

Conflicting Discourses in Language Teacher Education: Reclaiming Voice in the Struggle

By Theresa Austin

Denying the complex, contradictory “hard-to-code” voices makes trouble for creating borders around conclusive arguments. Fine sensitively warns feminist researchers in the social sciences not to romanticize voices but to pay critical attention to what voices we hear and how we hear them. (Jackson, 2003, 5)

The warning that Jackson provides is a particularly somber one for any teacher educator concerned about both valuing what teachers bring to the field as well as opening up space to hear and work with “difficult subjects” for teachers (Florio-Ruane, 2001; Gebhard, 2003; Torres-Guzman, 1996; Willett, 2007). The current historical context is one in which many of our teaching candidates, again largely women, are eagerly entering into their first teaching positions. According to the national study conducted by Cochran-Smith & Fries (2005), the majority of teacher candidates in the U.S. are White middle-class women. While those from the U.S. who

Theresa Austin is a professor in the Department of Teacher Education and Curriculum Studies of the School of Education at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Massachusetts.

Conflicting Discourses in Language Teacher Education

become TESOL teachers are also primarily White middle-class women, given the global demand for English, there is also a sizable number of TESOL teachers from international backgrounds (Braine, 1999; Lurda, 2005). As the current population entering our profession of language-teacher education is now beginning to differ from those in the past because of this international component, this seems to be a particularly significant moment for us to examine what discourses are currently operational that influence the direction and substance of teacher education programs where this notion of “civic culture voice” is encouraged.

With this aim, I use my own experiences as a multilingual teacher educator of dual racial heritage to illustrate how the contemporary period has produced three areas of contradiction and tensions through widely held beliefs about community of practice, Black feminist perspectives, and intersections of oppression. These concepts emanate from feminist, Womanist, critical-race, and post-structural perspectives. While these concepts at times may be problematic, they are nevertheless directly relevant to current discourses circulating in the professional development of teachers and can contribute to enriching our understanding of diverse voices in teacher education.

As a teacher educator and researcher from Massachusetts, I conduct seminars and courses in a bilingual and ESL teacher education program. In this article I would like to suggest examining the teacher educators’ “voice” will contribute to open up dialogue about how discourses in teacher education need to be continuously scrutinized for the manner in which they produce teacher- knowledge and instill instructional practices (Hargraves, 1996). Aligned with narrative study, I draw on my own life experiences in TESOL as a multilingual, multiracial, language teacher educator¹ to illustrate several lessons learned.

Feminist scholarship and poststructuralist theories have increasingly contributed to teacher education in the last 20 years and are becoming central to the theoretical underpinnings of the practice of educating teachers, a field that has historically attracted and continues to attract primarily women. Poststructuralism has provided varied approaches to examine the tensions and contradictions in teacher education (Cherryholmes, 1994; Mirón & St. John, 2003; Raths & McAninch, 1999). Tensions arise when competing ideologies are present in the lives of teachers yet can be productive dialectically in creating new understandings and envisioning options for praxis. For Bakhtin (1981), struggles are an integral part of developing new understandings: “The importance of struggling with another’s discourse, its influence in the history of an individual’s coming to ideological consciousness, is enormous” (p. 348). Feminist theories offer grounding for challenging institutional and disciplinary power that perpetuate inequities. Through research they propose a praxis that changes the “maldistribution to help create a more equal world” (Lather, 1986;258). These theories also advocate a self-reflexivity that constantly problematizes how positionality of the researcher affects knowledge construction (Weedon, 1997).

While I situate my own narrative in the current discussion of who is “highly qualified” to become a teacher, I am also obliged to ask who is “highly qualified” to be a teacher educator. Critics of schools of education’s teacher education programs

argue that teachers should be held accountable predominately for subject matter knowledge; this view accords a decidedly secondary importance to the pedagogy of the corresponding subject matter. Yet it is well documented that newly prepared teachers who lack pedagogical preparation end up abandoning their teaching careers within five years and even faster in urban poverty.

Ironically, those who are most familiar with the challenges and who are committed to raising achievement of these underserved children may be steered away from entering the profession. Their formidable obstacles go undetected because institutional mechanisms are naturalized as exclusionary practices, such as standardized testing and policies of counting certain subject matter for licensure and not counting others. Consequently fewer teachers of color enter into the profession, and even fewer become teacher educators. Hence a system is perpetuated that continues to put the education of future teachers into the hands of those whose lives are often far removed from those of their students (Sleeter, 2001; Varghese & Jenkins, 2005). In 1933, Carter Woodson, a highly respected Black scholar, harshly critical of how African Americans were being mis-educated, remarked on this very situation, "The present system under the control of the Whites trains the Negro to be White and at the same time convinces him of the impropriety or impossibility of his becoming White" (p. 23). While the segregation that was *de jure* then is now *de facto*, and while "Negro" can be replaced with a wider group students of color in the inner city, the critique of mis-education still holds true today. We recognize that teacher education programs need to be more responsive to increasing diversity within their membership ranks. One example is reflected in the profession of Teaching English to Speakers of Other languages (TESOL).

The title of a recent TESOL session,² "Hearing different voices in teacher education," was created to open up public space to voices of difference that matter but have not been heard. On a physical level, the notion of voice represents the physical actualization of coherent sounds that become audible to its listeners. Voice can only become intelligible if someone stops to make sense of this attempt to communicate orally. On a symbolic level, "voice" represents a perspective from an active agent who not only gets attention but offers a viewpoint that is fashioned from a particular experience for an audience who otherwise may be indifferent, ignorant, or unaware of its existence. What is the significance of "voice" in the language teaching profession?

