

**Repair with *confianza*:  
Rethinking the context of corrective feedback for English learners (ELs)**

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*ABSTRACT: In this paper, I focus on a prevalent and controversial practice in English instruction, namely corrective feedback or repair. While the pros and cons of this practice have been rigorously debated by language scholars for many years, the issue is mostly approached from a cognitive point of view with the focus being on the individual learner and their subsequent language development (or lack thereof depending on the perspective). The debate rarely focuses on the underlying beliefs and assumptions that mediate the practice (that is, language ideologies); furthermore, there is little attention paid to the socio-cultural context of corrective feedback and, more importantly, the affective and relational aspects through which we interpret corrective practices and repair. After highlighting some of the critical scholarly, theoretical, and ethical considerations surrounding this practice, I draw on case-study data collected in an urban, elementary language arts classroom to present an alternative model of corrective feedback and repair in English learner contexts. I argue for a more robust and critical view of corrective feedback and repair especially in a national context where restrictive language policies and mandated curricula are enacted. Ms. Ramirez strategically organises English language learning based on effective principles of corrective feedback (Ellis, 2004) through non-restrictive language ideologies, socio-cultural tenets of language, and building solidarity and *confianza* with students.*

*KEYWORDS: Corrective feedback, language policy, non-restrictive practice, language ideology, linguistic diversity.*

## INTRODUCTION

English learners (ELs) represent the fastest growing segment of the US school-age population (Alliance for Multilingual Multicultural Education, 2010). Today, one out of every nine students is learning English as a second/another language, accounting for approximately 5.4 million children, with this number expected to more than double in the next 20 years (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, 2007; The Working Group on ELL Policy, 2010). However ongoing data indicate that this population of students tends to perform at levels significantly lower than their language majority peers. The increasing number of linguistically diverse students in US classrooms coupled with the widening achievement gap has brought the literacy needs of students from non-English speaking backgrounds to the forefront of American education research and policy.

Despite the demographic shifts, the last decade has witnessed a significant return to linguistic restrictivism and the rise of anti-bilingual sentiments. Non-standard varieties of English and non-English languages have been subject to increased marginalisation and subordination *vis a vis* dominant discourses in public spaces

through out the United States. The users of these discourses are being corrected or “repaired” regularly in schools and other social spaces. In most of the last century, it was common sense and normal to find signs that read “Colored-Only”; however, today, any explicit sign of this type would certainly create moral outrage. The term “English-Only” as commonly used by anti-bilingual activists rarely (if ever) evokes the same type of moral and/or ethical response as the infamous “Colored-Only” signs. The question is: why? For the most part, there exists a dominant view that language is a choice, whereas race and other “biologically determined” traits are not (Lippi-Green, 1997). Since language is viewed as neutral and autonomous, the debates about language are framed as independent from the speakers or groups who use it. Thus, language and “talk” are divorced from identity, social and economic stratification, and historical relations of power and privilege.

How are these beliefs or *language ideologies* manifested in everyday instructional practices with ELs and what are the ethical implications on student learning and outcomes? How do we become aware of potential inequitable practices and ultimately change them? (Shannon, 1999; Siegel, 2006). Gee (2008) argues that there is an ethical imperative for doing discourse analysis in order to improve teacher practice. He states, “One always has a moral obligation to change a cultural model into a primary theory when there is reason to believe that the cultural model advantages oneself or one’s group over other people or other groups” (Gee, 2008, p. 26). This principle of discourse analysis form “the ethical basis and main rationale for schools and schooling. An unexamined life isn’t moral because it has the potential to hurt other people needlessly” (Gee, 2008, p. 27). Tacit beliefs that are grounded in broader historical relations (that is ideologies) that advantage one group over another, one language over another, or one cultural model over another (on whatever basis) must be publicly scrutinised and made overt.

In this paper, I focus on a prevalent and controversial practice in English instruction, namely corrective feedback or *repair* and offer an alternative model using practices from an effective teacher of Latina/o ELs (Ms. Ramirez). While the pros and cons of this practice have been rigorously debated by language scholars for many years (summarised later), the issue is mostly approached from a cognitive point of view with the focus being on the individual learner and their subsequent language development (or lack there of depending on the perspective). The debate rarely focuses on the underlying beliefs and assumptions that mediate the practice (that is language ideologies); furthermore, there is little attention paid to the activity and socio-cultural context of corrective feedback. More specifically, my work in urban schools points to the importance of the affective and relational aspects (identity and ideological solidarity) of socio-cultural context in meaning-making (Gee & Green, 1998; Ochs & Schieffelin, 1989). This is the lens through which we can alternatively interpret corrective practices and repair.

The affective and relational aspects of language use are an integral part of language socialisation and learning. These dimensions of learning can be analysed through various discourse practices over time and has become a subject of significant importance to scholars from multiple disciplinary perspectives focused on language and cognition (Wilce, 2009). Corrective feedback is a normative practice for English teachers (as well as other teachers), yet very few teachers are aware of the sometimes explicit but more often implicit consequences of such practices, especially on non-

dominant linguistic populations. When corrective feedback is discussed, there is a tendency to isolate the act and detach it from the activity and relational context in which it is embedded. For example, Gerrard McClendon is an educational activist in the United States who has been regularly featured in local and national media, as a champion for improving educational outcomes for African American children. He states that teachers who do not correct the pronunciation of African American children (that is “ax” instead of “ask”) are doing them a disservice (McClendon, 2004).

While well-intentioned, this emphasis on form without a critical examination of the underlying assumptions about the function and purposes of language use can lead to corrective practices that are more harmful than beneficial. Is the rationale for correction based on “meaning” or social identity? If it is the latter, then the implications are profound, especially for African American children who fail to see “the error” of who they are. Another important point is that although this statement appears to be true *prima facie*, it neglects the socio-cultural context of corrective practice and ignores how corrective action may be positively or negatively interpreted by students depending on the relationship one has with the corrector. For example, how would an African-American child who says “ax” instead of “ask” respond to a correction from his/her mother, uncle, peer or non-African American teacher? Is the rationale for the correction provided? If so, is it in terms of socio-political aspects of language use or cognitive ones? I will later present a narrative that explores this fundamental, ideological issue with respect to correction, ideology and identity.

