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CONTESTING REGIMES OF VARIATION: CRITICAL GROUNDWORK FOR PEDAGOGIES OF MOBILE EXPERIENCE AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Abstract:

This paper examines from a critical transdisciplinary perspective the concept of variation and its fraught binary association with standard language as part of the conceptual toolbox and vocabulary for language educators and researchers. “Variation” is shown to be imbricated a historically-contingent metadiscursive regime in language study as scientific description and education supporting problematic speaker identities (e.g., “non/native”, “heritage”, “foreign”) around an ideology of reduction through which complex sociolinguistic and sociocultural spaces of diversity and variability have been reduced to the “problem” of governing people and spaces legitimated and embodied in idealized teachers and learners of languages invented as the “zero degree of observation” (Castro-Gómez 2005; Mignolo 2011) in ongoing contexts of Western modernity and coloniality. This paper explores how regimes of variation have been constructed in a “sociolinguistics of distribution” (Blommaert 2010) constituted around the delimitation of borders—linguistic, temporal, social and territorial—rather than a “sociolinguistics of mobility” focused on interrogating and problematizing the validity and relevance of those borders in a world characterized by diverse transcultural and translanguagual experiences of human flow and migration. This paper reframes “variation” as mobile modes-of-experiencing-the-world in order to expand the critical, historical, and ethical vocabularies and knowledge base of language educators and lay the groundwork for pedagogies of experience that impact human lives in the service of restorative social justice.

Keywords: metadiscursive regimes ♦ sociolinguistic variation ♦ standard language ♦ sociolinguistics of mobility ♦ pedagogies of experience

Introduction

In the last half of the 20th century, the concept of variation emerged as the theoretical foundation of sociolinguistics to challenge the linguistic fictions of fixity in time and space—particularly those attached to standard languages—to offer pioneering accounts of language use grounded in the empirically observable realities of changing social practice (e.g. Weinreich, Labov, and Herzog 1968). Sociolinguistic variation offered a new critical vocabulary for addressing and potentially redressing the inequalities associated with the traditionally reductive focus on nationalizing and globalizing standard language and its attendant regime of ideologies, identities, practices, policies, and institutions in language education, particularly for speakers of minoritized and racialized languages and varieties (e.g., Labov 1969; Fishman 1975). However, variation seems to be problematically subsumed under standard language in sociolinguistics such that “the variants are always counted in such a way that the one that belongs to the standard accent is zero” (Chambers 2003: 25). Without dismissing the importance of the concept as it first developed in its Labovian and Fishmanian iterations, variation has become the object of well-founded scrutiny as poststructural, postmodern, and postcolonial critical approaches by a broad array of sociolinguists, linguist anthropologists, and applied linguists have attempted to better understand the diverse uses and impacts of language in human lives within, across, and beyond linguistically and temporally bordered regimes of languages and their varieties at multiple scales of individual, local, regional, national and global contexts (e.g., Blommaert 2010; Garcia, Flores, and Spotti 2017; Pennycook 2015; Canagarajah 2013; Makoni and Pennycook 2005; Pratt 2008, 1991).

In this paper, I examine the concept of variation and its fraught binary association with standard language as fundamental to critical transdisciplinary engagement in the study of language study by educators and researchers. This perspective stems partly from an observation, a frustration, and a concern, not unique to myself but grounded in my experiences of over three decades of teaching and researching languages in the context of “foreign language” and “heritage language” education. My observation: All too often “the language/s” we teach or research—as well as the ways we conceptualize them and talk about them—are at odds with the lived experiences of variability, mobility, and diversity in our complex lives as linguistic individuals (Johnstone 2009) in association and interaction with others as we move in multifarious attachments and entanglements with multiple communities, identities, and traditions. My frustration: As language professionals, to what extent do we know how to value human life that, in reality, does not begin with the standardizing and reductive normativity around “a” or “the” language with its varieties and putative speakers that undergirds our educational and linguistic

work, but rather with the fundamental complexity, mobility, diversity, and variability of how we live language? My concern: Our difficulties in conceptualizing, talking about, and addressing the need to ground language study in the irreducible value of all speakers beyond “a/the language” continue to impact the well-being of human beings, particularly those persons and communities marginalized with reference to institutionalized normativities at the intersection of language, non/nativeness, and non/standardness.

From a critical perspective, the study of language and languages is never only about the narrowly linguistic and always has impacts on human lives. To pursue this insight, I will outline some key points as to how the concept of “regime” is a useful transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary term to critically contest the ways in which some languages, varieties, persons, and communities are devalued and made into “problems”. I will show some of the multiple imbrications of “variation” in a historically-contingent metadiscursive regime (Bauman and Briggs 2003) in language study as scientific description and education that has supported problematic speaker identities (e.g., “non/native”, “heritage”, “foreign”) around a central ideology of reduction through which complex sociolinguistic and sociocultural spaces of diversity and variability have been reduced to managing the “problem” of supposedly systematizable and governable spaces in education and society. Regimes of (un)making and (de)valuing “different” people and their complex language practices are, I will describe, legitimated, institutionalized, and embodied in idealized speakers, teachers, and learners of languages invented through description, codification, and often standardization as the Western “zero degree of observation” (Castro-Gómez 2005; Mignolo 2011) in the ongoing contexts of Western modernity and coloniality. I will also explore in-depth how variation has been constructed, to use Blommaert’s (2010) terms, in a “sociolinguistics of distribution” constituted around the delimitation of borders—linguistic, social, and territorial—rather than a forward facing “sociolinguistics of mobility” focused on interrogating and problematizing the fundamental validity and relevance of those borders in a world characterized by diverse transcultural and translingual experiences of human flow and migration across borders. The reframing of variation in terms of mobility serves to disrupt the metadiscursive regime that a standard language is the principal set of language practices that contributes to a speaker’s well-being by defining and valuing a speaker’s ability to move linguistically, socially, and professionally across spaces. I will present the concept of language experience in connection to mobility and variation as a ground for language education grounded in considering the critical, historical, and ethical dimensions of mobility and experience in human lives (Martínez and Train 2020). I will introduce the concept of “pedagogies of experience” (drawing on Brown

2011) as the critical understandings of the ongoing historicity that links in a past-present-future perspective the regimes, discourses, ideologies, histories, and beliefs that shape a language educator's ethical vision of transformative teaching and learning along with the educator's continued pedagogical and ethical engagement with student-learners and their lives lived diversely and complexly within, between, and beyond named languages. I will suggest that a critical reframing of mobility and variation in pedagogies of language experience can expand the critical vocabularies of language educators focused on restorative social justice and wellbeing for linguistically and socially minoritized and often racialized learners (Winn 2018b).

I acknowledge this paper's focus on education and language in the United States, particularly on Spanish as it is institutionalized, minoritized, and often racialized as a "heritage" or "foreign" language. However, I write for a larger audience than my fellow educators and researchers engaged in Spanish language education in the United States. As we grapple with the multiple traumas of Trumpism, COVID-19, racism, nativism, and state violence in the United States, the ongoing histories, politics, and institutionalizations of long-standing and often racialized violence, neglect, inequality, and exclusion are not unique to the United States, nor do they begin and end there. The prevalence and urgency of these issues—and others—that disproportionately impact the well-being of minoritized persons and communities are truly global issues that play out in specific local and national contexts.

Regimes: Making and Valuing Language and People

The term "regime" has come to denote the governing, regulation, and control at multiple scales from the individual human (body, emotions, expression, health) to the government of state and institutions. Regimes typically entail then a multi-scalar embodiment from the human body, mind, and language to the body politic. A regime involves multi-scalar (de)classificatory, ontological and epistemological power to name, mis-name, or not-name certain human beings and individuals and/or their experiences. Thus, regimes call into being and make certain people and their lives visible, poorly visible, or invisible as (mis)recognized or recognizable legitimate objects of study and public action. The concept of regime is intertwined with notions of "imposing order" at multiple scales from the naming and ordering of linguistic features to the exercise of political and social power at local, regional, national, and global government. As in all cases of imposition and order, there arises the omnipresent, although often unacknowledged, ethical questions as to who orders and imposes what on whom? To whose benefit? With what impacts on which human lives? Regimes are often connected to the production or reproduction of difference and inequality. Regimes, then, have a fundamental ethical dimension as to well-

being, value, judgment, and normativity, often assuming the need, primacy, or desirability of certain social norms, appropriateness, and correctness over others. Regimes construct and intertwine descriptive, normative, prescriptive, and proscriptive discourses and practices in the directing and (de)valuing of people and human behaviors according to what they “are or are not”, “do or do not do”, and “should/must or should/must not be/do”. “Regime” also relates to directed movement in time and space, or directionality, historicity, and bordering. Along with notions of fixity and stability, regimes generally involve paradoxically reductive and totalizing (often universalizing) notions of *systemicity* (pervasive/systemic) and *systematicity* (planned/intentional). Given the reductive, standardizing, and universalizing power of regimes, they are fundamentally in tension with the much wider and deeper variability and diversity of human experience lived in diverse temporal and spatial contexts at multiple scales (affective, social, interactional, individual, family, community, local, regional, national, global) in which regimes are constructed, embodied, and contested.

Revealing Etymologies: Rules, Reductions, Inventions, Prescriptions, and Colonialities

In developing our critical vocabularies as language professionals, it is useful to excavate the many-layered etymology of “regime” in order to reveal different strata of meaning that help us understand and conceptualize key ideological and semantic elements of the term as it has been variously used and will be used in this article to elucidate how regimes impact language study.

“Regime” and its doublet “regimen” have recurrently come into English via French from the Latin etymon *regimen*, a noun variously signifying “a guiding, governing, directing; guidance, government, command;” sometimes embodied in “a ruler, director, governor” (Lewis and Short 1879). Revealing the deeper impact and connections of “regime” for the study of language, this static noun is only part of a semantic and discursive web derived from the verb *regere*, variously meaning “to keep straight or from going wrong, to lead straight; to guide, conduct, direct”, well as to “sway, control, rule, govern, have the supremacy over any thing”. It could also denote bordering in physical and moral space, as in Cicero’s use of “*regere fines*” to describe drawing the boundaries of human conduct (*De Legibus*, 1. 21. 55).