The notion of voice in the literature on writing instruction has come to mean authenticity of the author's experience expressed through a written composition. For liberatory pedagogy, voice often becomes equivalent to literate agency to name, take action, and reflect (Hargraves, 1996; Walsh, 1990). While different in their orientations as to purpose, I think the definitions of voice perpetuate a notion that voice is isomorphic with a 'true' identity assumed to be possessed by an author (See a critique of teacher voice in Hargraves, 1996, p.12). In contrast Jackson's (2003) review of voice points out that the concept has become meaningful as a response to women's "exclusion from the production of knowledge and the absence of women's experi-

Conflicting Discourses in Language Teacher Education

ences in social, cultural, and political spheres.” Thus we find expressions such as: “finding a voice,” “coming to voice,” “creating safe spaces for voice,” “centering on voice,” “voicing resistance,” “losing voice,” “giving up voice,” “bring voices to the center.” Linking voice, experience, and meaning, these feminist researchers are involved in recovery, liberatory projects which seek to empower all women who are involved in the research—participants, readers, and researchers” (p. 4).

These assumptions warrant our attention particularly at this time when Title 3 of the Bush Administration’s Leave No Child Behind Act has impacted the preparation of TESOL teachers and the lives of linguistically and culturally diverse children. Immediately as a result of this legislation, concerned educators noticed that the histories and identities of these students have been stripped of their diversity by their new appellation as “English Language Learners.” The double voicing that can be read between the lines is the erasure of diversity while at the same time leaving a singular focus on only part of their learner identity, English. If the trend in Massachusetts to remove school use of the learner’s primary language continues in other states, new teachers will come into the profession at a time when ethnolinguistic diversity is still not widely seen as a resource but rather as something to be remediated, and primarily, as a deficit in terms of learning English. In other words, the dominant value system allows public space to voice the needs of English language teachers and attempts to build a sense of their unity while at the same time ignoring what diverse students and their communities bring with them as they enter into public institutions of education.

These contradictions of voice for some and denial of voice for others makes schools sites of struggles that have consequences for all. As one example, currently in the state of Massachusetts, while all teachers are expected to meet the state professional standards which mandate that they must build upon the prior knowledge of students, severe restrictions are placed upon the use of a language other than English for instruction. This places teachers voluntarily or involuntarily in a difficult, if not impossible, position to comply by building student voices almost exclusively in English or by forcing them out of the public schools. Also in Massachusetts, the alarming failure rate of non-White students on the state-mandated high school exit exams have all but guaranteed that the potential pipeline of graduates of color from high school will only trickle into universities. This restricted flow will further reduce potential teachers of color unless this trend is reversed. If the trend also continues, the diversity that will exist will be constituted by largely elite international students and students from other states more successful at educating students of color in grades k-12.

In the national policy arena, other attempts to limit deeper appreciation and understanding of U.S. diversity are maintained by relegating diversity requirements to a single individual course rather than embedding it in all courses across a general education post-secondary curriculum. This, in turn, underscores future teachers’ perceptions that diversity is not an educational issue but rather an ideological imposition that should be treated as an obstacle toward licensure. The diversity course becomes perceived as an obligation that one “had to do” (See Vargese 2006, Motha, 2006)

Theresa Austin

and thus is seen as merely being politically correct. Thus a need to build greater understanding of broader equity issues concerning diversity remains unsatisfied by many programs. The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, while supportive of holding teacher licensure programs accountable for preparing teachers that respond to the foreseen diverse student populations, has also back pedaled into removing multicultural criteria from their accreditation rubrics and replacing it with “dispositions,” assumedly because of pressure from conservatives who challenge this as a necessary criterion for preparing teachers (Butin, 2007). In my own state of Massachusetts, the multicultural component of all teacher education licensure programs was erased from the requirements and replaced with a phrase “promotes equity.” The actual erasure of the concept of multiculturalism has been replaced with “civic culture,” defined as something that:

1. Encourages all students to believe that effort is a key to achievement.
2. Works to promote achievement by all students without exception.
3. Assesses the significance of student differences in home experiences, background knowledge, learning skills, learning pace, and proficiency in the English language for learning the curriculum at hand and uses professional judgment to determine if instructional adjustments are necessary.
4. Helps all students to understand American civic culture, its underlying ideals, founding political principles and political institutions, and to see themselves as members of a local, state, national, and international civic community. (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr7.html?section=08>)

This discourse to instill democracy by way of “civic culture” on the surface is hardly arguable. However, together with the erasure of multiculturalism, this discourse removes the need to view democracy as primarily confronting the challenges in light of inequities faced by diverse groups. Instead of a continued critique of a democracy that has failed to be inclusive in public institutions, this new emphasis places a need to understand the ideals of “founding political principles and political institutions.” Hence whereas multiculturalism extended a means to critique these democratic principles for their unfulfilled promise for non-dominant groups, the new discourse stresses the individual’s effort and a more assimilative stance of being “members of a local, state, national, and international civic community.”—a community that supposedly cares and supports equity.

For this reason, teacher education is needed that supports critical reflection on these institutionalized measures that erase diversity in the name of a democratic community. Moreover there is a need to develop strategies to maintain one’s position while fostering resistance to such oppressive policies. At the current time, we are in a context in which TESOL teacher educators will be further challenged to find ways to also ventriloquate or “voice” three well accepted principles of critical feminist pedagogy: (1) inclusive dialogue, (2) dialogic engagement and in democratic work, and (3) solidarity for social transformation (Wilson Kennan, Solsken, & Wil-

Conflicting Discourses in Language Teacher Education

lett,2000). National standards for teacher educators (NCATE; National Association of Supervisors of Teacher Education) as well as national standards in each profession shape the discourses that teacher candidates and educators are expected to use and demonstrate their understanding through their development as professionals.

Communities of Practice

First I would like to consider the Feminist studies' contribution of the notion of what is known as "the community of practice." The social nature of learning in both teacher education and the preparation of teacher educators has been increasingly recognized (Díaz-Maggioli, 2004). This recognition occurs in the form of sociocultural or socio-historical discourses as "situated learning," and has become more widely understood and used in teacher preparation programs. Based on past scholarship by Lev Vygotsky and Mikhael Bakhtin as well as current work by such scholars as Hall Kelly (1993), Lave and Wenger (1992), and Rogoff (2003), learning is understood from this perspective as a social process constructed through guided participation and then as an internalized process of appropriation, shaping both knowledge and identities of the participants. In terms of teacher education programs, feminist theorists have extended this constructivist learning perspective into the larger process of socialization such that it pertains to the issue of membership in a supportive community. This view of the centrality of such a "community of practice" identifies how knowledge and membership are constructed through participation in social contexts. A community of practice has thus been defined as "joint engagement in socializing members to shared practices" (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1999, p. 185). This concept has gained high currency in teacher preparation at both initial and advanced levels of certification. The extent to which this view has been accepted can be seen in its integration into the standards established by the National Boards for Professionals in Teaching and in many states' requirements for initial licensure, wherein teachers must show that they are actively participating in learning communities.

