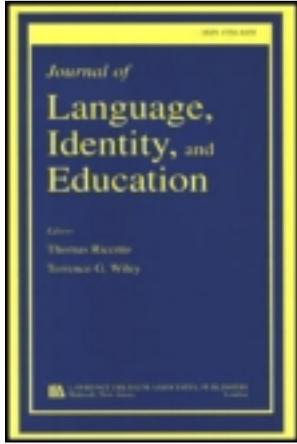


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Reading Repression: Textualizing the Linguistic Marginalization of Nonnative English-Speaking Teachers in Arizona

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This discussion draws attention to the discriminatory efforts of policymakers in Arizona to professionally marginalize public school teachers deemed to have an accent. In addition to debunking the linguistic and pedagogic validity of this policy, we emphasize the role of the media in the (re)construction and justification of language ideologies used to cast immigrants and language-minority groups in a negative light. To accomplish this, we have conducted a Critical Discourse Analysis of online responses to a recent *Wall Street Journal* article describing the Arizona Department of Education's latest attempt to oppress language-minority communities. Tapping into publicly advertised dialogues allows us to expose how media sources like the *Wall Street Journal* both emphasize and reproduce discourses that cement shared beliefs about minority groups. From this stance, we promote the benefits of linguistic diversity and advocate for the cultural and professional rights of teachers who speak English as an additional language.

Key words: language policy, bilingual education, language ideology, critical discourse analysis

Over the past two decades, scholars in the field of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) have fought to counter discrimination against educators of English who learned English as an additional language, asserting that teachers should be evaluated in terms of pedagogical skill rather than accent (see TESOL Position Statement: <http://www.eli.usf.edu/uploads/docpdf/tesolpositionstatement.pdf>). Recently, this debate has ignited an explosion of public controversy in the U.S. state of Arizona. Based on a conservative interpretation of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (see Title III, Sec. 3116, c: <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg41.html>), the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) has undermined so-called “non-native” English speaking teachers’ professional legitimacy by requiring public school districts to take punitive measures against teachers who are perceived as having linguistic difficulties, while this policy is being hailed by the ADE as an effort to improve academic achievement in school districts with high numbers of English language learners (ELLs), many consider it a direct attack on language-minority teachers and immigrant communities.

In this discussion, we analyze the dialogue surrounding the debate over Arizona's teacher fluency requirement as a platform for highlighting social perceptions of educators who learned English as an additional language. While much has been written about the attitudes of students and educators towards nonnative English-speaking (NNES) teachers (Amin, 1999, 2004; Braine, 1999a, 1999b, 2004, 2005; Johnson, 2010; Liu, 1999, 2004; Mahboob, 2004; Mahboob, Uhrig, Newman, & Hartford, 2004; Medgyes, 1992, 1994; Moussu, 2006; Nemtchinova, 2005; Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999), there has yet to be a study on the general public's opinion. In response to an article in the *Wall Street Journal* (Jordan, 2010) that reported on Arizona's approach to teachers' accents, 158 readers posted their opinions in an on-line discussion forum. In this article, we examine these responses as a way of gauging the general public's attitudes towards NNES teachers. Specifically, our discussion focuses on understanding the ideological assumptions behind education policies aimed at social and linguistic homogenization.

Our stance in this article is one of advocacy against cultural and professional discrimination. By looking at public discourse in the media, we illuminate the social processes involved in the perpetuation of language ideologies behind the widespread misconception of an idealized, non-accented dialect of English. Understanding how these ideologies drive language policies is crucial if we want to mitigate discriminatory practices and counter the type of professional and linguistic marginalization that is currently taking place in Arizona.

SOCIOPOLITICAL BACKDROP

In order to fully understand the rationale behind Arizona's policy toward NNES teachers, it is necessary to view it within the larger social architecture of intolerance toward immigrants and language-minority communities that has grown in the United States over the last century (McCarty, 2004; Ovando, 2003; Takaki, 1993). Considering the current political environment surrounding immigration and "homeland security" in the United States (see: <http://www.homelandsecurity.com/>), nowhere is language use more disputed than in states along the U.S.–Mexico border. Arizona, in particular, has been a hotbed of anti-immigrant sentiments over the past decade. Since 2000, Arizona's sociopolitical environment has become increasingly restrictive toward immigrants—especially those from Mexico.

This hostile environment propelled by panic and ignorance has produced a surge in anti-immigrant legislation discourse in the media (Johnson, 2005, 2006, 2008; Santa Ana, 2002). Regardless of the multiple ways Latinos enrich Arizona (Gans, 2007), they are readily defamed as "illegal" by the public and media, causing voters to attribute many of Arizona's social ills to immigrant communities. Building on the momentum of negativity surrounding immigrants in the media, policy makers have been particularly successful passing laws aimed at curbing the rights of immigrants and language-minority communities.

