Diversity and Decolonization in French Studies

New Approaches to Teaching

Edited by
Siham Bouamer · Loïc Bourdeau

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palgrave
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*To our inspiring students and colleagues. To those who want
to join us on a transformative journey.*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project would not have been possible without the enthusiastic response we received from all the speakers and attendees at our first "Diversity, Decolonization, and the French Curriculum" conference in 2020. The conversations we had over two days allowed us all to reflect on our various pedagogical approaches and our exchanges helped us build a strong and supportive community who is united around similar values: equity, diversity, inclusion, and social justice. We would like to thank all the contributors to this volume. They are, in alphabetical order, Madeline Bedecarré, Cecilia Benaglia, Kelly Biers, Charlotte Daniels, Katherine Dauge-Roth, Thea Fronsman-Cecil, Hasheem Hakeem, Kris Aric Knisely, Daniel Nabil Maroun, Marda Messay, Thomas Muzart, Blase Provitola, Alisha Reaves, Bethany Schiffman, Maya Angela Smith, Julia D. Spiegelman, and Kristen Stern. It has been an honor to be joined by such wonderful and inspiring scholars who remain committed to making French language education a space of exploration, debates, change, reassessment, critique, and growth.

As co-founder of the Diversity, Decolonization, and the French Curriculum collective, Siham Bouamer would like to thank all the people who have been involved in making this new venture possible. I am also grateful for the inspirational work of the sister collective in German and the support of Ervin Malakaj. Finally, I am also forever indebted to my parents who always reminded me that I, the daughter of Moroccan immigrants in France, belonged in a classroom, as a student and an instructor.

As a faculty member in the Department of Modern Languages, Loïc Bourdeau would like to thank his (undergraduate and graduate) students who challenge him every day and constantly give him hope about the

future of our profession and our world. More broadly, I am thankful to all the students who have crossed my path (at Texas Tech, Durham, UC Davis, William and Mary) and shaped me as a scholar, instructor, and as an individual. I personally dedicate this volume to my family, my friends, and the teachers who always showed me that my voice and I mattered.

Finally, we would like to extend our gratitude to Professor Hanétha Vété-Congolo (Bowdoin College) who delivered an outstandingly inspiring and thought-provoking keynote at our 2020 conference. This volume owes her a debt. She, as many other visible and invisible scholars from minoritized backgrounds, has paved the way for our initiative, our scholarship. We are thankful to all of these individuals who make academia a more welcoming place every day.

To learn more, join or support our collective, visit: https://ddfccollective.weebly.com. To learn more, join, or support our sister collective in German, visit: https://diversityingermancurriculum.weebly.com.

About the Book

This book is the result of a collective effort which Dr. Siham Bouamer and Dr. Loïc Bourdeau spearheaded in the Spring of 2020 when they set out to organize the first "Diversity, Decolonization, and the French Curriculum" (DDFC) online conference. The conference featured over 50 presentations and attracted over 200 attendees. Following the event, key contributors were invited to join this book journey by offering new takes and new approaches to French-teaching pedagogy. Drawing on postcolonial studies, queer pedagogy, and decolonization studies, this book proposes to decenter, diversify, divest, decolonize, and/or disrupt French studies and French language learning and teaching—including but not limited to assessments, syllabi, textbooks, reading lists—in postsecondary education, while keeping in mind what each terminology entails and makes possible. The different chapters in this volume serve as blueprints for inclusive practices, while at the same time critically challenging and deconstructing normative structures in the French curriculum. There are three main sections: "Dismantling the 'Francophonie': Language, Race, and Empire", "Intersectional French Studies", and "Beyond the Textbook: New Teaching Strategies".

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Notes on Contributors

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Siham Bouamer is Assistant Professor of French and Francophone Studies at the University of Cincinnati. Her research foci include French and Francophone literature and film of the twentieth to twenty-first centuries, with a specialization in transnational movements from and to the Maghreb. In her current book project, she explores French women's travel narratives on Morocco during the protectorate (1912–1956) and investigates how those accounts constitute an integral part of colonial propaganda. Part of this research has appeared in several journals. She has also published work on contemporary writers and filmmakers such as Leïla Sebbar, Yamina Benguigi, and Abdellah Taïa. She has co-edited the volume *Abdellah Taïa's Queer Migrations: Non-places, Affect, and Temporalities* (2021). Another volume focusing on the representation of women at work in contemporary France is set to be published in 2022. She also currently serves as associate editor of the journal *CFC Intersections* and series editor of *Studies in Modern and Contemporary France*.

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Hasheem Hakeem is currently an Instructor of French in the School of Languages, Linguistics, Literatures and Cultures at the University of Calgary where he teaches a variety of undergraduate classes, including beginner and intermediate French, as well as composition and conversation. His primary area of research focuses on queer and critical pedagogical approaches to French language teaching, including ways to diversify the curriculum, disrupt heteronormative ways of thinking and knowing, and empower minoritized students and instructors. Hakeem's work has appeared in a variety of journals including *Voix plurielles*, *Contemporary French Civilization*, *The International Journal of Canadian Studies*, *Cahiers franco-canadiens de l'Ouest*, and *Revue des sciences de l'éducation*.

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by teachers and learners in and through increasingly gender-just practices, particularly as informed by trans knowledges. Knisely's work has appeared in *Contemporary French Civilization*, *Foreign Language Annals*, *The French Review*, *Gender and Language*, *Journal of Applied Measurement*, and *Pensamiento Educativo*, among other venues.

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Introduction: Toward Diversity and Decolonization

Siham Bouamer and Loïc Bourdeau

In the introduction to *Living a Feminist Life,* Sara Ahmed writes: "If we become feminists because of the inequality and injustice in the world, because of what the world is not, then what kind of world are we building? … we need to ask what it is we are against, what it is we are for, knowing full well that this *we* is not a foundation but what we are working toward" (2017, 2). Putting together this volume has been a similar exercise in asking what we, teachers and practitioners, want to build or change in our discipline, knowing, too, that we are not only working toward diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice, but that we are also working to build a strong and supportive community that can enact change. As

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Ahmed further notes that "[a] collective is what does not stand still but creates and is created by movement" (3), then *Diversity and Decolonization in French Studies* is likewise grounded in a movement that can shake up and reshape our discipline. Notwithstanding the fact that French and Francophone Studies have been engaging with questions of diversity and decolonization for some time now, teaching materials, course contents, and pedagogical approaches have yet to fully reflect a true commitment to these values, along with social justice and equity. Enrollment decline across the humanities, including in French, has fueled the debate around the worth and necessity of language learning (Looney and Lusin 2019, 3). While Colleen Flaherty reports that "it's unclear what comes first: institutional disinvestment in language programs or waning student interest" ("L'oeuf ou la Poule?", 2018), the current trend nevertheless highlights the importance for our discipline to remain relevant and aware of institutional and societal changes. Many scholars in the field already work hard to achieve this goal and have been doing so for some time now, as chapters in this volume will show by engaging with important scholarship in the field and by proposing new ways to improve our practice. This volume thus seeks to contribute to a timely and necessary conversation, while providing language practitioners with tools to reflect the heterogeneous, globalized, and diverse nature of our world and of our student body.

As noted above, this collection of essays is the result of a collective effort which we spearheaded together in the Spring of 2020 when we set out to organize the first "Diversity, Decolonization, and the French Curriculum" (DDFC) online conference. The event took place over two days in November of that same year. Although COVID-19 forced academic meetings and instruction to virtual formats, our choice to hold our conference virtually aligned with our primary concerns for equity and accessibility. Indeed, in-person conferences—while essential to the profession—operate a form of exclusion that sidelines a number of important voices who cannot travel for varying reasons (e.g., financial, familial, medical, etc.); such an approach would have been in contradiction with our guiding principles. The enthusiastic response to our call for papers not only confirmed that many scholars and practitioners of French were also looking for ways to reshape our discipline, it also allowed us to feature speakers and/or topics that are seldom discussed, from French language learning in South Africa and Kuwait and study abroad in Senegal to trans-affirming pedagogy and fatphobia and ableism. Following the conference—which featured over 50 presentations and attracted over 200

attendees—we selected key contributions that offer new takes and new approaches to French-teaching pedagogy. In addition to this volume, our collective expanded across North America, the UK, and Australia and worked to develop new initiatives for teachers and learners of French— especially those from minoritized backgrounds—such as mentoring programs, job market and pedagogy workshops, and other co-sponsored events.

Diversity and Decolonization in French Studies also resonates with and complements other initiatives and publications in the field, such as *Teaching Diversity and Inclusion. Examples from a French-Speaking Classroom*, edited by E. Nicole Meyer and Eilene Hoft-March (Routledge 2022). In their volume, Meyer and Hoft-March likewise seek to "create a welcoming, inclusive classroom that draws in students we might not otherwise attract" and provide instructors with "innovative ideas to invigorate and diversify their pedagogical approaches" (2). Our own collective is similarly grounded in the belief that there is an urgency to rethink the French classroom and provide a "model (that) allows every student to feel safe, to share their truth, and to reflect deeply about their own identity and challenges" (Meyer and Hoft-March). We recognize that instructors are lifelong learners, too, and that our profession is not impervious to social changes or world events. Our efforts, however, cannot reproduce systemic violence by engaging in the tokenization or fetishization of minoritized topics or individuals. As such, this book not only serves as a platform for historically underrepresented scholars and practitioners, it also showcases effective tools to diversify the curriculum, to move away from the canon, to decenter knowledge production, to implement more horizontal learning practices, and to empower language learners (especially minoritized students). As scholars both committed to gender, postcolonial, and queer studies, several concepts help us foreground and contextualize some of the key theoretical frameworks and praxis that guide the overall scope of the volume.

The name choice of the collective—with at its core the concepts of "diversity" and "inclusion"—first intended to reflect our essential goal to enter in conversation with the important work of the sister collective in German, whose leadership and commitment to improving the profession has inspired our efforts. Indeed, in 2017 and 2019, the "Diversity, Decolonization, and the German Curriculum" (DDGC) collective, prior to publishing a volume with the same title, brought together scholars in German studies "to discuss pedagogical approaches, course design, and instructional materials … to make … classrooms more inclusive and

reflective of the diversity of … students" ("Conferences"). Following those conversations, Regine Criser and Ervin Malakaj, the two co-founders of the collective, gathered and published essays that aim "(1) to examine German Studies curricular models against the backdrop of diversity and decolonization discourses and (2) to offer curricular models, which help facilitate criticality in the spirit of diversity and decolonization discourses by connecting German Studies with critical race, gender, sexuality, migration, Indigenous, and disability studies" (2020, 17). In the volume, Criser and Malakaj offer an important reflection on definitions of diversity and decolonization, which they propose to examine in conversation. Within the extensive history and theoretical overview they provide, we would like to highlight, above all, specific aspects that guide this volume.

First, the contention with the productiveness of discussions surrounding diversity as a model for transformation in higher education strikes us as a crucial statement to approach our own in the volume (Criser and Malakaj 2020, 4). They cite, for instance, Ahmed's influential work *On Being Included* to denounce diversity discourses as a smokescreen for real change. We would like to add here that while language on diversity can indeed "get people to the table" (Ahmed 2012, 67), it is important to recenter the questions raised at the table around equity and social justice. As such, it was important that all the contributions in the volume offer practical tools to engage "*with* as well as *in* the gaps between the words and deeds" (Ahmed 2012, 140). Drawing on Ahmed's call to adopt an anti-racist and feminist pedagogy beyond "checking boxes", our approach is intersectional. This analytical framework is all the more important for our volume given the recent berating of scholars in France and the attacks on intersectionality as a matrix imported from U.S. universities. While Emmanuel Macron declared that "la logique intersectionnelle … fracture tout" [the logic of intersectionality fractures everything] (Djamshidi et al. 2021), referring here to the so-called threat of intersectionality for social cohesion, our volume showcases that adopting this theoretical foundation and tool is imperative and, as Eléonore Lépinard and Sarah Mazouz argue, "n'a pas spécialement besoin d'être défendue" [doesn't need to be defended] (2021, 8). While they argue for such inclusion in the French academic context at large, we posit that such a stance cannot be uncoupled from French as a foreign language in classrooms and curricula.

Lépinard and Mazouz attest to the importance of intersectionality, "(a)ujourd'hui adoptée par des mouvements sociaux d'une portée inédites comme #BLM et #MeToo ou, pour parler de la France, des mouvements

comme le Comité Vérité et Justice pour Adama et #NousAussi" [nowadays adopted by social movements with unprecedented impact, such as #BLM and #MeToo or, as France is concerned, by movements such as the Comité Vérité et Justice pour Adama and #NousAussi] (2021, 8). They further assert the importance for such marginalized groups to "prendre la parole et la rue" [take the floor and the street], to which we will add here the classroom; it is indeed an important space to reclaim (2021, 8). Intercultural communication competence, for example, one of the main benchmarks outlined in the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) can-do statements from the first semester onward, cannot be achieved without incorporating in the curriculum certain social realities and, most importantly, the actors that shape them as well as the philosophies that drive them. In addition, the fundamental principles of intersectionality, as Mazouz and Lépinard contend, do not threaten people's positionality. It is rather a driving force for social justice in the classroom which allows acknowledging and including the multiple identities of students, in all their complexities, in the classroom. Indeed, an intersectional approach permits to render visible certain oft-devalued identities that tend to be neglected and marginalized within conversation on diversity. For example, scholars committed to disabilities studies point out how higher education fails students on different levels of their college experience. They regret that disabilities tend to be considered, at best, in terms of accommodations—that is, Student Disability Services and the like—and not through the pedagogical value it can bring. For example, in *Worlds Apart? Disability and Foreign Language Learning*, Sander L. Gilman redefines "foreignness"—in "Foreign" Languages—to include disabilities cultures and to advocate for "Disabilities Studies as a space where language learning takes place" (2008, xi).

Similar to Sara Ahmed's significant influence to this project—mentioned in the opening lines of our introduction—queer theory and its engagement with intersectionality have likewise been key to defining the direction of the volume and to the foundation of the DDFC collective at large. Presenters and participants alike expressed how our first conference has been transformative because the discussions "force(d) (them) to rethink how and why we learn" (McNeil et al. 2017, 4). As such, they left the conference with the realization that this work is a laborious task insofar as "(d)eviation is hard. Deviation is made hard" (Ahmed 2019, 42). Drawing on the definition of queerness as "a continuing moment, movement, motive—recurrent, eddying, troublant" (Sedwick 1993, xii), the

chapters aim to create discomfort with current practices, definitions, and frameworks that shape the French curriculum. This discomfort, rather than being unproductive, opens a myriad of possibilities to envision and enact transformation in our field. Taken together, this volume does not presume to provide "the 'correct' method or the 'right' questions, but rather (highlights) the possibility to question our practices or notions of equality and acceptance", a dynamic at the core of queer pedagogy (Neto Nemi 2018, 591). Several chapters offer best practices to question the heteronormativity of French curriculum, but the overall volume "seeks to contribute to practices of education … and affirming that educational institutions should not attach themselves to one set model, since these ideals end up alienating, even excluding, certain individuals" (591). To that extent, we encourage the readers to use the different chapters as blueprints and helpful tools to redesign or make changes based on their own students' background(s) or the type of institution where they teach, to name a few factors that can influence the need for adjustment of these practices. Ultimately, "queer pedagogy … pushes both teachers and learners to consider how the production of knowledge is culturally situated and thus constantly open to radical revision", and in turn challenges "the reproductive telos of dominant ideology" (McNeil et al. 2017, 3). Such a pedagogical commitment cannot be separated from decolonial thought and praxis.