While the study of affect and identity in discourse can be challenging because it goes well beyond language form, it can still be achieved through the use of ethnographic tools and an analytic focus on cultural markers of affect and identity, especially terms of endearment. I illustrate an alternative model to interpreting corrective feedback by drawing on my analysis of corrective feedback episodes collected over a year of ethnographic work with Ms. Ramirez, a second-grade bilingual teacher in an urban elementary school. After highlighting some of the critical scholarly, theoretical and ethical considerations surrounding this practice, I draw on interview and discourse data taken from the daily literacy block to show how corrective feedback and repair can be mediated through a language ideology oriented toward meaning-making and teacher-student relationships built through *confianza* (sustained mutual and reciprocal trust).

## **CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK AND REPAIR AS AN IDEOLOGICAL PRACTICE**

In the 1960s, the social psychologist Wallace Lambert developed a method for measuring the *language attitudes* of Canadians toward French and English using the “matched guise” method (Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner & Fillenbaum, 1960). Subjects were asked to evaluate text read by the same speakers (once in French, another in English) to measure their feelings toward the two languages and their respective communities. This was one of the earliest examples of studies that linked language to beliefs, attitudes, emotions and the impact of stereotypes. In the eighties, Kathryn Woolard (1985) distinguished language attitudes along two dimensions, status and solidarity. This move emphasised the individual as part of a broader network of social and political relations. With measures of language attitudes, there was a danger in

oversimplification or perhaps a tendency to view an individual's dispositions as "personal," "unique" or "exceptional." The larger social, political and historical relations that mediate discourse can be rendered invisible.

Over the last three decades, linguistic anthropologists have moved away from language attitudes and gravitated toward *language ideologies* (Kroskrity, 2010). Whereas language attitudes emphasised feelings within an individual, *language ideologies* were a way to focus attention on social, historical and power relations. Thus, the connection between language practice and individual feelings were re-conceptualised as mediated through broader social, political, and historical relations. Irvine & Gal (2000) define language ideologies as "the cultural system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests" (Irvine & Gal, 2000, p. 5). The concept of ideologies is not confined merely to ideas or beliefs, but rather is extended to include the very language practices through which our ideas or notions are enacted (Razfar, 2005).

Language ideologies are rooted in the idea that how we conceptualise language and language use is indicative of how we think about language users themselves. In other words, "a definition of language is always, implicitly or explicitly a definition of human beings in the world" (Williams, 1977, p. 21). Our ideologies of language therefore are not simply about language alone. Rather,

they envision and enact ties of language to identity, to aesthetics, to morality, and to epistemology. Through such linkages, they underpin not only the linguistic form and use, but also the very notion of the person and social group, as well as such fundamental institutions as religious ritual, child socialisation, gender relations, the nation-state, schooling, and law (Woolard, 1998, p. 3).

Language ideologies therefore are "socio-culturally motivated ideas, perceptions and expectations of language, manifested in all sorts of language use" (Blommaert, 1999, p. 1). Therefore, corrective practices within the classroom, by definition, are a significant index of a teacher's ideas, perceptions, and expectations of language, learning and the speakers themselves.

Throughout my experience working in teacher development, no instructional discursive practice has evoked as much ethical and moral dilemmas as the practice of "repair", more commonly referred to as *corrective feedback* in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) circles (Ellis, 2009a). Repair is the practice of either correcting one's own speech ("self-repair") or the speech of others ("other repair"), and the term has its roots in Conversation Analysis (CA) (Sacks, 1984; Schegloff, 1992). While repair is primarily viewed within the prism of face-to-face and oral interaction, corrective feedback can be either written or oral with much of the research focusing on the former. The act of correction can target various aspects of language such as word choice, grammar, situational appropriateness, or even ideological stances (Razfar, 2005). The following narrative is an example of one teacher's response to our discussion of repair as an ideological practice:

"Eh, Ms. Nasir!" shouts David from across the classroom, "You finna' give us our ice cream party on Friday?" My students are promised a monthly party as a solution towards rewarding and promoting students who exhibit positive behaviour in the classroom. I turn towards David and respond, "You mean are we *going to have* our ice cream party on Friday?" It was a norm in my classroom to answer to my students

in Standard English and to have them respond back using Standard English as a form of correction. Hence, I became alarmed when David challenged this norm by standing out of his chair, throwing his hands up in the air, and exclaiming, “*Why you be always tryin’ to make me into a white duu [dude]?!*” My eye brows raised up perplexed, and my mouth dropped speechless and bewildered at his words. I wasn’t always trying to make him be white. What did he even mean by this statement? Was he associating Standard English to being white? I’m an Asian-American, who speaks Standard English, yet I don’t think I’m white, and David’s skin colour is black, so how can he possibly think I would want him to be white or that I even had a choice in the matter? The question of race confused me, you can’t change your skin colour, and so what does it even mean to be a white dude? To imply that I *always* do this made me reflect on my own everyday language practices in the classroom. What am I always doing to reinforce David’s interpretation of whiteness? What bothered me the most out of his sentence was him phrasing that I’m *making him* into something that he is not: white. [e-mail received from teacher taking Linguistics for Teachers course, Spring 2009]

This narrative vividly shows the intersection of repair, identity and language ideologies and also a moment of “critical awareness”, when it comes to repair and corrective practices in English instruction (Siegel, 2006). It also demonstrates Gee’s “ethical imperative” for doing discourse analysis in teacher education. It also demonstrates the tension between opposing language ideologies: language as neutral versus language as ideological; difference as deficit versus deficit as strength (Ruiz, 1984).