Most recently (April 2010), Arizona's Governor Jan Brewer signed into law the Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act (Arizona Senate Bill 1070 and Arizona House Bill 2162), obligating law enforcement officers¹ to require proof of legal immigration status

¹In this case, officers obligated to enforce the law would include those from city, county, and state police agencies. These responsibilities are traditionally relegated to the federal agencies like the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

during lawful detention processes. Individuals without immediate proof of authorized immigration status could be fined, arrested, and/or deported. Even though a federal judge placed a preliminary injunction on the Act one day before it went into law, the message that immigrants are not welcome in Arizona had already been deeply seared into the overall public discourse.

While this latest attempt to banish undocumented immigrants was the center of a national debate on immigration legislation for much of 2010, legal tactics of fear and repression have occupied a constant presence in the political environment for many years. In 2000, Proposition 203, English for the Children, was approved by voters in Arizona—essentially terminating bilingual education services for ELLs in public schools (Johnson, 2005, 2008). In 2006, Arizona voters again expressed their discontent with immigration policies by passing the following referenda:

- Proposition 100 (limits bail opportunities for undocumented immigrants)
- Proposition 102 (denies civil lawsuit awards for undocumented immigrants)
- Proposition 300 (dissolves undocumented immigrants' right to in-state tuition, taxpayer funded adult education, and taxpayer-funded childcare)
- Proposition 103 (establishes English as the official language of Arizona)

Not only do referenda like these place severe limitations on immigrants and language-minority communities, they exacerbate the atmosphere of divisiveness and suspicion that permeates the general public. In addition to being immersed within a social context that is fraught with animosity towards immigrants, schools in Arizona are unfortunately caught within an overbearing political environment focused on standardization and accountability. Enforcing language restrictions on teachers is a further example of how the ADE has strategically manipulated the federal matrix of accountability to promote ethnic assimilation.

THEORETICAL APPROACH

Recognizing the significance of the role that individual and community sociocultural practices play in the formation of language use, we are interested in how social institutions shape society through the widespread implementation of (language) policies that reflect dominant-class belief systems (Blommaert & Verschueren, 1998; Mertz, 1998; Philips, 1998; Spitulnik, 1998; van Dijk, 1987, 1993, 1997, 2000). Social agents with access to institutional power make decisions negotiated through a dominant-class social discourse. Any discussion of discourse that lacks this notion of power ignores the fact that societies and cultures are based on relationships and networks that are mediated through language. In a Foucauldian sense, this type of social discourse is reaction to, and comprehension of, control; discourse structures relationships and interaction; discourse is a means of resistance; in short, discourse is power (Foucault, 1984, 2000). Therefore, those who control discursive relationships dictate access to power.

A nation's educational institutions significantly shape the public's idea of what proper English is and who are legitimate teachers of English. Here, van Dijk's approach to critical discourse analysis (CDA) represents a way of working towards social change through a greater understanding of how language use is mediated through ideology. Individuals and institutions reproduce social knowledge and galvanize popular conceptions through the conscious and unconscious manipulation of discourse (van Dijk 1987, 1997).

According to this position, the images produced through discourse establish a mental framework that individuals draw upon when talking about others, talking to others, and/or relaying

information to others about someone else. These cognitive frameworks, termed *mental schemata*, are established through an aggregate of lifetime experiences (van Dijk, 1987, p. 184). Public discourse lined with various negative images reinforces preexisting stereotypes on a subconscious level. These socially constituted stereotypes eventually become common viewpoints via the constant bombardment of biased images in the media and through interpersonal dialogues (van Dijk, 1987). Based on this vantage point, examining the process of constructing social viewpoints through print allows us to view how ideologies are *textualized* within public spaces to perpetuate dominant discourse(s).

To instantiate this ideological process, we focus on the phenomenon of language teachers who are considered to have an accent. Foucault (1972) describes discourse as materiality that has an effect on people's lives. He argues that our existence is governed by a variety of institutional structures that make us easier to control (Foucault, 1977). Arizona is a prime example of a government controlling the way people talk in order to produce citizens that conform to specific idealized norms. Foucault is deeply concerned with the way those in power practice domination and social control through *Regimes of Truth* that divide our world into decisive binaries (Bertani, Fontana, Ewald, Macey, & Foucault, 2003). In Arizona, there are only two categories: teachers who have an accent and those who do not.

In the spirit of Foucault, van Dijk (2009) emphasizes that CDA scholars "are typically interested in the way discourse (re)produces social *domination*, that is, the *power abuse* of one group over others, and how dominated groups may discursively *resist* such abuse" (p. 63). In light of the current anti-immigrant actions taking place in Arizona, we are particularly concerned with the ideological underpinnings guiding comments in the *Wall Street Journal* depicting what does and does not count as an "acceptable English teacher." Specifically, we explore readers' attitudes towards appropriate accents for English teachers.