Criser and Malakaj convincingly argue that "attending to inclusivity and diversity via decolonization is an ethical obligation and an existential imperative", but recognize the challenges affecting such endeavors with foreign language education because "the field has been historically entwined with nationalist and ethno-nationalist projects" (2020, 7). Drawing on the work of Kramsch (2019), Macedo (2019), and postcolonial studies broadly, they identify, as part of decolonial work, the necessity to decenter Western knowledge from the curriculum and recognize and dismantle the long history of colonial legacies that still shape North American universities (5–6). Although the authors offer important insights relevant to Modern Languages at large, we believe that it is crucial to address those definitions for the specific Francophone context, its colonial past, and the current national narrative. Agreeing with Criser and Malakaj's argument that foreign language programs must disengage from nationalist influences, we believe that decolonizing the French curriculum cannot be achieved without contesting certain categories that frame our programs, namely definitions of "frenchness" and "la francophonie". The work of

Etienne Achille, Charles Forsdick, and Lydie Moudileno can here be useful to correct some of these limitations. In *Postcolonial Realms of Memory*, they examine the shortcomings of Pierre Nora's conceptualization of "lieux de mémoire" [sites of memory], which, they compellingly argue, excludes the multifarious layers of colonial history from France's national narrative. For instance, they first contend that "These issues are central to discussions of French identity, or what some would call 'Frenchness', especially at a time when the increasing hybridization of France – not least in terms of ethnicity and religious affiliations – raises questions about current understandings of republicanism and how this ideology fits (or does not fit) the socio-cultural realities of the early twenty-first century" (2020, 2). As several chapters underline in the volume, France's doctrine of color-blindness grounded in the so-called tenets of universalism impacts the way "Frenchness" is framed in the curriculum. While France is indisputably a multicultural, multiethnic, and multiracial society, French textbooks fail to effectively reflect this reality and instead relegate non-whiteness to the space of "la Francophonie". Although the expression, which broadly refers to the French-speaking community, is used throughout the volume, not questioning the validity of such a categorization would be counterproductive to the decolonial pedagogy we strive to enact. In particular, we dispute its value as an imagined homogenous group which denies the specificities of/within each locality. Most importantly, we take issue with the lack of engagement with the colonial historical background that such a term implies; a failure that is rooted in the "French incapacity and/or unwillingness to engage with the inherent and increasingly undeniable imbrication of the colonial in *le roman national*" (2020, 5–6).

This volume brings together a diversity of instructors from a wide range of institutions, academic ranks, and research specialisms. Although most chapters engage with issues pertaining to the French curriculum in the U.S., the observations the scholars make and the recommendations they propose can easily resonate with other settings across the globe, in particular in the Global North and in settler colonial nation-states. We must in fact acknowledge that all of us, editors and contributors, work at institutions founded on stolen Indigenous land. Our efforts, and the chapters thereafter, do engage with decolonization scholarship and praxis, but we are guided by Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang who remind us that "(d) ecolonization is not a swappable term for other things we want to do to improve our societies and schools. Decolonization doesn't have a synonym" (2012, 3). Contributors to this volume thus propose to decenter,

diversify, divest, decolonize, and/or disrupt—including, but not limited to, assessments, syllabi, textbooks, reading lists—in postsecondary education, while keeping in mind what each terminology entails and makes possible. We also acknowledge that while some of the tools provided can be useful for K-12 teachers, current legislation, regulations, and curriculum and assessment standards in secondary education can limit their applicability. Similarly, no chapter focuses specifically on graduate education and training, though the volume will still be of interest and use to emerging scholars who, for the most part, already and regularly deliver French foreign language courses. The power dynamic between graduate instructors, their supervisors, and the programs in which they teach at times limits how much graduate instructors can do to alter course content, but they should still find valuable tools to make minimal yet impactful changes in their classroom, should the structures in which they evolve not share in our transformative efforts in the first place. Moreover, these students/instructors will hopefully carry these strategies with them after graduation and continue to constantly question, reassess, and reshape foreign language education. More broadly, as DDGC also reminds us, "decolonization efforts need to address recruitment, graduate training, and professional development at the departmental and national levels" (7). Beyond this book, the DDFC collective works in other ways to provide support, training, and strategies to decolonize and diversify the profession.

As mentioned, the different chapters in this volume serve as blueprints for inclusive practices, while at the same time critically challenging and deconstructing normative structures in the French curriculum. As such, *Diversity and Decolonization in French Studies* is also grounded in the framework of "complaint as a feminist pedagogy" (Ahmed 2021, 7). Complaint, Ahmed describes, is a testimony which aims to "provide evidence, … to identify an injustice, a harm, or a wrong" (13). The contributions comparably provide testimonies of instructors' experiences in the classroom and point out the shortcomings and inequity they have encountered, contested, and untangled. This collective movement or complaint takes different forms and aims to contest several pedagogical spaces and structures as outlined in the following three main sections.

The first section, "Dismantling the 'Francophonie': Language, Race, and Empire", explores the ways in which the classroom can become a space to embrace multilingualism, offer solutions to decenter the language learning experience from hexagonal dominance, and engage with

questions of colonialism and racism that standard textbooks tend to overlook or simplify. The chapters offer helpful resources to overcome these obstacles and limitations and provide concrete strategies to design more inclusive, decolonial, and diverse courses and classroom experiences. Cecilia Benaglia and Maya Angela Smith's "Multilingual Texts and Contexts: Inclusive Pedagogies in the French Foreign Language Classroom" argues that while the U.S. are becoming more and more diverse, the French foreign language curriculum continues to present a very narrow and specific model of a French speaker—the white, monolingual native speaker with a Parisian accent. As a result, there often is a disconnect between the students' identities and the ideal they hope to achieve, which leads to linguistic insecurity and anxiety. Drawing on literature in Second Language Acquisition, this chapter thus articulates pedagogical strategies to help students better understand the role of language ideologies and identity formation in their language learning. In the end, the real-world examples of multilingual usage in the French language context invite students to center their experiences as multilingual speakers and creative language users instead of simply as imitators of monolingual French native speakers. Madeline Bedecarré, in "Unlearning Francophonie: Legacies of Colonialism in French Grammar Textbooks", turns to grammar manuals, a staple component of the French classroom, to show how they fail to properly account for France's colonial past. The inclusion of maps and statistics actually reproduces a form of colonial ideology, just as the ongoing diversification of these textbooks—by making room for countries and cultures outside of (hexagonal) France—runs the risk of glossing over the French colonial project and its attendant violence and trauma. In turn, Bedecarré shares strategies to disrupt the implied naturalness of the francophone world as well as to encourage students to confront the ahistorical and purely celebratory idea of "francophonie" in their textbook. Along similar lines, Julia Spiegelman explores how white, Francocentric norms remain undisturbed, passing for neutral while reinforcing harmful bias. In particular, her chapter, "Racism, Colonialism, and the Limits of Diversity: The Racialized 'Other' in French Foreign Language Textbooks", offers a critical analysis of first-year French foreign language textbooks to identify the ways in which the racialized construct of *la francophonie* is positioned relative to France as justifiably colonized and a consumable economic product. Spiegelman urges educators to move beyond surface-level diversity and inclusion toward critical consciousness and action, exposing and challenging racism with students through the guided

analysis, transformation, and creation of multimodal texts. Kristen Stern's "Making the Colonial Present Audible to our Students and Ourselves" moves to public digital scholarship and engages with recent developments and events in the field and in society at large (e.g., debates around colonial statues, Black Lives Matter in France, etc.). Here Stern provides further evidence of the need for internal work on ourselves (individually and as a discipline), the more inclusive work we need to offer and do with students, and ways to make colonial culture more "audible" in the field and in the classroom. Using short stories and films, Marda Messay shares about an upper-intermediate course she designed to introduce students to Black experiences. In "Blackness and Social Justice in the French Classroom", Messay thus demonstrates how students are able to deepen their understanding of issues of inequalities, intersectionality, inclusion, and social justice within the Francophone context. Further, her selected materials successfully position blackness and social justice as part of the French curriculum, transform students' perspectives and engagement with the Francophone world, and compel them to reimagine or reconceptualize the French classroom. Finally, Charlotte Daniels and Katherine Dauge-Roth, in "Honoring Native American Voices in the Francophone Studies Classroom: Restoring Oral Testimonies to their Rightful Place in the Story of Early Modern Americas", offer other ways to make audible minoritized voices. They describe the process of rebuilding the French curriculum at Bowdoin College and, more specifically, how they designed an Early Modern French course that centers oral history, Indigenous voices, and encourages students to interrogate what sources and voices have traditionally been accounted for in both literature and history and how the inclusion of previously ignored perspectives changes everything. Students also reflect on power dynamics in the French-speaking world and in relation to their own positionality and lived experience. Daniels and Dauge-Roth provide an outstanding example of collaboration with their surrounding community, especially with Executive Director of Maine-Wabanaki REACH Maria Girouard, a member of the Penobscot nation, former tribal leader, Penobscot historian, author, educator, and environmental activist.

The following section of this volume, "Intersectional French Studies", tackles questions of gender-just pedagogy, ableism, and intersectionality as praxis. Opening this section is Dorthea Fronsman's "*Halte au capacitisme!* A Toolkit for Creating Accessible French Language Classrooms for Neurodiverse Students and Students with Disabilities". Inspired by the

ongoing discourse of care and community, Fronsman explores inclusivity and its shortcomings when dealing with neurodiversity and disability in the classroom. In order to deliver a truly inclusive learning experience, she offers specific ways to develop a multimodal approach that not only accommodates neurodiverse students and students with disabilities but also empowers them to play an active role in the process. Whether students require official accommodations, are afraid to require official accommodations, or are experiencing temporary difficulties, this chapter provides crucial tools to build a comprehensive vision of accessibility for all students by applying universal design principles and a social justice agenda. Likewise concerned with social justice is Alisha Reaves whose chapter "Teaching the Feminization of Professional Titles in Intermediate French" seeks to overcome linguistic barriers and limitations (often imposed by the French Academy). Reaves thus describes a method for incorporating language policy and language change into the French as a foreign language classroom. By focusing on a specific lesson, she effectively shows how students engage with language change in their first language as well as in their target language (here, French), while exploring the role of language for the expression of (individual and national) identity. As this volume is concerned with diversity, Blase Provitola sheds light on the ways in which "French feminism" in the U.S. academy often focuses on predominantly white-authored and psychoanalytically inflected theories of difference. In "Teaching French Feminism from an Intersectional Perspective", Provitola moves beyond a homogeneous canon and shores up the history of intersectional feminism in France long before the importation of the term "intersectionality" in the 2000s. This chapter gives readers access to the author's attempt to design and teach an upper-level undergraduate seminar on Intersectional French Feminisms, along with a personal reflection to make future improvements. Finally, Kris Aric Knisely concludes this section with "Teaching Trans Knowledges: Situating Expansive Possibilities in an Intermediate French Course". As a part of a long historical arc, educators are increasingly recognizing the critical impetus to engage with gender in expansive ways. Despite a proliferation of general resources, a paucity of training and materials for French language educators persists. Knisely thus builds upon broad, starter-kit approaches to address continued challenges in applying trans knowledges to the everyday by guiding readers through a series of concrete pedagogical choices that span a semester long, intermediate-level course, beginning with the syllabus and

continuing on through myriad moments where gender is or can be made relevant to teaching, learning, and using French.

The third and last section of this volume, "Beyond the Textbook: New Teaching Strategies", follows in the footsteps of the previous contributors and draws attention to new and potentially transformative teaching tools. The first chapter, "Queering the French Language Classroom: A Social Justice Approach to Discussing Gender, Privilege, and Oppression", turns to the inadequate representation of sexual and gender diversity in school curricula. Here, Hasheem Hakeem reminds us that misrepresentation or silencing can have a devastating impact on LGBTQ+ youth and proposes strategies for queering the French language classroom, particularly through two webcomics developed by the Canadian trans writer, cartoonist, and activist Sophie Labelle. Applying a social justice framework, Hakeem gives examples of guiding questions and activities that can help students think critically about mainstream knowledge, their socialization, as well as the discourses that shape their perspectives about gender, privilege, and oppression. Turning to social media as a means to broaden students' perspectives is Daniel Nabiel Maroun's "Decanonizing Contemporary Culture Courses: Teaching Culture with Twitter", which reminds us once more that our discipline is not impervious to social and technological developments. As do other contributors, Maroun posits that embracing a multimodal approach to teaching has in fact the potential to enhance the overall student experience and can also play a crucial role in reaching our collective goals. More specifically, Maroun aims at guiding educators on how to integrate Twitter into content-based culture courses. Surveying some of the major contemporary French culture or "civilization" textbooks used in various higher-education institutions in the U.S., and underscoring the tendency to explain contemporary culture historically, this chapter suggests that educators use Twitter to help students glean deeper culture knowledge from actual culture actors. In "Approaching Plurality and Contributing to Diversity Through Podcast Pedagogy", Thomas Muzart examines the growing popularity of podcasts in French and the ways they can improve inclusivity. Based on a literature course and an advanced grammar and composition course, Muzart first demonstrates that podcasts' focus on storytelling and subjective experience give students access to a plurality of voices whose embodied experiences allow them to connect with complex issues of their time. Then, he offers a detailed example of podcast integration that not only relies on existing podcasts but requires that students, too, create their own and play an active role in knowledge production. Bethany Schiffman, in "Beyond the

Book: Multimodal Texts and Assignments as Anti-Racist Pedagogy", argues that today's students want to learn the traditional forms of expressions in order to join the elite and secure a job, which can in fact reproduce forms of violence and oppression. In this chapter, Schiffman demonstrates how incorporating multimedia and multimodal texts (including post-digital and non-Western texts) into the classroom—both as objects of study and as student assignments—is an integral part of anti-racist pedagogy. While she is not making the case to eliminate traditional learning methods (literary analysis, argumentative essays, set reading lists, etc.), Schiffman suggests that we remain aware of the influence of gatekeepers and unwritten rules that make these texts and assessments difficult or impossible for certain groups to access. Finally, in a similar vein that proposes new design and assessment methods, Kelly Biers' "Decolonial and Feminist Course Design and Assessment in the First-Year French Curriculum" explores how instructors can motivate students and consider their engagement in a way that is equity-driven. Drawing on the principles of Specifications Grading Biers provides clear guidelines to design a course that removes the hierarchy of language proficiency over cultural and metalinguistic knowledge, rewards students equally for developing their linguistic abilities and for engaging deeply in the history, culture, and sociopolitical practices of the French-speaking world.

As a final note, we would like to return to Ahmed. If this volume makes a critical intervention in French language pedagogy, it is also part of a larger and ongoing movement; it is "(a) movement (that) comes into existence to transform what is in existence" (Ahmed 2017, 3). *Diversity and Decolonization in French Studies* provides clear tools and examples to (re) shape French pedagogy today, but it is not a prescriptive volume. It is a blueprint to empower students, scholars, and practitioners of French who are committed to diversity, decolonization, equity, inclusion, and social justice. It is as much a collection of essays as it is a collective of diverse individuals who are part of a conversation and hoping to make room for new transformative exchanges.

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Dismantling the 'Francophonie': Language, Race, and Empire

Multilingual Texts and Contexts: Inclusive Pedagogies in the French Foreign Language Classroom

Cecilia Benaglia and Maya Angela Smith

Introduction

In the past few decades, demographics in the United States in general and higher education in particular have become increasingly diverse. Currently, about 40% of the population identify as other than white, up from 20% in 1980, and as the Brookings Institute notes, "the 2010 to 2020 decade will be the first in the nation's history in which the white population declined in numbers" (Frey 2020). Even larger gains have been made in higher education. According to the American Council of Education's *Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education: A Status Report*, 45.2% of higher education

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students were people of color in 2016, up from 29.6% in 1996. Hispanic students saw the biggest gains, almost doubling their numbers (from 10.3% to 19.8% of the student body over the same period of time) (American Council, xvi). This racial/ethnic diversity translates into linguistic diversity where 20% of the population speaks a language other than English at home (up from about 14% in 1990 according to the US Census). If one takes into account the 5.5% who are foreign students, the classroom is even more linguistically diverse.[1]

While classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse, educators and curricula have not adapted to sufficiently address the needs of these students. Instructors remain overwhelmingly white, accounting for almost 80% of full-time faculty (American Council, xvi). Furthermore, as Macedo argues, language programs "reflect class biases where the foreign language curricula are geared toward white, middle-class realities" (2019, 10). For example, he notes the expectation that "students will go to Spain to be fully immersed in the 'model Spanish' reflected in the curriculum" instead of being encouraged to engage with immigrant communities near campus that also speak Spanish but whose varieties are considered inferior (10). The French curriculum in the United States suffers similar pitfalls, almost always championing a French language that is associated with white, monolingual speakers of Parisian French and thus eliding the diversity of Frenches in the world.[2] As such, it is important for educators to systematically reassess the ways we teach French because being a good instructor requires learning from, adapting to, and reflecting our changing world.