As linguistic anthropology shifted from individual to social understandings of language, and in many ways departed from cognitive oriented linguists and psychologists, the same conceptual tensions surround corrective practices. Over the last thirty years, corrective feedback has been one of the most controversial topics in English language learning and instruction (Carroll & Swain, 1993; Ellis, 2004; Lyster & Ranta, 1997). As expected, there is quite a bit of variation in the characteristics of corrective feedback in English instruction, both across disciplines and national contexts (Sheen, 2004). While some have argued in favour of corrective feedback especially on learner perception and recall (Carroll & Swain, 1993), others have argued that corrective feedback either has no positive effect on language learning (Krashen, 1982; Schwartz, 1993) or is typically negative and harmful to development (Truscott, 1996; Truscott & Hsu, 2008). This debate is grounded in how various scholars approach the nature and function of language with cognitive psychologists and nativist linguists arguing that corrective feedback helps reinforce the inherent, predetermined structural rules of language (Fodor & Crain, 1987). In both cases, the learner is detached from the social, political and historical context of development. Those who argued that corrective feedback is harmful (for example, Krashen, 1982) suggest that correction leads to a rise in the “affective filter” (that is more anxiety, more stress) which impedes the LAD (language acquisition device).

This begs a critical instructional, ideological and moral question, especially in English instruction: is correction always good or bad? Instructors listening to this polemical exchange are left in a quandary: “should I correct or not?” As long as I correct nicely, “revoice” or “indirectly” correct, everything should be all right, one argument goes. However, an opposing position suggests, correcting “nicely” in order not to “hurt someone’s feelings” could potentially be more harmful. And then, if a teacher doesn’t explicitly correct, the student may view the teacher as not caring. As a former ESL

instructor, I found that many adult, second-language learners demanded explicit correction of pronunciation, syntax and word choice. With “non-standard” English speakers, the question might be answered differently (see McClendon, 2004 on “ax” versus “ask”). If teachers decides not to correct a student’s regional speech in favour of the “Standard” variety nor at least engage in a conversation about “code-switching” for different purposes, because they want to affirm the student’s identity, are they doing the child a favour? There are real social consequences to using one variety over another and isn’t it the teacher’s responsibility to generate this meta-pragmatic awareness? These questions and scenarios problematise the narrow debates surrounding corrective feedback and repair in English instruction.

In recent years, this oversimplified and reductive view of correction and, in reality, the process of language learning has been fundamentally questioned (see Razfar, Khisty & Chval, in press). More social oriented language scholars and socio-culturalists have argued that corrective feedback is situated within cultural rules of discourse (Ellis, 2009b). Furthermore, corrective feedback or “repair” needs to be understood in terms of the inherent language ideologies mediating the practice, issues of status and solidarity, and ethical questions (Razfar, 2005). By foregrounding the language ideological character of correction in the context of English instruction, we can move beyond the dichotomous debate surrounding corrective feedback. In addition, we can develop a more nuanced and situated approach by understanding the social context in which corrective feedback or repair occurs. Rather than argue for or against corrective feedback, it is more useful to explore the affective and relational dimensions through which teachers and students engage one another in the course of language development. According to Ellis (2004), corrective feedback in the context of English. In addition, there needs to be a language ideological orientation toward meaning-making rather than linguistic form and grammatical correctness<sup>1</sup>.

These principles of effective corrective feedback and repair practically emerge in a socio-cultural context where the relational and the affective components of teacher-student interactions are more fully developed. It is important to emphasise that there isn’t a separation between the socio-cultural context and critical/ideological aspects of development, where the former is understood as related to pedagogy and learning and the later is considered to be related to the broader ideological and social forces. Gee (2008) argues that all discourse is simultaneously socio-cultural and critical and Gutiérrez (2008) has called the combination of socio-cultural and critical social thought as *socio-critical*.

Participants who have established this type of “solidarity” with one another are more likely to engage in authentic meaning-making and corrective acts are tools that serve the purposes of meaning-making. Extending Woolard (1985) and Gee’s (2008) metaphor of “solidarity”, the concepts of “authentic care” (Noddings, 2005), *respeto*, *educación* and *confianza* (Valenzuela, 1999; Zentella, 2005) more readily apply to corrective feedback in the context of Latina/o students and teachers. These terms signify a deeply rooted social, political, historical and affective alignment between teachers and students. Zentella (2005) concludes that educators of bilingual (especially Latina/o children) need to infuse *respeto*, *educación* and *confianza* into

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<sup>1</sup> See Ellis (2009a) for a more detailed typology of effective corrective feedback based on the latest research focusing on direct, indirect and metalinguistic forms of corrective feedback and student response to each.

teaching practices in order to build on the language and literacy strengths of Latina/o youth and their families. These three words, when translated into English as respect, education and trust, do not adequately capture the same meanings as when they are uttered in Spanish. Teachers who enter educational relationships with their students and parents with *respeto* are able to “see beyond the numerous labels placed on Latina/o families, and truly understand the language and literacy practices of families beyond traditional language and literacy tools” (Zentella, 2005, p. 178). Teachers who understand the notion of *respeto* instead treat the everyday language and literacy skills of students as useful for learning – activities such as personal letter writing written and received in students’ homes; translation and interpretation work done by the children; the reading of religious literature; game playing, and so on. In this sense, *respeto* requires the teacher to understand the notion of *educación*, since it “...is linked with a good upbringing and based on *respeto* as the foundation for learning. Moral and academic aspects are fused in *educación*, not just the formal schooling stressed in “education” (Zentella, 2005, p. 178).

In the remainder of this paper, I illustrate how Ms. Ramirez engaged in corrective practices while simultaneously building *confianza* (social, political, solidarity). Drawing on discourse data taken from the daily language arts block, I show how corrective feedback and repair can be mediated through a language ideology oriented toward meaning-making and teacher-student relationships built through *confianza* (mutual and reciprocal trust).

## CONTEXT

In 2007, Project INPAC (Instruction, Policy, and the ELL Classroom) was initiated to better understand how teachers in bilingual classrooms were being impacted by the tension created by restrictive language policies at the federal level like *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB, 2001) and its state-wide instantiations (for example, WIDA Consortium, [www.wida.us](http://www.wida.us)). The stated goal of WIDA is to develop academic English proficiency for ELs and provide assessment tools (ACCESS) to insure accountability under NCLB. This study was designed to examine the impact of a set of English language proficiency standards (the WIDA), currently being implemented in a typical elementary school with large percentage of ELs. Lewis Elementary school is located in a Midwestern urban district with a Latina/o population of over 90%, 7% African-American, 1% White, and 2% other ethnicities. While most of the students are US-born, nearly half the school (49.4%) is considered “limited English proficient”.