The Ideology of NNES Teachers as Deficient

Historically, it has been assumed that native-English-speaking teachers are linguistically superior—and, by extension, pedagogically superior—to English teachers who learned English as an additional language (Jenkins, 2009; Kirkpatrick, 2007; Morgan, 2004; Motha, 2006a, 2006b; Nayar, 1998; Phillipson, 1992). This view holds that by being born into a language community, the native speaker is the best resource for conveying proper use (Quirk, 1961). Quirk's narrow vision of linguistic practice assumes that there is a discrete standard to which native speakers adhere—in spite of the fact that there is no clearly defined national standard for English. *Perfect* or *proper* English is simply a myth, an abstract idealized accent that is often associated with White, middle class speakers (Lippi-Green, 1997; Paikeday & Chomsky, 1985). Quirk's ideology of English teaching that vehemently prioritizes the native speaker (1961, 1985, 1990) has profound implications. He fails to acknowledge the variety of dialects existing both within English-speaking countries and throughout the English-speaking world.

The NNES Teachers' Movement

In the late 1990s, researchers in the field of TESOL increasingly questioned the assumptions surrounding native-speaker superiority. Medgyes (1999) points out that nonnative-English speakers

have potential strengths as English language *teachers* (see e.g., p. 178). Having learned English as an additional language himself, Medgyes (1994) found NNES teachers (NNESTs) to be empathetic with their students, able to provide positive role models as successful ELLs, and able to teach from their experience on effective language learning strategies (see e.g., p. 69). Moreover, he found that NNESTs can anticipate and prevent students' language difficulties and pointed out that if they have the same linguistic background can make use of the learners' mother tongue as a pedagogical resource (Kamhi-Stein, 1999; Medgyes, 1999).

It was once a common assumption of linguists that a person's native language could be defined as *the* language he or she had acquired from birth (Mesthrie & Bhatt, 2008). However, in many countries around the world, people are equally fluent in several languages and multilingualism is the norm (Mesthrie & Bhatt, 2008). Stemming from this context, multiple scholars have questioned whether the native speaker–nonnative speaker dichotomy is able to account for the varied linguistic experiences of millions of English teachers world wide (Canagarajah, 1999; Cook, 1999; Higgins, 2003; Huang, 2009; Liu, 1999).

Instead of defining an essentialized “native speaker,” it is more useful to view English-speaking proficiencies along a continuum somewhere between the two categories (Liu, 1999). Furthermore, Widdowson (1994) has problematized the ownership of English; due to its unique international role, the language *belongs* to all who use it. As long as the language is being used as a tool for communication, it will stabilize within communities of practice in order to meet its users' needs. Therefore, communities that communicate transnationally (e.g., science and business) have developed a standard of English within their field that maximizes communicative effectiveness and is not tied exclusively to any national prestige form (Widdowson, 1994).

Phillipson's (1992) work on *linguistic imperialism* abates the tendency to attribute to the native speaker of English inherent qualities as the ideal *teacher* of English. While researchers in the TESOL field often depict a good English as a second language/English as a foreign language (ESL/EFL) teacher as possessing qualities like “facility in demonstrating fluent, idiomatically appropriate language, in appreciating cultural connotations of the language, and in being the final arbiter of the acceptability of any given samples of the language,” Phillipson (1992, p. 194) points out that these are all abilities that can be developed. Moreover, Widdowson (1994) argues that it is a mistake to think of native speakers as the “arbiters of proper pedagogy” (p. 387) because it takes didactic training and skill to be a competent English teacher, not just fluency in the language. In other words, it makes sense to value pedagogical competence and linguistic flexibility over native-English-speaking-teacher (NEST) status in TESOL professionals.

Motha, Jain, and Tecele (2012) agree with the idea that the NEST/NNEST dichotomy is over simplistic in the multilingual, global context in which many English teachers situate themselves (Liu, 1999; Higgins, 2003; Huang, 2009). As such, they adopt the term *translingual identity* to replace NEST/NNEST. This term focuses on what is relevant pedagogically: Teachers who have gone through the process of becoming proficient in an additional language have an advantage in teaching languages over monolingual teachers regardless of linguistic background. One area in which this approach can be particularly beneficial regards the translingual teachers' ability to challenge stereotypes about what it means to be an NNEST, which has the potential to promote inclusivity in our pluralistic society (Motha, Jain, & Tecele, 2012).

Widdowson (1994) and Lippi-Green (1997) both argue that enforcing the arbitrary notion of Standard English as a shibboleth is a discriminatory process that perpetuates power in the hands of a privileged minority. Lippi-Green (1997) raises concerns about the way we associate

foreign accents with stereotypes in the mainstream U.S. media, which encourages a damaging form of exclusivity in our society. To combat such linguistic marginalization, she urges for a more open-minded approach to the way dialects and accents are treated in this country.