Recent work in Applied Linguistics and Sociolinguistics have called on these fields to decenter whiteness and reimagine language education. Macedo's (2019) edited volume implores educators to acknowledge and combat linguicism—language discrimination that has emerged from linguistic imperialism (Phillipson 2008) and that is tied to racist and classist notions of "good speech." Meanwhile, Blackledge and Creese's (2014) edited volume explores how Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia can widen our understanding of linguistic diversity by going beyond the "naming and separation of languages" inherent in traditional

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[1] These numbers come from a 2019 report from the Institute of International Education. While COVID and U.S. policies toward foreign students have impacted these numbers, the long-term trend suggests a continued increase in foreign students.

[2] See Chapelle (2016) and Uzum et al. (2021) for cultural depictions of French in language textbooks.

conceptualizations of multilingualism and embracing the flexibility that speakers have in using signs to make meanings through their communicative repertoires (1–2).

This chapter takes into account this evolving understanding of linguistic diversity as well as the importance for implementing inclusive pedagogical practices in the French foreign language classroom. Inclusive pedagogy, a student-centered approach, "responds to learner diversity in ways that avoid the marginalization of some learners in the community of the classroom," as well as considers how educators' choices "convey messages which are much wider than the formal learning focus of the lesson" (Spratt and Florian 2015, 90). Both authors of this chapter have realized that in order to best serve our students, we need to put their needs and their identities at the center of what we do. The first part looks at how the concept of the native speaker (NS), a constant in foreign language teaching, is harmful to language learning in general and to minoritized students in particular. The second part offers ways that educators can address these issues by presenting how we have approached teaching French in our own classrooms. These concrete suggestions offer a template for how others can start to decolonize their classrooms, regardless of the language in question, the course level, or the demographics of their students.

Glottophobia and Monolingual Biases in the Teaching of French

Just as the national trend suggests, our own classes are composed of students from a large variety of cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds. Despite their various differences, many students have something in common: they are multilingual. Besides English, they speak several languages and enjoy a "diversity of linguistic practice" within these languages.[3] As such, from a linguistic point of view, they do not correspond to the "norm," that is, the standard monolingual speaker of the national language of the United States, English, nor the standard speaker of the language they are learning, French. Therefore, in various contexts our students are labeled as non-native speakers (NNS), a maligned category that stands in opposition to the coveted native speaker (NS) one. It has been 25 years since Firth and Wagner (1997) called on the field of Second

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[3] The discussion of heteroglossia in *Heteroglossia as Practice and Pedagogy* (2014) expounds on this idea of "diversity of linguistic practice" (3).

Language Acquisition (SLA) to move beyond this binary opposition, arguing that it leads "to an analytic mindset that elevates an idealized 'native' speaker above a stereotypicalized 'nonnative,' while viewing the latter as a defective communicator, limited by an underdeveloped communicative competence" (285). However, this NS ideal still influences how most instructors teach language and how most learners understand their L2 identities.

The NS of French, which informs "international French" (i.e., the language taught outside of France), is conceived as a white, monolingual speaker marked by a so-called neutral accent, which is, de facto, the Parisian accent. Multilingual speakers that fall outside this model regularly experience a sense of linguistic insecurity that accompanies their exchanges with interlocutors, especially in institutional and official contexts.[4] This type of insecurity, which is often reinforced through the negative stigma on accents, is integral to the one nation=one language ideology inherent in the conceptualization of many modern languages. France is probably the modern nation that historically, and even today, has most insisted on the relationship between nationhood and linguistic norm and that has focused its attention on notions such as linguistic purity, standard language, and neutral accent—embodied best by the prominent position of the *Académie Française* in French society. As Posner notes, "the standard language is viewed in the French tradition as a *trésor* [treasure], a *patrimoine* [heritage]—an institution, which has been elaborated and perfected over time" (1997, 11).[5] Consequently, when multilingual learners who already face linguistic discrimination in their everyday life study French, their complicated relationship to languages becomes even more complex.

As mentioned above, schools and universities play a crucial role in the development of linguistic insecurity by promoting an inaccessible and

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[4] Linguistic insecurity is defined by sociolinguist Philippe Blanchet as "la prise de conscience, par les locuteurs, d'une distance entre ce qu'ils parlent et une langue (ou variété de langue) légitimée socialement parce qu'elle est celle des classes sociales dominante, parce qu'elle est perçue comme « pure » (supposée sans interférences avec un autre idiome non légitime) ou encore parce qu'elle est perçue comme celle des locuteurs fictifs détenteurs de la norme prescrite par l'institution scolaire" [the consciousness that speakers have of a distance existing between what they speak and a language (or a variety of a language) which is socially legitimated because it is the one spoken by dominant social classes, or because it is perceived as "pure" (i.e. perceived as being without interferences with other non-legitime idioms), or because it is perceived as the language spoken by fictive speakers of the norm prescribed by the school institution] (2017, 807).

[5] All translations in the chapter are our own unless specified.

mythical model of French. Teaching and learning models espouse a mono-lingual ideology, promoted by the French state, which values and extols the standard variety of French to the detriment of dialects and other varieties spoken outside the country. The very existence of these norms leads to the formation of what Philippe Blanchet calls glottophobia, a form of linguicism based on a person's accents and languages. Glottophobia, which generally manifests itself through microaggressions, is always a key dimension of racial, class, and gender discrimination. As such, it has major consequences for people and, specifically, for students' academic outcomes (e.g., undermining their self-confidence, sense of legitimacy, and belonging).

A language pedagogy based on the "sacralizing overpromotion of homogeneity" ["survalorisation sacralisante de l'homogénéité"] (Blanchet Emp1856) is a key component of glottophobia. This pedagogy adheres to a French-only policy in the classroom, in which students supposedly learn a foreign language or culture better when they are immersed in the exclusive usage of the standard variety of this language. However, several studies counter this perspective, showing that incorporating students' other languages into the teaching of the target language is an asset for learning (Auerbach 1993; De Angelis 2007; Daniel and Pacheco 2015).

It is worth noting that suggesting a move toward a multilingual and/or inclusive pedagogical model may seem antithetical to the teaching of a specific language such as French. How will students learn to speak French if we do not alert them to their production of non-standard French? Do we open them up to ridicule by Parisians who may correct their speech? What effect will the multilingual classroom have on opportunities for students to practice French? We acknowledge that the language classroom is often the only site of language immersion available for students. However, we must also recognize that the model generally adopted in our teaching has been created for a monolingual, white, middle-class student population and fundamentally fails to take account of the multilingual, multicultural, multiracial, and multiethnic reality of our communities. By presenting this model as the only possible and desirable one, we are hampering our students' learning capacities and potential both as speakers of French and as individuals. While there is a place in class for the standard variety of French, students should also learn that "they have a choice in the language they produce as well as in whether to align themselves with standard forms or to subvert linguistic norms that conflict with how they identify socially

and politically" (Smith Forthcoming). The following section will look at two pedagogical strategies for empowering our students.

Multilingual Texts and Voices in the Classroom

Our diverse classrooms require us to rethink the type of teaching we do with regard to content, teaching modalities, strategies, and assessments. Students often struggle with their multilingual and multicultural identities, viewing them as a hindrance instead of an asset, because our pedagogy myopically focuses on teaching students how to use the target language in a monolinguistic, sterile vacuum. What happens if we promote students' investment in the learning process and empower them by building on their already existing linguistic and cultural capital so that they can navigate the diverse societies in which they would use their languages?

In this section, we present the value of using multilingual texts in the French language classroom. The first part demonstrates how real-world examples of language use permit students to make connections with their multilingual identities instead of simply trying to attain a monolingual native-speaker norm. The second part details how by having students analyze various authors' multilingual language memoirs and then create their own multilingual journals, they can explore the relationships between multilingualism, emotions, and power relations. This reframing centers the students' experiences, instills confidence, and motivates their language learning.

Sociolinguistic, Ethnographic Texts

While the French foreign language curriculum often relies on literary texts, there is much value in diversifying our pedagogy and exposing students to a wider range of language production. For example, in a bridge course where students build advanced language skills and cultural competency through oral and written production in French, Smith has students analyze sociolinguistic, ethnographic texts from her research on the Senegalese diaspora in Paris, Rome, and New York published in *Senegal Abroad* (2019). Students in the course, many of whom are French majors and minors, have finished the language sequence and are preparing to take upper division content courses in French. They are also learning about the multifaceted uses of French in the Francophone world.

As a former French colony and a multilingual country, Senegal has a complex relationship to the French language. While French is the sole official language, only 10% speak it fluently with another 21% using it on a regular basis. Meanwhile, more than 80% speak Wolof, the main national language, and most people also speak one of the 25 or so other national languages as well. The majority of Senegalese are multilingual, and when they migrate to other countries, most learn the national languages of their new homes. Smith has found that her interviewees in *Senegal Abroad* take great pride in their multilingual repertoires, lauding the virtues of being able to cross geographic and linguistic borders.

For instance, Duudu, a Senegalese man in his fifties who had lived in Paris with his family for two decades, ruminated on his multilingualism: "Quand on maîtrise ces trois langues là, ça devient un jeu, quoi. Quand on parle le français, quand on parle le wolof, quand on parle le pulaar, on sait que dans la tête on est toujours sénégalais" [When we master these three languages, it becomes a game, you know. When we speak French, when we speak Wolof, when we speak Pulaar, we know that in our head we are always Senegalese] (Smith 2019, 128). In comparing this multilingual ability to a game and focusing on the playfulness of language, Duudu elevated the aspects of joy and creativity in manipulating multiple languages. Language students are often so focused on producing what they see as perfect language that they entertain feelings of failure when they think they fall short. They seldom realize the power that derives from navigating various linguistic codes. Hearing this perspective from a multilingual speaker means they are learning more from authentic texts than just what French looks like. They are learning to expand expectations they have of themselves as language learners. By being able to see themselves in a person such as Duudu who thrives in multilingualism, students can reframe their multilingual acts as successes instead of failures. It may also be useful for instructors to point out that even French people are known to often sprinkle English words in their discourse. Languages are not as separate as often assumed. Students can thus ruminate on the porous nature of language instead of focusing on the ill-conceived assumption that multilingualism is impure.

While Duudu described his multilingual usage, other interviewees produced multilingual speech that students can analyze. Ousseynou, a 37-year-old taxi driver from Dakar who had spent nine years in the United States, explained to Smith during his interview in New York how he wanted to learn Spanish for his job: "Por **me**, **è** muy interesante de hablar

muchos *different languages* … si le client entre dans ma voiture, je dis, '<u>Cómo estás? Muy bien?</u>' *They say 'Ah OK,* <u>tu hablas español!</u>' Tu vois?"[6] [<u>For</u> **me**, **it is** <u>very interesting to speak many</u> *different languages* … if the client gets in my car, I say, "<u>How are you? Very good?</u>" *They say, "Ah OK,* <u>you speak Spanish!</u>" You see?] (Smith 2019, 134). He was proactively cultivating a space of linguistic hospitality where his multilingualism served to put his clients at ease. Throughout the interview, he switched between French, Italian, Spanish, and English.

Thirty-eight-year-old mechanic Bouba, who was also from Dakar, enjoyed similar multilingual abilities. He heard Pulaar and Bambara at home, picked up Wolof through neighborhood interactions, and learned French at school. He then studied in Morocco, worked in Switzerland, and returned to Senegal for several years before calling New York City home. Bouba conveyed how both his linguistic experience in Senegal and his moving to different places allowed for multilingual language learning: "Je **parlo italiano** mais *just a little bit* parce que je travaille avec des Italiens au Sénégal. … Mais ici, quand je suis venu aux États-Unis, ici je n'ai pas mal de travail avec des Espagnols … Mon *big boss*, il ne parle pas français. Maintenant, quand il veut quelque *translation*, il m'appelle, pour que je puisse faire cette *translation*. Ça c'est fort pour moi"[7] [I **speak Italian** but *just a little bit* because I work with Italians in Senegal. … But here, when I came to the United States, I work quite a bit with Spaniards. My *big boss*, he doesn't speak French. Now, when he wants some *translation*, he calls me so that I can do that *translation*. That's important for me] (Smith 2019, 135). This ability to adapt, facilitated by his access to different languages, minimized borders that often constrained other people. Through this cultivated linguistic ability, Bouba transcended restrictions that could be imposed on him for being a foreigner, a non-native speaker, or an immigrant.

These real-world experiences of multilingualism center multilingual subjectivity and casts doubt on the NS/NNS dichotomy so entrenched in language teaching. Kramsch (2009) calls for a third culture pedagogy that "leaves space for mischievous language play, carnivalesque parody, simulation and role-play and the invention of fictitious, hybrid identities that put

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[6] The excerpt uses the following notation: <u>Spanish</u>, **Italian**, *English*, French.
[7] The excerpt uses the following notation: French, **Italian,** *English.*

into question NS claims on authenticity" (238).[8] By having students perform close readings of these texts and dissect how languages are used in specific contexts (e.g., the relationship between language choice and semantic content, the specific placement of code-switching, the affective qualities associated with creative language usage), students begin to embody linguistic freedom. In other words, when students see how actual French speakers move between languages such as with Ousseynou and Bouba or describe the joy of playing with languages such as with Duudu, they are no longer restricted to imagining themselves as monolingual native speakers, an identity that they could never truly claim. Instead, they can express pride in becoming a multilingual being and the freedom it entails.

In addition to having students analyze these multilingual, sociolinguistic, ethnographic texts, Smith also incorporates guided journaling exercises followed by group discussions so that students can reflect on their multilingual abilities. She asks them questions such as (1) How have you pushed the boundaries between languages such as in the examples provided? (2) Have you ever code-switched (switched between languages, varieties, registers, etc.) or engaged in translanguaging (the flexible use of linguistic resources)?[9] (3) What are your thoughts about these practices? She also brings in examples of her own experiences with code-switching, translanguaging, and multilingualism to further normalize the practices. Students always have a lot to contribute to these discussions and seem eager to share the various ways they use language in their lives. Even the students who would consider themselves monolinguals realize how they may speak differently among friends than with their teachers and are able to reflect on the facility in which they switch between registers and linguistic varieties of English. Therefore, everyone can participate and feel like they belong.

Multilingual Memoirs/Journals

Another possible way to promote students' role as language explorers and creative users is by systematically introducing translingual and multilingual writers in the corpus of texts studied in language, culture, and literature

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[8] Bakhtin described "carnival" as a celebration of change and a reversing of power dynamics. See Bakhtin (1984, 107–108) for a more detailed discussion.

[9] See Blackledge and Creese (2014, 11) for more information on translanguaging.

classes. Reading writers from both migrant and postcolonial literatures, like Ágota Kristóf, Abdelfattah Kilito, Patrick Chamoiseau, or Nancy Huston, exposes students to different varieties of French but also to the ways in which individuals relate to this language and use it as a space to form their multilingual selves through writing.

In order to fully take advantage of the study of multilingual writers in the classroom, Benaglia has also tasked students with writing their own multilingual journal. She first proposed this assignment for a MA course on multilingualism and translation in the Francophone world, in which students were introduced to the main language policies adopted in France and in the colonies since the French Revolution as well as to multilingual and translingual literature. In this course, 90% of the students were at least trilingual, with around 30% of them speaking more than three languages. Through this assignment, which requires a critical self-reflexive perspective, students are invited to think and write about the contexts in which they learned their languages, referring, for instance, to histories of mobility (including any type of mobility that implies a change in the language but also in the sociolect spoken by an individual, be it transnational, social, or intergenerational mobility) marking their families or communities, and reflecting on the relationships they entertain with each language they speak. By producing their own language learning autobiographies, students have a chance to use their experiences and lives as an entry point into the study of Francophone literary texts.

The multilingual memoirs they read in class function as "pretexts" to writing (Mathis 2016, 4), as a guide accompanying them in the exploration of the relationships between multilingualism and emotions as well as multilingualism and political power. For Abdelfattah Kilito, French, along with Classic Arabic, is the "langue de la faute," "faute" which can be translated simply by "mistake" but also as "sin" and "wrongdoing," adding a key moral dimension to the word. When he writes in French, Kilito is "taraudé par un sentiment de culpabilité" [tormented by guilt], and by the fear of making mistakes (Kilito 2013, 16). For Ágota Kristóf, French is the "enemy language" because it is a language that resists her and, at the same time, kills her mother tongue. These writers endure endless suffering from the language war taking place in their own writing and experience language as a battlefield in which histories of colonialism, racism, exile, diaspora, and discrimination find expression. These authors show that emotions—confusion, hate, anger, guilt, rejection, but also love—are entrenched in our relationship to languages and are often reactions to the

power relations and the violence languages project on us. Writing autobiographical narratives through the lens of language acquisition makes students more aware of the inextricably affective and political factors that influence our usage of language and that have shaped the history of French specifically.