Along with the Latin *regimen*, the derivations of *regere* provided many keywords in our descriptive and prescriptive vocabulary of language study in the translingual metadiscursive moves between Greek, Latin, and the later vernacular languages. The noun *regula* denoted “a straight piece of wood, a measuring stick or ruler”, and by extension, “a rule, pattern, model, example” to be followed. *Regula* is at the origin of our current word and concept of “rule,”

particularly in the study of language, and was in Latin sometimes interchangeable and often associated with *norma*, from which “norm” and “normativity” come. The adjective *rectus* meant literally “led straight along, drawn in a straight line, straight, upright” and figuratively “(morally, lawfully) right, correct, proper, appropriate; just, virtuous, noble, good”. Beginning with the Roman elite—like Cicero—educated in both Latin and Greek, *rectus* fit easily within the ideological, semantic, and educational space existing in the Greek ὀρθός [*orthos*], with its ongoing presence in prescriptive and descriptive terminology over the centuries, as in “orthology”, “orthoepy”, and “orthography”. The adverb *rēctē* was the linchpin of a pervasive metadiscourse of *recte facere*, or doing—and thinking—things correctly and skillfully, which was indissociable from the systematization, codification, and teaching of those practices in manuals or “arts” (*ars/artes*). This was particularly the case for language as the curricular foundation of education in the “liberal arts” (*artes liberales*) established in the Roman empire and continued in the translingual humanist culture of early modern Europe with the basic *trivium* beginning with grammar (*ars grammatica*) and rhetoric (*ars rhetorica*).

The prescriptive and descriptive codification of languages-qua-grammar provided the foundation for the study of Latin and the emerging European national-standard languages. The Spanish humanist Antonio de Nebrija, in his 1488 bilingual version of his best-selling textbook for Spanish speakers to learn Latin, wrote:

Quid est grammatica?

Scientia recte loquendi recteque scribendi ex doctissimorum uir.

Que cosa es Grammatica?

Sciencia de bien hablar & bien escriuir, cogida del uso & autoridad delos muy enseñados varones. (Nebrija, Esparza, and Calvo 1996: 94)

[What is grammar? The science of speaking and writing correctly from the example of the most educated men. What is grammar? The science of speaking and writing well taken from the usage and authority of the very educated men.]

The inseparability of correctness (*recte*) and systematized knowledge in science and education laid the basis for Nebrija’s foundational codification of Spanish in 1492. As the self-proclaimed “inventor” of normative Spanish grammar (“*arte*”), he presented his *Gramática castellana* to the Spanish Queen Isabel declaring that “the language has always been companion to power and empire” (“*siempre la lengua fue compañera del imperio*”), at the same time that Columbus was on his way to establish the first European global empire. Nebrija’s “grammar” was part of

an expansive metadiscourse on the power of a codified state language attached to an expansive political regime, and mirrored those linguistic descriptions and prescriptions that followed in other vernacular languages in Europe, and then throughout the world in conjunction with European imperial projects.

We can identify a central ideology of reduction through which sociolinguistic and sociocultural spaces of diversity and variability have been reduced to “the problem” within the standardizing and managing of governable spaces and people, first constructed in European national-imperial regimes (Train 2009a, 2010). In his 1492 grammar, Nebrija summed it up well as he lamented that the Spanish language was “wild and rule-less” (“*suelta y fuera de regla*”) and would disintegrate in a matter of centuries through change, “difference and diversity” (“*diferencia y diversidad*”). Nebrija’s solution to the supposed problem of change, variability, and diversity was to save the language from itself through standardization: “Reduce it to art and reason” (“*Reducir [la lengua] en arte i razon*”) (Nebrija 1492).

Nebrija also discursively and pedagogically “invented” the reductive categories of native and non-native speakership that laid the foundation for regimes of speaker-learner classification in modern language study. Nebrija states that his grammar of Spanish/Castilian is written for “three kinds of men” (“*para tres generos de ombres*”). The first kind consists of those native speakers who have acquired “our language” since childhood and who want to “reduce” it to the standard of “art and reason”. The second are those Spanish speakers who wish to learn the grammar of Spanish/Castilian in order to learn Latin—the primary language of power, knowledge and education in early modern Europe. The third kind is embodied in “those speaking a foreign language [*lengua peregrina*] who want to learn ours.” Nebrija classifies the non-native speaker kind into two broad categories, roughly corresponding to “minority” and “foreign” language speaker-learners: the newly conquered Spanish national/imperial subjects (“barbarian” and “foreign” peoples) and those outside Spanish political control who “need to know the Spanish language” because they have “transaction and communication in Spain” (“*algun trato i conversacion en España*”).

Modernity and coloniality involved reducing language and languages to a standardizing European regime of teachable and learnable forms codifiable in grammars and vocabularies. This Western “zero degree of observation” or “*el punto cero de la observación*”, as postcolonial scholars have pointed out (Castro-Gómez, 2005; Mignolo, 2011), allowed for Latin—the first world language—to become the model by which all other languages were legitimated through codification, and in some cases standardization. Colonial projects throughout the world resulted

in numerous accounts of ethnocentric description and observation of indigenous cultural and linguistic practices made by European explorers, missionaries, and soldiers. But we are confronted by the striking asymmetrical absence or paucity of historical accounts by indigenous peoples of their own languages. The standardizing Western model of language has provided the basis for a Western “standard model of humanity” (Mignolo 2011). Since the Romans, this standard humanity—*humanitas*—has been inextricably intertwined with institutionalized notions of education and culture. Or perhaps, even more disturbingly, a standard model of humanity has emerged through a constellation of reductive and standardizing ideologies, practices, and policies around language and education, with all the real consequences for inclusion and exclusion that go along with this regime. We can see this regime today in the words we use to describe basic educational concepts such as “language arts”, “the humanities”, and “liberal arts”.

Regimes of Truth: Biopolitics, Biosecurity, and Biopower

In conceptualizing the binary standard language-variation relationship as “regime”, a key reference is Foucault’s influential use of the term, particularly his concept of “regimes of truth” (*“régimes de vérité”*) (Foucault 1977, 2004b, 2004a, 1994). Calling on intellectuals to critically interrogate knowledge and power, Foucault observes that each society has its regime of truth, or its “general politics” of truth, which entails 1) the types of discourse it welcomes and “causes to function as true”; 2) the “mechanisms and instances” which enable us to distinguish true from false utterances (*enoncés*) around the manner in which each utterance is sanctioned; 3) the “techniques and procedures which are valorised for obtaining truth”; and 4) the professional or social status of those who are “charged with saying what counts as true” (Foucault 1977: 13; 1994). The insight that what we define and express as truth in science and society is not “outside of power” is central to Foucault’s larger framing of governmentality, biopolitics, and biopower. For Foucault, modernity and economic (neo)liberalism developed as a governmental regime (*“régime gouvernemental”*) from the 18th century to the present around a central notion of what we call “population” which has allowed for the construction of “a biopolitics” (2004a: 24). Biopolitics entails a systematizing and rationalizing approach to the “problems” posed for governing practice by those phenomena inherent in a body of living beings classified and grouped as a “population,” such as hygiene, natality, longevity, and race (2004a: 323). The governmental regime of (neo)liberalism brings together the notions of politics and economy such that they come to be inscribed in what is real, derived from the legitimizing of a certain regime of truth that divides what is true from what is false (2004a: 22). Similar to standard languages, the notions of politics and economy do not exist as an objective reality independently

from the persons, discourses and technologies of power that create and sustain them. For Foucault, the (neo)liberal régime of truth is connected to an ensemble of practices that developed in the 19th century to order and control madness, illness, delinquency, and sexuality forms an instrument of “knowledge-power” (*“un dispositif de savoir-pouvoir”*) (22). Governmentality, for Foucault, is part and parcel of biopolitics and biopower¹ as the manner in which human behavior is managed (*“la manière dont on conduit la conduite des hommes”*) which serves as an analytical framework (*“une grille d’analyse”*) for power relations (2004a: 192).

Extending Foucault’s terminology and conceptual toolkit to (post)colonial contexts, Stoler (2016) identifies shifting “racial regimes of truth” that undergird the classifying and governing of persons in a racial order of things and people that intersects with “security regimes” around the ongoing impacts of “imperial formations” that police, confine, detain, and displace racialized human bodies. For Stoler, racial regimes of truth involve “colonial occlusion”—the intentional and structured concealment of inconvenient histories and practices—and the “colonial aphasia”—the inability to speak about them. Recognizing the ongoing “colonial presence” in racial regimes of truth allows us to consider and articulate in critical terms how racism in the past is connected to racism in the present. In this perspective, the Obama-era “new

¹ Giorgio Agamben takes Foucault’s classificatory dimension of biopolitics and biopower (i.e., the technology of power for managing human beings and human lives in large groups) a step further to include impacts on some human lives by the declassificatory power increasingly present under state of exception (*“stato di eccezione”*) regimes (Agamben 2005). Describing it as the “dominant paradigm of government in contemporary politics”, Agamben highlights the “immediately biopolitical significance of the state of exception as the original structure in which law encompasses living beings by means of its own suspension” (2005: 2-3). In regimes of exception after 9-11, the “indefinite detention” of non-citizens suspected of involvement in terrorist activities, and their trial by “military commissions”, instead of the usual military tribunals assured by international convention, “radically erases any legal status of the individual, thus producing a legally un-namable and unclassifiable being” (2005: 3). For example, the Taliban detained in Afghanistan and at Guantánamo by the US military are “neither prisoners of war nor persons accused” in that they have neither the protection of POW status defined by the Geneva Convention nor the status of persons charged with a crime with the attendant protections afforded by American laws (2005: 3). President Trump’s state of exception regime has effectively transgressed existing laws and legal precedent to wage war on the most vulnerable mobile populations of refugees and immigrants at the border with Mexico and his nearly daily assaults on undocumented immigrants within the United States.

racial regime of ‘post-racial’ America” that downplayed structural racism while maintaining racial domination (Bonilla-Silva 2015) is firmly anchored in the ongoing historicity of colonialism and imperialism. Similarly, the “new nativism” with its mounting violence against immigrants in recent decades has deep colonial roots (Feagin 1997).

Regimes of Historicity

The concept of “regimes of historicity” names the discursively shaped experience of time and temporality that constitute our culturally and historically shifting relationships of past-present-future (Delacroix, Dosse, and Garcia 2009; Hartog 2015, 2003). In addition to indexing regimes of language invention (Makoni and Pennycook 2005), shifting regimes of historicity enter into the public and professional landscape of language, learning and education. Adapting the concept from historian François Hartog (2015), we can think about historicity beyond “history” in its conventional sense of a set of facts or events or language forms that happened in the past or as how we narrate that past. Rather, following Hartog, we can look at how the constructed categories of “the past”, “the present”, and “the future” organize our experiences with the past and provide us with the “conditions of possibility” in which we can articulate those experiences. Hartog (2015: 17) asks: “What present are we dealing with in different places and at different times, and to what past and future is it linked?”