At the end of the year, students take an English proficiency exam (ACCESS) to determine their readiness to transition out of the bilingual program. They must receive a composite score of 4 out of 5 in the areas of listening, speaking, reading and writing. In this regard, all of Ms. Ramirez’s students passed the ACCESS exam and she is considered by her principal, “one of the best teachers...and a great model of best practices for bilingual children.” (Interview, 08/15/2007). The research team worked with several teachers, and Ms. Ramirez was the most experienced and effective bilingual teacher, who served as a mentor for the novice teachers. As expected, the pressures relative to high-stakes testing and accountability were high. Teachers were expected to follow a scripted curriculum in English and essentially prepare children for rapid mainstreaming into the mainstream curriculum. The primary objective was

to show how teachers working within the same school context interpret and respond to the demands present as the result of policy and administrative directives.

While the purpose of this paper is not to report on all the global findings of Project INPAC, the study resulted in a descriptive account of how Ms. Ramirez interpreted and responded to the demands placed upon her via policy and administrative directives aimed at improving student performance on high-stakes tests. As she focused on writing instruction within her language arts block, she employed multiple instructional practices to support students' literacy development, while preparing her Spanish-dominant second-graders for the testing realities that accompany life in the upcoming third grade. Ms. Ramirez constantly navigated and negotiated this tension-filled space. Every day was a struggle to reconcile multiple and simultaneous tensions among her own personal and professional histories as bilingual person and teacher, her beliefs about high-quality writing instruction, the demands of the school administration for improved tests scores, and the backdrop of the politically charged ideological debate surrounding the NCLB legislation.

Ms. Ramirez, as well as other participating teachers, did not simply comply or resist the pressures precipitated by the new federal mandates. She engaged in complex acts of negotiation – enacting her classroom practices along a continuum of compliance and resistance. In other words, Ms. Ramirez negotiated the macro and micro ideological tensions through various practices along a continuum of compliance to resistance. Throughout the literacy units, Ms. Ramirez engaged in multiple practices to negotiate her autonomy as a teacher who was in solidarity with her students and policy or administrative directives that were clearly misaligned to serve the needs of Latina/o ELs. She strategically appropriated the discourse of the standards while simultaneously resisting aspects she felt were not in the best interest of her children's literacy development. One significant practice was the use of Spanish to mediate comprehension and development (a practice discouraged by the new mandates). While she implemented the scripted curriculum, she also added, omitted, and reorganised activities to better reflect an authentic meaning-making language ideology as opposed to an artificial adherence to form.

## **METHODOLOGY AND DATA SOURCES**

The data selected from Ms. Martinez's class was collected over the course of one academic year, using naturalistic ethnographic methods such as participant observation, field-notes, video-recorded literacy activities and semi-structured interviews. These methods are ideal for understanding the context of instruction and learning (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995; Erickson, 2006). The principal activity that was observed was the literacy block in the morning, that usually lasted an hour and a half to two hours. As mentioned, Ms. Ramirez organised her activities around thematic units (for example, climate, geography, community), and her class was observed thirty times for approximately fifty hours of observation. In order to build trust with the participants, the research team began audio-visual recordings of literacy activities in December, once a week until the end of the academic year. Since Ms. Ramirez was the focus of our observations, she wore a microphone which was useful as she circled around the classroom working with small groups. Two formal interviews were also conducted with Ms. Ramirez, one at the beginning and one at the end.

For the purpose of this analysis, I have focused on the fifteen observations for which video and audio data sources were available. Ms. Ramirez's literacy block was organised around activities that created multiple levels of interactions with peers and teacher as well as multiple genres and modalities of language: silent sustained reading, journal writing, book-making, writing centres, and peer conferencing. The names of these activities are part of the standards, yet as I will show later, Ms. Ramirez strategically re-organised the mandated activities to index her focus on meaning-making, comprehension, and solidarity with her students. Her corrective feedback and repair episodes were identified within the transcript data of video recorded observations.

## **LANGUAGE IDEOLOGICAL TENSIONS: RESISTANCE & SOLIDARITY**

Over the last ten years, the United States has witnessed an erosion of the progressive gains of the Civil Rights era, as illustrated by the rise of English-Only movements, anti-immigrant and anti-affirmative action legislation, which has led to a crisis in education, especially for Latinas/os (Gándara, 2007; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Valenzuela, 2004). The advent of NCLB effectively ended the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 and removed the word "bilingual" from all federal documents and the US Department of Education's lexicon. For educators throughout the United States, a linguistically and culturally restrictive climate has emerged, especially for those who espouse non-deficit language ideologies. Ms. Ramirez was an example of one such educator. She has been teaching second grade in a predominantly Latina/o school with a transitional bilingual program for more than a decade. Despite the non-restrictive language ideologies of the administration, NCLB has had a significant effect. She explained the impact of NCLB on her school and district: "every document that we create has to have the standards" (Interview, 4/24/2008). There was an expectation that the literacy goals and curricular content addressed in classrooms should align with or be informed by NCLB standards. The standards were not something decided by the schools or teachers as they were "Coming from up high. Coming from somewhere above and trickling down to us." (Interview, 4/24/2008).

In her native country, Ms. Ramirez was exposed to the English language throughout her childhood schooling. "We basically learned, you know, the basic vocabulary and a little basic grammar, but it was not a formal education in English." (Interview, 11/15/2007). Upon her arrival in the US, she enrolled in ESL classes, where she studied English intensively for about a year and a half before her instructor encouraged her to begin taking college level courses, which she did. She described her early college career as "really difficult", due to her limited English skills at the time, "I needed to build up a lot of background knowledge [in English], but little by little... I'm still learning English." (Interview, 11/15/2007). Since she immigrated, Ms. Ramirez has earned both a bachelor and master's degree from US universities. She has membership in multiple communities that allow her to relate to the experiences of her students. For one, as a native South American and Spanish speaker, she identifies herself as Latina. Moreover, she identifies with being part of the immigrant community. She drew on her immigrant experiences frequently within the classroom to either connect culturally with the children or to empathise with their struggles as second-language learners. Her immigrant history and experience as an EL, coupled with her higher education and ten years of teaching in bilingual settings, have contributed to a complex system of language ideologies that shape the way she

views and engages with the multiple facets of teaching and learning in bilingual classrooms.