The instructor can choose literary excerpts that address several issues or topics, such as the ones mentioned above. In the following passage, taken from *Nord perdu*, Canadian writer Nancy Huston addresses her feelings of linguistic insecurity caused by bilingualism and the way she perceives herself with regard to monolingual speakers:

> Quand les monolingues perçoivent un objet familier, son nom leur vient automatiquement à l'esprit. Pour moi, le nom qui vient dépend de la langue dans laquelle je suis en train de réfléchir. Parfois l'un des mots me vient, alors que c'est de l'autre que j'ai besoin. Parfois les deux affleurent, simultanément ou en succession. Mais parfois ça se complique, s'emballe, se bloque, et je m'en arracherais les cheveux […]. Il y des mots qui refusent tout bonnement, que ce soit dans la langue maternelle ou dans l'adoptive, de faire le trajet de mon cerveau jusqu'à mes lèvres - des mots que je ne trouve jamais au moment où j'en ai besoin. (Huston 1999, 54)
>
> [When monolinguals perceive a familiar object, its name automatically comes to their mind. For me, the name that comes up depends on the language I am thinking in in that precise moment. Sometimes one of the words comes to me, while it is the other that I need. Sometimes both come up, simultaneously or in succession. But sometimes it gets complicated, it gets out of control, it gets stuck, and I would tear my hair out [. . .]. There are words that simply refuse, whether in the mother tongue or in the adopted language, to make their way from my brain to my lips - words that I can never find when I need them.]

Students realize here that accomplished writers can openly speak about the difficulties they encounter in learning and then practicing French and how, instead of letting these difficulties hold them back, they transform them into literary material.

Écrire en pays dominé by Patrick Chamoiseau is a text that can be used in the classroom to introduce students to the political and colonial history of French, to its symbolic capital, and the place it holds even today in the hierarchy of global languages.

Comment écrire alors que ton imaginaire s'abreuve, du matin jusqu'aux rêves, à des images, des pensées, des valeurs qui ne sont pas les tiennes? Comment écrire quand ce que tu es végète en dehors des élans qui déterminent ta vie? Comment écrire, dominé? (Chamoiseau 1997, 17). La langue dominante, quand elle est apprise comme extérieure à soi, se conserve à distance: on la manie en demandeur; voulant la conquérir, on sollicite ce qu'elle a d'orthodoxe. (Chamoiseau 1997, 274)

[How can you write when your imagination, from morning to night, feeds on images, thoughts, values that are not yours? How to write when what you are vegetates outside the impulses that determine your life? How to write, dominated? … The dominant language, when it is learned as external to oneself, is kept at a distance: one handles it as a seeker; wanting to conquer it, one solicits what it has of orthodox.]

Similarly to what Chamoiseau himself does by creating in this book what he calls a *Sentimenthèque* (a montage of excerpts from the writers with whom he is in dialogue and who populate his "mental library"), students can start to mirror themselves in multilingual Francophone writers' words and view them as models for their own learning of French. These writers do not aspire to write and speak as "native speakers." Instead, they affirm other possible appropriations of French. By incorporating different accents, foreign vocabulary, and syntactic structures, they value a broader understanding of what this language is and can be.

The composition of the multilingual journal can be a semester-long activity or done in one or a few sessions. It can also be adapted to a variety of levels, from intermediate and advanced language courses to graduate seminars. Benaglia usually asks students to start by writing the chronological order and detailed circumstances in which they learned the languages they speak. She then asks them to recall one good memory or episode they associate with each of their languages and one less pleasant one. Starting from these simple autobiographical elements (which can be complemented, for instance, with the description of the most important people students associate with each language), they are asked to identify, among the literary excerpts studied in class, a passage or two that most resonate with their own experience and then explain why. This is a canvas for an activity that can be adjusted for upper-level classes or drawn out to be completed throughout the semester. Following the general topic of the course and the students' level, the instructor may decide to put the accent on the language learning process described in certain texts, on the cultural and political aspects of multilingualism that emerge from others, or on

both. At the MA level, for instance, the instructor can invite students to produce a longer piece of creative writing as well, inspired by the initial exercise briefly described above and by the readings and in-class discussions.

Students inevitably come to class with certain preconceived images and representations of French and are often drawn to the study of this language by the prestige it holds as a dominant European language. This activity asks students to make their assumptions around French explicit, with the goal of complicating the received images they have. The composition of a "multilingual journal," similarly to the use of ethnographic texts, also fosters an atmosphere in the classroom in which students are not inhibited about mobilizing their multilingual resources but instead are encouraged to do so and to see their multilingual repertoire as an asset, both in learning French and in grasping its socio-cultural and political significance.

Conclusion

In the classroom, much as in real life, French does not exist in a void, but rather coexists and constantly interacts with a plurality of languages, which are embodied by our students and cannot artificially be put aside at the time of a lesson. The activities we have briefly presented in this chapter take seriously the consequences of this reality. They insist on the fact that acknowledging students' multilingualism has the potential to help them see their own experiences and histories reflected in what they study, narrating their multiple and often conflictual identities and cultural roots in the process. What we have discussed here are different types of *translingual practices*, defined as "the deployment of a speaker's full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of [a given language]" (García 2019, 207). Helping to "liberate the voices of language minoritized students" (García 2019, 200), translingual practices transform the classroom into a laboratory in which new forms of appropriation of French are promoted and in which French becomes a tool for linguistic and political emancipation.

In conclusion, if we want to transform the French classroom into a truly diversified, decolonized, and decentered place and to challenge the methodological nationalism and neocolonialism that still inform the teaching of modern languages, a first step is to embrace the classroom's glosso-diversity and stop conceiving it as a homogenous, monolingual space.

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Unlearning *Francophonie*: Legacies of Colonialism in French Grammar Textbooks

Madeline Bedecarré

Textbooks have found themselves at the heart of debates over how to represent France's colonial past. In 2005 the French National Assembly passed the *la loi Mekachera*, a law expressly mandating that the national history curriculum and its manuals mention *les bienfaits* [positive aspects][1] of French colonization. Despite being repealed the following year, the celebratory vision of the French empire mobilized by this legislation endures in public debate and in the curriculum.[2] This chapter takes as its starting

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[1] All translations from French are the author's unless otherwise noted.

[2] In 2016, former Prime Minister and then presidential candidate François Fillon accused French educators of teaching students to be ashamed of France's (colonial) history and proclaimed while on the campaign trail that "la France n'est pas coupable d'avoir voulu faire partager sa culture aux peuples d'Afrique, d'Asie et d'Amérique du Nord" [France isn't guilty of having wanted to share its culture with the people of Africa, Asia, and North

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point the French language textbook as a site of postcolonial memory.[3] A site, or realm of memory [*lieu de mémoire*], is a concept developed by French historian Pierre Nora to describe the (im)material places, objects, practices, and discourses that act as depositories of a nation's collective memory. Scholars have pinpointed a major flaw with Nora's project; it denies France's colonial history and therefore its importance in shaping modern-day France.[4] Achille, Forsdick, and Moudileno's 2020 volume works to correct this gap, by inventorying important postcolonial sites of memory. While Nora's original tome identified schools, the French language, and educational texts as sites of national memory (see, for example, Mona Ozouf's entry on the schoolbook *Le tour de la France par deux enfants* and Marc Fumaroli's entry on Le génie de la langue française), it fails to address the role that educational manuals played in representing the French empire and promoting the country's colonial ideology both in hexagonal France and abroad in its colonies. Philip Dine and Leon Sachs rightfully remedy this in Achille et al.'s study with their chapters on children's literature and the republican school, respectively. My chapter therefore draws on these efforts to identify the sites of postcolonial memory lacking in Nora's volumes by adding the U.S. French language grammar textbook to the repertoire they have begun to compile.

Recent scholarship has emphasized the need to look for these sites or remnants of the colonial past, not just in museums, but in everyday life. For instructors and students of French, nothing is more quotidian than the grammar textbook. Contemporary French grammar primers *are* arguably more diverse and inclusive, with added units focusing on immigration in *Sur le vif*, profiles on Francophone writers such as Aminata Sow Fall and Myriama Ba in *Mais Oui*, characters based in Texas and Louisiana in

America] (*L'Express*). Coursework on the positive influences of French colonialism has not disappeared from teaching materials. Take, for example, this 2019 activity used in a primary school in Nantes where students were taught that "il ne faut pas oublier les bienfaits que cela a eu pour les populations colonisées" [one must not forget the benefits that this had for the colonized populations] (*Le Figaro*). In 2020, France's Prime Minister Jean Castex bemoaned on national television "Nous devrions nous autoflageller, regretter la colonisation, je ne sais quoi encore!" [We should beat ourselves up, lament colonization, or I don't know what else!] (*Libération*).

[3] See also Benoît Falaize and Françoise Lantheaume (2008).

[4] See Etienne Achille, Charles Forsdick, and Lydie Moudileno (2020).

Français interactif, and chapters on countries such as Senegal in *Motifs*. Thus, textbooks frame French as a world language that extends beyond the borders of the hexagon. While at first glance this does signal a progressive embrace of other countries and cultures outside of France, I suggest that it also evidences a trace of an older, colonial ideology.[5] Here I consider two ways this ideology lives on in grammar manuals, in the ubiquitous map of the so-called Francophone world and the statistics about the global number of French speakers.

The maps and statistics found in textbooks promote *francophonie*, the idea that French speakers throughout the world form a family or community. *Francophonie* is an amorphous concept, and while it is a word instructors of French are vaguely familiar with, we are often at pains to define it. In fact, much ink has been spilled in seemingly endless attempts to fix a set definition. By illustrating the Francophone world both cartographically and numerically, language textbooks reify this abstract concept into an incontestable physical space and quantifiable reality. In doing so, they reinforce the colonial-era expansionist discourse of *francophonie*.

In this chapter I will briefly survey this phenomenon of statistics and maps in a number of French language textbooks and analyze what these maps communicate to students. Then I will focus on some strategies I have used for disrupting the implied naturalness of *francophonie* in grammar textbooks within the context of a survey course on the Francophone world. This chapter outlines lesson plan ideas that encourage students to confront the a-historical and purely celebratory idea of *francophonie* in their textbook. These in-class activities and assignments get students to draw parallels between colonial-era maps and textbooks, writing by Oneisme Reclus, promotional materials from the *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie*, and their own grammar manual. Students acquire basic vocabulary in French for talking about colonization and gain an interpretative framework for analyzing postcolonial cultural productions.

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[5] Despite these changes, textbooks remain heavily Paris-centric. On the need for an increased focus on Canada in educational materials for French learners in the U.S. in response to a narrowly French curriculum, see the work of Carol Chapelle (2009).

Counting and Mapping the Francophone World: Lies My (French) Teacher Told Me

It is almost an unspoken rule: French language textbooks begin and end with maps. As early as the inside cover, and oftentimes in the first few pages of the book, students are confronted with this image of the map. Typically, the first map is of hexagonal France, followed by maps of French-speaking Africa, Europe, and culminating in maps of the so-called Francophone or French-speaking world. French is construed both as a deeply national and as an international language. Alongside the prevalence of maps, we often see the use of statistics that further prove the existence of this unified Francophone world. The prestige and importance of the French language is touted based on these numbers. In *Promenades* a section on *francophonie* includes a textbox with the title "Les pays en chiffres" [key figures about countries] which indicates "Nombre de pays où le français est langue officielle: 28. Nombre de pays où le français est parlé: plus de 60. Nombre de francophones dans le monde: 175 000 000 (cent soixante-quinze millions)" [Number of countries where French is the official language: 28. Number of countries where French is spoken: more than 60. Number of French speakers in the world: 175,000,000 (one hundred and seventy-five million)] (Mitchell and Tano 2017, 38). *Sur le vif* has a similar page on *francophonie* and estimates that there are "Plus de 200 millions de francophones" [more than 200 million French speakers] around the world which they break down into several groups including "51 000 000: number of people in France for whom French is the first language. 77 000 000: number of people in and outside of France for whom French is the first language. 50 000 000: number of French speakers in the world for whom French is a second language" (8). In *Motifs* the authors cite percentages to illustrate the weight of French in different countries: "On compte plus de 169 millions de francophones. En Europe, hors de la France, on trouve des francophones essentiellement en Belgique (45% de la population), en Suisse (20% de la population), à Monaco et au Luxembourg, où le français reste la langue dominante au travail, dans les relations professionnelles et à l'école secondaire. En Amérique du Nord, 82% de la population du Québec, au Canada, parle français" [There are more than 169 million Francophones. In Europe, apart from France, you can find Francophones mainly in Belgium (45% of the population), in Switzerland (20% of the population), in Monaco, and in Luxembourg,

where French remains the dominant language at work, for professional relationships, and at secondary school] (264).

I propose that instructorsdissect these maps and statistics with students. Far from being purely factual or neutral, these figures and illustrations communicate four things worth analyzing. First, textbook authors use them to insist upon the presence of the French language on every continent, reminiscent of the saying "the sun never sets on the British empire". In the 2004 edition of *Sur le vif*, *Francophonie* is described as "This linguistic and cultural space [which] extends well beyond the borders of France to include areas on all five continents" (8). This conveys that French is an international language, meaning an important, prestigious language—one of the few that allows for cross-cultural communication, travel, and business. With maps, textbooks make the link between a global presence and its status as an eminent, powerful language in the hierarchy of legitimate languages worthy of being taught and studied. In *Promenades,* Mitchell and Tano proclaim, in a boxed text underneath a map of "Le monde francophone" [the French-speaking world] where "pays et régions francophones" [French-speaking countries and regions] are highlighted on each continent: "Incroyable mais vrai! La langue française est une des rares langues à être parlées sur cinq continents" [Unbelievable but true! The French language is one of the rare languages to be spoken on five continents]. They also boast that "Le français est la deuxième langue enseignée dans le monde, après l'anglais" [French is the second most taught language in the world, after English] (2017, 38). *Bien dit* (2013), another American textbook for learners of French, frames French as a language that holds caché across the globe "Formidable! You have chosen to learn French […] Your sphere immediately expands to include 175 million French speakers in more than 50 countries and millions of people who have studied French on five continents. And did you know that about 2 million people speak French as a first language in the United States?" (Mcdougal xvi).

Secondly, maps and statistics naturalize the use of French in these places where its presence is in fact the result of colonization. The use of French is for the most part presented in an unproblematized fashion with little to no mention of the violent history of the French empire that brought the French language to North and South America, Africa, Asia, and Oceania (Uzüm et al. 2021).[6] Cheery, colorful maps evoke multiculturalism and

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[6] See also Karen Risager (2018).

diversity—and leave the reader to assume that the spread of the French language is an uncomplicated, positive reality. These maps and statistics ignore the complexities of these histories.

Relatedly, world maps and statistics also contribute to a myth of monolingualism in some of these countries labeled as Francophone. The maps ignore the diversity of languages that exist in places such as Senegal, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Canada, or the Ivory Coast.[7] Nor is there sufficient discussion of the realities of language politics in places such as Cameroun, where conflict abounds between English- and French-speaking swaths of the population or Algeria, which underwent a movement known as arabization in the 1990s to replace the use of French with Arabic in the government and in schools.[8] Maps and statistics exaggerate the use of standard French in some locales such as Haiti, where French's status as an official language masks the everyday realities of Haitian creole, in Vietnam, where French is dying out with an older generation, in Switzerland which is divided into different linguistic regions, or in the Ivory Coast where the use of French is restricted to a small elite.[9] This myth of monolingualism insists on the French language as the most defining language of these countries, but comparing the maps in textbooks with linguistic maps of the Congo would better illustrate the reality of French in relation to other languages. The myth also flattens out the complexities of the varieties of French spoken within each country. There is not one singular French being spoken in France, for example, and the type of French being spoken in Montreal is not the same French being spoken in New Orleans or Cameroun.[10]

Fourth, in maps and statistics, Francophone countries and regions appear as a coherent unit, a *monde* or world. The accompanying activities and texts push for this interpretation of French-speaking countries as forming a community. In the textbook *Motifs* an exercise instructs students to study a map of the Francophone world. They must then respond to questions about *fraternité* [brotherhood] and language as a unifying force:

[7] The "Maps of the French-speaking world" in *Promenades* (2014) are an example.

[8] On the history of the political divide between English and French speakers in Cameroon, see Verkijika G. Fanso (1999). On arabization in Algeria, see Heather J. Sharkey (2012).