Understanding the regime/s of historicity that shape our world, then, involves critical engagement with the ways in which our understandings and articulations of the past may limit or enable our understandings not only of the past, but also of the present and the future. Regimes of historicity entail socially and historically contingent ways of temporal (im)mobility ranging, say, from a certain immobility of myopic focus on the past, present, or future to a fluidity between those temporal categories. Are we, as Hartog asks, currently mired in a sort of presentism with its “perpetual” or “omnipresent present” (8)? Or, considering the relationship between regimes of language and to those of education, we can ask: Are we living—as some cultural critics assert, “obsessed with the future”, with a “permanent future agenda” that drives a “future-first education model” that is decimating the humanities (Niedzviecki 2015, 46-47), and language education beyond English? What are the conditions of possibility for understanding language in scientific and educational terms connected to how we as scholars and teachers metalinguistically and metadiscursively frame “language”, “languages”, and “speakers” in terms of past, present, and future? How do we understand or not the historical ontology (Sergeant 2010; Hacking 2002) of our present languages and linguistic varieties (“language x”, “English”, “Spanish”, “variety z”, “Spanish of the United States”, etc.) with the

attendant nomenclature and multi-scalar categorization of speakers, languages and communities as, for example, “global”, “local”, “national”, “regional”, “native”, “foreign”, “second”, and “heritage”, within and beyond science and education? A critical sense of historicity as past-present-future (dis)connectedness requires that we and our students in language programs learn that what is today has not always existed or at least not in the same way; that what doesn’t exist today could have existed in the past; what seems new is not necessarily new (e.g. variation, migration, globalization). On the other hand, what we hold to be eternal is often recent and always contingent, as “the x language” with its attendant bordered “speech community”, “region”, “nation”, “empire”, and “literature”.

A regime of historicity can disconnect or negate the intergenerational experiences of racism and oppression directed at minoritized and/or racialized individuals, groups, and their language-culture practices. For example, the Black Lives Matter movement in the United States actively contests the silencing of Black voices to tell their ongoing histories of past and present police brutality, educational exclusion, and the dehumanization of Black bodies as a step toward changing the future.

Regimes of Language and Metadiscursive Regimes: Ideologies of Inequality, (Racio)linguistic Ideologies, and Professional Language Ideologies

Language, as a fundamental component in human lives and experience, is at the center of the critical conceptualizing and studying of regimes and their multi-scalar and differential impacts and consequences on certain categories of persons. Anthropologists have long pointed to the historical connections between the increase in social inequalities characteristic of hierarchical societies and emergence of written language and metadiscourses surrounding literacy (Lévi-Strauss and Charbonnier 1961). Dell Hymes noted that “the issue of inequality is historically associated with the notion of ‘language’” or rather “not ‘language’ alone, but repertoire—the mixes of means and modalities people actually practise and experience” (Hymes 1996, 207).

In recent decades, a substantial body of debate and research has emerged around regimes of language and metadiscursive regimes to critically understand language as an object of study in science and education in cross-linguistic, cross-cultural, and historical perspective. Linguistic anthropologists led the way in the 1990s and 2000s in their self-reflexive questioning of the ethnocentric and racializing discourses, ideologies, and practices around language that undergird social science and professional practice in anthropology, and more broadly in modern linguistic sciences (e.g., Bauman and Briggs 2003; Schieffelin, Woolard, and Kroskrity 1998;

Woolard and Schieffelin 1994; Woolard 1985; Blommaert 2008; Kroskrity 2000b; Silverstein 1996; Kroskrity 2000a).

In their seminal book on language ideologies and the politics of inequality, Bauman and Briggs trace how people from Bacon, Locke, the brothers Grimm, to Boas and beyond “created new regimes of metadiscursive ideology and practice, who seized new opportunities for imagining and naturalizing language and tradition” (2003: 17). Moreover, these “ways of imagining language and tradition and shaping practices for representing them,” observe Bauman and Briggs, “are always tied to schemes of social inequality, modes of imagining and controlling Others, and efforts to naturalize inequality” (313). In an important call to action, they admonish language professionals that it is not enough to study ideological constructions of language and tradition, and their reification as social facts, we need to “engage with the intricacies and intimacies of metadiscursive regimes” (318).

In Kroskrity’s influential formulation of “regimes of language”, the word “regime” invokes “the display of political domination in all its many forms”, including what Gramsci’s framed as “the coercive force of the state and the hegemonic influence of the state-endorsed culture of civil society” (Kroskrity 2000a: 3). Regimes require regimentation involving metadiscursive practices (i.e., the capacity of discourses to represent and regulate other discourses) to control the production and reception of socially dominant discourses (Kroskrity 2000a: 11). In the “regimenting of languages,” language ideologies play a central metalinguistic, metadiscursive and experiential role, such that they “represent the perception of language and discourse that is constructed in the interest of a specific social or cultural group” (8). Echoing Foucault’s regimes of truth, Kroskrity notes that the cultural and affective notions of what is “true”, “morally good” or “aesthetically pleasing” about language and discourse are grounded in social experience and often in political-economic interests. This perspective refutes “the myth of the sociopolitically disinterested language use or the possibility of unpositioned knowledge, even of one’s own language” (8). Regimes of language and their attendant ideologies are instrumental in constructing metadiscourse around variation and diversity in a vertical hierarchical order of differentiated linguistic varieties and languages. Regimes of language can involve the control exerted by “a state hegemonic standard language” with its “symbolic domination” and “social distinction” (Bourdieu 1977, 1979).

The question of the complex relation between standard language, identity, and inequality leads to an interrogation of the metadiscursive and ideological underpinnings of “variation” and “diversity” in the study of language. Kroskrity suggests that Bourdieu’s concept of the symbolic

domination of standard language “rationalizes vertical, or hierarchical, relations between speakers,” as shown in Labov’s (1972) foundational variationist study on standard American English over New City regional English (2000a: 28). Kroskrity cautions that “it is doubtful whether processes like symbolic domination alone can provide a comprehensive account of how speakers find the horizontal camaraderie of citizenship in a nation-state” (28). “How then,” he asks, “do we understand the dual role of standard languages as embodiments of both national identity and state-endorsed social inequality” (Kroskrity 2000: 28)?

Contrary to conventional discourse of descriptive (socio)linguistics, our “professional language ideologies” (Kroskrity 200a: 15) are not distinct from our experiences with local, societal, or “folk” beliefs, ideologies, and ways of talking about language beyond the standard language. Kroskrity offers a critique of Labov, who “quite explicitly diminished the importance of attending to speakers’ linguistic ideologies” (6). Kroskrity provides as evidence Labov’s justification for disregarding ideology as “noninfluential” in variation in a study of a New York City English speaker in which Labov stated “that a profound shift in social experience and ideology could not alter the socially determined pattern of linguistic variation” (Labov 1979: 329, quoted in Kroskrity 2000a: 6-7). More generally, Kroskrity questions the tendency in the linguistic sciences to either “reduce linguistic meaning to denotation, or ‘reference,’ and predication” or present speaker metalanguage as “cultural givens rather than understood as having any connection to political-economic factors” associated with language ideologies and regimes (7). Similarly, we can ask to what extent have professional linguists and educators generally assumed a “non-ideological” and “noninfluential” stance toward language regimes grounded in standard language in association with social inequality as cultural givens, and therefore beyond the scope of critical analysis? Language professionals—such as linguists and educators—may critically ask to what extent have we naturalized standardization and the “monoglot standard” (Silverstein 1996) in our professional metadiscourses? How is it that even sociolinguistic metadiscourse seems to have developed its own regime of variation in which “the variants are always counted in such a way that the one that belongs to the standard accent is zero” (Chambers 2003: 25)?

Regimes of Difference

Following Foucault’s insights about classificatory power, Doerr and Lee (2013) demonstrate how the construction of heritage language learners (HLLs) is a contested process that involves competing and contrastive regimes of difference based on categories into which students are interpellated. Regimes of difference are “systems of categories in which an item is defined in

relation to another item with which it is contrasted” (9). The notion of regime allows for an analysis of the diverse ways in which individuals as subjects relate to the specific regimes of difference through, for example, resistance, strategic submission, disruption, and acceptance (10). Among the regimes of difference lived by HLLs in the United States, Doerr and Lee identify mainstream English monolingual Americans vs. multi/bilingual heritage language learners, foreign language learners vs. HLLs, individuals with single heritage vs. individuals with multiple heritage, and, in terms of linguistic proficiency, top-track vs. lower-track students (9).

In the case of Spanish in the United States—a “regional”, “minority”, “immigrant” and “heritage” language—and being a bilingual Spanish speaker in the United States, we can conceptualize a regime of language, speakership, and heritage. Spanish language and Spanish speakers become classified as doubly minoritized, foreignized, and racialized subjects with respect to an ideologized and institutionalized monolingual Native Standard Language of “English speaking (White) Americans” and that of “educated Spanish speakers” in ideologically “Spanish-speaking” Spain and the post-colonial nations in the Americas historically formed by independence movements from Spanish colonization and empire (Train 2007, 2009b, 2010, 2012; Train and Kramersch In press). At the same time, the empirical realities of linguistically diverse and variable Spanish language in the United States and the lived experiences and identities (e.g., heritage, Latinx) of Spanish speakers become increasingly “elsewhere” and inclassifiable—to echo Agamben (2005)—with respect to those same reductively normative, “native” and “standard” practices associated with the pluricentric standardization of Spanish in powerful national and global normative centers in Europe (e.g., Spain, Madrid) and the Americas (e.g., Mexico City, Lima).²

The power of standard language regimes to “de-language” certain speakers goes hand in hand with the power to construct categories of vulnerable persons based on their supposedly linguistically unclassifiable status as not fitting the narrow parameters of “a language” on the standard model. Seen through a raciolinguistic lens, we can examine, as has Jonathan Rosa (2016), how ideologies of language standardization and “languagelessness” contribute to the enactment of forms of societal inclusion and exclusion in relation to different sociopolitical contexts, ethnoracial categories, and linguistic practices. For Rosa, the ideologies of language standardization “stigmatize particular linguistic practices understood to deviate from

² For perspectives on Spanish as a pluricentric language, see, for example, Arteaga and Llorente (2009); Clyne (1992); Villa (2002).

prescriptive norms,” while “ideologies of languagelessness call into question linguistic competence—and, by extension, legitimate personhood—together” (162). This insight allows us to consider how the ideologies of language standardization and languagelessness become linked in racialized ways in a web of theory, policy, and everyday interactions.