Whether feminists hold egalitarian discourses or empowerment discourses, the notion of a community of practice is a significant concept because it widens the scope of our understanding of how teaching and learning impacts not just individuals but communities. Such discourses inevitably give privilege and preference to values that encourage either solidarity or criticism in their community of practice. In research on teacher education where this concept community of practice is encouraged, Jerri Willett and Mary Jeanot (1993) identified language practices in groups of teachers, composed predominantly of white middle-class females and the occasional international female student, that were characterized by an egalitarian discourse in which the language of care, bonding, and building of supportive relationships were highly valued over critical practices. While this community of practice creates legitimacy for a counter discourse to those privileged by males in which individuals must be competitive and assertive, it undercuts the critical perspective necessary to create pedagogical and social advances. Thus collabora-

tive group work is valued and developed as the community learns to appreciate the contributions of all its members in the production of knowledge and in forming identities as “knowers,” but it fails to sufficiently challenge inequities and insufficiencies of current instructional practices.

Other feminist egalitarian practices are characterized by “the democratic and collaborative nature of the classroom, and the breaking down of the hierarchical relationship between teacher and student.” They are seen as important in feminist classrooms (Davis et al., 1989) and have been incorporated into the ideology of many TESOL teacher preparation programs (Cizek, 1999, p. 52). Practices of this nature that commonly occur in teacher programs across the nation encourage the inclusion of various perspectives to accomplish assignments, such as the keeping of dialogue-journals that engage future teachers in dialogue and reflection, and collaborative group work.

On the other hand, while egalitarian feminist goals of solidarity ideally assume democratic and collaborative relationships that are non-hierarchical, explicitly tying this type of class work to social transformation can be problematic when the teacher in that classroom setting is not from the dominant group. For example, in becoming a teacher educator I had to learn the talk of the teacher educator and make it my own, similar to how new teachers learn specialist language in teacher-preparation courses. As one raised in a African American and Okinawan family, and educated in traditional Armed Forces schools, I was used to a more impersonal style of communication and was taken aback by the personalized story-telling that has become a part of the discourse of teacher education today.

The use of personal narratives held the promise of constructing a sense of solidarity with discourses in teacher education, but it was also supposed to afford me a reflection on my own actual situation. As a feminist practice, this was supposed to lead to closer relationships with those who would learn to share my reality. However, in my case, I encountered a situation where relatively few others could share my reality, raising the question of what happens when one’s struggles based on race, ethnicity, gender, or class are not faced by one’s teacher educator peers or the future teachers in one’s courses. When social inequities transcend one’s ability to imagine another’s context, self-revelatory talk can become an uncomfortable experience for both speaker and listener, pointing out the importance of knowing how to build a common critique of the inequities that are being named and how to develop strategic actions to face these tensions.

Since becoming more reflective about this discomfort and more participatory in creating narratives that can be shared, I now realize how this type of knowledge about the creation of shared narratives can indeed work to establish credibility and solidarity within the teacher education field of largely White middle-class women in the region where I currently work. Far from “being natural,” it has become a second discursive register that I feel obligated to ventriloquate and become skilled at. At first, my efforts made me appear to some as overly eager to share, as I had struggled with selectively self editing the most relevant and significant details to use

Conflicting Discourses in Language Teacher Education

to illustrate my “coming to know through my experience” stories. This was evident in the quizzical looks and nervous laughter from the teachers with whom I shared my story. I needed to likewise monitor how were they receiving my narrative and to even provide a coda to reinforce my intended message.

While clearly sealing my intentions and the interpretation I desired, what sounded *other* to these teachers also worked at times to position me as “dogmatic.” I see this in the current critiques I face in my courses from teachers who feel the few other diverse peers in the course should not be allowed to make so many “irrelevant comments.” This quote is from a number of anonymous student evaluations sprinkled across several of my courses. Examples typically are not written to anchor the critique. Rather than viewing themselves as benefiting from a broadening of their intercultural communication boundaries through these encounters with difference, often these comments position the authors as guardians at the gate of what constitutes appropriate professional discourse, strategically using their power as students in our program to influence me. Since these comments are anonymous, but occur in courses where students of color and students who represent multicultural or multilingual experience are vocal, I do not know if the authors are from the majority White middle class student and/ or the former group. Nonetheless these comments represent a socialization into dominant expectations about what they will “learn” in a course and how they will “learn” it.

Thus, if we as teacher educators uncritically accept egalitarian feminist inspired notions of “a community of practice,” of apprenticeship into ways of knowing, acting, and being in our profession such as it is with limited diversity in our membership, we will be dialoging primarily with one sector of the population while many others are not heard or even silenced as a result of being excluded. The practice of allowing personal experiences to be given “voice” and placing value on the knowledge that is constructed from this experience when it is without diversity and critique should be recognized for its exclusionary side-effects, one of which is the decreased likelihood that opportunities are created to question prevailing norms presumed by that very community of teachers (See Hargraves, 1996).

In a sense, by implementing egalitarian feminist theories within a less diverse community, the dominant cultural groups’ ways of knowing, acting, and being all have high probabilities of remaining the normative standard against which bi-dialectal, bilingual, or multilingual members have increased chances of coerced participation or even relegation to outsider or marginal categories rather than being positioned as capable actors shaping new norms. The study by Jerri Willet and Mary Jeannot (1993) confirms how teachers, when predominately White women, actively resist the language of critique when it threatened to disrupt their solidarity or control over events. As an example, here is a very heated argument among three women I came upon in the hallway outside of a class:

Amy: You did not let me speak.