METHODS

We review the 158 comments made in response to Miriam Jordan's online *Wall Street Journal* article titled "Arizona Grades Teachers on Fluency" from Friday, April 30, 2010. Specifically, we analyze readers' comments that either support Arizona's approach to linguistic competence or undermine it. In analyzing these comments, we incorporate elements of Foucault's (2000) notion of governmentality to see how readers reveal either their conformity with educational policies that regulate the way we speak or resist such policies. In order to examine general ideologies, we highlight broad themes and topics that the comments discuss. Furthermore, we draw on van Dijk's (2009) work with CDA as an approach that aims to create a more equitable society. As such, throughout this analysis we take a stance against linguistic discrimination and support counter-discriminatory ideas to provoke a larger dialogue on the treatment of language within professional realms.

While analyzing the data, we accessed the article and comments section several times during the month of May 2010. The article and posts were, and continue to be, completely free and open to the public; however, the posts continue to change as new readers comment on previous posts, and several posts have been eliminated for violating the community rules established by the *Wall Street Journal*. When scrutinizing the comments, we omitted those that did not deal directly with the issue of accent in relation to pedagogy. After isolating accent-specific posts, we divided the remarks into two categories: (a) criticisms of NNES teachers; and (b) criticisms of the ADE. Within each general category, specific themes emerged (see Table 1).

As mentioned previously, while much research has been done in terms of analysis of students', teachers', and administrators' attitudes towards English teachers who learned English as an additional language, scholarly work that examines the general public's attitudes towards these teachers is scant; here, our work addresses this gap in the literature. Additionally, we have included issues related to the NNES teacher movement as a means of questioning the extent to which this movement has penetrated the teaching profession in the United States. Whether or not the goal of linguistic equity in the TESOL field has become a reality in the United States is juxtaposed against educational policies and the general public's response to these policies.

TABLE 1
Primary Themes Posted by *Wall Street Journal* Readers

<i>Criticisms of nonnative-English-speaking teachers</i>	<i>Criticisms of the Arizona Department of Education</i>
Students learn to talk like their teachers.	There is no definition of the ideal accent.
One must speak English a certain way to be successful in life.	Ability to teach is not related to accent.
There is a standard form of English that binds the nation.	Linguistic discrimination is veiled racial discrimination.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

In Jordan's (2010, April 30) *Wall Street Journal* article, she describes how the ADE has used a conservative interpretation of the federal No Child Left Behind Act to remove teachers from ESL classes if they have too strong an accent. In light of the recent research under the umbrella of the NNES teacher movement, two particularly striking quotes used by Jordan (2010, n. p.) are

1. The ADE recently began telling school districts that teachers whose spoken English [the ADE] deems to be heavily accented or ungrammatical must be removed from classes for students still learning English.
2. State education officials say the move is intended to ensure that students with limited English have teachers who speak the language flawlessly.

While the article is quick to point out the main thrust of the law, it does not discuss the inherent randomness of how the Arizona Department of Education defines "accent" or what criteria are used to define "flawless" English. On the basis of how this message was conveyed, our analysis looks at the way the public digested the symbolism of this article.

For the first level of analysis, we consider the overall number of comments that either supported or questioned the actions taken towards teachers with accents in Arizona. Of the 158 total responses, 55 (35%) voiced support of such actions and 39 (25%) criticized them. The remaining comments (64 [40%]) addressed some aspect of education policy and immigration but did not directly deal with the issue of English teachers with accents. This reveals how intertwined the issue of accent is with concerns over national immigration policies.

Criticisms of NNES Teachers

Further scrutinizing the number of comments that relate directly to either the issue of teachers having accents or not speaking English "flawlessly" allows us to view the disparity between the two percentages. Out of the 94 comments that dealt directly with the issue of accent, there were 55 (59%) postings in favor of the policy and 39 (41%) comments against the actions in Arizona. With general support favoring Arizona's anti-accent policy thereby established, it is helpful to look at specific excerpts to better understand the attitudes expressed by the readers towards English teachers with accents, the teaching of ESL, and flawless English. We have separated the comments supporting the idea that ESL teachers with a strong accent should be removed from the classroom into three thematic categories:

1. Students learn to talk like their teachers.
2. One must speak English a certain way to be successful in life.
3. There is a standard form of English that binds the nation.

Students learn to talk like their teachers. Many of the comments that expressed support for the actions taken in Arizona towards English teachers with accents demonstrate an overall

belief that students talk like their teachers. The following group of (verbatim) comments reveals a concern with teachers' ability to speak proper English:

1. How on earth can we expect our children to speak English properly when our own teachers can't?
2. Don't you just love it? "English learners" learning from someone who doesn't speak the language properly. Must be the Monty Python school.
3. Teachers who cannot effectively and properly communicate in the English language have no place in our public schools.
4. The concept of having a "teacher" who can't speak the language properly is ludicrous. It doesn't matter whether they "teach" English, ESL, or physics. One of the primary reasons that "Johnny can't spell" [or form a grammatically correct sentence] is that his "teacher" can't spell or form a grammatically correct sentence either. In most states, teachers have to have a college degree from an accredited institution. How does someone who can't speak the language graduate high school, much less college? Is education in this country indicative of nothing other than sitting in a classroom for a number of hours, regardless of achievement?
5. So if we follow this to the end; the students will not be fluent in English either. So in the end, the students will speak like their English teacher in "broken" English. This is down right madness!