The scaling of human vulnerabilities around (not)belonging includes the threatened survival of racialized and minoritized languages in monolingual national regimes. Drawing on Jenson’s work on citizenship regimes³, Sonntag and Cardinal (2015) propose the concept of “language regime” from a language planning/policy perspective, as “language practices as well as conceptions of language and language use projected through state policies and as acted upon by language users” (6). For example, a monolingual language regime informed by a state tradition of one-language-one-nation would define language use in terms of a single national language, and the regime’s language policies would reflect that definition and restrict the medium of instruction in schools to the single national language. Most language users would follow the monolingual conception and act in accordance, with the likelihood that most speakers of languages other than the national one would experience language shift and intergenerational abandonment of the minority language for the national language (Sonntag and Cardinal 2015).

Regimes of Spatial and Social Distribution and (Im)mobility: Nationalism, Racism, Nativism

Regimes of historicity that temporally distribute and often limit mobility of language and experience over past-present-future impact our language and experience. These regimes of historicity intersect with the hierarchical ordering and valuing of ideologically bordered languages, varieties and speaker identities in regimes of spatial and social distribution—most notably those associated with regimes of sovereignty (Agnew 2005) and nationalism.

As we saw in the case of Nebrija, the study of language/s in education and linguistics in modern Europe began with the emergence and standardization of certain vernacular languages (i.e., those languages other than classical or sacred Latin, Greek and Hebrew) as “the medium of nationalism” and mass literacy beginning in the 16th century (Fishman 1972). As Anderson famously observed, the “interplay” between linguistic diversity, printing and capitalism produced an “assembling process” by which only a relatively few languages from amid the

³ Another related concept is that of “citizenship regimes,” which include “the institutional arrangements, rules and understandings that guide and shape state policy; problem definition employed by states and citizens; the range of claims recognized as legitimate” (Jenson 1997: 631).

immense diversity of languages spoken in Europe became the increasingly standardized and institutionalized “languages-of-power” as “national print languages”, each associated with a particular territorial space bound increasingly bordered and together by identity in the “imagined community” of the modern nation-state (Anderson 1991: 43-46). Language study has largely mapped onto the geographical, social and hierarchical distribution of these national languages into bordered spaces associated with literacy and literature, with their deprived “dialects” and the diverse subaltern “regional” or “minority” languages reduced to sub-national territories and social sub-groups.

Nationalism is central to the construction of the hierarchical spatial and social distribution of language and identity, and the limiting of linguistic and identitary mobility within and between those spaces. Nationalism is also tied to the different regimes of historicity which fix certain languages and persons in time and history through a host of institutionalized and systemic normativities. As Etienne Balibar observes, “racism is a philosophy of history” imbricated in nationalism, such that “most racist philosophies present themselves as inversions of the theme of progress in terms of decadence, degeneracy and the degradation of the national culture, identity and integrity” (Balibar 1991: 54-55). Moreover, he adds, “very often racism provides nationalism with its theories, just as it provides it with a daily stock of images” (65).⁴

Ways of talking about “national” language use and speakership, such as English in the United States, can undergird the violence experienced by minoritized and racialized language speakers. This violence and domination are fed by the discourses best described as “racist nativism” (Pérez Huber 2011) that support larger regimes of distribution, inequality and separation in society and education. The discourses of nationalism, nativism, and racism coalesce in “racist

⁴ These observations are important in critically understanding the pervasive media mis-characterization of public discourse that is racist as “populist” or “nationalist.” For example, then-presidential candidate Donald Trump declared during a public debate in 2015 in Los Angeles, California, that “This is a country where we speak English, not Spanish.” While barely registering in the mainstream English-language press, Trump’s dismissal of Spanish—a language lived daily by some 40 million residents of the United States, of whom over 10 million live in California—was understood by many Spanish speakers as more racist than nationalist. Trump’s declaration brought together a long-standing regime of historicity in the United States that glosses over the ongoing histories of discrimination and violence directed at Spanish speakers as a racialized and minoritized group, while, at the same time, dismisses the complex intergenerational experiences of Spanish speakers in the United States, and especially in California, as vital participants in the life of the nation and the state.

nativism” or “the institutionalized ways people perceive, understand, and make sense of contemporary US immigration, that justifies native (white) dominance, and reinforces hegemonic power” (Pérez Huber 2011: 379). Using a Latina/o critical theory framework (LatCrit)—a branch of critical race theory (CRT)—Pérez Huber documents the experiences, or *testimonios*, of two groups of female university students in California: undocumented Mexican immigrants and US-born Chicanas (women born in the US of Mexican ancestry). The data point to how racist nativist discourses have been institutionalized in California public education by English hegemony that “maintains social, political, and economic dominance over Latina/o students and communities, regardless of actual nativity.” All the women described “feelings of exclusion, differential treatment, and overt discrimination based on language during K–12 education” (390) stemming from teacher practices of English dominance. These experiences are, in Pérez Huber’s analysis, “a manifestation of this hegemony that can be articulated by the concept of racist nativist microaggression—systemic, everyday forms of racist nativism that are subtle, layered, and cumulative verbal and non-verbal assaults directed toward People of Color” (379).

Regimes of (Im)mobility

Regimes around language are never disconnected from other regimes at the intersections of time, space, territoriality, and power. Especially salient are regimes of (im)mobility and historicity that are fundamental to creating boundaries or “bordering” and to “making” or “inventing” languages and discrete linguistic varieties (Makoni and Pennycook 2005; Harris 1980; Bauman and Briggs 2003), or—in Foucauldian terms—the historical ontology of languages (Seargeant 2010) attached to the specific histories of “making up people” (Hacking 2002) and the historical ontology of motion (Nail 2018).

Critiques of national sovereignty regimes (Agnew 2005) and the construction of linguistic differences in colonial and nation-state contexts intersect with recent critical and historical perspectives that have challenged researchers to question “regimes of mobility” (Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013). The notion of regimes of mobility serves to “explore the relationships between the privileged movements of some and the co-dependent but stigmatised and forbidden movement, migration and interconnection of the poor, powerless and exploited” (Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013: 188). These regimes are grounded in “imaginaries and relationalities” of differential power underpinned by conceptual orientations built upon “binaries of difference” that thwart analyses and understandings of “the interrelationship between mobility and stasis,

localization and transnational connections, experiences and imaginaries of migration, and rootedness and cosmopolitan openness” (Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013).

The movement of peoples and languages across and within linguistically, socially, racially and politically bordered spaces intersects with the concept of “immigration regimes” (Molina 2014). In the United States, the Immigration Act of 1924 was the nation’s first comprehensive immigration restriction law designed to “limit the immigration of aliens into the United States”. The Act installed a new “immigration regime” that remade racial categories that still shape the way Americans think about race, and particularly Spanish-speakers and Mexicans. The Act “remapped the nation in terms of new ethnic and racial identities, specifically transforming denigrated European ethnics into 'whites' while simultaneously criminalizing Mexicans as illegal workers who crossed into the United States without authorization” (Molina 2014: 1). The forced mobility of criminalized immigrants at the nexus of regimes of sovereignty, immigration and mobility has intersected with an important body of work critiquing “the deportation regime” that limits the freedom of human movement in an increasingly global mechanism of state control (De Genova and Peutz 2010).

The (meta)discursive regime of truth around mobility in the United States, with its central narrative of an “American future”, may still ring true, at least for some. The American mobility narrative (socioeconomic mobility, racial mobility, occupational mobility, educational mobility, linguistic mobility, etc.) positions immigrant experiences—especially around language—in *monolingual time and space* around an “American future” in English and an “immigrant past” that resides elsewhere than in the US (Martinez and Train 2020: 109-112). This (im)mobility regime intersects with an educational regime of English monolingualism grounded in the construction of symbolic language borders (Valdés 2017) around an idealized white native standard American speaker (Bonfiglio 2002). Spanish language education is largely limited, instrumentalized, and institutionalized in time and curricular-space to early acquisition and development in K-6 in transitional (with the goal to learn English) or dual immersion bilingual classes (made popular by their cosmopolitan appeal to monolingual English-speaking parents as to the benefits of bilingualism for their children). Spanish is then more explicitly “foreignized” or “heritagized” in secondary and post-secondary curriculum.

(Im)mobility intersects with language regimes and racializing nativist regimes of national identity in the sociopolitics of Spanish and speaking Spanish in the United States (see Fuller and Leeman 2020). The national population censuses—since the use of the Hispanic origin question since 1980—link the category of “Hispanic” identity to supposedly Spanish speaking

foreign national identities (e.g. Mexican, Guatemalan, etc.). As Leeman (2013) observes, the US Census “doubly reinforces” the supposed foreignness of human beings classified as being of Hispanic origin. On one hand, Latinxs “are permanently linked to other countries” that are “Spanish speaking”, irrespective of how many generations Latinx families and individuals have lived in the US, and the diversity of Latinx language experiences with different varieties of Spanish or even whether they or their family might have actually spoken Spanish (as in the case of indigenous peoples), or continue to speak Spanish in whatever way. On the other hand, the monolingual, English only “national imaginary constructs languages other than English as un-American,” thereby rendering persons defined and categorized as of “Hispanic origins based on Spanish language” as “less American” (Leeman 2013: 319).

As we have seen, regimes directly impact human experience and have consequences in human lives, as well as our understanding of what is true in human experience and lives. Although directly impacting real human beings, regimes are not defined by a collection of disconnected or haphazard events and practices randomly touching individual persons. Nor do regimes magically appear or disappear in a past disconnected from present and future lives. Rather, regimes are enmeshed in an ongoing historicity of past, present and future of human life that is institutionalized, totalizing, and systemic. Recognizing the *systemic* (or pervasive), as well as the *systematic* (or planned and intentional) character of regimes offers language educators and linguists insights into and vocabulary for critically understanding, naming, and contesting the inequalities and injustices attached to the *historicity*, *systemicity*, and *systematicity* of what we come to know and do around language, speakership and education as practitioners and researchers. Critically understanding regimes can support anti-racist and anti-oppressive social justice work aimed at disrupting and dismantling practices and policies that continue to constitute, for example, systemic racism in education and the criminal justice system (see section 5). How, for example, do we develop a critical stance toward what we have come to know and do in reference to “standard language” and “variation” imbricated in minoritizing and racializing regimes of truth that sanitize the complicated histories of minority, national, and world languages and ongoing colonial/imperial presences? How do we find critical terminology to apprehend and articulate how our current and future identities and practices as language professionals are shaped by the historicity of prescriptive practices mentioned earlier and our scientific “descriptive” understandings of language?

