changing classes again because the level is too easy for me. I'm going to change next week and I don't know what to study in my new class, but there is a way to study. First we study grammar and conversation, and then we study the Bible. I love studying the bible because I know the text and it is easier to understand about the text.

Below pictures of my second Bible passage that was studied.



Figure 1 is Molly's written story about her experiences at a Church language class. Although Molly included a photo from the Bible in her narrative, she did not provide a detailed explanation of the photo mode. However, during the reflection and debriefing session, she was able to think critically about the photo. It is worth noting that Molly and Amy both participated in the debriefing session. For example:

**Excerpt 5**

*The Story is about Miracle*

- 1 Molly: The picture is from the Bible. Because it is more easy [easier] to understand  
2 the story. My teacher in the church finds the picture for us. The story is about  
3 miracle, fish, people, and peace in the Bible. Do not fish in this year, not fish  
4 in the sea. After the miracle, there are a lot of fish. Jesus loves the people.  
5 R: So, how do you feel when you talk about the photo?  
6 Molly: It is more easy [easier]. I know the picture. Sometimes I am tired of thinking.  
7 R: Okay. Yes, the story sounds very interesting. Isn't it?  
8 Amy: Yes, whole night they did not find any fish. But after the miracle there is a lot  
9 of fish.  
10 R: Right. I think the story is not just about miracle but also about God's power  
11 and human beings' faith upon God. If people follow God's command, they  
12 will be rewarded.

(Reflection and Debriefing session: September 2<sup>nd</sup>)

Molly explained the photo mode during the classroom discussion, allowing other participants to join and contribute to the conversation. This led to a new story being created, with the photo mode providing a vital message and visual representation of a story from the Bible. The single image contained a meaningful religious story, making learners think more deeply about it. The photo mode also provided more opportunities for language learners to speak in the classroom, with Amy adding information about a miracle in the Bible. The use of familiar modes like photos and texts positively influenced language learning, making it easier for learners to understand and explain the story. The implementation of photo mode significantly improved the learners' engagement and participation. The interactive visual representation of the Biblical story served as a common reference for all learners regardless of language proficiency. The photo mode also worked as a useful tool for understanding complex religious stories that may be difficult to comprehend through text alone.

One of Molly's multimodal narratives included a photo depicting her real-life actions, depicting her growing agency through a combination of narrative writing and photo mode. For instance, in Figure 2, Molly presents another written multimodal narrative that displays her growing autonomy.

The narrative shows a photo mode of her everyday habit of going to a coffee shop to test her English skills. By adding this photo, Molly confirms the authenticity of her narrative about buying coffee every day and her actions in the real world. Furthermore, the photo mode emphasizes her ability to order various types of coffee, showcasing her language development and agency. In her own words, "I gained autonomy. I can go wherever I want...I can communicate much better" (line 3), illustrating how this autonomy in language proficiency is vital for language learners to assert their agency in an English-speaking society. Molly uses visual representations of her daily habits, asserting herself in a space where language learners are often marginalized due to their language learning status. The findings resonate with Guzzetti and Wooten's (2002) work, suggesting that images and text complement each other in narrative representation.

## Figure 2

### *Molly's Multimodal Narrative about Her Autonomy*

#### *I gained Autonomy*

As a final text, I should highlight the many times I talk to different people. Today I have contact with Americans all day long. After starting my job, I got a lot more than a job. First I gained autonomy, I can go wherever I want. So I have opportunities. And I realized that when I'm alone, I can communicate much better. People who know more about prey or unwillingness to expose you to error will not let you develop. .... Every day before work, I go to a coffee shop, buy different coffees and test my English, I know I can order it. I know that every day we are learning, and I have heard from many Americans that they understand me very well and that makes me feel good. So is to continue studying and practicing.

And I think for those who know, I think it's cool to wait for someone to ask for help, so they can develop more. After all you don't know if that is her only opportunity to practice.



Molly's multimodal narrative illustrates how combining textual and visual modes can express personal growth, autonomy, and the practical application of language learning in everyday life. The purpose of visiting the coffee shop is not simply because Molly loves coffee, but rather it is a strategic move to monitor her language development. The act of ordering coffee demonstrates Molly's language skills, confidence, and independence as a language learner in real-world situations. Her account of visiting a coffee shop can be perceived as a metaphor for navigating a society where English proficiency is intertwined with societal power dynamics.

#### **Conclusion**

This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of using debriefing strategies and multimodal narrative practices as pedagogical tools in the language classroom. The results showed that using these strategies in combination with narrative reflections of learners' experiences helped to develop learners' agency, facilitate negotiation of meaning, and confront linguistic racism. Narrative reflections revealed that learners often face challenges in non-institutional settings due to their appearance and the way they speak English. For example, one learner named Molly's friend assumed that she did not know how to order food in a restaurant because of her preconceived notion about immigrants' language proficiency. This implicit language ideology can lead to social withdrawal and mental health issues for immigrants, including depression, inferiority complexes, and suicidal thoughts (Dovchin, 2020).



However, debriefing teaching strategies supported learners in becoming aware of their inner strengths and feeling empowered. These strategies not only revealed the pattern of linguistic racism that learners may face but also facilitated their understanding of how to negotiate meaning and confront linguisticism. Learners learned different strategies, such as asking questions, being willing to speak, and not feeling inferior, which they could demonstrate in real-life situations to negotiate meaning. For instance, one learner named Genia told the cashier at KFC that she needed to learn the difference between fried and roasted chicken. The cashier showed her actual fried chicken to illustrate the difference, facilitating communication, and demonstrating Genia's developed ability to negotiate meaning.

Through narrative reflection and debriefing sessions, learners were able to better understand the power dynamics present in society and effectively negotiate meaning during conversations. Additionally, utilizing multiple modes in written narratives helped enhance learners' ability to present their ideas, ensure the validity of their narratives, and showcase their actions in the real world. Moreover, incorporating photo modes in writing and discussing linguistic and visual modes relevant to learners' everyday lives can facilitate language learning.

Furthermore, individuals who are learning a new language desire acceptance, appreciation, and care from the dominant society, both in institutional and noninstitutional settings. Learners' personal experiences and identities should be taken into account in second language teaching to connect classroom learning with real-world language use (Norton, 2013). Considering these aspects, this study suggests that sociolinguistics is essential in acknowledging learners' lived experiences, empowering them, and fostering a democratic spirit. Therefore, it argues that language teachers should incorporate pedagogical tools, such as debriefing teaching strategies and multimodal narrative practices, to harness linguisticism, develop agency, and negotiate meaning in the language classroom.

In conclusion, this study underscores the importance of debriefing strategies and multimodal narrative practices in confronting linguistic racism and empowering language learners. These pedagogical tools not only address linguistic racism but empower learners to counter these challenges with confidence. The study's findings highlight the crucial role of sociolinguistics in comprehending and addressing the intricate interplay among race, language, and power in society. It proposes a language teaching approach that connects classroom learning with real-world applications. The study suggests conducting further research to deepen understanding of the interconnected nature of linguisticism and its impacts.

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