[9] On the use of French in the Ivory Coast being reserved for a minority, see Paulin G. Djité.

[10] See Bengalia and Smith's chapter in this volume. For an overview of approaches to studying regional variation in French, see Mari C. Jones (2011). For a discussion of camerounian francanglais, or camfranglais, see Suzie Telep (2017).

- "Etant américain(e), est-ce que vous ressentez une fraternité avec les habitants des pays anglophones: l'Angleterre, le Canada, l'Australie …?" [As an American, do you feel a familial bond with the residents of Anglophone countries: England, Canada, Australia …?]
- "Dans quel mesure une langue en commun unifie les gens?" [To what extent does a language unify people?]
- "Donnez un exemple d'un pays où les habitants sont divisés parce qu'ils ne partagent pas la même langue" [Give one example of a country where residents are divided because they do not share the same language] (Jansama and Kassen 2006, 264).

On a page dedicated to the topic of *francophonie* in *Promenades*, the authors list the "Villes capitales" [capital cities] of *la francophonie* (Alger, Yaoundé, Paris, Conakry, Port-au-Prince, Bamako, Kigali, Victoria, Berne) as well as "francophones célèbres" [famous speakers of French]: Marie Curie, René Magritte, Ousmane Sembène, Jean Reno, Céline Dion, and Marie-José Pérec. The idea here is that these cities and celebrities from different time periods and professions all share French as citizens of the Francophone world (Mitchell and Tano 2017, 38). But this can be confusing in certain textbooks where *francophonie* seems like just another region of France. Take, for example, *Promenades*, which is divided into chapters for each region in France. The book treats *francophonie* like another French region, dedicating a whole chapter to it alongside chapters on "Les pays de la Loire" or "La Normandie". This is also accomplished in grammatical exercises such as those in the textbook *En avant!* where students, learning how to use the quantifier "tout" [all/much/many] in an exercise called "Connaissez-vous bien la francophonie?" [How well do you know *francophonie*?], are asked to choose the correct answer in the following sentence: "Il existe une relation au niveau de la langue entre **tous les/plusieurs** pays de la francophonie et la France" [A relationship on the basis of language exists between **all of the/several** countries of *la francophonie* and France] (Anderson and Dolidon 2016, 412, my emphasis).

But when you look at the institutional history of *francophonie*, the rhetoric of *partage* [sharing], unity, and community seems less obvious. The first iteration of the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) known as the Agence de Coopération Culturelle et Technique was not met with common approval by France's former colonies. Many African countries had to be won over. Algeria has to this day famously refused to

become a member. At different moments, countries like Cameroun or the Democratic Republic of the Congo have temporarily left the Organisation. More recent examples are numerous and easy to come by. Since 2008, Rwanda has on three separate occasions reinforced its decisions to consolidate English as the national language, joining the British Commonwealth in 2009 and most recently in 2020 instituting English as the language of instruction in schools (Williams 2020). Similarly, in 2015, Burundi passed a law that changed the official national languages to include English despite attempts by the OIF to convince legislators otherwise. In 2016 when the OIF cut official diplomatic ties with Burundi following its presidential election, activists in the country called on citizens to boycott the French language to protest the deployment of hundreds of UN police officers ("Burundi" 2016). French President Emmanuel Macron publicly and vigorously supported the candidacy of the Rwandan Louise Mushikiwabo to head the OIF in 2018 and her election was celebrated as "a sign of slowly improving relations between Paris and Kigali a decade after the African nation turned its back on the French language" ("In sign of better relations" 2018). Earlier this year France promised Tanzania 384,000 euros toward French language instruction and the OIF invited Tanzania to join its ranks as a fellow Francophone nation. Despite what boastful maps and statistics convey, they hide the sheer amount of money and effort that goes into inventing and maintaining this "community".

This celebratory rainbow map version of *francophonie* has its roots in colonial ideology. As Harry Gamble has shown, "These maps tended to represent AOF as a solid and often brightly colored space that had been resolutely attached to France, despite its remote location. Maps thus functioned to obscure the very real struggles and hesitations that continued on the ground" (2017, 3). The fetish of mapping and counting French speakers can be traced back to French colonial propaganda whose role was to cultivate a feeling of belonging. As the plethora of names for the French empire attest—"France Overseas, External France, France of the Five Parts of the World, the France of One Hundred Million Inhabitants, 'Greater France', Total France" (Sandrine Lemaire, 264)—the average citizen was encouraged to feel as though they were a member, not just of the French nation, but of the larger conglomerate of the French empire. These monikers, like the maps and statistics, contributed to a larger "discourse that is striking for its remarkable stability from 1880 until 1962" whose purpose was to promote "The theme of geographic and political

continuity, the invention of this purely fictional territory" (Bancel and Denis 2014, 277).

One of the major purveyors of this colonial ideology today is in fact the *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie*. The OIF has taken up this project of producing maps and statistics as a way of giving existence to and legitimizing an imagined community. The OIF, which was created in 1970 as a political institution tasked with fostering diplomacy between France and its former colonies, manufactures this iconography that is then reproduced in the media and in textbooks, thanks to their *Observatoire de la langue française*. In this way, the Organisation has assumed the role of colonial-era geographic societies which produced maps and studies in order to introduce French citizens to the French imperial project and gain their support (i.e., make them feel as members of this larger community, this empire).

Strategies for Instructors of French

American textbooks for French language learners—whether or not they explicitly mention the OIF (they often do)—are seeped in this official institutional discourse about *francophonie* which is why as early as the first day of class, analyzing the book with students can serve as an entry point into the contemporary legacies of colonialism. I use the following activities and readings as a way of providing a theoretical framework for a "Francophone Cultures" survey course, but some of these could be used more as a punctual lesson, for example, during the month of March, the *Mois de la francophonie* [Month of the *francophonie*], in order to complicate the implied naturalness of the so-called Francophone world.

This first-day activity is a productive way to introduce the historical link between the teaching of French as a foreign language and the project of empire before we start studying cultural production from former French colonies. During the first class period, I show students a series of images of maps from different contemporary French grammar books used in American universities. As a warm-up, students take time describing the images and then answer a series of follow-up questions: Why do they think textbooks begin with these maps? Why include a map at all? Why are there French speakers in these disparate places? Next, we discuss the meaning of the words Francophone and *francophonie* that pop up in these maps.

I then introduce them to the person who invented the word: the French colonial geographer and explorer, Onésime Reclus. We examine the covers

of some of his books and they react to the titles of his publications—
France Algérie et Colonies [*French Algeria and Colonies*], *Le Partage du
Monde* [*Sharing the World*], et *Lâchons l'Asie Prenons l'Afrique* [*Let Go of
Asia Let's Take Over Africa*]—making inferences about his worldview.
Next, they read the following excerpt outloud from his writing where he
counts the hypothetical numbers of French speakers in each colony.

> Dans l'état présent, il faut au moins dix ans aux francophones pour aug-
> menter de 2 millions ½. Comme la France est inféconde, que la Belgique et
> la Suisse n'ont plus de place pour les nouveaux venus, nous ne pouvons
> attendre un rang d'accroissement meilleur que de deux pays plus jeunes que
> le nôtre, l'Afrique du Nord, âgée de cinquante ans, et le Canada, qui n'a pas
> encore trois siècles. Les mêmes dix années donnent à la langue anglaise, déjà
> deux fois plus parlée que la nôtre, au moins quinze millions d'anglophones;
> A la langue russe, dix millions de russophones Aux deux langues soeurs de
> l'Ibérie, huit à dix millions de castillanophones ou lusitanophones.
>
>   [Currently, at least ten years are needed for the number of Francophones
> to increase by two and a half million. Since France is infertile, and since
> Belgium and Switzerland have no more space for newcomers, we cannot
> expect a growth rate better than the two countries younger than ours, North
> Africa, fifty years old, and Canada, who is not yet 300 years old. The same
> ten years give English, which is spoken by twice as many people as our lan-
> guage, at least fifteen million anglophones; gives ten million Russian speak-
> ers to Russia, and gives eight to six million Castilian or Lusitanic speakers to
> the two sister languages of the Iberian Peninsula]. (Reclus 1886, 423–424)

After tallying the "population probable au 31 décembre 1880" [estimated
population by 31 December 1880] on the five continents, he devotes
pages to counting all of the potential French speakers in the future given
France's colonies and ongoing conquests. *Francophonie* is an idea that was
invented at a specific moment (colonization) and needs to be historically
situated for students. Showing them the genealogy of this word helps to
convey its complexities.

Next, we look at some colonial-era maps of the French empire together
such as the one painter B. Milleret produced for the French army as pro-
paganda for the 1931 Colonial Exposition, which shows rays of light ema-
nating from the Hexagon outward toward its colonies. The text below the
map reads "C'est avec 76 900 hommes que la France assure la paix et les
bienfaits de la civilisation à ses 60 millions d'Indigènes" [It is with 76,900
men that France ensures peace and the benefits of civilization to its 60

million natives] (Milleret). Yet, another world map where French colonies are highlighted in red is accompanied by text that shouts in red capital letters "FRANÇAIS … Tu fais partie de la Plus Grande France. Tes aïeux t'ont donné outre-mer un empire 18 fois plus vaste que la France et que peuplent près de 70 millions d'habitants. Cet empire achète à la mère-patrie huit milliards par an, soit plus que les principaux pays d'Europe réunis" [FRENCH PEOPLE … You are part of Greater France. Your ancestors gave you an empire overseas 18 times more vast than France and inhabited by nearly 70 million people. This empire earns eight billion a year for the motherland, more than the major countries of Europe combined] ("Français"). Another colorful map from Vichy government propaganda entitled "Carte de l'empire français" [Map of the French empire] boasts "Le drapeau français a flotté sur toutes les terres colorées" [the French flag flew over all the land highlighted in color] and reveals the same anxiety about the loss of French territories (and therefore French speakers) and a perceived need to keep tabs on these number. Below the map one finds a list of territories that remain under French control "ce qui reste à la France" [what France still owns] versus "ce que la France a perdu" [what France has lost] ("Carte de l'empire français").

The link between geography and *francophonie* is reinforced in many textbooks beyond the use of maps. In *Motifs*, one section on learning the geographic prepositions and geographical vocabulary promises the following to students: "In this module you will explore the rich geographic and cultural diversity of the French-speaking world. You will learn how to talk about geography, to explore travel destinations, and to make travel plans" (Jansama and Kassen 2006, 264). And in *Bien dit*, this vocabulary resurfaces in the letter addressed to students from the president of the American Association of Teachers of French, Margot M. Steinhart, "Why Study French: French Can Take you Around the World! … In addition to learning the language, you will ***discover*** the uniqueness of many cultures from around the world. You have the opportunity to ***explore*** Quebec, the Caribbean, West and North Africa, Europe, and the Pacific Ocean islands, to name a few" (2013, xvi, my emphasis). When French language textbook chapters in the U.S. focus on countries of the Francophone world outside of hexagonal France, they tend to rely on teaching students colonial-tinged adventure and travel vocabulary (see, e.g., the "explorateurs" vocabulary lesson on p. 413 in *En avant* and the "découvrir" vocabulary in *Motifs*).

In pairs, students now return to the map in their own book and read some of the introductory material in *Sur le vif*'s prelude, which celebrates *la francophonie*. Those activities that gloss over this history are designed for the first day of class. On these two pages dedicated to "Le français dans le monde" [French in the world], the contention is that French is a language that is "la voix de la diversité" [the voice of diversity] (2-3). The authors back this up with a slew of percentages from the OIF's website:

> Il y a 220 millions de francophones dans le monde. Le français est la 9ème langue la plus parlée sur la planète et la seule, avec l'anglais à être sur les cinq continents. Dans l'Union européenne, le français est la 2ème langue maternelle la plus parlée (16%), après l'allemand (23%) et devant l'anglais (15,9%). Dans l'Union européenne, le français est la 2ème langue étrangère la plus pratiquée (19%), après l'anglais (41%) et devant l'allemand (10%) ou l'espagnol (7%).
>
> Pourtant l'Afrique est le continent où l'on trouve le plus grand nombre de francophones. Dans la majorité des pays membres de la francophonie, 60% de la population a moins de 30 ans. Le français est la 3ème langue utilisée sur Internet avec 5% des pages après l'anglais (45%) et l'allemand (7%) et devant l'espagnol (4,5%) (3).
>
> [There are 220 million Francophones in the world. French is the 9th most spoken language on the planet and the only language besides English to be spoken on five continents. In the European Union, French is the second most spoken native language (16%) after German (23%) and before English (15.9%). In the European Union, French is the second most practiced foreign language (19%), after English (41%) and before German (10%) or Spanish (7%).
>
> However, Africa is the continent where the largest number of Francophones are found. In the majority of countries who are members of *la francophonie*, 60% of the population is younger than thirty years old. French is the third most used language on the Internet with 5% of pages, following English (45%) and German (7%) and before Spanish (4,5%).]

Together as a class we spend time comparing their grammar book with these other maps and texts, pinpointing these traces of colonial ideology in their own textbook.

I end this class period by assigning reading for homework that focuses on the civilizing mission. Students read a short excerpt from Alice Conklin's *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa* (1997) in English as well as a brief paragraph from Patrick Chamoiseau's autobiographical novel *Chemin d'école* (1994) about his

experience as a young student in a French school in Martinique. Conklin's text provides students with some basic factual background information about French colonization, specifically one of the ways the French justified their colonial project via the civilizing mission: education and the spread of the French language. The text shows how the kind of education offered to Africans imagined by the French was far from their humanitarian claims. As Conklin shows, colonial education (learning French) was not designed with the intent of forming equal citizens, but instead to teach young children "to love the French", to willingly cooperate with them (1997, 135). The French conceptualized literacy in Africa as a way of creating *hommes utiles* [useful men], that is to say men that would loyally submit to and serve them. The curriculum centered on the differences between French and African ways of life, for example, was propaganda meant "to make children understand the profound difference between their unstable and bloody past and the peaceful and productive present" (135). Students in my course begin our second class period by discussing what they associate with the words education, literacy, and language learning. They spend time answering questions such as what is the value and purpose of education? Why do they attend school? And why do students learn to read and write? We then compare their answers to how schooling was imagined for African students.

Chamoiseau's text speaks to the same phenomenon of the civilizing mission in the French colonial school system. The narrator, a young boy in Martinique, describes his school teacher and what he and his classmates are taught: "On allait à l'école pour perdre des mauvaises moeurs: moeurs d'énergumène, mœurs nègres ou mœurs créoles—c'étaient les mêmes" [We went to school to rid ourselves of bad mores: oddball, negro, creole mores—they were all the same] (1994, 169). Learning French came with other messaging, that is, the French were racially superior to Martinicans. On the one hand, Europeans were depicted as the founders of history and were responsible for bringing progress and Civilization to Martinique, while those from the island were devoid of history and thought of as nothing more than "cannibals", "savages". These readings from Conklin and Chamoiseau chip away at the pretty picture painted by maps and statistics, giving students a window into the violence of the doctrine driving the spread of French in Africa and in the Caribbean. In class, students spend time describing the school teacher from the Chamoiseau excerpt and identifying the ideas about colonization that are mobilized by the *maître* [same French word for master and teacher]. They explain what they gleaned

about the colonial educational system from the text.[11] These short passages also serve to poke holes in the myths propagated by the maps and statistics regarding the naturalness of French in these countries. Students more easily grasp why certain countries may still have hostile or ambivalent relationships to the French language.

After these brief discussions, we read together in class a few pages of a colonial textbook used in French West Africa that Conklin references as embodying the themes of the civilizing mission: Louis Solonet's *Moussa et Gi-Gla: Histoire de deux petits Noirs* (1916).[12] The narrator follows Moussa, a child from a small village in Soudan, in today's Mali, who meets a traveling French trader, Monsieur Richelot, who hires him as his servant. They make their way to Tombouctou and along the way take Gi-Gla, an orphan from Dahomey, under their wing. The paternalistic Richelot explains things to him, teaching him about geography but mostly about the progress that France has brought to the colonies through the extraction and sale of natural resources (with chapters on salt, palm oil, wood, oil, and cacao), technological advancements (chapters on railroads, steam boats, hot air balloons, etc.), and civilization (gone are the backward and "barbaric" indigenous customs such as human sacrifices, violence, and excessive drinking). But above all the book hammers home the message of *l'homme utile* [useful man]. Schoolchildren are advised: "montrez-vous avides de vous instruire et devenez des hommes laborieux et utiles" [appear eager to educate yourselves and become hardworking and useful men] (260) and prompted to answer questions such as "Pourquoi faut-il bien servir la France?" [Why must you serve France well?] (12).