The bilingual program was a Spanish/English transitional bilingual program across all grade levels. As reported by Ms. Ramirez, there was no explicit policy for the language of instruction to be used in bilingual classrooms. The idea of “transitioning” students to English was therefore left open to interpretation on behalf of teachers. In second grade, the teachers collaborated to plan and design thematic units that were taught across both the bilingual and English monolingual classrooms. They were expected to align their activities with state and national standards, but each teacher had relative autonomy in terms of how they interpreted and implemented those standards. According to Ms. Ramirez, the second-grade team met over the summer to discuss the “big ideas” and skills to be incorporated into their thematic units (Interview, 11/15/2007). Each second-grade teacher was then responsible for planning at least one thematic unit for the year.

Ms. Ramirez was deeply committed to authentic meaning-making, student agency, and using Spanish to develop English academic literacy. This language ideological stance was clearly in tension with some aspects of the mandated curriculum. In particular, under WIDA, she was expected to implement silent reading and a formulaic “Writing Workshop” at a predetermined time. The curriculum lacked explicit references of key components of good writing, such as developing a sense of authorship, writer identity, awareness of genre, and awareness of audience. Despite the stated constraints, she was able to skilfully integrate her literacy objectives. Furthermore, she was able to build solidarity through her language ideological commitments by strategically re-organising or *reappropriating* the mandated activities to suit her purposes. For example, instead of simply talking about the writing process as a series of discrete steps, she redefined the Writing Workshop to prompt students to engage with texts closely and guide them to think about the socio-cultural practices of good writers. When some of the other teachers at the school used the mandated silent reading time to have students individually read an arbitrary range of self-selected texts, Ms. Ramirez organised silent sustained reading (SSR) time to guide student reflections within a particular genre of writing. She posed questions designed to make these issues explicit for students, often switching between English and Spanish in order to foster metalinguistic awareness. For example, in preparation for students writing non-fiction books, she utilized the SSR time to promote their reflections about non-fiction writing. She distributed National Geographic magazines and focused their attention on a range of visuals and writing characteristics of expository text (lines 1-5).

1. Ms. R: Review the magazine, but I want you to look at how the authors write it. How they make it interesting. Why do you think you were so interested in this magazine?
2. St: It was exciting.
3. Ms. R: Ok, why were you so excited? What did you find in this magazine that you were like “**oh!**” – What made you so excited?
4. St: I don’t know.
5. Ms. R: That’s ok. That’s ok...he wasn’t paying attention. Ok, now. What made you so excited about it? The pictures? So when you’re writing your own non-

fiction books, what do you think is going to make your readers want to read the book?

A discussion ensued about the authors' uses of pictures, maps, and diagrams to present important information visually to further capture the interest of their readers. Ms. Ramirez then clarified why it was useful to examine texts in this way.

1. Ms. R: La razón por la cual estoy mirando esta revista es porque estoy mirando que hacen los escritores para hacer que la revista sea **interesante**. Y ya dijimos...usan muchos, muchos dibujos, muchas ilustraciones, usan diagramas, usan mapas y lo que escriben es interesante. Nos llama la atención. Es un tema interesante. Ok?...Estoy buscando ideas de qué hacen los buenos escritores para escribir.

*(The reason that I'm looking at this magazine is because I'm looking for what writers do to make the magazine **interesting**. And we said...they use lots of drawings, many illustrations, they use diagrams, maps, and what they write is interesting. It grabs our attention. It's an interesting topic. Ok?...I'm looking for ideas about what good writers do in order to write.)*

In this line, Ms. Ramirez modeled what “good writers” do by drawing attention to the manner in which writers state their claims and use evidence to support it. After initially modeling the good writer identity in Spanish, she later restated it in English (line 1):

1. Ms. R: Ok, so I'm looking at the magazine **not** because [it is focused] on my [book] topic that I chose, but because I'm looking to see **how** other people write. What do good writers do?

Ms. Ramirez also strategically positioned her more proficient English students to model good writing and mediate a culture of peer review and feedback as cultural practices of good writers. In the following example from a feedback session, Carla first shared the title of the book she read and then reads her written response (lines 1-9):

1. Ms. R: Bien, ahh, ¿Carla? (*Good, ahh, Carla?*)
2. Carla: I wonder...I wonder why spiders spin webs. What I learned today in this was that bedbugs are the Dracula of the insect world. [Ms. R nods] The water spider makes an underwater tank of silk.
3. Ms. R: **Wow!** Neat.
4. Carla: I learned more things in this book and this book is very interesting.
5. Ms. R: Wow! Ok. ¿Qué opinan de lo que escribió Carla? (*Wow! Ok. What do you think about what Carla wrote?*)
6. Maria: Explicó las ideas del autor. (*She explained the author's ideas.*)
7. Ms. R: Explicó las ideas del autor. Magnífico. (*She explained the author's ideas. Magnificent.*)
8. Maria: Dijo...dijo las letras en inglés. (*She said...she said the letters in English*)

9. Ms. R: Bien. Lo escribió en **inglés**. Ella quiere practicar más su inglés.  
Ahh,¿Daniela?

(*Good. She wrote it in **English**. She wants to practice her English more. Ahh, Daniela?*)

After positively affirming Carla's response (line 5), she proceeded to ask the more Spanish-dominant students to reflect not only on the content of what Carla said but how she said it. When Maria says, "[Carla] said the letters in English (line 8)," Ms. Ramirez expanded Maria's response to emphasise Carla's use and continued practice of English, hence encouraging the use of English while making sense of Carla's English text in Spanish. Clearly, some students had not understood Carla's idiomatic expression of "bedbugs" and the analogy she used to describe them. Idiomatic uses, of course, are the most challenging for language-learners and translations are not as accessible. After prompting Daniela, Ms. Ramirez answered her question and explained Carla's analogy of "bedbugs" to "dracula of the insect world." (line 2). Ms. Ramirez was more elaborate than Carla and used Spanish to explain it, concluding her feedback with an affirmation of Carla's writing: "I liked how you explained it Carla." (line 13)