Janice: You did not seem to want to collaborate.

Theresa Austin

Amy: Did you ask me?

Helen: Well, if you were responsible, you would have said something and done more.

Amy: I am tired of your racism and blaming me for being excluded in the presentation.

Teacher educator: What's going on?

My eyes and ears were riveted on the group members, but the confrontation maintained their attention so intently that while they glanced around they ignored me. Amy was the only African American and the others were White. While I wanted to intervene, since their instructor was present I kept walking to my office and could hear the voices slowing down and the volume decreasing to murmur. A week later when I inquired about how the problem was resolved, my White colleague replied "what problem?" She sincerely said she did not remember the incident. While I recalled various comments made by the students, my colleague could not recall anything of the sort. I wondered if this was an unspeakable rule, "when race is involved, silence is the best response." I was left wondering what about the African American colleague who basically "dropped out" with no support for her efforts. What choices do she and others make who experience similar interactions?

At the time, I let the incident slip into the recesses of my mind, but later I mulled it over and it began to bother me. It was clear that the majority of our elementary teachers outside the bilingual, ESL, and multicultural specialization were not learning to dialog with others of different backgrounds. Developing a consideration of and a respect for divergent and multiple perspectives was not being inculcated in our program, partially, it would appear, because of the paucity of candidates of color. Yet this skill needs to be developed if we are going to prepare teachers to form communities through joint democratic action for social transformation, and in our own program we have discussed using mediation and further dialog (Gebhard, Austin, Nieto, & Willett, 2002). Programs lacking the participation of underrepresented groups in its membership seriously limit new teachers from developing the ability to dialogue across racial, ethnic, and class boundaries. In fact, they may be failing to develop a racial literate position at a time they most need it.

In fact, if current trends in Massachusetts, California, and Arizona continue, many teachers entering our profession in the U.S. now and in the near future may uncritically participate in a dramatic ideological change that is taking place—the shift to an exclusive orientation to technicist training at the expense of social concerns. Our attention is needed to understand the potential impact of the current ideological shift and to be prepared to take up positions that help teachers become more aware of alternatives.

Low numbers of underrepresented groups in both the teaching profession and teacher education, as well as teachers' reluctance to work with teacher educators from non-dominant groups, are both conditions resulting from economic, political, and historical factors that continue to limit the enterprise of ESL teacher preparation. While my concern is primarily how teachers are educated, what happens to

Conflicting Discourses in Language Teacher Education

teachers as learners and cultural workers affects how they teach in primary schools or secondary schools, and closely impacts the democratic development of communities in which they work. Consequently, this inevitably affects the admission of students to the university who could potentially enter into the profession of K-12 teaching and teacher education as well.

Historical Context of Change

Our current situation contrasts with the recent past 40 years in TESOL. Across these years of the TESOL field's growth, there has been a steady questioning of the impact of standard English and how it caused a filtering out of populations, both locally and internationally. At the same time a growing critique of the privilege of Standard English also opened up studies on World Englishes, language variation, and people's identities as part of the broader picture of sociopolitical, cognitive, and social influences on of how people developed English as a foreign or second language. In fact, in the professional standards established by the TESOL organization, there are explicit expectations regarding respect for cultural diversity and for all teachers to abide by these (Meskill, 2005).

In the 1970s, many women, particularly in the U.S., entered into teaching ESL from having had experiences in the Peace Corp, having traveled and worked abroad, or having worked with adult immigrants and their children. Many were involved in multi-ethnic experiences that provoked liberal humanistic desires of "doing good." In the U.S., since many of these teachers, men and women (predominantly White and from the middle class) developed their interest in teaching ESL at a time when experiences in learning about the cultures of others was valued, this in turn influenced the profession as a whole to value the importance of the cultural background brought by the ESL learner to his or her learning experience. It also led to reflection on the shortcomings that inevitably accompany the normative status of standard English, and the subsequent critique and growth in our profession came to allow for renewed consideration of who were disenfranchised because of this and recognition of alternative educational responses.

By contrast, today the current conservative discourse in our profession, both in the U.S. and abroad,³ that instead stresses personal responsibility and accountability in our teacher preparation program and thereby hides the role of the institution in perpetuating historical injustices of underserving diverse populations. By dismissing diversity as an "excuse," this conservative discourse undermines the necessary dialogue about what counts for particular students. In the name of "accountability," a system is produced that eventually blames teachers and students alike for not meeting high standards.

While admittedly there is currently a degree of acceptance of some feminist principles, it will become more difficult to retain teachers in our ranks who believe in cultivating diversity when restrictive language policies script what linguistic resources count in the classroom, as is happening in immersion classrooms in California and sheltered English programs in Massachusetts. Already we have

reports of teachers who are leaving the profession because of these oppressive conditions. Moreover, those entering will find a field without diverse membership, further limiting the possibility for discourses of diversity to emerge. This, then, is the current historical context in which many teaching candidates, largely women, are eagerly entering into their first teaching positions.

How can we teacher educators respond to the discourses of community of practice, Black feminist perspectives, and intersections of oppression? Critical Race Theory (CRT) has emerged as a way of facing the growing racial inequities of our country and draws on legal, sociological and historical studies (Ladson Billings & Tate, 1995; Matsuda 1993). In the last dozen years, it has become an area of scholarship by researchers of color that has been extended into education through the work of Lynn (1999), Ladson-Billings (1998), Solorzano 1997, and the feminist studies of Berry and Mizelle (2006). According to Solorzano and Ornelas (2002, p. 219) there are five components in its model:

- (a) the centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of subordination;
- (b) the challenge to dominant ideology;
- (c) the commitment to social justice;
- (d) the centrality of experiential knowledge; and
- (e) the transdisciplinary perspective.

CRT takes as a basic tenet that our society is racist, and that important work remains in teacher education to operate through educating our membership to challenge the traditional paradigms, methods, texts and to affirm a liberatory pedagogy. This is an emancipatory pedagogy, which means a pedagogy that enables its participants to act critically to promote their interests in shaping our social worlds.