We spend time on particular passages where we see the genesis of the *francophonie* discourse of community. Moussa meets and converses with a diverse cast of characters across the Afrique-Occidentale Française in his travels, thanks to his ability to speak French well. The French language allows him to both communicate and form relationships with many different people wherever he goes. The textbook reminds the readers: "Ainsi la pratique de la langue française rapproche les Noirs les uns des autres et leur permet de se connaître et de se rendre service" [Thus the use of the

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[11] I've adapted this activity from the textbook *Mais Oui*! Boston (2008).

[12] The book can be easily accessed on Gallica, the BNF's website. There are many similar colonial textbooks that would work just as well. See, for example, *Mamadou et Bineta apprennent à lire et à écrire* (1930) or *Livret de l'Ecolier Soudanais* by Jean-Louis Monod (1911).

French language brings Blacks together and allows them to know one another and to help each other out] (30). Textbooks like *Moussa et Gi-gla* played a central role in indoctrinating both French and African schoolchildren, planting the idea that they belonged to a wider community, a family led by France: "La France est la patrie des Blancs qui y sont nés, mais elle doit être aussi celle des noirs qui habitent l'Afrique occidentale française. Car la patrie n'est pas autre chose qu'une grande famille dont tous les membres doivent s'unir, s'aimer et se soutenir" [France is the motherland of Whites who are born there, but it must also be that of Blacks who live in French West Africa. Because the motherland is nothing other than a big family whose members must come together, love, and support each other] (110). Again, students in my course are confronted with the reality that the spread of a foreign language is a deeply political enterprise. I ask students to compare these excerpts with contemporary promotional materials produced by and about the OIF that rely on a similar trope of family. Students then seriously consider the aforementioned questions from *Motifs*. In previous courses, some students have spoken about the comradery they feel with fellow English speakers while traveling abroad, while others countered that even though they share a common language with people on their college campus, this alone does not build community or make them feel a sense of belonging. A student from Senegal mentioned that even in a Francophone country, the language that connected him to his fellow citizens was Wolof, not French.

These first two days of class are thus meant as a way of showing students the staying power of colonial ideology. I take up Françoise Vergès' injunction that "We must work to understand how, though indirectly and without our having any immediate contact with colonization, colonial ideology has shaped dispositions, mentalities", by approaching our textbook as a site of postcolonial memory (2014, 250). Through readings and class discussions I help students make the connection between colonial expansionist iconography and the maps of and statistics about *francophonie* in their textbook. This way I introduce a critical lens through which students can understand and evaluate *francophonie* during the semester. Like the colonial maps, these textbooks attempt to legitimize the idea of *le monde francophone* [the Francophone world] and a certain definition of *francophonie*. One of the reasons why there is so much effort put into defining this word is because it is an imagined community. One has to describe and illustrate it to make it exist. This is the work done in part by maps and statistics in French grammar books.

Conclusion

The stakes of identifying the realms of postcolonial memory in the French curriculum for students in the U.S. seem especially high today given the concerted efforts by the French government to actively dissuade educators from acknowledging the weight of the colonial past on our current moment and concurrent trends in the U.S. to vilify if not unequivocally outlaw Critical Race Theory in the classroom. Relegated to the physical peripheries of the text, maps of the French-speaking world bookend the grammar lessons and vocabulary exercises, the meat of the manual. The placement of the maps in the annex, which is to say, outside the boundaries of the important content, evokes the marginal location of colonial history in Nora's study. This brief study of maps and figures about *francophonie* in French grammar textbooks shows that these sites of postcolonial memory are at once buried in plain sight and deserving of our critical attention both as scholars and as instructors.

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Racism, Colonialism, and the Limits of Diversity: The Racialized "Other" in French Foreign Language Textbooks

Julia D. Spiegelman

America's racial reckoning in the summer of 2020 set off a wave of renewed efforts in education to challenge white supremacy across all disciplines. However, for U.S. foreign language teaching in general and French in particular, anti-racism efforts continue to be diluted into the depoliticized, whitewashed language of "diversity" and "inclusion" (ACTFL 2019). The American Association of Teachers of French (AATF), for example, following George Floyd's brutal murder and the revolution of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) Americans demanding full civil rights and protections, chose as a 2021 conference theme, "Laissez les bons temps rouler[1]: Explorer la diversité du monde francophone" [Let the good times roll: Exploring the diversity of the Francophone world].[2] This title is more

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[1] A Louisiana French phrase used to evoke the party atmosphere of New Orleans, Louisiana, during Mardi Gras.

[2] This translation and all others in this chapter are my own.

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than shockingly tone-deaf to its historical context; it also exemplifies and perpetuates a pervasive ideological view of French foreign language education as value-neutral and immune to racism, just another fun thing. Through the euphemism of "diversity," the title positions French speakers of color, coded as "the (non-French) Francophone world," as valuable assets to the cause of promoting the language. "Good times" and "exploring" evoke vacations in uncharted, exotic lands, while the history, agency, and subjectivity of Francophone people of color are absent. It is clear that racism is alive and well within the field of French foreign language education. The question that remains for educators is: How can we recognize, challenge, and subvert racism in our discipline, and how can we empower our students to do the same?

A strategic focus on the "diversity" of the French-speaking world, *le monde francophone*, is not unique to the AATF. Insecurity about enrollment and the future of French teaching in the U.S. has led to a gradual re-branding of the language over the past 40 years, in which the use of French worldwide represents an attractive alternative to the traditional prestige focus on France and Paris. "Teaching French as a multicultural language" has been promoted by educators and textbook publishers since the 1980s, as a way to broaden the language's appeal to American students (Ogden 1981). Though white, metropolitan France continues to dominate French foreign language textbooks, often in the form of attractive photos of museums, cafés, and the Eiffel Tower, France is no longer presented as the sole target culture (Chapelle 2014; Spiegelman 2022). Rather, the focus is increasingly on "la francophonie": the ensemble of nations, territories, and provinces, spanning five continents, united by their use of the French language. A symbol of harmonious diversity and the real-world relevance of French, *francophonie* has gained visibility to the extent that most American French foreign language textbooks open with a highlighted world map that presents the "Francophone world" as a political unity (see Bedecarré's contribution to this volume).

While the concept of *francophonie* is indeed political, it is also deeply ambiguous, contested, and embedded within racial and economic power relations. French owes its status of world language to four centuries of colonization, beginning with Jacques Cartier's 1543 "claiming" of the North American land inhabited by Mohawk and Huron-Wendat nations in the Saint-Laurent Valley. Over the course of the following century, the French government successively seized control of territories in the Antilles—now Martinique, Guadeloupe, Dominica, and neighboring

Guyana—and in the Indian Ocean, consisting of Reunion, Madagascar, and Mauritius. At the same time, France was a major force in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, kidnapping and purchasing West African people from *l'Île de Gorée*, off the coast of Senegal, selling the survivors as property to white enslavers in Guyana, in the Antilles, and in Louisiana, and bringing the riches back to France. As French authorities imposed their language in these contexts of domination, enslaved peoples incorporated French into their West African languages to form new languages known as creoles. Following the Haitian revolution in 1804, France redoubled its imperialist efforts through the invasion of Algiers in 1830 and forced conquest of lands throughout Indochina and in northern and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Alongside military force, French language education was used as a weapon of psychological and cultural domination (Calvet 1974). The imposition of French was framed as a "moral conquest" by French colonial officials and intellectuals (Hardy 1917), who justified colonization as a "mission civilisatrice" [civilizing mission], a triumph of the noble white man over black and brown savages. Following racist enlightenment logic, the "barbarian" languages of Africans reflected their moral and intellectual limitations and were best replaced with French, "la langue même de la civilization" [the language of civilization itself] (Hardy 1917, 186).[3] The power attributed to France as a colonial language was not only cultural but economic, as colonial and postcolonial administrative systems required the mastery of French for economic opportunity. Despite the efforts of French colonial educators, communities across the African continent have remained plurilingual, as individuals and communities continue to resist linguistic colonization through the maintenance of "national" (local) languages and by continually transforming French into an African language (Somé 2017). The "Francophone" label is, however, often fraught, as the violent imposition of French was neither consensual nor total. For many inhabitants of countries described as "Francophone," the very label evokes subjugation, cultural erasure, and economic exploitation (Canut 2010; Nze-Nguema 1982). Focusing on *francophonie* rather than France only, then, is no automatic solution to challenging racism in French foreign language settings, particularly when discussions of colonial history and power dynamics are absent. Without critical attention to power in representations of people, places, and history, French language instruction reinforces racism by normalizing and justifying its effects.

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[3] This rhetoric persists in contemporary political discourse in France (e.g., Rakotomalala 2016).

This chapter aims to identify the particular forms through which racism manifests in textbook representations of the "Francophone world." It draws from two separate yet compatible intellectual traditions, Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) and Critical Race Theory (CRT), which take as a given the operation of unequal power dynamics (CDS) and racism in particular (CRT) in all levels of society. This understanding allows our inquiry to go beyond the question of *if* racism and power are operating within a particular space, and instead to recognize *how*. I use CRT as a theoretical framework to conceptualize racism as ubiquitous, socially constructed, economically rooted, and discursively reproduced. Next, I draw from CDS an analytic tool called Discourse Historical Analysis (DHA) in order to identify the particular discourses of racism constructed in two first-year French textbooks used in U.S. high schools, in which an unmarked, white "Subject" associated with France or Europe is juxtaposed with a racialized "Other" associated with *francophonie*. Two major patterns emerge in these representations: first, the presentation of *francophonie* as justifiably colonized, contrasted with France as a benevolent colonizer; and second, positioning *francophonie* as a consumable product vis à vis France as a discerning consumer. I argue that these discourses echo and perpetuate racialized dynamics of domination and objectification that stem from colonial history and continue to the present day. I conclude by proposing a framework for engaging students in the critical analysis of textbooks as a means for understanding, disrupting, and transforming these harmful discourses.

Racism as Discourse

Critical Race Theory (CRT), developed by black legal scholars in the 1980s and applied to education in the 1990s, offers crucial insights into the ways in which racism operates, serving as a tool for both critical analysis and deconstruction (Ladson-Billings 1998; Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995). Within this perspective, curriculum is not neutral; it serves as a "culturally specific artifact designed to maintain a White supremacist master script" (Ladson-Billings 1998, 18). Several tenets of CRT inform the present analysis. First, racism is conceptualized as "ordinary, not aberrational" (Delgado and Stefancic 2017, 8): it permeates every level of society, yet is protected by a discourse of *color-blindness* that refuses to acknowledge racialization or its impacts. A color-blind approach, critiqued in language education as "liberal multiculturalist" (Kubota 2004), may

celebrate such positive values as diversity, tolerance, equality, yet fails to recognize power dynamics or disrupt white norms. In the classroom, this approach tends to exoticize, otherize, and tokenize individuals and communities of color, leaving systems of oppression undisturbed while superficially celebrating food and festivals (Kubota 2004). Second, the CRT concept of *interest convergence* highlights the relationship between racism and capitalism, arguing that racist policies are upheld because they materially benefit white people and are challenged only when there is a material gain to white people (Bell 1987).

Kubota and Lin (2009) understand racism as "both *discourse* and *social practice* which construct and perpetuate unequal relations of power through inferiorization" (6 [emphasis added]). In this view, the overt manifestations of racism in discriminatory actions, institutions, and systems are inextricable from the discourses, or invisible systems of power and knowledge, that support, reify, and reproduce them (Foucault 1981). These discourses not only represent but also produce racial categories and power differentials through context-specific means and modalities. As Stuart Hall (1996) writes:

> Precisely because identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies. Moreover, they emerge within the play of specific modalities of power, and thus are more the product of the marking of difference and exclusion, than they are the sign of an identical, naturally-constituted unity. (4)

In order to identify these particular formations and enunciative strategies in a French foreign language setting, we turn to the rich analytic framework offered by Critical Discourse Studies.

Racism in Discourse

As both theoretical orientation and methodology, CDS is "fundamentally interested in analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language" (Wodak and Meyer 2008, 10). CDS draws from the work of social theorists such as Louis Althusser, Pierre Bourdieu, Antonio Gramsci, and Karl Marx that emphasize the role of ideology in perpetuating

structural inequality. Scholars of CDS have also addressed identity-based forms of systemic oppression such as racism. Van Dijk (2005) locates discursive racism within an evaluative binary of "Us" versus "Them" in which a dominant, white subject is juxtaposed with an objectified, racialized "Other." The following analysis employs Discourse Historical Analysis (DHA), an approach which holds that the particular linguistic strategies through which discourses manifest in texts exist in constant dialogue with broader ideologies and the socio-historical context (Wodak 2008). In the case of French foreign language textbooks, *grand theory* such as the history of European colonization of the African continent and *middle-range/meso theory* such as the particular, commercialized epistemic authority that is a French foreign language textbook (Block and Gray 2018) serve as important context to the texts themselves. As for the linguistic manifestation of these larger discourses, Wodak (2008) identifies five discursive strategies used to construct and evaluate in- and out-groups: *nomination* (how groups are named and constructed), *predication* (what traits are attributed to each group), *argumentation* (topoi used to justify these attributions, including usefulness, responsibility, law, abuse, etc.), *perspectivation* (positioning or framing of the speaker), and *intensification/mitigation* (degrees of force of propositions) (Wodak 2008).

The examples presented in this chapter are drawn from two first-year French foreign language textbooks commonly used in U.S. secondary school contexts: Glencoe's *Bon Voyage* (Schmitt and Brillié-Lutz 2008) and Houghton Mifflin's *Discovering French* (Valette and Valette 2013). (For an in-depth multimodal content analysis of these two textbooks, see Spiegelman 2022.) Passages were identified in which metropolitan France appears in conjunction with other "Francophone places." DHA was employed to identify the constructions of in- and out-groups in these texts and to identify the particular discursive strategies through which they are constructed.

Analysis of the textbook excerpts revealed multiple recurring discourses that construct an evaluative, racialized dichotomy between France and *francophonie*. I will briefly illustrate two of these discourses by unpacking the linguistic strategies that constitute them. In particular, I focus on the three strategies in Wodak's (2008) framework that feature most prominently in these passages: *nomination*, *predication*, and *argumentation*.

Francophonie as Justifiably Colonized (France as Benevolent Colonizer)

The rare references to history in each textbook overwhelmingly paint colonization as neutral, passive, and justified. For example, in a presentation of the Francophone world in the preface of *Bon Voyage*, the following two sentences represent the country of Gabon: "More than three-quarters of the territory of Gabon is covered by forests. Its capital, Libreville (appropriately named), was founded by Catholic missionaries to house liberated slaves" (Schmitt and Brillié-Lutz 2008, xxvi). In this passage, two racialized groups are nominated, defined respectively as "Catholic missionaries" and "liberated slaves." These labels contrast strikingly with one another in terms of agency (missionaries act; slaves are acted upon) and evaluation (missionaries bring positive connotations of benevolence; slaves, negative connotations of oppression). These identity categories are further juxtaposed through strategies of predication, including the use of the passive voice and a positive lexicon. The missionaries perform positively connoted actions such as "found" and "house," while the Gabonese ("slaves") are passively described as having been "liberated" by others. Dominant topoi that appear as argumentation are humanitarianism and liberation. These are further emphasized in this passage through the parenthetical comment "appropriately named," which draws attention to the meaning of Libreville as "free city." The passage, positioned as factual, focused on territory, and overwhelmingly positive in tone, frames a history of enslavement and colonization as a story of white actors who bring freedom and civilization to nameless Gabonese people.