In these comments, the underlying assumption that students eventually talk like their teachers (i.e., improperly) reflects a behaviorist approach to language acquisition (i.e., language acquisition is equivalent to habit formation). This orientation to the language learning process has been widely disputed, and we now recognize language acquisition to be much more socially and cognitively dynamic (see Atkinson, 2002; Chomsky, 1986; Long, 1996; Vygotsky, 1986).

Even though the way a language instructor actually teaches is much more influential than the way he or she speaks, these comments demonstrate how viewing accent as a detriment can gain momentum through social discourse. The posted comments also fail to address the unique qualities that teachers who learned English as an additional language bring with them to the profession. For example, they have been in the place of the target-language learner and are familiar with learning strategies that monolingual English teachers only tend to contemplate on a theoretical level (Braine, 1999a, 1999b, 2004, 2005; Huang, 2009; Medgyes, 1992, 1994, 1999; Seidlehofer, 1999). The individuals who posted these comments—as well as the ADE—need to consider whether it is more important for English teachers to be *native-like* speakers or excellent English educators.

In addition to the lack of pedagogical insight in these comments, there is a gross overgeneralization of the use of *proper* or *broken* English. Instead of offering examples, there is an ideologically implicit understanding of what constitutes "good" or "pure" language (Spolsky, 2004, p. 22). Furthermore, this type of stance portrays teachers with accents as being *dangerously different* (McCarty, 2004). In the preceding comments, language is approached through a lens of *us* versus *them* such that there are two groups of people in the United States: those who speak English properly and those who do not. The use of accent here is implicitly understood as a foreign (i.e., nonnative speaker) accent. Considering the immense variety of regional English dialects in the United States, it is important to point out that the notion of accent was not associated with anyone other than nonnative speakers. Attempts to homogenize the way people speak

are parallel to homogenizing the way people act—something deeply concerning in a pluralistic society.

While the above comments demonstrate how accent is conflated with nonnative English speaker, the following excerpt reveals an underlying association between accent and undocumented immigrants:

If the Teachers can't speak proper English, then how exactly can they teach it to the children. We had all better wake up and smell the coffee, before we can't even afford to buy any. The US is on the verge of destruction and those who are here illegally or cannot, will not accept American Culture, need to LEAVE!

Xenophobic perspectives like this hold that not only do teachers with accents inflict educational harm on students, they are a threat to “American Culture” and must be removed. This type of statement also exemplifies the inextricable relationship between language, ethnic identity, politics, and ethnocentrism. By extension, it is evident that the debate over educators’ accents is really a public reaction to the larger social dialogue on immigration.

One needs to speak English a certain way to be successful. The next group of comments underscores the popular notion that in order to be successful in the United States, you need to speak English a certain way. This popular argument frequently surfaces in the media by equating the “American Dream” and English proficiency—especially when championing English-only policies (Johnson, 2006). The following statement constructs a superficial syllogism that conflates English with having a “better life”:

Why would we want teachers who can't speak English correctly? It is about teaching students how to become part of America, which most of us know is an English speaking country and speaking English well only increases the chances for the students to have a better life.

Not only does this comment imply that nonnative-English-speaking teachers are a barrier to achieving a better life, it also assumes that people cannot be happy without speaking English in America. This argument raises concerns about stifling linguistic diversity in the United States. If we deny people employment on the basis of the way they talk, we are forcing them to change their identity. Forcing people to change the way they speak constitutes a violent and offensive act against their identity. Somehow, though, campaigns of linguistic sterilization have been—and continue to be—commonplace in American public schools (Johnson, 2009; McCarty, 2004; Ovando, 2003).

Extending the importance of English beyond U.S. borders, another reader points to the influence of English as a global language:

Standards in English should be kept high. It is the language of business world wide.

Not only does this post fail to account for the wide variety of world Englishes (Crystal, 2004, 2008; Jenkins, 2009; Melchers & Shaw, 2003; Mesthrie & Bhatt, 2008), it (ironically) glosses over the fact that the vast majority of English dialects used to conduct business on a global level include accents that are distinctly different from mainstream American English. Expanding on this comment, especially considering the inherent variety between global “Englishes,” we suggest that having teachers with diverse accents is actually a benefit to students who plan on conducting international business.