How Does CRT Challenge the Color Blindness of TESOL Education?

CRT notes that “color blindness makes no sense in a society in which people, on the basis of group membership alone, have historically been, and continue to be, treated differently. The danger of color blindness is that it allows us to ignore the racial construction of Whiteness and reinforces its privileged and oppressive position” (Taylor, 1998, p. 123).

To build strategies for action across the color line and other lines of inequity, we need to raise the question: What role does teacher education play in the maintenance of racial ethnic and gender subordination?

Discounting One’s Knowledge Is Destructive of One’s Identity

I remember in one of my first classes at the University of Massachusetts, I taught an introductory sociolinguistics class for future teachers. In our discussion of how culture influences our language choices and how the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis

Conflicting Discourses in Language Teacher Education

attempts to account for this, a 22 year-old White female student mentioned that she had learned about Vygotsky's notions of development. In responding to her insight, I wanted to get her to elaborate so that she could draw the connections to socially situated learning and share this with others in the class. I did so by responding to her with the question, "Could you tell us who Vygotsky is?" By her body language and her gaze at me, it appeared that she assumed that this was an indication of my ignorance rather than my attempt to share the pedagogical floor with her. Subsequently, several times her pointed questions challenged me as if to test my authority. After a number of exchanges with other students which allowed more students to contribute their perspectives, I returned to her initial comment and made more explicit connections with sociocultural theory that elaborated on her understandings of the "zone man." Had I not acted strategically to demonstrate my knowledge, I would have been positioned as "not competent" to teach the course.

I kept wondering whether or not my race affected her initial perceptions of my competence. In the end, on my course evaluations I was rated as "very knowledgeable" very often, and yet on a few "too serious and authoritarian." Apparently, according to an anonymous comment, I needed to "work on my rapport-building skills with the students before I could achieve "knowledgeable, yet teacher-friendly" status. No doubt my youthful look then, relative to the class members who were in-service teachers, could also have made me vulnerable to such suspicions. Others may also associate this type of challenge to authority as something frequently faced by younger inexperienced teacher educators. Had this occurred under different circumstances, perhaps earlier in my first ten years of educating teachers, I might have more readily accepted this interpretation.

Later when I joined a support group for women faculty and staff of color, I learned that colleagues across campus in a variety of academic fields were facing similar challenges; they, too, needed to assert themselves or prove their worthiness as academics in front of their departmental colleagues and with their students. We discussed the problem of how often it is that when teachers of color take up strategic moves to reclaim their authority, they are rated as having taken unnecessarily status seeking moves, which disrupts the notion of teacher as facilitator as espoused by feminist theories of egalitarianism. A Mexican-American colleague who taught a course on communication disorders refused to accept this labeling of her demeanor in a class and contested her student evaluations. She recounted how bitterly disappointed she was that her department chair had not supported her in her claims that the students were responding in a racist manner. She continued teaching for one additional year, receiving higher teaching evaluations, and proved her point about students learning to value her authority, before leaving to accept a position in a more hospitable university environment with higher a concentration of students of color.

The presumption that "you can't know or you don't know because you are (fill in the blank)" also works in ways that undercut the feminist agenda, and the critical race agenda as well. As critical feminist theory addresses oppressive gender relations constructed between males and females, and has begun to address oppressive

relations among females ourselves across race and class, the question of how to work across female privilege remains an area yet to be worked out.

In the current state of TESOL with predominately White women in the teaching force, we want to address the non-represented speakers of English and speakers of other languages who are missing from discussions. But feminist practices of egalitarianism, inclusion, collaboration, and reflection within the TESOL field will not bring diversity into the field, nor will it help much in struggles where diversity is introduced.

Also given that international teachers of English as a second or foreign language often study here in the U.S. to obtain their doctoral degrees, it is expected that we would have international scholars also as TESOL and TEFL teacher educators. In fact, given considerations of socioeconomic class and the globalization of English, it may be more commonplace to see their scholarship than that of scholars from underrepresented groups in the U.S. (See Belcher & Connor, 2001; Johnson & Burton, 2000; Lurda, 2005). If these international scholars themselves are second language speakers of English, they may have ample first-hand experiences of what it means to teach to dominant groups (ESL teachers) and how that may lead to being challenged by both dominant and non-dominant groups (Liu, 2005). In fact, their experiences in the U.S. are far from easy, as they may face multiple discrimination due to differences in race, ethnicity, gender, culture, and nationality. One of my colleagues, a Japanese national, discovered that she had received a considerably lower salary for her entry level rank. As no one had informed her of this fact, had she not inquired about the salaries of other women, she would have continued without petitioning to address this anomaly. The international scholar may also see how inequities breed multiple contradictions in the positions of the dominant groups' policies with respect to equity in such things as employment tokenism, how the rhetoric of meritocracy is used as the cover for subjective decision making, etc.

Critical Black Feminism

Critical Black feminists, as well as critical race theorists, are scholars of color who work toward creating an agenda of anti-racist action but unfortunately have few proponents in the professional ranks of TESOL teachers and even fewer among the ranks of teacher educators. From the perspective of people of color, an enormous amount of work in dealing with conflict has been left in the hands of very few. bell hooks (2001) would argue that allies are needed in this struggle. So when White educators take up anti-racist stances we should all think of how they can be supported.

Thus, there is a need for theorizing a discourse that welcomes the dominant group (White) teachers to take up critical race discourse without it being double-coded or having a dual effect of both addressing the issue of domination, while still playing the role of dominator. At the very least, we must make room for speakers coming from the dominant community to be heard on these matters without the presumption of disingenuousness. Clearly there are some teachers and teacher educators who believe that because you are (*blank*) and do not have racial mem-

Conflicting Discourses in Language Teacher Education

bership in their group nor the discursive tools to speak to them, they cannot learn from you, closing the door to your participation in their preparation as teachers. This kind of prejudice can work in both ways, of course. In the following case a Black educator was open but the student teachers' subjectivities were formed in their program's constructivist values of collaborative, student-centered learning, egalitarian learning and teaching, and not in understanding the culturally embedded discourse practices that take on meaning in local sites, and that give rise to alternative and competing ways of "successful learning and teaching."