In a second example, colonization is presented positively not through an argument of liberation but by emphasizing order and administration. The excerpt reads as follows:

> Vietnam and other Southeast Asian countries like Laos and Cambodia have a long civilization. For a period of about eighty years until the mid-1950s, these countries were occupied and administered by France which established schools and promoted the use of the French language among their populations. (Valette and Valette 2013, 123)

The identity categories juxtaposed in this text are rendered impersonal through the metaphor of countries, rather than human actors; this level of abstraction serves to erase individual responsibility or impact. The group

names contrast in their level of specificity, as the specific concept of "France" is juxtaposed with the nebulous grouping of "Vietnam and other Southeast Asian countries like Laos and Cambodia" and their "populations." The lack of precision in the latter group's name implies a corresponding lack of importance of or distinction among these countries. "France" is situated as the implied subject of four actions carrying mainly positive connotations: it not only "occupied" and "administered" the Southeast Asian countries mentioned, but even "established schools" and "promoted the use of the French language." Due to the passive construction of the clause, similarly to the previous example, the countries in Southeast Asia are objects only, receivers of France's presumably beneficial actions. The "Southeast Asian countries" only appear as the grammatical subject of "hav[ing] a long civilization," yet this assertion is undermined by its lack of elaboration and status as the sole reference to pre-colonial history in this region: if this history were perceived to be important, it would logically be discussed. Together, these discursive strategies construct the argument that French colonization was beneficial to Southeast Asia, as it brought order and language to a broad region without identity or history to distinguish it. Despite their appearance in twenty-first-century textbooks, these two examples draw on centuries-old white supremacist arguments that strategically construct non-white communities as incapable and uncivilized as a justification for colonization. Through this logic, not only is colonization warranted, but it is constructed as a benevolent and noble endeavor.

Francophonie as Consumable (France as Consumer)

The second discourse presents Francophonie through an economic lens that may at first glance appear positive: emphasizing the worth of non-white cultures. However, this discourse continues to objectify and degrade non-French Francophone groups by reducing them to products to be consumed and evaluated by the French or European consumer. One example, on the topic of Vietnamese migration to Paris, reads as follows: "Vietnamese restaurants are very popular with French students because of their fine yet inexpensive cuisine" (Valette and Valette 2013, 123). The two nominated groups, "Vietnamese restaurants" and "French students," are not on equal footing, as only students, not restaurants, possess agency. Indeed, it is the "French students" who consume Vietnamese cuisine and judge it to be worthy of its cost. Vietnamese restaurants are predicated

only with the evaluations "very popular" and "fine yet inexpensive." These are ostensibly positive descriptors, yet the quality of this cuisine is only discussed relative to cost, and popularity among students is not necessarily a general recommendation. Through the metaphor of food, this passage constructs Vietnamese people as being of certain but limited economic value to French society and in a position of servitude.

A second example appears in a text about Morocco:

Les artisans marocains créent des produits d'excellente qualité : textiles, céramiques et objets de cuir et de cuivre. Il y a aujourd'hui un million de Marocains qui habitent en France où ils ont introduit le couscous, le thé à la menthe et d'autres spécialités de leur pays. (Valette and Valette 2013, 357)

[Moroccan artisans create products of excellent quality: textiles, ceramics, and objects made of leather and copper. Today, there are one million Moroccans who live in France where they have introduced couscous, mint tea, and other specialties from their country.]

This depiction of Moroccans contrasts with that of Vietnamese restaurants in that Moroccans are granted humanity and agency through being named as people with professions: "Moroccan artisans" who are the subject of a number of actions (they "live," "create," and "introduce"). France appears in the text only as a location and lacks explicit characterization or agency. Here, the French consumer role is constructed implicitly in the text through the purchase and evaluation of Moroccan products as being "of excellent quality." Indeed, the emphasis on material contributions is striking, as it serves to justify the presence of Moroccans in France through the value of their products. Although the nomination and predication strategies in this passage are very different from those used to discuss Vietnamese cuisine, the argumentation is the same, rooted in usefulness (advantage) and monetary value. Both passages produce the same effect: reducing a country's importance to the assessed value of material products that it offers for consumption to French consumers.

We can observe that even when France does not explicitly appear as the topic of these passages, it emerges as a central preoccupation as an underlying, superior norm by which other cultures are to be measured and judged. Ultimately, this consumerist discourse on immigration echoes and perpetuates colonial discourses of labor, resources, and exploitation. It uses Francophone cultures to construct a particular, positive image of France: as a tolerant, humble, welcoming nation appreciative of cultural diversity.

DISCUSSION

As we have seen, the analytic tools drawn from CDS illuminate the central contradiction of a color-blind, liberal multiculturalist approach to the teaching of a colonial language. The excerpts discussed constitute, on a surface level, diverse and positive representations of the Francophone world. In no instances do overtly racist epithets, negative stereotypes, or xenophobic arguments appear. On the contrary, formerly colonized nations are places of freedom and order, and immigration to France from the Francophone world brings great value to the French economy. It is only upon critical examination of these discourses that the racist underbelly of liberal multiculturalism shows itself. The erasure of any history of oppression or struggle for liberation justifies colonization as passive and natural. This denies agency to non-French Francophone people, who are passively reduced to "slaves" or metonymized as "restaurants" or "products." As we have seen, this messaging not only is conveyed in the ideational content of these passages but also is enacted through specific lexico-grammatical means, such as the use of the passive voice and evaluative vocabulary. Though not explicitly raced, these depictions are indeed racialized, whether reproducing white supremacist narratives of the *mission civilisatrice* or exploiting the marketability of diversity. The failure to critically examine or disrupt the power dynamics inherent in the past and present of *francophonie* naturalizes the dominance of France, reinforcing Ladson-Billings's (1998) "White supremacist master script" (18).

The purpose and impact of these discourses as they appear in foreign language textbooks can only be understood within a broader context of neoliberalism (Bori 2018; Curdt-Christiansen and Weninger 2015). While the prestige of France has long attracted American students to learn French, different strategies are necessary to counter declines in enrollment. Peaceful, diverse, fun, oppression-free depictions of *francophonie* render French not only prestigious but also exotic, positioning the student as a consumer who, in studying French, may also access all that the world has to offer in terms of food, products, and tourism. As these discourses are beneficial to white people with economic power, there is little impetus to textbook publishers to disrupt them. Indeed, these depictions are attractive to white consumers: they construct the world as harmonious, maintain white people's sense of comfort and optimism, and position them as worthy, powerful, and agentive. Like the AATF's conference theme, "Laissez les bons temps rouler!", fun, food, and festivals present

for many a preferable alternative to addressing historical violence, despite the ways in which racialized trauma continues to be reproduced undisrupted in the present day. Given this reality, it is unlikely that that new editions of textbooks will include rich historical information about precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial history, integrate multiple voices and perspectives, or present representations of French speakers of color that do not tokenize, exoticize, or reduce to a single story. It is also unlikely that teachers and districts will opt to stop using textbooks entirely, due to administrative regulations and the severe constraints imposed on teachers' time and autonomy.[4] If these racist discourses cannot be eliminated or silenced, how can we teach students to notice, name, and challenge them?

Implications

Brazilian educator Paolo Freire's ([2005]) liberatory pedagogy proposes that students engage in critical reflection and action as a means of *conscientization*, the development of critical consciousness that is necessary for the transformation of oppressive systems. CDS can serve as an effective tool in the language classroom for the development of a critical consciousness (c.f. Cots [2006]; Rahimi and Shariifar [2015]), a way of "reading the word and the world" (Freire and Macedo [1987]). With a broad understanding of texts as multimodal, socioculturally situated, and produced within a particular perspective and for a particular audience, any medium (e.g., song, advertisement, textbook passage, short story, map, photograph, film, etc.) can be subject to analysis in a language classroom context (Kern [2008]). Wodak's ([2008]) framework as adapted for the previous analysis can be expanded for use by students at any level of language education, prompting close linguistic analysis and critical reflection on historical and cultural contexts:

1. Nomination: Which individuals and groups are represented? How are they named? Who does the naming?
2. Predication: What words are used to describe these individuals and groups? What actions do they perform?
3. Agency: Who acts? Who is acted upon?

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[4] Indeed, at the time of this writing, many states have introduced bills to ban the teaching of "Critical Race Theory" in PK-12 schools, misusing the term to refer to any discussion of current-day racism or white privilege.

4. Evaluation: Are these individuals and groups portrayed positively, negatively, or neutrally? Which words carry these implications?
5. Perspective: Which perspectives are represented in this text? Which are not? Who is the text made by and who is it for?
6. Purpose: What purpose is the text made to serve?
7. Historicity: What historical events or larger ideologies is this text connected to? How?
8. Message: What message is conveyed through the text?
9. Reaction: What do you think of this representation? Is it just? How would you adapt the text and why?

Teachers can pose these questions individually and collectively whenever a text is introduced. This framework can also be used for group projects with any level of language learners, in which students collaborate (in French or other languages) to understand a particular text with awareness of its broader perspective, purpose, and impact. Given the specific, conventionalized ways in which power can manifest in language, a critical understanding of representation demands keen linguistic awareness, a skill that aligns with proficiency-based objectives. In this way, students can become not only aware of *what* words and phrases mean, but also *how* they mean. Even as beginning learners, students can become sensitive to the implications that subtle language choices in English and French, including grammatical agency ("liberated slaves"), metonymy and metaphor ("Vietnamese restaurants"), and evaluative language ("established schools and promoted the use of the French language") have on representations of people, and the implicit connections to our relative value and humanity. In addition to analyzing, students can transform these texts and create new ones, justifying their linguistic choices with awareness of how language is linked to power. Rather than situating students as passive receptors of knowledge, or as potential tourists ready to be convinced of the value of French, we can empower students to become active agents who can identify, deconstruct, challenge, and subvert discourses of racism, all while honing their sensitivity to language as a tool for perpetuating and combating oppression.

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Making the Colonial Present Audible to Our Students and Ourselves

Kristen Stern

Digital platforms have the advantage of being more nimble than other venues for academic writing, and creators and scholars can respond in a more timely manner to specific events that can demonstrate to students the pertinence of their studies in this field. I discuss here two examples of digital texts by Françoise Vergès and Raoul Peck that do the work of uncovering, of "making audible," colonial legacies in French-speaking cultures. Both of these examples are also adjacent to legacy spaces of intellectual debate and publication such as universities and print publishers, and are examples of work that might be considered public scholarship. I will examine how these examples are productive tools to re-examine the academic discipline of French and francophone studies as a whole both for the teaching corps and for students. Vergès and Peck are two public figures whose work blurs several of the boundaries between academia, arts and culture, and activism. I propose these resources as examples of tools for faculty looking to improve their own knowledge base in colonial history and the persistence of its legacies in everyday life and the French

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classroom. Particularly for faculty like myself who do not come from historically minoritized groups, it is crucial to acquire the appropriate historical and theoretical grounding in order to reimagine their curricula. This reimagining must go deeper than simply adding additional texts and materials to course syllabi, but rather engaging with primary sources in new ways.

Research and teaching on colonialism and its contemporary traces are not ancillary to our discipline though these themes are still often treated as such. Marc Ferro theorizes French colonization as not hidden, but rather "an inaudible history" (2013, 51). Ferro uses this metaphor for what is hard to detect in contrast to "taboo," a term he finds less accurate. A taboo would mean there was an injunction on speaking its name, and colonialism was and is in fact spoken about: monuments to colonial conquest, streets named for enslavers, and France's push to assert a positive effects of colonialism clause in its constitution are a few of just the most visible examples. It is more accurate to say that there has been a shift in *how* colonialism is spoken about in more recent times, making the truths and insidiousness of it resonate more clearly. As Étienne Achille, Charles Forsdick, and Lydie Moudileno assert in their introduction to *Postcolonial Realms of Memory*, published early in 2020, "These issues [concerning identifying traces of colonial memory in *lieux de mémoire*] are central to discussions of French identity, or what some would call 'Frenchness', especially at a time when the increasing hybridization of France – not least in terms of ethnicity and religious affiliations – raises questions about current understandings of republicanism and how this ideology fits (or does not fit) the socio-cultural realities of the early twenty-first century" (2). Furthermore, as Patricia-Pia Célérier has pointed out, it is increasingly in digital and other spaces, like podcasts, where some of the most vital critical work is being done on decoloniality in the francophone sphere, as opposed to what we might call legacy institutions of French university halls and Left Bank publishing houses (2021).

The focus for this chapter is to provide resources for educational practitioners at all levels who may be seeking models from scholars and creators who are reimagining what French and francophone studies can be. This work must be done with the highest priority: to re-learn (or learn for the first time) the colonial heritage that is not past, but still present, still rehearsed, reenacted, reiterated at all levels in our curricula and institutions, and in the field of French and francophone studies. As Françoise Vergès explains in *Décolonisons les arts!* [*Decolonize the Arts!*]:

Décoloniser c'est apprendre à voir de nouveau, de manière transversale, intersectionnelle, à dé-naturaliser le monde où nous évoluons, fabriqué par les êtres humains et les régimes économiques et politiques. C'est apprendre à poser tous les morceaux comme un puzzle et à étudier les relations, les circulations, les croisements. Ainsi de nouvelles cartographies émergent qui questionnent le récit européen et font apparaître régionalisations et globalisations qui n'obéissent pas exclusivement à la logique Nord-Sud. (2018, 120–21)

[To decolonize means to learn to see with new eyes, in a way that is transversal and intersectional, to de-naturalize the world in which we evolve, constructed by human beings and political and economic regimes. It means to learn to place all the pieces together like a puzzle and to study the relations, circulations, and intersections. In this way new cartographies that question the European narrative emerge, making regionalizations and globalizations that do not exclusively submit to North-South logic appear.][1]

Following this orientation to learning and de-naturalizing, it is clear that offering a more diverse reading or materials list to our students alone is not enough to adequately represent the realities of the francophone world the field claims to introduce to students, nor is it sufficient to equip them with the critical thinking tools they need to navigate a world rife with inequalities stemming from specific historical contexts. Adding "diverse" content to a syllabus is not decolonial work. Decolonial work requires a teaching corps that is adequately equipped with the theoretical and historical grounding necessary to teach the complexities of francophone studies.

Public Digital Scholarship: Visual Citation and In-situ Intervention

Public scholarship by credentialed academics is in fact a crucial part of the needed work to change minds in the broader public and also within the academy—we are all someone's broader public. I share here two examples of scholar-practitioners in France doing this work in the immediate context of uprisings and demonstrations for racial justice in 2020: Françoise Vergès and Raoul Peck.

In June 2020 Vergès collaborated in a short video for the page *Histoires Crépues* regarding debates around removing statues in mainland France of

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[1] All translations are my own unless noted otherwise.

enslavers and those who participated in the colonial project (published on Facebook 16 June 2020[2]). *Histoires Crépues* has existed as a platform on YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram since March 2020. Their content mostly consists of short, fast-paced video clips illustrating lesser-known stories of colonial history and Black histories in the francophone world, using informal, accessible language, and the occasional emoji to get the point across. At the same time, the information presented is thoroughly researched and clear. The "About" section of their YouTube channel clearly states their goals: "le but est de rendre accessible des anecdotes d'histoires coloniales pour que tout le monde puisse s'approprier cette histoire" [the goal is to make anecdotes of colonial histories accessible so that everyone can claim ownership of this history] (*Histoires crépues* 2021).

In the June 2020 video, twenty-first-century technology functions as an effective visual citation strategy. While Joseph-Simon Gallieni has been remembered and glorified for achievements during the First World War, his role in the colonial invasion is highlighted on screen with images evoking his military campaign in Vietnam (the cover of his memoir, *Trois colonnes au Tonkin 1894–95* [*Three Columns in the Tonkin 1894–95*]) and the conquest of Madagascar and his role in instituting forced labor (a contemporary portrait of Gallieni with the map of Madagascar). Vergès argues that these historical facts are disqualifying factors for public memorialization.

Vergès is seen here putting into practice the work theorized in the aforementioned *Décoloniser les arts!* [*Decolonize the Arts!*] edited volume, which seeks to help the public to "apprendre à voir de nouveau" [to learn to see with new eyes] (120). In this work of public-facing scholarship, she guides the viewers—whether students, scholars, or members of the general public—to look at objects in the city in new ways to reveal the colonial legacies that are placed in plain sight. This puts the theoretical work of decolonization into practice, creating both a resource for educators and a model for how to engage with our peers by speaking in accessible language while citing our sources—sources that often come from our own surroundings. While the video itself could be used as classroom material in a unit on colonial history or current debates revisiting the appropriateness of statues dedicated to figures involved in the slave trade or colonial conquest, I think the model of Vergès's engagement with the historical object of the statue, "hidden" in plain sight in central Paris, is also instructive. It is possible to look with new eyes many different artifacts of the discipline

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[2] https://www.facebook.com/108973224109699/videos/609976029621741

or materials used in the classroom. Even if an object or text is not removed, there are ways of examining it that can reveal the more complex reality behind it that may be linked to this colonial history that is often kept silent in the classroom.