10. Daniela: Ella dijo qué hacer las... ..como...¿qué dijo Carla? (*She said what they do... ..like...what did Carla say?*)
11. Ms. R: Se llaman bedbugs. So, bedbugs. (*They're called bedbugs. So, bedbugs.*)
12. Daniela: Sí, estos. (*Yeah, those.*)
13. Ms. R: Sí. Es bien interesante lo que dice ese libro que leyó Carla. ¿Permíteme el libro, Carla? Cuando tengan oportunidad y estén ahí en los centros de...de lectura, este libro es bien interesante y lo que estaba leyendo Carla dice que los bedbugs son como unos **Dráculas**. Que porque te chupan la sangre cuando estás durmiendo. Bien interesante, ¿verdad Carla? Me gustó como Carla lo, lo explicó. (*Yes, it's very interesting what this book, that Carla read, says. May I have the book, Carla? When you have the opportunity and are here in the...the reading center, this book is very interesting. And in what Carla was reading it says that bedbugs are like **vampires** – because they suck your blood while you are sleeping. Very interesting, right, Carla? I like how Carla explained it.*)

In the above example, Ms. Ramirez invited students (in Spanish) to offer their opinions on Carla's writing (line 5). Maria commented on Carla's ability to explain the author's ideas and write in English (lines 6 and 8), while Daniela recognised the way in which she included descriptive details (for example, "she said what the bedbugs do"; lines 8 and 10). As part of the established classroom norms, the children began by noting positive aspects of their peer's writing. Given the focus on meaning-making, Ms. Ramirez purposefully re-organised learning to index a different language ideological norm, where students can comfortably engage in sense-making using either Spanish or English. At the same time, Ms. Ramirez encouraged English use without subtracting Spanish, used English speaking peers as models, and offered corrective feedback or explanation by expanding on peer voices. Ms. Ramirez's practice effectively established solidarity with her Spanish-speaking students, socialised them toward practices of good writers, while maintaining the mandated learning goals and activities (for example, SSR & Writing Workshop).

## FROM SOLIDARITY TO CONFIANZA: THE CONTEXT OF CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK

The previous snippets showed that despite the restrictions and mandates, Ms. Ramirez was committed to building a classroom culture that was rooted in *authentic care* (Noddings, 2005), *respeto, educación and confianza* (Valenzuela, 1999; Zentella, 2005). This type of classroom culture did not emerge spontaneously, and Ms. Ramirez strategically organised learning to yield classroom interactions that indexed non-restrictive language ideological stances. From the very beginning of the year, Ms. Ramirez explicitly established these norms especially when it came to pronunciation errors and other second-language mistakes:

I say to the children, “this is going to be a safe environment. We are all learning English and if someone mispronounces a word, you can just let it go. Or if you’re kind, you can say, ‘you know what, this is the way I say it.’” So we are going to have *respeto* for that person trying to speak a second language because it’s a work in progress. (Interview, 11/15/2007)

Ultimately, *confianza* must be developed between teachers, students and parents and is often lacking in schools. Traditionally, Latina/o parents send their children to school with the admonition that “*la maestra es tu segunda mamá*” (the teacher is your second mother), expecting teachers to sustain and expand the values of the home (Reese, Balzano, Gallimore & Goldenberg, 1995).

*Confianza* goes beyond the surface and aesthetic level of caring typically found in schools (Valenzuela, 1999) and points to the broader historical and institutional relationship that states, “we are with each other.” It is more than just “correcting nicely” or teachers attempting to avoid repair practices that may make a student uncomfortable. These reciprocal relationships of solidarity are built through time and sustained through various discourse practices such as language choice for highly valued objectives, endearing terms of address, and engaging in common problem-solving narratives. Effective models of corrective feedback and repair are predicated on such relationships. Ms. Ramirez consciously displayed this empathy for students in how she went about creating a community of *confianza* for second-language learners. She didn’t correct her students’ “failed attempts at spoken English.” (Interview, 11/15/2007) Instead, she “repeats their question or [statement] to model the appropriate usage of the word.” She was opposed to more direct and punitive forms of error correction because she knew “how it felt”. The potential feeling of embarrassment or humiliation that may accompany error correction “often leads to detrimental effects of students not wanting to speak the second language anymore.” (Interview, 11/15/2007)

Another important practice employed by Ms. Ramirez was the way in which she made the use of Spanish central to higher-order learning and developed native language proficiency as a means toward critical thinking:

For the first 3 months which is September, October, November, and – well almost 4 months – I’ll do an introduction to English. But [during this time] I’m making sure they have literacy skills in their native language, and I’m [also] helping them develop their higher-order thinking in their native language. I cannot wait until they learn English [to push] them to start thinking critically. So they are doing that in their native language now and when January comes, I have confidence that they [will]

have acquired enough English to start [taking] risks and using those skills in their second language. (Interview, 11/13/2007).

Ms. Ramirez expressed her belief that native language proficiency was essential for English development and learning in general. The literacy activities she designed (for example, Book Club, Author's Chair) promoted comprehension and connections to text through small-group discussions, where students were encouraged to use Spanish and engage in complex meaning-making:

When they do Book Club in their native language, they are able to ask more higher-order thinking questions, and they feel confident. They are not worried about the language, they just [focus on] the thoughts that they have. But when they are performing in a second language, their cognitive abilities don't show as much [or] as much as they show in their native language. (Interview, 11/15/2007)

The use of native language was also essential to building strong teacher-student relationships and a positive learner identity:

I know how it feels to be so fluent in your native language and [then] to transition into a second language. You are going down in the way that you express yourself, and you don't sound as intelligent as you sound in your native language. (Interview, 11/15/2007).