There is a standard form of English that binds the country together. The final section of comments supporting the ADE's actions contends that English binds the United States and American politically and culturally. In many of these postings, learning English is portrayed as an invaluable rite of passage for immigrants who want to be considered "American":

English is the common denominator that provides the "melting pot" of American Citizenry. All Euro Immigrants retained their customs, food, and neighborhoods but assimilated into Society. The more recent blocks actually resist this notion. (see French Canadians wanting streets and papers in French down in So. Florida, Hispanics wanting everything in Spanish, just try to call a customer service phone number and press the buttons for the language you want). America have some onions and declare one language and the fact we were founded on Euro-Christian culture!!!!

This comment includes the "melting pot" phenomenon to imply that teachers with accents are not American and will contribute to a lack of cultural cohesion by not teaching students adequate English. The author of this post furthers this argument by implicating French and Spanish speakers in the fracturing of our "Euro-Christian" culture—in spite of the fact that both French and Spanish are European languages. The following statement builds on the previous comment and explicitly blames immigrants for not wanting to learn English:

. . . far too many of them [immigrants] expect to seamlessly integrate themselves into America without bothering to even learn how to speak basic functional English.

These types of sentiments ignore the fact that the overwhelming majority of immigrants—especially students—are highly motivated to learn English (Johnson, 2008). This type of popular misconception is endemic in the overall social discourse surrounding immigration and education.

When languages other than English are spoken in public contexts, the speakers are viewed as a threat to the essence of being *American* (Urciuoli, 1998). Furthermore, speaking a language other than English is often regarded as a barrier to upward class mobility and any sign of an accent or code switching is perceived as a symbol of laziness and/or illiteracy—which people are obligated to remedy through education (Urciuoli, 1998). When teachers have accents, this situation is exacerbated in the eyes of the public. The excerpt below depicts teachers with accents as "victims" trapped within an idealized cycle of immigrants teaching immigrants. This metaphor insinuates that allowing students to be taught by educators with accents is abusive and immoral.

I absolutely have no problem with requiring teachers to be fluent in English. We should be doing all we can, on all levels, to strengthen and encourage an excellent command of English in our children. Perhaps the teachers involved are victims themselves, and had they been properly schooled in the use of English, then these problems would never have arisen in the first place. One wonders whether those who object have an ulterior motive to fragment America into a Bi-Lingual Society?

The abuser-victim relationship here is punctuated by suggesting that teachers with accents are being used conspiratorially to divide the United States into a "bilingual society." This stream of reasoning is further reified by those who openly applaud efforts to expunge linguistic diversity from the public realm:

Since it's inarguable that America would function better if everyone spoke a common language, I applaud any reasonable effort to insure that such is the case.

The comments described in this section exemplify the misconception that English is somehow threatened or weakened by other languages (Crawford, 2004). Jingoistic comments like these do not consider whether or not requiring everyone to learn an idealized form of English and then overtly discriminating against those who cannot reach this goal is really the most effective way to promote national unity.

Criticisms of the Arizona Department of Education

While the majority of postings surrounding the ADE's actions favored this institution's approach to teachers and accents, there were many comments that criticized such actions by raising important questions. We have separated these comments into three categories:

1. No definition of ideal accent.
2. Ability to teach is not related to accent.
3. Linguistic discrimination is veiled racial discrimination.

Bringing these comments to the fore highlights the efforts of those who carve out spaces of discursive resistance to challenge ethnic prejudice and linguistic ignorance.

No definition of ideal accent. One reader in particular posted several comments—often directed at remarks from other readers—that questioned *whose* accent the ADE had deemed to be *proper* or *flawless*. In these postings, the author bemoans the idea that we are exchanging experienced teachers for teachers who are seen as speaking a more mainstream dialect and resists the idea that the United States is or should be linguistically homogenous.

When did someone having an “accent” turn into someone not speaking English? Who determines what accent is acceptable, “mid-west/southern” and which is not, “Spanish” and why don't we do this, look at student results? If students achieve in these classes, “as the article suggests many of these teachers are successful veterans” then why fix what isn't broken?

Here, the author shifts the focus from immigrants and accents to classroom performance. This comment suggests that we stop making scapegoats out of teachers with accents and look at academic achievement. In the case of Arizona, it is no secret that many language-minority students are struggling academically; yet, the public is blind to the fact that academic difficulties also take place in classrooms led by teachers without accents. Instead of looking at the linguistically oppressive education language policy in Arizona (i.e., Proposition 203) that continues to structure this context of failure (Johnson, 2008), the ADE insists on blaming teachers—especially those it deems to have an accent.

The same author persists in eschewing the blaming of teachers by recognizing the benefits of a multidialect education:

When these kids enter the real mainstream American world they are going to face many, many, many, accents, languages, and dialects. By segregating them and isolating them from reality you are putting them at a competitive disadvantage.