Contesting Regimes of Variation: Moving from Distribution to Mobility and Experience

A broad swath of research across disciplines from genetics to the social sciences to the humanities increasingly recognize human mobility and movement as consistent, recurrent, and multidirectional features of the complexity and diversity of human history and culture past and present, and likely future. Mobility and migration now are recognized as integral to the human historical experience, thus “deflating the myth of isolated communities” and questioning the conceptualization of the movement of and interactions among past peoples as closed and bounded homogeneous (Feinman and Neitzel 2019). Traditional approaches to the study of language have privileged the separation and distribution in time and space (social and geographic) of what are conceptualized and valued as discrete languages or varieties and their speakers.

On the one hand, a standard language as central to the traditional metadiscursive regime of language study in education and linguistics is the tacit, default model for a discrete “language” and its “variations” fixed, separated, and bordered in time and space. On the other hand, those languages described by early applied sociolinguist-language planners as “standard” (e.g., Haugen 1966; Stewart 1968; Garvin and Mathiot 1968) are assumed to cut across time and space with their supposed superior communicative power, despite the fact that standard varieties are grounded in class, educational (un/educated), and geographic (capital/urban ~ rural; metropolis ~ colony) differences, and often racialized distinctions within larger webs of asymmetrical human relations at intersecting scales (individual/corporeal, local, regional, national, global, intergenerational).

What if we re-conceptualize and re-center our understanding of language and languages in terms of variation as complex experiences of mobility? Toward this end, we can examine how the traditional metadiscursive regime surrounding variation that has been constructed, to use Blommaert’s (2010) distinction, in a “sociolinguistics of distribution” constituted around the delimitation of borders—linguistic, social and territorial—rather than a forward facing “sociolinguistics of mobility” focused on interrogating and problematizing the fundamental validity and relevance of those borders in a world characterized by diverse transcultural and translanguingual experiences of human flow and migration across borders. The canonical conceptualization of variation in a sociolinguistics of distribution is further disrupted and shown to be inadequate by a growing body of theory and research into the complex intersections of language, identities, and learning in which language is conceptualized as local practice

inscribed in complex transcultural and translingual histories and experiences of global flows and mobility across time and space (Pennycook 2010; Pratt 2008; Canagarajah 2017).

In order to critically engage with the intricacies of “variation” as a historically- and culturally-contingent metadiscursive regime (Bauman and Briggs 2003) in language study, we need to outline a central trope of “variation as problem,” grounded in a central ideology of standardization and reduction that socially, scientifically and educationally frames the multi-scalar complexity and diversity of language experience as a problem to be treated prescriptively or descriptively.

Modern linguistic research emerged in close association with regimes of nationalism and colonial and imperial expansion of nation-states, with considerable impact on the lives of human beings in territories across the globe. In nineteenth-century Europe, the increasing interest in “exotic” languages as well as local dialects coincided with colonial expansion and the creation of a European regime of nation-states. Language scholars with their ideas and arguments about linguistic differences played a significant part in the development of categories of identity central to “producing and buttressing European claims to difference from the rest of the world, and claims to the superiority of the metropolitan bourgeoisie over ‘backward’ or ‘primitive’ others, whether they were residents of other continents, other provinces, or other social classes” (Gal and Irvine 1995: 967).

Historically distancing themselves from the overtly normative prescriptive study associated with national standard languages and education, modern linguists have largely positioned the study of language as “descriptive”, conveniently relegating “prescriptivism” to language education and to the past, or at least to elsewhere. However, the descriptive foundation of modern linguistics is more complicated than the conventional descriptive-prescriptive dichotomy would suggest (see Cameron 1995: 5). Juan Carlos Moreno Cabrera (2008) points to the ongoing “linguistic nationalism,” a “destructive ideology” that continues to reduce much of linguistic research to discrete languages on the fixity of the national standard model, thereby limiting our larger understanding of complex linguistic diversity and variation in human lives as well as justifying and legitimizing political and cultural inequality.

In the following sections, I will outline several regimes of (socio)linguistic truth that establish the scientific value about language and speaker identity in ways that variously (dis)count, distribute, and (de)value variation and diversity in synchronically, socially, and geographically bordered space with respect to the standard language.

The purpose of interrogating these regimes is not to dismiss the contributions of linguistics and sociolinguistics with its foundational concept of variation to our understanding of language in human lives. While acknowledging these contributions, it is necessary to ask: what is it that narrowly positivistic or reductively social scientific perspectives leave out of our understandings of the diversity and variability lived in and through language, and whose experiences and lives are included, made present and valued, and whose are not?

Regimes of Linguistic Truth and the (Im)mobility of Language

In a foundational move in the descriptive regime of modern linguistics, Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) reduced the scientific object of linguistic study to the language-object of “*langue*” as 1) a self-contained semiological system (i.e., of signs expressing ideas and meanings) and 2) a principle of classification (Saussure 1995). The reductive move to establish language/*langue* as a unified object of linguistic study entailed separating out the troublesome problem of variability in empirically observable language use, which Saussure relegated to a secondary concern under the labels “speech/*parole*” and “language/*langage*”. While Saussure describes language/*langage* as having diverse forms and being heterogeneous (“*multiforme et heteroclitie*”, 25; “*hétérogène*,” 32), language/*langue* is bounded and by nature homogenous (32). Saussure similarly abstracts *langue* as “social fact” (*fait social*) away from the variability of actual speech/*parole* of the individual speaker (*sujet parlant*), who somehow speaks, thinks and acts outside of the social context (30-31). The language/*langue*, as object of scientific inquiry, is grounded in this supposed “linguistic reality” institutionalized around an apparently monolithic and homogeneous “speaking mass” (*masse parlante*) and “social fact” isolatable in time in a synchronic “state of language” (*état de langue*). The ostensible reality of this “social” institution of the language is further abstracted and reduced to semiological “values”. Seeking to establish linguistics as “*science de valeurs*” (115), Saussure declared that the language/*langue* can only be a “system of pure values”, around a relational value of arbitrary signs (composed of signifier + signified) institutionalized in a homogeneous social body of the *masse parlante* (155). In constructing a regime of linguistic value based on the positivistic reduction and systematization of oppositions, Saussure effectively evacuated most questions of social, ethical and historical value from modern linguistics in its structuralist iterations.

Just as Saussure immobilizes and distributes the messy variation of how people actually speak (*parole*) away from a reduced, purified, unified, and systematized “language” (*langue*) fixed in time, he also privileges a model of linguistic diversity that values the “ideal form” of separate linguistic languages varieties coterminous with geographical and political borders (“*autant de*

territoires, autant de langues distinctes”, 265). He insists that the normal state of linguistic diversity results from geographical separation, although acknowledging that this unified ideal situation is not always the case. Saussure outlines some of the ways in which the “linguistic unity” both within a “natural language” and within a geographical space can be destroyed. He evokes the Babelian metalinguistic and metadiscursive stance toward linguistic diversity as the problem of “the confusion of languages”, citing cases of language diversity as national or regional multilingualism in Europe. Saussure’s acknowledgement of linguistic-diversity-as-fact shifts to the metadiscursive trope of diversity-as-problem given the unimaginability of unity in the face of linguistic confusion and mixing in Europe. At a larger global metadiscursive scale, this move mirrors the Western imperial and colonial framing of linguistic diversity across the planet.

As “that obscure object of desire”, quipped Tony Crowley (1990), Saussure’s “reductive systematization” of language (35) required “mythical entities in order to guarantee ‘scientificity’” (43). In Crowley’s analysis, among Saussure’s myths was the creation of a constructed “staticity” in language through the hierarchical ordering of *langue* over *parole* as the necessary condition of theorization and study grounded in “a certain stability and staticity rather than a constant flux of activity” (Crowley 1990: 31). Saussure, then, ostensibly solved the supposed problem of “linguistic differentiation and the difficulties it poses for any attempts to systematize language” (Crowley 1990: 35). Standard languages were the obvious and available form of *langue*, given the long history of prescriptive metadiscourse and ideology surrounding standardization involving the abstraction, systematization and mythological nature of “the language”. At a global metadiscursive scale, the standard model of language entailed a universalizing move to distribute this regime of language in support of Western imperial and colonial regimes across the planet. As Crowley notes, “it was not simply national languages which could be thought of as synchronic systems, but *any* system of language which achieved the required stability” for scientific study (Crowley 1990: 33). The goal for structuralists then became to fit nonstandard practices and regional varieties (dialects) into a system of *langue*, not unlike that associated with standard languages.

In reaction to the empiricism of American behaviorism, Noam Chomsky established a regime of linguistic truth that appropriated much of Saussure’s metadiscourse and ideological assumptions to further systematize the linguistic object of study and segregate it from the mobile social and affective lives of speakers. In his tripartite mirror of Saussure’s system, Chomsky separated linguistic competence from the actual performance of speakers in real speech communities with respect to a universal language faculty innate to human beings.

Chomsky formulated the scientificity of language around the linguistic competence of an “ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech-community” (Chomsky 1965: 3). The Chomskyan idealization of “competence” (on which his view of syntactic structure rests) relegates the way people actually use language (“performance”) in real social contexts to a theoretically unimportant status. At the heart of the Chomskyan view of language is the tacit or unquestioned privileging of “grammaticality judgments” based on the linguist’s own language practices or those of authorized “native speakers”. Chomsky inherited this conception of language from the prescriptive tradition of grammarians, as we saw in Section 2, who codified their idea of authoritative language practices (usually conforming to their own) into national standard languages, to Enlightenment thinkers who turned sociohistorically-contingent practices of language into universalized notions of human language and modern structural linguists. In particular, Saussure provided Chomsky a grounding for the scientific description of language in a set of idealized language practices (*langue/competence*) that most resembled the standard language of the educated native speaker (Train 2003). Chomsky created yet another variation-free “linguistic utopia” around a “linguistics of community”, in Mary Louise Pratt’s terms, in “a utopian project that postulates unified, idealised social worlds” (Pratt 1987: 58). The Chomskyan tradition, like Saussurean structuralism, as Pratt observes, relies on a dual theoretical move. It establishes 1) “a maximally homogeneous object of study” that is achieved in the construct of the ideal native speaker and “whose competence the theory is to account for,” while 2) what Anderson (1991) called “the deep, horizontal comradeship” of the “imagined community”—not limited to a nation, but rather “embodied in the idea of competence as an innate, discrete resource all humans share” (Pratt 1987: 50-51).