Example 1: Discourses in Conflict

I have been working in a dialogic inquiry with a White female teacher educator who has been seriously questioning her own anti-racist stance. She was conflicted because she was between adhering to the state standards expected of her students and respecting the womanist stances that the Black cooperating teacher was upholding in a largely African American community. The highly-respected cooperating teacher, as a Black educator, claimed privileges of being able to speak to Black children in ways that other teachers or student teachers could not. Her womanist position took pride in claiming that her ways of accomplished teaching could not be used by anyone else but her. The Black teacher's claimed position of uniqueness made even other Black student teachers uneasy as they sought to create egalitarian relationships as promoted in their teacher education program. They did not see the support and encouragement that occurred in the way the Black cooperating teacher communicated with her students in the way that those students and the cooperating teacher did. Whereas the student teachers (both Black and White) saw her communication as not supporting dialogue, the senior teacher saw her talk making clear her high expectations for their achievement. This conflict of perspectives ended in both White and Black student teachers avoiding the accomplished Black teacher's mentorship.

The White teacher educator was fearful of raising a dialogue with the student teachers about what made it work for the Black teacher and her students because it would have positioned her as supporting contradictory and potentially perceived as racist assumptions about differences in teaching. The White teacher educator was also without colleagues with whom to discuss what were thus laminated issues of race, language, power and knowledge. As a consequence of their observations the student teachers, both Black and White, labeled the Black teacher's discourse as an undesirable traditional classroom, one in which the both groups of student teachers had learned to devalue.

While critical race theory advocates actively and consistently resisting and challenging authorities who advocate practices that are hegemonic and counter-emancipatory, we need to recognize hegemony is not the sin of the other ideology, rather can also be found within any ideology. This is what I find to be the strength of critical race theory. Together with the reflective practices of feminist theory and their joint call for dialogue and emancipatory education, there is a possibility of formulating a theory to answer Marvin Lynn's (1999, p. 622) question of "How

do we learn to build a democracy that acknowledges and incorporates all of its citizenry and takes into account the special gifts that each person, each community; and each cultural, racial and ethnic group have to offer?"

Example 2: Negotiating Difference

As TESOL educators committed to social justice, building experiences for our teachers to engage in this discussion prepares us not to avoid the conflict but to use the conflict to further our collective thinking about “alternative actions and their consequences.” In my own experience, my colleagues have helped me face my own challenges to instruction with supportive positioning. For example, to help me negotiate my students evaluations of my course that were contradictory, I asked a white colleague to meet with a focus group of my teachers in my course who could help provide suggestions on how to better address their needs in my course in ways that would build trust that our community would be responsive and still encourage them to be open to my particular voice in instruction. This clearly sent a message that our community was one in which teachers as well as teacher educators need to be open to differences in educational experience.

To get a closer look at my instructional practices in action and to design a course that responded to programmatic needs, I co-taught with a respected colleague who could also view up close my interactions in the classroom. Her supportive interaction with me, created a respect for my position as co-teacher educator and also scaffolded my interaction with those who attempted to discount my knowledge or challenge my practices. In class, we did not always agree but demonstrated that disagreement and reasoning could differ and still be respected. Not only did her mediation show me that she had confidence in my judgments, it provided a model for students not to equate disagreement with disrespect, *and* not to equate authority with infallibility. I believe this openness to critique on both our parts, allowed for our course participants to also value the process of critique. Moreover these actions afforded me the possibility of being seen as a resource.

Example 3: Being Perceived as Racist

Given that we will be in increasingly diverse classrooms, and given that we will predominantly be preparing White female teachers, it should not surprise anyone here to be called a “racist” at some point time in the process of educating future teachers or teaching. It could be levied by a person of color as a student teacher or colleague or teacher. Or it could be levied by a White educator in a similar role. What is surprising is that in our work as teacher educators we have not raised this as a concern, as something to prepare teachers to face.

The sting of this appellation is of course intensified when one is committed to removing the pernicious effects of this very real social illness. For those who believe they can remove the pain and stigma by claiming color blindness, in effect by saying “I treat everyone the same,” be aware that the aggravation of the aggrieved

Conflicting Discourses in Language Teacher Education

party will only be deepened by such remarks. A more thoughtful response would be to find out how that perception was formed and to work toward rectifying it and facing the emotional level that was evoked for your accuser and yourself.

It is easy to remember episodes when I was the victim of racism. But I also have faced being called a “racist” in response to my having acted in a way that negatively affected a particular group of students. Frequently on the East Coast, because of the shape of my eyes and face and the coloring of my skin, I am not perceived as Black, rather, often, I am read by others to be “Asian.” With the recent influx of international teachers from various countries of Asia studying TESOL, their percentage among the admitted student population has increased. This is problematic particularly as economic and political contexts have placed barriers on local underrepresented populations from entering into graduate study. Against this historical background when few Latino students were admitted, I was accused of being racist against Latinos and in favor of admitting Asian students. For me, this signaled a clear need to build an agenda to be responsive to the locally felt needs. This agenda included taking steps to recruit and support more Latino students entering into and completing our program, as well as searching for funding that could financially support more scholarships for students of underrepresented groups.

Conclusions and Points for Further Elaboration

There is a dire need in teacher education to:

1. Improve our recruitment and professional development strategies for TESOL teachers and teacher-trainers from underrepresented groups;
2. Address in the programs of teacher-preparation through the curriculum to help prepare teachers from the dominant groups to recognize and deal with institutionalized forms of racism in our society that will affect them and their future students; and
3. How to improve our curriculum in our teacher-training programs to help prepare teachers to deal with racism as well as other forms of oppression.

I like to use this idea as a metaphor for the complex responsibilities we have to “hear voices from other educators” as well as to build a community of varied voices. Because communities define themselves by the similarities of their members and their collective identity by their differences from other communities, this tends to form obstacles that prevent others from joining who are different. In fact, newcomers who are different in some way can be seen as the “problem” precisely because they are different (Liu, 2005).