In an era where the use of English is proliferating rapidly around the globe, being linguistically flexible enough to accommodate multiple dialects should be seen as an asset. The comment above

expresses the opinion that figuring out how to deal with a variety of accents from teachers will be helpful to students outside of the classroom as they interact with our linguistically diverse society. This is a fundamental shift from the language-as-a-problem orientation described in the previous sections to viewing language as a resource (Ruiz, 1984).

Ability to teach is not related to accent. The criticism of the ADE policy with the largest number of comments focused on the difference between the ability to teach and one's accent.

Some of my best teachers in high school and college had foreign accents . . . I wonder how posters hereabouts would feel about hunting down teachers with America's rich and sometimes impenetrable variety of southern accents. Changes the debate, no?

While the point here is that good teaching is not dependent upon a *native-like* accent, the author brings up the variety of accents in the United States, questioning whether or not some of those accents should be considered as insufficient for teaching, too. While facetious, this comment challenges the other readers to rethink the role of accent in the formation of language policies.

Other comments dealt specifically with our lack of knowledge about the relationship between a teacher's accent and a student's accent.

How much pronunciation is affected by a teacher's accent versus the accent of his or her parents or peers should be part of this debate.

Missing from this debate . . . is any data. Do accents matter? And if they do, how important are they? Worth firing someone? It's a debate about accents, or perhaps more accurately, what we think we know about accents, not about results.

Both comments insightfully point out that we do not quantitatively know how much a learner's pronunciation is affected by his or her teachers, parents, and peers. Instead of casting blame on teachers, these remarks prioritize the importance of understanding the nature of language acquisition through social interaction.

Another problem with the anti-accent argument includes looking at the people who are evaluating teachers and their language proficiency. The following posting seeks to reconcile this by pointing out the inherent hypocrisy involved:

I don't believe the problem is people with accents. I believe the problem is our unwillingness to accept others and to take the time to listen. We don't want to try to hear the words that are spoken. We want to criticize and get rid of what we don't want to hear. I think if the teachers with accents are not going to be allowed to teach English we need to make sure that people without the proper accents cannot teach Spanish or any other language . . . So, since we would not remove people without accents from the Spanish classes (or any other language class) we should ask ourselves why. The only answer I can come up with is that we are discriminating. Unless we decide to treat ourselves the same way, discrimination is the only reason for taking this type of action.

Considering the hegemony of English in the United States, it would seem nonsensical to most people to disallow someone with an English accent to teach a Spanish class—especially since many teachers do so with a high level of success. The above comment uses this perception to shed light on how contradictory it is, then, to place the same restriction on NNES teachers.

Linguistic discrimination is veiled racial discrimination. Several readers commented that Arizona's accent policy can be interpreted as a cover for attempts to practice racial discrimination, most notably against Spanish-speaking teachers.

The issue at point is not just teachers who have poor grammar, but Spanish-speaking teachers specifically being singled out due to their pronunciation and dialect.

It isn't the accent these posters are concerned with, it is the color of the skin of the teacher.

This ruling stems from one principle and one principle only. We are looking at the beginnings of ethnic cleansing in our own southwest. Isn't hate a grand thing!

This isn't about "accents" this is about -Spanish- accents.

Interestingly, many who communicated this point explicitly mentioned how Spanish speakers are the target of this policy. Considering the political environment in Arizona (described above), these comments touch on the core of this debate. Regardless of how or if policies like this are enforced, the message being circulated stems from the overall anti-immigrant discourse that continues to dominate the public sphere along the U.S.-Mexico border. All of these comments reveal an understanding of linguistic discrimination as a cover for racial discrimination. Even though protection against racial discrimination is guaranteed under the 14th amendment of the U.S. Constitution, somehow it is still acceptable—and expected in many cases—to support institutionalized linguistic discrimination.

DISCUSSION

Our sociocognitive orientations to language use mold social evaluations and expectations (Woolard, 1989). These communal values are integral in the link between the development and implementation of macrosocial policies and the way people talk. This view is based on Bourdieu's (1999) application of *habitus* in which attitudes towards others are embodied in our aural perceptions—essentially crediting language as depicting the way speakers are intuitively categorized and labeled by others. As Woolard (1989) explains,

Reactions to certain styles of speech, particularly stigmatized ones, can be visceral, and may conflict with more consciously and deliberately held evaluations of the people we hear. Even in less dramatic moments, we make surprisingly definite judgments about people's intellectual and moral qualities on the basis of the way they "sound." (p. 88)

These "evaluations" are acquired from a specific cultural perspective. Perpetuated misbeliefs towards other groups become associated with the languages used by the various minority communities. As we demonstrate here, the way these misbeliefs are *textualized* through the media generates an expanded arena for public exposure that extends over time and space—even more so with an interactive forum like the Internet.