Regimes of Variation in Sociolinguistics

The Chomskyan approach opened the door to criticism that linguistics is more about what linguists think language is than about language as it is actually used. Much of the work of sociolinguistics has been to question the homogeneity of the Chomskyan native speaker and establish the social grounding of speakers’ actual language practices in terms of variability correlating to social class, register, ethnicity, age, geography, gender, etc. With the pioneering work of William Labov in the 1960’s, the concept of variation emerged as the theoretical foundation of sociolinguistics. Taking aim at Chomsky’s idealized ideal speaker-listener and the engineered unity of a supposedly homogeneous speech community, “variation” allowed sociolinguistics to challenge some of the established linguistic fictions of unity and fixity in time, space, and mind—particularly those attached to standard languages. Variation became an increasingly powerful concept to provide accounts of language use grounded in the empirically

observable realities of changing social practice (see Weinreich, Labov, and Herzog 1968). At the same time, sociolinguistic variation offered a new critical vocabulary for addressing and potentially redressing the inequalities associated with the traditionally reductive focus on nationalizing and globalizing standard language and its attendant regime of ideologies, identities, practices, policies, and institutions in language education, particularly for speakers of minoritized and racialized languages and varieties (e.g., Labov 1969; Fishman 1975).

In a seminal study on the speech of (some) African-Americans, Labov famously challenged the traditional view of non-standard English held by many public-school teachers that non-standard varieties represent “an illogical form of speech” and “that when children are taught the standard forms they are also being taught to think logically” (Labov 1969: 1). Labov debunked the underlying notions of “cultural deprivation” and the resulting “verbal deprivation” that claimed that African-American children from the low-income neighborhoods “receive little verbal stimulation, are said to hear very little well-formed language, and as a result are impoverished in their means of verbal expression: they cannot speak complete sentences, do not know the names of common objects, cannot form concepts or convey logical thoughts” (2). Labov roundly rejected these claims as “part of the modern mythology of educational psychology, typical of the unfounded notions which tend to expand rapidly in our educational system” (2). He further dismantled the related Deficit Theory used by educational psychologists and, according to Labov, by the British sociologist Basil Bernstein to account for the poor performance of children in schools by attempting “to discover what kind of disadvantage or defect they are suffering from” (2).⁵ Labov’s vigorous defense of non-standard language practices and his trenchant critique of professional metadiscourse is a watershed moment in the ongoing struggle by sociolinguists against the deleterious impacts of standard language ideologies and educational practices that devalue and delegitimize the linguistic knowledge of minoritized and racialized languages, varieties, and speakers that are often positioned in terms of deficit, deficiency and deprivation (see, for example, Corson 2001; Valencia 1997).

The scientific study of variation initiated by Labov has provided a powerful position from which to disrupt regimes of language in which standard language ideologies, practices, and policies go unquestioned in the study of language in science and education (see Dittmar 1976). At the same time, questions have emerged as to how the Labovian, or “variationist” approach to sociolinguistics might itself be a sort of regime of language that too narrowly systematizes and

⁵ Labov’s attack on Bernstein’s concept of “elaborated” and “restricted” codes continues to find supporters and critics (e.g., Jones 2013; Bolander and Watts 2009).

reduces variability to a set of positivistic quantifiable values (i.e., variables) correlated to bounded communities and hierarchical notions of social experience within a normative social order. Already by the 1970s and 1980s, researchers—particularly outside of the United States—engaged in energetic interrogation of the methodology and social assumptions of sociolinguistics. For instance, Suzanne Romaine (1982: 2) articulated a “post-Labovian sociolinguistics” in a primarily European or non-North American setting. Among the issues at hand in rethinking the assumptions of sociolinguistics were, for Romaine, the role of the individual, problems quantifying and analyzing variables, and the integration of social factors into linguistic description. She questioned the Labovian theoretical assumptions as to the relationship between social and linguistic differentiation, particularly that “the patterning of sociolinguistic behaviour is to explained by reference to social class or status” (2). She challenged Labov’s reliance on the relative deviation between an idealized prestige standard and a non-standard vernacular and his explanation of language change in a speech community in terms of the effect of upward social mobility on language use (2-3). Romaine contends that Labov’s notion of “speech community” grounded in New York City, USA “quickly breaks down elsewhere” (3).

The limitations of the Labovian speech community grounded in the relationship between a standard variety and a dialect within a single language become apparent in bidialectal and multilingual communities with long and complicated histories of linguistic contact (3). In fact, New York City, like other global urban centers, is a case study for the multilingual complexities and realities of mobility and the superdiversity (Vertovec 2007) constituted by many speech communities and individuals within a single city, and even within a single language community, such as Spanish (see Fishman and García 2002). However, the multilingual diversity of New York did not enter into Labov’s canonical treatment of the regional speech of the Big Apple. A monolingual and English-centric bias is evident in Labov’s large study of the non-standard English of African American and Puerto Rican Speakers in New York City (Labov et al. 1968), which solely dealt with English and made invisible the Spanish of the Puerto Rican speakers and community. The study failed to acknowledge the role of language beyond English in the bilingual lives of Puerto Ricans in and beyond New York City. This monolingual blind-spot highlights Romaine’s call for sociolinguistics to “develop a more integrated and coherent account of the manner in which real communities of speakers use language in a socially meaningful way” (1982: 4).

In addition to leaving unquestioned monolingual regimes of English, there appears to be a regime of historicity (Hartog 2015), a presentism lurking in the variationist account of

sociolinguistics. As articulated by Labov (1994), the variationist approach has sought to “apply data from the synchronic study of linguistic change in progress to historical problems” of linguistic change to establish distributions of variation or, more exactly, variable rules, in linguistic structure and the social matrix (25-27). It is, in his words, “the use of the present to explain the past” (9). Or, in my view, Labov’s stance is an inversion of Foucault’s critical “history of the present” in which historical inquiry serves to critically engage in and address the concerns of the present. For example, Foucault evoked the present-day conditions in prisons and the wide-spread revolts of prisoners provoked by those repressive conditions in framing his study of the birth of the modern prison system and a “political technology of the body” (“*une technologie politique du corps*”) that generates punishment and surveillance (Foucault 1975: 35).

The Labovian sociolinguistic regime of variation has come under scrutiny from a sociological perspective. Williams (1992) describes the Parsonian “consensus functionalism” built on “the twin issues of norms and values” that dominated most of early sociolinguistics and sociology of language (69). The “consensual and politically conservative nature” of this functionalism in sociolinguistics is, according to Williams, evident in that “the community is defined by actors who share a common value orientation” (70) and that “speech is seen as the product of social convention or norms” (65). The objective of much of the research in sociolinguistics is “descriptive in that its aim is to discover the relevant speech norms” (65-66). For Williams, sociolinguistics falls into the “structural functionalist trap” by implying that “the activity of the group is the product of an authorless norm,” such as Labov’s claim that “the locus of grammar lies in the community, and that the speech of any social group will be less variable than the speech of any individual” (71). What Williams calls “the normative consensus view of society” and Labov’s “inherent consensus orientation” (86) support a certain transparency of language or a “reflection view of language” such that norms exist as some simple expression of society, and that language reflects society (66). A similar critique of the sociolinguistic myth of the social is offered by Cameron (1990) who calls for “a far more complex model that treats language as part of the social, interacting with other modes of behaviour and just as important as any of them” (82). Williams also points to the “reluctance of sociolinguists to conceptualise standardisation in other than normative terms,” such that “much of their conceptualisation of standard language derives not from theory but rather from a descriptive basis of linguistic features and their subsequent relationship to some social category which suits the arguments of that particular analyst” (Williams 1992: 146).

Regimes of Variation in S/LA

The variability of language in first, second and multilingual learners has been a foundational and ongoing concern for Second/Language Acquisition (S/LA). However, drawing on the prescriptive metadiscourse around the “problem” of variation from the standard language, the scientific study of learner language was born in “error,” that is, to systematize, analyze and more importantly understand the significance of learners’ errors as non-conformity to “native(like)” speech (e.g., Corder 1967). With increasing research into learner interlanguage (IL), variation observed in the performance data of non-native learners—largely framed in terms of “error”— become “one of the abiding problems of second language acquisition.” (Young 1988: 281). In her work on Samoan L1 acquisition and socialization, anthropologist Elinor Ochs (1985) examined the notion of error from a sociolinguistic perspective on variation to consider error in terms of the contextually-specific range of variants in use for a given linguistic feature. However, as Regan observes, issues of globalization and migration in the twenty-first century demand “a multilayered, more nuanced ethnographic description of the L2 speaker’s experience” that has led research on variation and SLA in social context to combine the quantitative linguistic analysis of speech with ethnographic research and thick descriptions to produce “rich accounts of L2 acquisition” (2013: 284, 290).

Grounding Critical Pedagogies of Language Experience in Variation as Mobile Modes of Experiencing the World

In this section, I will reframe the concept of variation in critical transdisciplinary terms of mobile language experience as a ground for pedagogies of experience. Drawing on calls for a phenomenological view of language, we can frame the ordinary enactments of language, i.e. utterances, as “modes of experiencing the world” (Ochs 2012).

The ongoing group experiences around language and identity, particularly in minoritizing and racialized experiences (for example, around Spanish in the United States, Arabic and Turkish in the European Union, indigenous languages), require explicit recognition by sociolinguists and educators. Martínez (2006) offers a useful perspective in the context of Mexican-American Spanish speakers in the United States:

a language experience is more than just the language itself and more than the deployment of language in social situations. A language experience is the composite of a group’s experience with, in, and through language. In order to study language experience, then, we must look at complex intersections between multiple facets of

language including language structure, language use, language politics, language history, language attitudes, language ideologies and so on. (Martínez 2006: 7)

Recognizing collective language experiences is vital to understanding and addressing the impacts and tensions associated with minoritizing and racializing or ethnicizing speakers of regional and/or immigrant languages through the educational and political discourses in biopolitical regimes that construct large “populations” by reducing the complexity and diversity of human lives to named categories of, for example, “Latinx Spanish speakers” in the United States or “Muslim Arabic speakers” in Europe. On the one hand, recognizing collective language experience can serve to strategically create, support and mobilize individuals and communities into politically and culturally powerful groups at multiple scales that can form advocacy and resistance movements in order to demand advantageous rights and services, such as equitable education (including bilingual education), civic participation, and equal protection under the law (see San Miguel Jr. 2013; Mora 2014; Martínez and Train 2020). However, the reduction of complex and diverse human lives to named biopolitical categories of experience do not necessarily value or benefit every individual and family who compose those groups and can serve to further contribute to the racist and nativist stereotypes and agendas directed against them. Not all human beings fit easily into the groups assigned to or even constructed by themselves in the confines of dominant regimes within and between nations. Not all English speaking “Americans” can or want to be part of the monolingual, “great white America” fantasized by Donald Trump and his supporters. Not all Latinx, immigrant and Spanish-speaking lives in the United States are the same, nor fit uncomplicatedly into any or all of those named categories. In more philosophical terms, we can see a tension between the irreducible humanity of our diversely lived, experience-grounded subjectivities and the reduced objects of named being (Dewey 1938).