Similarly, if membership asks you to give up your “otherness” there will be little more than mass gained by the whole community. If that otherness is allowed to also influence the shape of the community, the community becomes dynamically diverse, propelled by struggles over meaning yet shaped by this very force to be representative

of conflict workouts. Through these workouts, we all potentially become better with newcomers and our community learns to create space. The social “tax” is spread among all those in the community and not just on those most vulnerable and whose cultural capital has yet to be recognized by the dominant community.

One step in this strategic action is to prepare the mainly White female teachers to face racism in their programs, helping them realize their role in becoming allies of their peer teachers from underrepresented groups, recognizing and challenging through dialogue with others the institutional contexts that keep certain groups underrepresented and positioned negatively in their professional communities. In this way, we prepare underrepresented teachers with counter-discourses to continue their professional development and contribute their values as well as prepare dominant groups with skills to productively handle the conflicts that most likely will ensue when their community norms are challenged.

Recent statistics (U.S. Census, 2000) reveal several facts: (1) U.S. schools are now 41 percent non-White and the great majority of the nonwhite students attend schools which now show substantial segregation. (2) Levels of segregation for Black and Latino students have been steadily increasing since the 1980s. (3) Achievement scores are strongly linked to school racial composition and so is the presence of highly qualified and experienced teachers. (4) Most White teachers do not have direct experience with schools where there is highly concentration of poverty (Orfield & Lee, 2005, p. 5). We know education of TESOL teachers requires knowledge and deep understanding of the institutional practices rooted in perpetuating these conditions. Lyotard offers a critical account of the status of knowledge and education in the postmodern condition that focuses on the most highly developed societies.

Even more so today, TESOL teacher education is becoming a commodity, reifying processes through which teachers understand their profession and identities as education reform policies reconfigure the nature of teacher education to be efficient mass production assembly lines even across distances with technology. Within that commodification are the technical skills that are a part of the tool kits of our trade, however what often is missing will be the very necessary experiences of facing the social inequities and negotiating these complexities. If we examine our practices with voices who differ, the encounter serves to open up dialogue about what teachers should know and do. No one is ever fully conscious of all privileges of their position in a particular context nor fully conscious of the oppression that can result from privileging our own assumptions.

In tracing back through some of my own particular history, I have made visible several constraints that established theory faces when a person of color takes up accepted practices such as “voice” within a community of practice, expressing authenticity and claiming particular knowledge while challenging the racism at large. Others whose stories that illustrate other fields are included in Pollard, Sleeter, and Welch (2006) and Raths and McAninch (1999). Overall I strive to make visible how our TESOL field of teacher education still needs to struggle with its openness to being shaped by diverse voices. In this vein, I have offered examples

Conflicting Discourses in Language Teacher Education

of the possibilities of feminist, womanist, and critical race theories in our field of teacher education. If teacher education programs can provide professional “democratic apprenticeship” through both pedagogical practices and curricular content (Nieto, 1995), then teachers in schools everywhere may have a chance in doing the same for all learners.

Notes

¹ At the time this article was initially drafted in the School of Education in which my department is located, of the 36 full-time faculty in teacher education, women clearly outnumbered men, two to one. Yet there is little diversity of race and ethnicity. There was one Puerto Rican female faculty and three others identified as African-American, counting myself. In my department, we have had three lesbian faculty, one gay faculty and no other Asians. Of the ESL faculty, I included myself and the Puerto Rican educator as the two women of color who join two other White European American women to form a group of four. Currently, the situation in 2007 has seen the retirement of the only Puerto Rican faculty in the school, and the hiring of three junior faculty of color in the past three years. In general, the situation nationally is worse.

² I delivered an earlier version of this self-study narrative as an invited speaker in an Intersections session at the TESOL conference sponsored by the Teacher Education Special Interest Group.

³ See Lawes (2002) for an account of trends in language teacher education in England. Also see Lurda (2005.)

References

- Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). Discourse in the novel. In M. Holquist (Ed.), *The dialogic imagination: Four essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. (Trans. C. Emerson & M. Holquist). Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Belcher, D., & Connor, U. (Eds.). (2001). *Reflections on multiliterate lives*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Berry, T. R., & Mizelle, N. D. (Eds.). (2006). *From oppression to grace: Women of color and their dilemmas within the academy*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.
- Braine, G. (1999). *Non-native educators in English language teaching*, Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Butin, D. (2007) Dark times indeed: NCATE, social justice, and the marginalization of multicultural foundations. *Journal of Educational Controversy*, 2(2). Retrieved 2/01/08 from <http://www.wce.wvu.edu/Resources/CEP/eJournal/v002n002/a003.shtml>
- Cherryholmes, C. H. (1994). Pragmatism, poststructuralism, and socially useful theorizing. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 24(2), 193-215.
- Cochran-Smith, M., & Fries, K. (2005). Researching teacher education and changing times: Politics and paradigms. In M. Cochran-Smith & K. Zeichner (Eds.), *Studying teacher education: The report of the AERA panel on research and teacher education* (pp. 69-109). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Cizek, G. (1999.) The tale wagging the dog. Narrative and neopragmatism in teacher education and research. In J. D. Raths & A. C. McAninch (Eds.), *What counts as knowledge in teacher education* (pp. 47-68). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Press.