Ms. Ramirez's language ideological solidarity with her students and her ability to empathise with them was grounded in her own experience of native language proficiency and its impact on her English development:

I was well educated in my native language...so I learned [English] a lot faster not because I was smarter than other people, but because I had an education in my native language...I was able to make sense of English a lot faster than other students in [my ESL] classroom who didn't have the opportunities I had in my native language...And I've seen it with children in my class. They come from Mexico, you know, and when they come from a good school learning and reading in their native language, they acquire that second language a lot quicker. So to me, if you are developed in your native language, your skills will transfer over which is, you know, what the experts say. (Interview, 4/10/2008)

The following interaction (lines 1-11) between Ms. Ramirez and several students, taken from the Book Club activity, is representative of the way in which Ms. Ramirez used the students' native language to build writing proficiency, critical thinking, and *confianza*:

1. Ms. R: Jorge, leelo por favour. *Jorge, read it please.*
2. Jorge: Este cuento me recuerda que yo también planté una semilla de manzana y ha, ha nacido un ramito y todavía yo lo tengo en la ventana pero necesita el sol. También yo planté una semilla de girasol y una de calabaza. *This story reminds me that I also planted an apple seed and a bunch grew and I still have it in the window but it needs sun. I also planted a sunflower seed and a pumpkin.*
3. Ms. R: Muy bien, ¿qué opinan de lo que escribió Jorge? *Very good. What do you think about what Jorge wrote?*

4. Miguel: Que escribió las ideas del autor y // pero algunas ideas... *That he wrote the author's ideas and // but some ideas...*
5. Ms. R: Usó // espera, mamita. Uno a la vez. Miguel, ¿qué decías tú? ¿son las ideas del autor? *He used // wait, dear. One at a time. Miguel, what would you say? They are the author's ideas?*
6. Ms. R: y las de Jorge. *And Jorge's.*
7. Ms. R: Y usó sus propias ideas. Muy bien, gracias. Oscar, ¿qué querías decir tú? *And he used his own ideas. Very good, thank you. Oscar, what would you like to say?*
8. Oscar: Este // (inaudible) // casi que hizo // las ideas del...del autor. *He almost did the author's ideas.*
9. Ms. R: Ok. Las ideas del autor. ¿Entonces tú le recomendarías a Jorge que nos cuente algo más de lo que decía el autor en el libro? *Ok. The author's ideas. So you would recommend to Jorge that he tell us more about what the author would say in the book?*
10. Oscar: Este // ¿cuántas manzanas le llegaron? Así es... *Like // how many apples grew? Something like...*
11. Ms. R: Quiere más detalles de lo que decía el libro. Ok. Vamos a escuchar - Gracias, Jorge. A mí me gusta lo que tú escribiste. *You want more details about what the book says. Ok. We are going to listen to – thank you, Jorge. I like what you wrote.*

The students were sharing their summaries and reflections about a short story they just read. Jorge's summary (line 2) consisted mostly of his own experience planting seeds and offered little in terms of the author's ideas. The goal of the activity was to summarise and analyse the author's ideas as well as including one's own ideas. As Ms. Ramirez asked students to reflect upon Jorge's ideas, she constantly affirmed what Jorge had contributed, while simultaneously providing feedback to include more details of what the author had written. Thus, the corrective feedback took on a communal and peer generated discourse pattern.

O'Connor and Michaels (1993) introduced *revoicing* as a viable classroom discourse strategy to repair and provide corrective feedback. Revoicing, as opposed to direct repair, positions students with greater sense of ownership and agency. In lines 9 and 11, Ms. Ramirez revoiced Oscar's assessment of Jorge's response as a "recommendation" to Jorge. The students were positioned to provide the feedback, and she concluded with positive affirmation, "a mi me gusta lo que tu escribiste [I like what you wrote]." (line, 11). Ms. Ramirez clearly distanced herself as the one providing the recommendation and positioned herself as a facilitator of discussion and one who asked questions. It is important to note the degree of positive affiliation conveyed by the Spanish style she used to affirm that she really liked what Jorge wrote. A more casual rendition would be "me gusta lo que escribiste" but the addition of "a mi" and "tu" creates a more intensive and unequivocal position in terms of where she stood in relation to Jorge's contribution, creating the sense that "I am clearly with you." At the same time, Jorge heard what improvements he needed to make.

Another point illustrated by this segment is that students were given enough time to "self-repair" their talk, as indicated by Miguel's and Oscar's contributions (lines 4, 8, 10 as marked by "//") and nobody categorically rejects Jorge's contribution. Ms.

Ramirez also exhibited her regular practice of using affectionate terms of address in line 5, with the use of “mamita” when one student attempts to talk over another student. This practice allowed her to regulate discourse in a caring and motherly way, that forms one of the essential building blocks of the culture of *confianza* she aimed to engender.

### **Building *confianza* through terms of address**

Throughout our observations of Ms. Ramirez’s language arts activities, it became evident that the use of native language cannot simply be reduced to the “code” (that is, Spanish words and grammar are being used), but rather must be viewed in terms of the performative, affective and relational functions of language. These affective practices were critical to building a sense of “I am with you” or what Ochs & Schieffelin (1989) call *affective alignment*. According to Ochs & Schieffelin, affective alignment emerges when participants in an interaction express feelings, attitudes and relational orientations that either signal solidarity with one another or distance from each other.

One of the most salient features of this practice was the affectionate and endearing terms of address used regularly by Ms. Ramirez. In fact, the difficulty in providing English translations points to the fact that such practices, in order to be interpreted as “authentic”, must be performed in the primary discourse of the students. These practices were an integral part of the context of corrective feedback and repair in Ms. Ramirez’s classroom. In the majority of episodes of corrective feedback and repair that we analysed, there was an invocation of such terms of address (always in Spanish). The following data (Table 1) was based on ten hours of video-recorded observations focused on thematic writing units (Book Club and Author’s Chair) conducted throughout the academic year:

LITERACY ACTIVITY	TERMS OF ENDEARMENT	FREQUENCY TOTAL OBSERVATIONS=10
Book Club/Author’s Chair	“Mi Amor” ( <i>My Love or My Dear One</i> )	37 (5/10 Observations)
Book Club/Author’s Chair	“Corazón” ( <i>My heart</i> )	10 (5/10 Observations)
Book Club/Author’s Chair	“Niños” ( <i>My children</i> ); used to address whole class	103 (10/10 Observations)
Book Club/Author’s Chair	“Mamita”	25 (7/10 Observations)

**Table 1. The use of endearing terms of address**

The terms of endearment used to address students both individually (“mi amor”, “corazón” and “mamita”) and collectively (“niños”) engender a deep sense of affiliation and solidarity with the students’ identity and primary discourse (Gee, 2008). Terms such as “niños” are less formal and distant compared to “estudiantes” or “alumnos” (meaning “students”) and index a more comfortable and home-like relationship. The following vignette (lines 1-3) illustrates how Ms. Ramirez used the expression “mi amor” (roughly translated “my love” or “my dear”) to establish a deep sense of affiliation and *confianza* with students:

1. Ms. R: Mi amor. Lo que va a hacer, lo que vamos a hacer es que este va a ser nuestro secreto. Esta adivinanza la vamos a saber solo nosotros porque vamos a trabajar juntos pero los demás...