We can reframe “variation” in terms of an ecologically complex and dynamic view of language experience at the intersections with discourse, identity, locality, and mobility within and across multiple intersecting scales of the global, national, institutional, community, familial, individual, affective, and temporal (Martinez and Train 2020). Language experience—woven into our human experience through languaging and translanguaging as we live in the world—offers educators working beyond English an ethical space in which to critically engage with the violence increasingly targeting at our institutions, key constituencies of our students, and—in many cases—at ourselves and our families.

Language experience shifts the focus away from framing variation in terms of objectifying classifications of language, speakership, and learner identity, as in the canonical “This is how they say x in y variety.” A critical notion of language experience works against the long-standing objectification of racialized linguistic minority learners, while offering a deeply humanizing stance on, for example, who Spanish language speakers are—particularly heritage learners—and who they see themselves to be. Language experience privileges, in phenomenological terms, the perceived and embodied experiences of being in the world. This conception draws on Wittgenstein’s notion of language as of the life-forms or *Lebensformen* of experience and harmonizes with Brigitta Busch’s more recent formulation of the concept of the “lived experience of language” (*Spracherleben*) (Busch 2017).

Following Martínez and Train (2020), I will bring into focus an interdisciplinary concept of language experience through the multiple lenses of criticality, historicity, and ethicality to contest standard regimes of variation and their implications for language education in the light of social justice. Ethicality—not limited to normative ethics—opens up vital spaces for collective and individual imagining and re-imagining of who we are or would like to be in relation to what we know and do in the contexts in which we live. Ethicality emerges at the intersection of how human beings construct and transform language experience into what counts as valid knowledge (epistemology) in relation to our multiple experiences of being (ontology) and doing (agency)—and learning to do and to be—in the world with our contingent competences, identities and, realities. Framing ethics as ethicality allows educators to deploy some of the terms and ongoing debates around justice and injustice that are useful in aiding or challenging language practitioners to name and consider some of our positions, assumptions, and practices in order to better engage with the language experiences of diverse language learners.

Ethicality points to the role of sustained attention to ethical questions and the everyday ethics of practice and reflection by professionals. For researchers, ethicality offers a transformative lens to ask the fundamental ethical question: for what and for whom is our research? (Ortega 2005) Ethicality calls on language researchers and scholars to publicly “contribute directly to a broader understanding of language” in order to expand the public’s understanding of issues of enormous significance and impact (Valdés 2005: 424).

Criticality embraces approaches to language study informed by diverse currents of research and practice (e.g., post-structuralist, post-modern, post-colonial) grounded in (self)reflexivity around critical positioning and stances that problematize our understandings of language and

experience. In terms of an explicitly critical applied linguistics, a self-reflexive position involves the need to “retain a constant skepticism, a constant questioning of the givens” and of the “everyday categories” of what we do as researchers and practitioners (Pennycook 2001: 8).

Historicity offers a lens through which to magnify our critical perspective on experience in lives past, present, and future as zones of tension and contention beyond regimes of historicity and language built on standard language with their discourses, ideologies, and histories of sovereign nations, each with their putative national language and culture embodied in native speakers. In bringing historicity more explicitly into the discussion, we can move toward re-theorizing criticality in ways that capture the presentness and immediacy of a critique informed by diverse realities and ideologies of lived experiences of learners and teachers. As language educators, we must keep that reality in focus as we recognize and critically interrogate the named categories of language and identity that underpin what we do. What are the productive strategic uses and the unethical mis-uses of named languages—English, Spanish, French, etc.—along with their attendant educational categories of “foreign”, “native,” “heritage”, “bilingual”, and so on?

The notion of “equality” perhaps moves us to a “linguistic justice” incorporating English as a global *lingua franca* (Van Parijs 2011). However, a distributive justice of “everyone has the right to learn English” would support the current global trends toward educational regimes centered on a national standard language as a putative L1 with English as L2, leaving little space for minority, regional and/or indigenous languages. In countries where English is the dominant language, as in the United States, linguistic “equality” favors the current native standard language regime around “the right to monolingual literacy in English.” The concepts of “diversity”, “mobility”, and “variation” perhaps only acknowledge or describe the obvious fact of human movement and the observable linguistic and cultural diversity, or superdiversity, in our complex global world of human migration. But “diversity”, “mobility”, and “variation” do not necessarily get us to meaningfully engaging with what diversity, mobility, and variation mean in education and in our complex lives and those of our students. How do we address the basic sociolinguistic and sociocultural variability and diversity stemming from the ongoing histories of mobility that shape the ways in which the language practices and identities of the diverse speakers of what we call “Spanish”, for example, are never always the same everywhere, any more than speakers of English all experience “English” in the same way? How do “diversity”, “mobility”, and “variation” help us to examine how we linguistic individuals (Johnstone 2009) bring to education as learners and teachers our diverse, mobile, and varied *Spracherleben* (Busch 2017) as we co-participate in the ongoing shaping of experience?

However, framing social justice in terms of equity and bringing attention to the ongoing injustices and inequities in society and in education requires us to ask increasingly pressing questions. For instance, what are the ethical responsibilities that we have as educators and researchers in critically examining how we may contribute to those injustices and inequities, and how we can work with our colleagues, students, families, and communities in addressing them? How do we value or de-value the plural knowledges—the “funds of knowledge” (Moll et al. 1992)—our students bring with them to their education? We guide our students to be effective, successful, educated, and literate—or multiliterate—communicators and participants within and across cultures and languages, within and across disciplinary discourses, and so on. But where we start from and the process by which we get there matters, particularly for minoritized and racialized language speaker-learners. This basic insight informs pedagogies of experience that attempt to critically connect spaces of language experience.

In a study examining the grounding and approaches of five African-American teachers committed to social and educational change for African American male students, Anthony Brown (2011) evokes the term “pedagogies of experience” to describe the diverse experiences that shape their “philosophical vision” or “foundational ideals that guide and inform a teacher’s purpose for working with students” (369):

Pedagogies of experience are the narratives, ideologies, histories and beliefs that inform a teacher’s philosophical vision to teaching and pedagogical approach to working with students. In this context, pedagogies of experience can provide the philosophical grounding to a teacher’s vision while also providing the teacher a method to their instruction or approach to interacting with students. (Brown 2011: 366)

From the diversity of experiences recounted by the teachers, Brown found that for each of the teachers “their philosophical vision was to incite change” (369).

For the purposes of augmenting the critical vocabulary of educators and researchers dedicated to change in language study, I will widen Brown’s focus on the diverse experience-grounded pedagogies of African-American teachers and reframe the notion of “philosophical vision”. I will also include our experiences as educators and researchers involved in language education in listening to and attending to our students’ diverse and mobile experiences as minoritized and/or majority language speaker-learners. This move serves to connect the insightful and valuable term “pedagogies of experience” proposed by Brown with the conceptualization of language experience in terms of criticality, ethicality and historicity that I have outlined above. What I will call “pedagogies of language experience” are the critical understandings of the

ongoing historicity that links in a past-present-future perspective the regimes, discourses, ideologies, histories, and beliefs that shape a language educator's ethical vision of transformative teaching and learning along with an educator's continued pedagogical and ethical engagement with student-learners and their mobile lives lived diversely and complexly within, between and beyond named languages. Pedagogies of language experience entail critically attending to both the diverse, complex and mobile experiences of the learners whose education we are entrusted with and our own complex experiences as educators, speakers and persons in the world.

Contesting Regimes of Variation in the Work of Restorative Justice

In this final section, I call for the reframing of “variation” as mobile modes-of-experiencing-the-world in order to expand the critical, historical, and ethical vocabularies and knowledge base of language educators and lay the groundwork for pedagogies of language experience that impact human lives in the service of restorative social justice. We must supplant the “historically obsolete vocabularies” and find “critical vocabularies” that can support restorative justice work in schools and universities “by creating opportunities for healthy relationships and bolstering activities” designed to undermine racism and other forms of oppression (Winn 2018b: 41).

Restorative Justice

But what is restorative justice? Broadly speaking, the concept of “restorative justice” has come to refer to a wide array of ethical stances and explicit practices to value and transform lives by cooperatively repairing harm done by experiences of exclusion, trauma, violence and injustice lived at multiple scales (e.g., individuals, families, communities, institutions, nations, global, intergenerational). Restorative justice is the object of voluminous research, theory, and application, often implemented through codified practices and programs (see Aertsen and Pali 2017; Winn 2018a, 2018b; Levad 2012; Weitekamp and Kerner 2002; Wadhwa 2016). Most notably, restorative justice theory and programs have emerged since the 1980s and 1990s as an influential world-wide alternative to punitive or retributive regimes of criminal justice. Increasingly, restorative justice has emerged as a core component in many educational settings to contest and replace traditional and “zero tolerance” regimes of discipline that disproportionately harm racialized and minoritized students, such as Black and Latinx students in the United States. Encounter, dialogue and connectedness are among the most common values and practices of restorative justice. For example, forming a circle composed of

stakeholders is a widely-used and versatile restorative practice that can be employed to develop relationships and build community or to respond to wrongdoing, conflicts and problems. Beyond a set of techniques and values, restorative justice is “a paradigm shift that seeks to make building and sustaining equitable relationships essential to everything we do” (Winn, Graham, and Alfred 2019: ix).