Theresa Austin

- Davies, A. (1991). *The native speaker in applied linguistics*. Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press.
- Delpit, L. (1988). The silenced dialogue: Power and pedagogy in educating other people's children. *Harvard Educational Review*, 58, 280-298.
- Deever, B. (1993). A curriculum for educational justice: The social foundations of education and pre-service teachers. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 20(2), 43-56. [EJ 466 237]
- Díaz-Maggioli, G. (2004). *A passion for learning: Teacher-centered professional development*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Edelsky, C. (1995). Education for democracy. Address to the U.S. National Council of Teachers of English Annual Conference, Pittsburgh, PA.
- Fairclough, N. (1992) *Critical language awareness*. London, UK: Longman.
- Feiman-Nemser, S. (1997). Teacher mentoring: A critical review. *ERIC Digest*. Retrieved 7/18/2007 at <http://www.ericdigests.org/1997-1/mentoring.htm>
- Florio-Ruane, S. (2001). *Teacher education and the cultural imagination: Autobiography, conversation, and narrative*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Hargraves, A. (1996). Revisiting voice. *Educational Researcher*, 12(1), 12-19.
- hooks, B. (2001). *Salvation: Black people and love*. New York: Harper Perennial.
- Jackson, A. (2003). Rhizovocality. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 16(5), 693-710.
- Johnson, K. E. & Burton, J. (Series Eds.) (2000), *Teacher education case studies in TESOL practice Series*. Alexandria, VA: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages.
- Lawes, S. (2002). Trends in modern foreign language initial teacher education-The role of higher education. *Language Learning Journal*, 25, Summer, 40-45.
- Liu, J. (2005). Chinese graduate teaching assistants teaching freshman composition to native English speaking students. In E. Llorca (Ed.), *Non-native language teachers: Perceptions, challenges, and contributions to the profession* (pp. 155-178). New York: Springer Press.
- Lurda, E. (2005). Looking at the perceptions, challenges and contributions ... or the importance of being a non-native teacher. In E. Llorca (Ed.), *Non-native language teachers: Perceptions, challenges and contributions to the profession*. New York: Springer Press.
- Massachusetts, 603 CMR 7.00. Regulations for Educator Licensure and Preparation Program Approval.
- Matsuda, M. (1987). *Looking to the bottom: Critical legal studies and reparations*. *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review*, 22, 323.
- McClaurin, I. (Ed.). (2002). *Black feminist anthropology: Theory, politics, praxis and poetics*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- McLaren, P. (1995). *Postmodernism, postcolonialism and pedagogy*. Albert Park, Sydney, Australia: James Nicholas Publishers.
- Meskill, C. (2005). Infusing English language learner issues throughout professional educator curricula: The training all teachers project. *Teachers College Record*, 107, 739-756.
- Mirón, L. F., & St. John, E. P. (2003). *Reinterpreting urban school reform: Have urban reforms failed schools or have schools failed at education reform?* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Motha, S. (2006). Decolonizing ESOL: Negotiating linguistic power in US public school. *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies*, 3(2 & 3), 75-100.
- Nettles, K. D., Balogun, O. M., & Wright Myers, L. (2003). A broken silence: Voices of African American women in the academy. *Contemporary Sociology*, 32(1), 107-108.
- Nieto, S. (1995). From brown heroes and holidays to assimilationist agendas: Reconsidering the critiques of multicultural education. In C. Sleeter & P. McLaren (Eds.), *Multicultural*

Conflicting Discourses in Language Teacher Education

- education, critical pedagogy, and the politics of difference (pp. 191-220). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Orfield, G., & Lee, C. (2005). *Why segregation matters*. Cambridge, MA: The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University.
- Peters, M., & Burbules N. C. (2004). *Poststructuralism and educational research*. Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Pollard, D. S., Sleeter, C. E., & Welch, O. M. (Eds.). (2006). *From center to margins: The Importance of self-definition in research*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Raths, J. D., & McAninch, A. C. (1999). *What counts as knowledge in teacher education: What counts as knowledge in teacher education?* Stamford, CT: Ablex Publishing.
- Raths, J. D., & McAninch, A. C. (1999). *Advances in teacher education, Volume 5: What counts as knowledge in teacher education?* Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Rogoff, B. (2003). *The cultural nature of human development*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Royster, J. J. (1996). When the first voice you hear is not your own. *College Composition and Communication*, 47(1), 29-40.
- Sanguinetti, J. (1994). The sound of Babel and the language of friendship: An exploration of critical and feminist pedagogies and their application in teaching ESL and literacy to women. *Australian Journal of Adult and Community Education*, 34(1), 18-38.
- Schenke, A. (1996). Feminist theory and the ESL classroom. Not just a "social issue": Teaching feminist in ESL. *TESOL Quarterly*, 30(1), 155-58.
- Sleeter, C. (2001). Preparing teachers for culturally diverse schools: Research and the overwhelming presence of Whiteness. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 52, 94-112.
- Solsken, J., Willett, J., & Wilson-Keenan, J. (2000). Cultivating hybrid texts in multicultural classrooms: Promise and challenge. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 35, 179-212.
- Toohey, K., & Scholefield, A. (1994). "Her mouth windfull of speech": Gender in the English as a second language classroom. *TESL Canada Journal*, 12(1), 1-14.
- Torres-Guzman, M. E. (1996). *Mentoring the bilingual teacher. Research collection series No. 7*. National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, NCELA: BE020683. Retrieved 8/18/2007 from <http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/pubs/resource/mentor.htm>
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2000). *Age by language spoken at home by ability to speak English for the population 5 years and over*. Retrieved from <http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/policy/states/reports/statedata/2001/pdf/files/>
- Vandrick, S. (1994). Feminist pedagogy and ESL. *College ESL*, 4(2), 69-92.
- Varghese, M. (2006). Bilingual teachers-in-the-making in Urbantown. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 27(3), 211-224.
- Varghese, M., & Jenkins, S. (2005). Challenges for ESL teacher professionalization in the United States: A case study. *Intercultural Education*, 16(1), 85-95.
- Villegas, A. M., & Lucas, T. (2002). Preparing culturally responsive curriculum. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53(1), 20-32.
- Walsh, C. E. (1990). *Pedagogy and the struggle for voice: Issues of language, power, and schooling for Puerto Ricans*. New York: Bergin & Garvey.
- Weedon, C. (1997). *Feminist practice and poststructuralist theory* (2nd Edition) Cambridge, UK: Blackwell.
- Weiler, K. (1994). Freire and a feminist pedagogy of difference. In P. L. McLaren & C. Lankshear (Eds.), *Politics of liberation: Paths from Freire* (pp. 12-40). London, UK: Routledge.
- Willett, J., & Jeannot, M. (1993). Resistance to taking a critical stance. *TESOL Quarterly*, 27(3), 477-95.