Language policies cannot be separated from the sociohistorical context in which they are developed (McCarty, 2002). Rooted deeply within the larger dispute over immigration, the conflicting ideologies that surfaced throughout the comments in this on-line dialogue paint a vivid image of the discursive forces that inform our daily social interactions. While many applaud the

actions taken by the ADE as a valiant effort to protect the American way of life, others decry the policy as myopic and xenophobic. Here, it is evident that the public holds certain beliefs concerning the use of minority languages, all of which inherently focus on the communities who speak those languages.

As a discourse-analysis endeavor, the purpose of this article has been twofold. First, we have sought to highlight the politically charged nature of the Arizona accent debate by sifting through the ideological assumptions driving the commentaries. Next, we focus on the Internet and the *Wall Street Journal* as data sources to emphasize the role of the media in the reconstruction and justification of such ideologies. By exposing certain views to the public, the media both emphasize and reproduce discourse that cements shared beliefs about minority groups. Not only did the *Wall Street Journal's* discussion forum highlight common public beliefs concerning language, it actively contributed to the formation and perpetuation of a social discourse surrounding sociolinguistic hierarchies. As Herzfeld (2001) contends, the media "have a performative force: they may create as much as they refract or reflect the events taking place in the larger society" (p. 311). Recently, this process has been well documented through the use of pejorative metaphors surrounding Latinos in the U.S. Southwest (Johnson, 2005, 2006; Santa Ana, 2002).

The specific comments examined in this discussion draw attention to the complex nature of policies aimed at controlling particular groups. Such overt linguistic discrimination is an example of the immense ideological cleavage separating language policy and racial equity within American national rhetoric. Another one of our primary concerns involves the correlation that people make between quality pedagogy and language use. Even though much work has been done that illustrates the level of complexity of the language acquisition process (Atkinson, 2002; Long, 1996; Vygotsky, 1986), the public in general remains largely uninformed about the linguistic and educational factors involved. Furthermore, while the NNES teacher movement exists as means of fighting discrimination, its effects over the past two decades remain limited.

While fleshing out the linguistics of language acquisition and explaining pedagogical implications to the public might be a seemingly impossible task, it is possible to point out inherent inequities in the development of government policies that overtly place limitations on particular groups. Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) remind us that

hegemonic texts such as local, state and national legislation, corporate by-laws, labor-management agreements, professional contracts, mortgage offers, and school report cards, to name a few, are those "sacred" texts that emerge in every-day lives of citizens and that serve to limit, constrain, or control actions or thought. (p. 53).

The consequences of official government policies can only be mitigated through action and education. By removing teachers who closely associate with immigrant students to heighten their awareness of the social forces involved in cultural marginalization, Arizona's government is exercising its power to perpetuate dominant class interests. Considering that "an effective implementation of critical pedagogy requires educators to disrupt pedagogical trends" (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008, p. 72), removing teachers with accents ensures that other educators will strive even harder to conform to the social and linguistic norm. It also reinforces the message that accents and cultural diversity are not acceptable. Moreover, while debates that focus on unequal access to material and economic resources are easily discussed and contested, Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) remind us that "we rarely address the psychological consequences of the domination of social thought and social space for those who are marginalized within these regimes of truth" (p. 190).

As touched on throughout this article, forcing people to conform to a certain way of speaking (i.e., Anglo, middle-class expectations of speech patterns) is a form of cultural violence. Not only is inhibiting language use a means of suppressing a group's culture, identity, and ethnicity, it is a direct affront to their basic human rights (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). As the reactions to Jordan's *Wall Street Journal* article demonstrate, not only is the ADE committing this act of violence on a statewide level, it is producing ideological ramifications on a national level as well.

CONCLUSIONS

From a Foucauldian perspective, the current practice in Arizona can be seen as a way to discipline citizens—especially immigrants—into conforming to Anglo, middle-class norms. While we believe that English teachers have to be competent English language users, requiring them to be native-like is an unrealistic prerequisite. The concept of an idealized native speaker is too nebulous (Paikeday & Chomsky, 1985), and it is unreasonable to expect people who learn English in distinct contexts to converge linguistically (Cook, 1999). Rather than focus on native-like pronunciation and grammar, it makes more sense for teachers to focus their energy on becoming pedagogically competent in the tools that promote student learning and growth. Evidently, Arizona's current approach to English teachers' accents draws on ideas that are similar to the (linguistically) uninformed opinions of the majority of those who commented on Jordan's April 2010 *Wall Street Journal* article.

The comments deploring the accent law contribute to a counter-hegemonic discourse to support professional and educational rights. This is laudable and very important considering the overall anti-immigrant social orientation saturating American media. Beyond the education context, though, we argue for a greater appreciation of the linguistic diversity and cultural knowledge that immigrants contribute to the United States. Finally, instead of being used as vehicles of monolithic assimilation, schools should be seen as spaces to cultivate acceptance and cultural curiosity—not animosity. If the benefits of multilingualism continue to go unrecognized, the variety of ways immigrants strengthen our society will remain veiled, allowing divisive policies to flourish in culturally repressive states like Arizona.

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