In the United States, English is the dominant language in the context of massive mobility due to immigration and internal migration. Classrooms in public schools are generally linguistically and culturally diverse spaces to which learners come with varying experiences of mobility that are indexed in their language use as, for example, different “dialect” speakers (associated with experiences of class, region, race, etc.) and English language learners (ELLs).⁶ English-language educators have begun to recognize and to institutionalize the restorative justice dimensions to the teaching of literacy (in English) by attending to the complex experiences of learners whose knowledge of English or a standard variety of English cannot be assumed. For example, the National Council of Teachers of English/NCTE has published a guide for classroom teachers to think and plan using a restorative justice lens to address issues of student disconnection and alienation, adult and youth well-being in schools, and inequity and racial justice through writing, reading, speaking, and action (see Winn, Graham, and Alfred 2019). In

⁶ The historical and intergenerational experiences and consequences of mobility connected with the African diaspora from enslavement to rural-urban migration are foundational and ongoing in the United States and continue to play out linguistically, culturally, socially and politically. In educational terms, the “Ebonics debate” in the late 1990’s brought renewed attention (much of it negative) to the complex language experiences of African American Vernacular English speakers in urban schools (Perry and Delpit 1998; Baugh 2000). Mobility connected to immigration (historical and recent) can be seen in the significant number of public-school students (K-12) in the United States who are English language learners (ELLs): 10.1 percent or 5.0 million students in 2017, ranging from 0.8 percent in West Virginia to 19.2 percent in California. Spanish is by far most the widely-spoken minority language and the home language of 3.7 million ELL public school students (2017), representing 74.8 percent of all ELL students and 7.6 percent of all public K–12 students nationally, followed by Arabic and Chinese (National Center for Education Statistics/NCES 2020). However, language diversity in schools varies considerably from region to region, depending largely on immigration patterns. In California, for example, Spanish is the home language of 81.56% (in 2018) of ELL students, followed by Vietnamese (2.21%). A more significant statistic shows that 2,587,609 students (English Learners and Fluent English Proficient) in California speak a language other than English in their homes, that is, about 41.8 percent of the state’s total public-school enrollment (California Department of Education 2020).

language education beyond English, the conversation around restorative justice has begun on a more theoretically- and research-informed level in connection to the complex experiences of Latinx Spanish speakers as Heritage Language learners (HLLs) with the publication of a monograph treating experience and ethics sponsored by the Center for Applied Linguistics/CAL (see Martínez and Train 2020).

Restorative Values: Interconnectedness, Belonging, Nondomination

My purpose here is not to provide a detailed account of restorative justice practices in the foreign or heritage language education; that work remains to be done. Rather, I will outline several key values of restorative practice and discuss briefly how they support the reframing of mobility and variation in pedagogies of language experience that can expand the critical vocabularies of language educators focused on restorative social justice and wellbeing, particularly for linguistically and socially minoritized learners (Winn 2018b).

In broad ethical strokes, a well-known practitioner, Kay Pranis, writes of the “restorative impulse” centering on “community and how we live with one another” (Pranis 2012: 33). She outlines the transformative core values that may lead to an “important shift in worldview that could move us toward daily use of the restorative impulse”: interconnectedness, belonging, and nondomination. For her, interconnectedness means that we must deal with each other to live together and we “cannot drop out, kick out, or get rid of” anything or anyone: “The restorative impulse requires us to look at the context of the situation, to look at our own role in harmful behavior, and to recognize that harm to anyone else is harm to us as well” (Pranis 2012: 34). The restorative value of nondomination requires an equal voice for all stakeholders: “If you are affected by a decision, you get to be part of that decision” (34). Belonging entails addressing the “fear of not belonging and the pain of feeling that one doesn’t belong” that are “at the root of much violence and harm in the world” (Pranis 2012: 34).

I argue for language experience in education as a ground for resistance to violence and for restorative practice in the ongoing struggle to contribute to learner well-being and heal the wounds of violence. This restorative work is vital in addressing the impacts of state-institutionalized violence that accompany the expanding politics of harm in the world stemming from intersecting regimes of language, historicity and (im)mobility. On a massive scale, the wounds provoked and re-opened by the global and domestic war waged by President Trump against immigrants and people of color disproportionately harm the persons, families, communities, and education of Latinx Spanish speakers in the United States (Train 2019). In

light of that injurious state, the concept of restoration, as I use it here, provides a powerful response. While equality and equity are important goals that we must strive for, we also urgently need to attend to the wounded, and that is the work of restorative justice.

Toward Critical Pedagogies of Mobile Language Experience

A restorative approach to language education engages in literacies of experience. A key restorative stance is the unconditional respect and value for the person, homes, and communities of minoritized and racialized language learners. Restorative literacy practice, then, builds a foundation of respect and value on which to develop the learners' meaningful engagement in learning how to use a range of inclusive literacy practices in "crafting an agentive self" (Hull and Katz 2006). Restorative work deploys sociocritical literacy (Gutiérrez 2007, 2008) practices that privilege the historicizing of the student's (and teacher's) experiences as a fundamental starting point of respect and agency that values the diverse traditions of language and culture in home and community (see Martínez and Train 2020; Winn, Graham, and Alfred 2019). Restorative practices contest standard literacy regimes by expanding education to include literacy experiences of minority groups (Fisher 2009), bilingual literacies (Bartlett 2007), and translingual literacies (Canagarajah and Matsumoto 2016). Designed so that learners fully participate in and benefit from their learning both inside and outside the educational institution, these pedagogical practices are culturally sustaining in their commitment to linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling (Paris 2012). At the same time, restorative practice seeks to redress the harm to or neglect of learners positioned as "non-native", minoritized, and/or racialized with their complex language practices in school and society. Redress and reparations require critically historicizing, examining, and disrupting reductive literacy regimes narrowly constructed around the monolingual, nativist, and racist practices, ideologies, and policies of the "native standard language" (Train and Kramsch In press; Train 2003).

Restorative language practice counters reductively normative practices with their traditional "deficit" or "remedial" pedagogies focused on "fixing" or "correcting" the learner's supposedly error-ridden or defective language practices according to prescriptive notions of (in)correctness, designed to marginalize or erase those same non-native or minoritized speakers in a fraught regime of variation that privileges the "native (standard language) speaker". Some applied linguists have long called for a rejection of the "myth of deficient communicator" in L2 instruction and research (Belz 2002), and yet non-native-learner and heritage-learner "error" still remains a fundamental descriptive term to measure deviance from a baseline of "native

speakers” (when? which? where? of what variety?). L2 educators have long been asked to rethink their norms of teaching for learning a non-native language grounded in learner deficiency-deviancy. Language teachers were long ago admonished “to relinquish their roles as deficiency experts” and learners “to adjust their role expectations of being led through the learning process by teacher correction” (Loveday 1982: 141). It is not clear that most educational ideology, practice, and policy has yet taken heed by adopting a valued speaker-learner stance for non-native, heritage-language, and minority-language learners.

Restorative work requires attending to the impacts of the historical and ongoing regimes of variation keyed to the “native/national” standard language on speakers and communities of regional and minoritized languages and varieties, who supposedly “do not fit” and become a “problem” to be “solved” by society, teachers and learners. Restorative practice must address and resist the labeling by educators, learners, and researchers of certain practices and experiences of mobility and variation as a “stigmatized variety” (see Parodi 2007) featuring “in/correct” or “non/native-like” morphological and lexical items (e.g., patois, Spanglish), as is often the representation of Spanish in the United States particularly for heritage learners. Restorative work requires a critical sociolinguistic approach that considers the dominant construct of the native standard language as the *problem* and begins with variation as a means of managing this problematic standard model of language, learning, and speaker identity (Train 2003). Moving beyond a language-as-problem to a language-as-resource orientation (Ruíz 1988), variation as mobile modes of experiencing the world becomes a fundamental resource, not a problem, for language education, whether institutionalized as “native”, “second”, “foreign”, “heritage”, or “bilingual.” In teacher education and undergraduate linguistics courses, a restorative curriculum begins with sociolinguistic variation and reframes the native standard language as the problem by critically unpacking a constellation of raciolinguistic (Alim, Ball, and Rickford 2016), sociocultural, and sociopolitical issues surrounding experience, identity, and mobility involving, for example, (im)migration, minoritization, and racialization, as well as problematic concepts of (non) nativeness and foreign-ness.

Restorative Belonging and Personhood in the World

Restorative practice seeks to contest the regimes of variation that only marginally address the fundamental variability and mobility of language experience. In broader terms, restorative practice fosters a critical sense of the historicity around our experiences with and in language as past-present-future connection. It requires that we and our students in minoritized language programs (e.g. Spanish in the US) as well as in dominant/national language programs (i.e.,

English in the US) learn that what is today has not always existed or at least not in the same way (e.g., the oppression of Spanish speakers in California); that what doesn't exist today could have existed in the past; what seems new is not necessarily new (e.g., globalization; human mobility). And what we hold to be eternal is often relatively recent and always contingent, as “the x language” with its attendant “nation”, “empire”, and “literature”.

Restorative practice embraces the value of the irreducible variety, diversity, and mobility of our language experiences. In short, our very existence as “linguistic animals”—to use the philosopher Charles Taylor’s (2016: 95-96) phrase—depends on the “full shape of our human linguistic capacity” that continues to transform our way of existing as a species and create “a context for human life and action” and “our way of being in the world, and with each other” that is “regularly renewed and sustained in linguistic exchange”.

A restorative approach to language education does not deny the value of teaching relevant literacy practices associated with a standard language in the interest of the learner’s educational success and well-being. However, the crucial ethical questions remain as to how, as language professionals in education and research, we value human lives lived in the complexity, multiplicity, and variety of human language. Where do we begin as educators and researchers? Will we begin with stances grounded in disinterest or even disrespect toward the complexities and varieties of how people actually talk and write within, across, and beyond the bordered languages we teach and research? Or will we begin from the irreducible value of language as it is used and lived, where we listen to the diversity and variety of experience and empirical data? Will we recognize and begin to repair the harm done by the ongoing legacies of exclusion, marginalization and, in some cases, criminalization of minority languages and non-standard varieties, as well as translingual practices, characterized by, for example, switching, mixing, borrowing, and calquing? How will we use our classrooms and our research to attend to repairing the harm done over generations to minoritized language speakers, their families, and their communities, such as indigenous language speakers in the Americas, heritage language speakers in the United States, or speakers of regional languages in Europe? Who do we allow ourselves and the speakers we teach and study to be and to become in the multilayered and multifarious course of transformative human development? Restorative practice requires a fundamentally anti-violence, anti-nativist, and anti-racist stance in contesting those persons and institutions that for too long have committed countless acts of violence by excluding or marginalizing from our fundamental humanity far too many human lives on a litany of pretexts, such as language, speakership, race, and origin. We would do well to remember this restorative credo: “Living as if everyone belongs might be the biggest violence prevention measure we

could ever devise” (Pranis 2012: 34). Taking belonging a step further, restorative justice practices support the much-needed pedagogies of love and caring in transcultural spaces of language education, particularly in the service of immigrant learners (Faulstich Orellana 2016), whose complex experiences of language and mobility will continue to define our humanity.

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