*[My love. What you gonna do, what we do is that this will be our secret. This guess/attempt only we will know because we only work together but the others.]*

2. Miguel: Esto se puede hacer así... [This can be done well]

3. Ms. R: Correcto. Esta hoja donde vamos a organizar nuestras ideas, esta hoja entonces no se la van a mostrar a nadie. Esto es solamente ahora mientras organizamos nuestras ideas. Lo que les vamos a mostrar a la clase es la hoja que tiene la adivinanza.

*[Right. This sheet where we will organise our ideas, this paper then it will not show anyone. This is only now as we organise our ideas. What are we going to show the class is the page that is the riddle.]*

In this example, Ms. Ramirez was reassuring Miguel that his brainstorming and attempts to organise his ideas would not be shown to anyone, a “secret” between him and the teacher. Thus, he didn’t have to worry about the social consequences of errors and could write freely with the teacher’s support.

The following example comes from the previous feedback sequence involving Jorge. After receiving peer feedback, Ms. Ramirez spoke with Jorge individually and directed him to write more details, while addressing him with an endearing “corazón” (my heart) and affirming his “good ideas” (line 1):

1. Ms. R: [directed to Jorge] Escribir más detalles, corazón. Te acuerdas que tenías buenas ideas principales pero te faltaban detalles. Eso es lo que hiciste aquí?

*[Write details my dear. Remember that you had good ideas but lack key details. That’s what you did here?]*

In the following example, she guided another student to provide more detail ending it with an affirming tag question “¿entiendes corazón?” (line 1):

1. Ms. R: Los detalles importantes sería de lo que ellos hablaron. La idea principal sería el cochinito conversó con el sapo y los detalles sería de qué hablaron ellos. Esos serían los detalles importantes. ¿Entiendes, corazón?

*[The important details of what they would talk. The main idea would be the baby pig spoke with the frog and the details would be what they spoke about. Those would be the important details. Do you understand, darling?]*

## DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

When teachers deploy verbal repairs and other forms of corrective feedback in classrooms, they are in fact making manifest their tacit beliefs about the purpose and function of language, which language is valued, and how language is learned. Depending on the language ideologies, these practices can range from solidarity with non-dominant populations to deficit notions of their linguistic and cultural tool kits *vis a vis* Standard American English (SAE); they can also range from a focus on linguistic form and grammatical correctness to meaning-making and communicative competence.

In this paper I have aimed to show an alternative view of corrective feedback and/or repair in language instruction. This view is based on examining instructional discourse practices that were mediated by language ideologies that engender solidarity, socio-cultural tenets of meaning-making, consciousness of student agency, and a commitment to social justice (Ellis, 2004). In addition, effective corrective feedback and verbal repairs were predicated on the affective context of learning, as demonstrated through the use of endearing terms of address, teacher-student relationship(s) grounded in affective alignment, solidarity and *confianza* (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1989; Valenzuela, 1999; Zentella, 2005).

Despite the implementation of restrictive linguistic policies, the case of Ms. Ramirez showed how it was possible to create a classroom culture that embodies the best principles of effective corrective feedback for ELs. She empathised with her students as a former second-language learner, and her classroom practices, especially her *critical* awareness of repair (Siegel, 2006), enabled a suitable context for second language learners. Overall, her critical awareness of repair and corrective feedback, her focus on native language use and proficiency, and use of endearing terms of address, led to a *value-added* approach to second language learning (Crichton, 2009) rather than the subtractive model that, unfortunately, is experienced by the majority of Latina/o second language learners in US urban schools (Valenzuela, 1999).

In conclusion, this analysis leads to three critical recommendations and implications for creating effective contexts of corrective feedback and repair and developing these practices for future teachers of ELs:

1. *Sociocritical language ideologies*. Develop a critical awareness of repair through an inquiry and analysis of repair and corrective practices. Place emphasis on socio-cultural tenets of meaning-making and adapt a non-restrictive language ideological stance.
2. *Native language use*. Focus on native language proficiency as a tool for learning and development.
3. *Confianza*. Develop authentic solidarity and affiliation with English learners through mutual reciprocity, use of native language, and employing the principles of respeto, educación and confianza.

While these recommendations emerge from a context where English language development was the primary learning goal, these principles can be applied to other domains of learning (for example, mathematics, science, social science, and so on). Regardless of the domain of learning, language and meaning-making play a pivotal role; hence, there is a broader applicability for socio-critical language ideologies, native language use and *confianza*.

In a time when teachers are constrained by restrictive language policies, mandated curricula, and the pressures of high-stakes testing, the consequences for linguistic minority or non-dominant populations are profound. Educators working with these populations should pay greater attention to the socio-cultural and socio-critical contexts of corrective feedback, rather than be overly concerned with the potential benefit and/or harm of isolated corrective actions. A more robust view of corrective

feedback, where socio-cultural tenets of learning, critical language ideologies, and student agency merge, can lead to enhanced instructional strategies and learning opportunities for not only English learners, but all learners across all domains – no matter how constrained the policy environment may be. More importantly, this is not possible, unless the instructor is critically aware and assumes a greater agentive role in the classroom. The case of Ms. Ramirez demonstrates this well-known but sometimes overlooked dimension of effective corrective feedback and instruction, and that is *teacher agency*.

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