Because of its short length and use of visual communication, Vergès's video can also be used in the undergraduate classroom at an intermediate language course or an advanced-level course focused on contemporary France or francophone postcolonial studies. At either level, this text facilitates work on the ACTFL Standards of Comparisons and Connections: US-based students will also be familiar with debates about statues and public memory, and are directed to find similarities and contrasts between the historical figures represented by these statues and the arguments presented for or against keeping them in place (The National Standards Collective Board 2015). Pre-viewing work done before class can include research on Gallieni and on the location of the statue in Paris for advanced students; for intermediate students a short article in the French press about recent statue debates would be more appropriate assigned reading. The video can be viewed in class. For intermediate students the focus would be on comprehension, aided by the engaging visuals described above. For advanced students a more engaged discussion and critique of the visual grammar and citation practices of the clip would be appropriate. At both levels, the video can serve as a model for further student work in the form of oral presentations (live or pre-recorded on-site as *Histoires crépues* does). For advanced students, this could involve individual research on another present-day artifact of French colonial culture; for intermediate students, the model could be used for a more immediate, tangible object on campus or in their home community.

Op-ed to Print Essay

Another timely intervention during the 2020 summer uprisings came from filmmaker Raoul Peck, in his op-ed "J'étouffe" [I Can't Breathe], which first appeared online with *Le 1* on 17 June and was then quickly republished as a standalone essay in August 2020 with the publishing house Éditions Denoël. Raoul Peck, former Minister of Culture of Haiti, has directed a number of critically acclaimed documentary and fiction films with a Black internationalist point of view, and his work has been distributed widely including on US platforms like HBO. His political engagement and his desire to share these uncovered stories with a wide

public in an accessible way are evident in the range of topics and the formats he chooses. Publishing this long-form essay first with an open-access online publication demonstrates a similar gesture, to react in a timely way to a large-scale event but on an individual, human scale, and in a way that is accessible to a maximum number of readers. Now based in Paris, Peck examines in this essay his own reactions to French responses to the murder of George Floyd and the subsequent uprisings, describing feeling as if "Quelque chose s'était brisé. Je venais de comprendre que mon histoire avec la France était terminée" [Something had been broken. I had just come to realize that my personal history with France had ended] (2020, 1). His opening lines immediately invite the reader to think of the uprisings that were sparked by one event in Minneapolis as connected to a transnational struggle for Black liberation, while also asking the reader to think of the human toll of police violence on individual lives, focusing on his own personal history.

Later in the essay Peck uncovers for the reader "traces" of these histories that have led to his broken state. The middle of the essay delivers the most damning punch, and perhaps the most illuminating, to understand individual responsibilities within institutions founded on white supremacy such as the North American university:

> Tout est donc lié. Les policiers qui ont mutilé l'anus de Théo L. ne connaissent probablement pas les détails de cette 'grande histoire', mais, intuitivement, ils ont compris qu'il fallait taper fort. Les policiers qui ont étouffé Adama Traoré ne savent pas vraiment d'où vient la France, mais ils se sentent diffusément, quelque part au fond d'eux-mêmes, qu'ils font partie des 'vainqueurs', alors ils frappent. Les policiers qui ont traqué comme des biches dans une chasse à courre deux adolescents, Bouna Traouré (quinze ans) et Zyed Benna (dix-sept ans), pour que, transis de peur, ils meurent électrocutés à l'intérieur d'une armoire de transformateur électrique, n'ont pas la moindre idée des ramifications de la 'grande' histoire avec leur hallali suburbain. Mais qu'à cela ne tienne: 'Nom de Dieu, faire partie des gagnants! Y a que ça!' Ils soupçonnent vaguement qu'ils font le travail pour ceux qui ont planqué leur argent aux Îles Vierges, mais ils ne sont pas sûrs. (20)
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> [Everything is therefore connected. The police officers who mutilated Théo L.'s anus probably do not know the details of this 'larger history,' but they intuitively understood that they should strike hard. The police officers who strangled Adama Traoré do not really know where France comes from, but they feel vaguely, somewhere deep down, that they are one of the 'conquerors,' so they strike. The police officers who hunted down two ado-

lescents, Bouna Traouré (15 years old) and Zyed Benna (17 years old), like deer, ending up seized by fear and dying by electrocution inside a transformer substation, do not have the slightest idea of the ramifications of the "larger" history with their suburban hunter's call. But never mind all that: "My God, being on the side of the conquerors! That's what matters!" They vaguely suspect that they are working for people who have stashed their money in the Virgin Islands, but they aren't sure.]

By reminding readers of three of the most visible incidents of police brutality in France directed at Black and Brown men and boys over the last two decades (2005, 2016, 2017), Peck condemns those who decline to engage with questions of state violence against people of color. Peck does not think that the individual officers who committed these acts of violence against Théo L., Adama Traoré, or Bouna Traouré and Zyed Benna were necessarily conscious of the "grande histoire" or "d'où vient la France"— that is, the long history of French empire and its aftereffects—in the moment. It is, however, impossible to separate these individual incidents of brutality and the larger colonial history that remains inaudible to many most of the time and that empowers the state to act in this way with impunity. Peck makes clear the rhetorical and theoretical alignment of colonial conquerors then and those in positions of power within a white supremacist society now: "Tout est donc lié" (20).

Everything is connected. We could also consider that as scholars and faculty members we police our discipline: police the history and the canon in our curricula, police what a student or a faculty member historically has looked like, police the acceptable tone, form, or genre that knowledge production might take. I detect a similar gesture toward a desire to be on the side of the winners, as Peck articulates here, that must be identified, acknowledged, and examined in our discipline. While there will always be debates about what should be included or excluded from a curriculum or for an assessment, it is important to approach these discussions using a framework that strives for equity and justice while recognizing that we are operating within a field that is permeated by the legacies of colonialism.

Peck's essay would be most suited to an advanced-level course focused on contemporary French culture or francophone postcolonial studies. Leading up to this reading, students would need context on, for example, the 2005 uprisings in France following the deaths of Traoré and Benna, to appreciate the rhetorical devices the author uses to build his argument. Objectives for class sessions on this essay would also be to improve student

competency in the Connections and Comparisons ACTFL Standards (The National Standards Collective Board 2015). By discussing the rhetorical strategies the author uses to build his argument, advanced students would also learn to analyze essays as literary genre.

CONCLUSIONS

While I have focused in this essay on more public forms of scholarship and knowledge production, I would like to close by bringing this essay back to the academy specifically, which is the focus of this volume. I find Lorgia García-Peña's remarks on "Decolonizing the University" from a June 2020 interview in the *Boston Review* instructive for French and francophone studies specifically, though she speaks with regard to ethnic studies broadly considered. The interview focuses on the state of ethnic studies in the neoliberal university, particularly in the atmosphere of heightened crisis and austerity specific to 2020. The interviewer asks what the consequences of eliminating ethnic studies might be, to which García-Peña responds by describing the irony of universities' use of images of a diverse student body and faculty corps in promotional materials for institutions that have been built on the exclusion of those who are not white or well-off. These historic exclusions permeate every part of the university. García-Peña observes

> …[t]he hypervisibility of people of color in promotional materials for universities, on their webpages, to highlight how in these liberal corporations we're really trying to be inclusive, but that project of inclusion has never actually gotten into the structures of the university, into how academic departments are constructed, into what we read, into what the syllabus reflects, and into how we value the intellectual production of people whom we're supposedly trying to include. (2020)

She continues, connecting this intellectual marginalization to very concrete consequences in policy and society:

> We have, for example, an entire class of politicians, most of whom are educated at elite institutions, who cannot accurately talk about race or about people of color as agents of history or as producers of knowledge. We are only spoken about as statistics in relation to social problems such as incarceration, illegal immigration, or poverty. (2020)

The field of French and Francophone studies needs to recognize this as well—it needs to do decolonial work in the discipline, as well as ways to find connection and work in solidarity with our colleagues in other disciplines, languages, within race and ethnic studies, and with whomever we can find common ground. Indeed, everything is connected: French and francophone studies are not immune to the need to examine curricula through a lens of equity and justice, and equally faculty can find connection outside of the discipline to build coalitions for better institutional support to do this work. This solidarity is ever more important now for both the generative intellectual work that it produces and strengthening alliances in the face of increasing austerity that is sure to reverberate well beyond the pandemic's early days in 2020, while at the same time faculty face urgent mandates to do better for their colleagues and students.

How, then, can we move forward? Conferences and working groups like the Diversity, Decolonization, and the French Curriculum collective are definitely part of the solution. But there is also a need for work outside of a specifically pedagogical end goal or at least work that considers that the students who need to learn decolonial approaches to our discipline are not *only* the undergraduates in our classrooms but very often our colleagues around the faculty meeting conference table. Lily Saint and Bhakti Shringapure caution against letting decolonizing work devolve into "facile tokenism" with syllabi "sprinkled" with a handful of so-called diverse authors in a "diluted approach towards decolonizing our curricula." They call for action at an institutional level: robust funding for "marginalized literatures" and a "reckon[ing] with the deeply embedded epistemological biases inherent in curricular design. Individual departments must be willing to alter their definition of diversity itself, to decolonize diversity, if we may" (2020). There is thus a labor and budget issue, as García-Peña also raises above. And this labor of building coalitions across campus and across institutions must not burden just those who suffer the most from systemic oppression and discrimination. It is a question of equity and justice to ensure the burden of decolonial work does not fall solely on colleagues (and students) from minoritized groups, work that is often unpaid and under-recognized. This labor happens in classrooms and office hours, but also in teach-ins perhaps, directed at our peers. Of course, a teach-in only works if there are learners who show up, physically or virtually, with a willingness to feel discomfort with re-examining *idées reçues* from our research training and pedagogical practices. It is difficult work, and difficult at times to find co-conspirators.

I want to end by holding up the call to *ethical* action that Hanétha Vété-Congolo gave attendees in her keynote at the first DDFC conference in November 2020. She reminds us of the often invisible or undervalued labor of faculty of color who have been doing this decolonizing work for a long time without the support structures in place. She calls for radicalism to make real change: "radical will, radical engagement, radical listening."[3] Faculty indeed need to practice radical listening to make the colonial past and present audible.

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CHAPTER 6

Blackness and Social Justice in the French Classroom

Marda Messay

In his introduction to *Nouvelles Francophones: Nouvelles du continent africain, de la Réunion et du Canada* [*Francophone Short Stories: Short Stories from the African Continent, Reunion and Canada*] Stéphane Guinoiseau states: "Mettre en voix le chagrin des muets, nous faire voir les invisibles. En cela, les écrivains francophones ont une place à part entière dans la littérature française contemporaine" [To voice the sorrow of the silent, to make us see the invisible. In this, French-speaking writers have a proper place in contemporary French literature] (2014, 6). Accordingly, these authors hold an important place in any French program. This chapter focuses on an upper-intermediate course "Francophone Short Stories and Films", created in 2018 at Simmons University, a predominantly white, private, and women-centered institution with undergraduate enrollment of less than 2000.[1] It is designed to expand students' exposure

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[1] This chapter describes the most recent offering of the course in Spring 2021 as it includes the materials and assignments added since its creation in 2018.

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to the diversity and complexity of the Francophone world. Before taking this course, students are mainly exposed to the Francophone world through authentic materials (literary readings, video clips, films, etc.) provided by the instructor to supplement the minimal cultural content of textbooks used in Elementary and Intermediate courses.[2] It is also designed to diversify course offerings in terms of content and level. The French program is small with a handful of majors/minors and two full-time faculty members, which limits the courses that can be added to the curriculum and explains the breadth and depth of the course described in this chapter. The course's objectives include (a) to gain an understanding of the historical, cultural, and political elements that shaped the Francophone world and to expand the students' critical understanding of the Francophone world, (b) the ability to read critically, analyze literature and films effectively, (c) to communicate ideas about the Francophone world orally and in writing. To accomplish these objectives, I use short stories and films from the Francophone World that focus on Black experiences and explore topics such as colonialism and its legacies, racism, migration, social class, state and ethnic violence, gender inequality, and multicultural France. In this chapter, I will demonstrate how these short stories and films and the related assignments allow students to contend with the legacies of oppression and to deepen their understanding of issues of inequalities, intersectionality, inclusion, and social justice within the Francophone context and beyond. As we shall see, these short stories and films position Blackness and social justice as part of the French curriculum, transform students' perspectives and engagement with the Francophone world, and compel them to reimagine or reconceptualize the French classroom.

Content

The benefits of using short stories and films in language pedagogy are well-documented. They are considered authentic materials that can be used to enhance students' skills and knowledge of the target language and culture (Sturm 2012; Badenas Roig 2018). Short stories are brief (in comparison to a novel) and focus on one character in all their complexity or a relatively small group of characters and their interactions with each other

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[2] For instance, in FREN 201, students watch Roschedy Zem's *Chocolat* [*All Out*] (2016), a film about the first Black stage performer in France, and engage in conversations about race in France.

and/or with the world, making them ideal for the intermediate level. While films are added into the course for their pedagogical utility as the audio-visual component helps students understand the content, they are also included in the course as another medium of Black expression. For example, one cannot discount the visual of Black bodies in a raw and oppressive context like those working in sugar cane plantations in Euzhan Palcy's *Rue Cases-Nègres* [*Sugar Cane Alley*] (1983) or when one of the main characters of the film, the wise Médouze recounts in a relatively short close-up scene the violence of the slave trade, the violence of liberation and the continued exploitation of the plantation system where the "boss" replaced the "master".[3] Furthermore, the black and white cinematography of films like Ousmane Sembène's *La noire de …* [*Black Girl*] (1966) or Abd al Malik's *Qu'Allah bénisse la France!* [*May Allah Bless France!*] (2014) adds a necessary and incredibly rich layer to discussions of race relations or white European exclusivity.[4] Lastly, the inclusion and the centering of voices that speak and provide audio-visual testimony of Black experiences allow students to act as witnesses and to think of and question their positionalities. For instance, Renée Bergan and Mark Schuller's *Poto Mitan: Haitian Women Pillars of Global Economy* (2009), a documentary on the feminization of poverty in Haiti, neoliberal globalization, worker exploitation, violence against women, and their resistance, provides a useful tool for students to engage with the realities of Haitian women and to reconsider their perspectives on power structures and global justice.

For the purpose of this chapter, I will focus on a few examples. This chapter outlines examples for colonialism and its legacies, Black women and intersectionality, migrancy, marginalization of ethnic and racial groups in France, and police violence. Given the students' intermediate level and to maximize their understanding of these texts, most of the readings and films are accompanied by a simplified historical, cultural, or political explanation. The students are also asked to prepare broad questions for class discussions, such as

[3] *Rue Cases-Nègres* is set in 1930s Martinique and is the story of José, a young boy, and his grandmother, M'Man Tine, who is determined to save her grandson from the sugar cane plantations by doing everything she can so that he can acquire an education.

[4] *La noire de …* is the story of Diouana, a Senegalese woman who moves to the South of France to work for a French family. While she is eager for this new life in France, she is mistreated and isolated. *Qu'Allah bénisse la France!* is based on Abd Al Malik's memoir and is about his youth in the banlieues of Strasbourg, his passion for music, and his conversion to Sufism.

- Discutez du titre. Quelle est la signification du titre? Quelles idées ou expériences sont évoquées par le titre? [Discuss the title. What is the meaning of the title? What ideas or experiences are evoked by the title?]
- Qui est le personnage principal? Décrivez et discutez de son état psychologique, son statut social, son rapport avec les autres etc. … est-ce que le personnage est stéréotypé, marginal etc. …? [Who is the main character? Describe and discuss his psychological state, his social status, his interaction with others etc. … is the character stereotypical, marginal etc. …?]
- Quels sont les thèmes importants dans le texte? Y a-t-il des phrases clés ou passages clés qui soulignent bien l'idée principale du texte ? Choisissez deux et expliquez. [What are the important themes in the text? Are there any key phrases or key passages that emphasize the idea of the text? Choose two and explain.]

Students are also asked to record a 2:30-minute video or audio clip with Flipgrid, an online audio-visual discussion platform, so that they have the opportunity to reflect on the content before engaging with it in class. They are simply asked to pick an aspect of the content and present their thoughts and arguments using the text. There is no assigned question for the recording so that students can engage with the text without restrictions and develop their critical thinking skills. This ultimately culminates in increased participation in classroom discussions. Feedback from students underscores an appreciation for the variety of texts and the opportunity to discuss, especially contemporary issues.

Colonialism and Its Legacies

Given the course's focus on Blackness, we first consider questions of colonialism and its legacies. Students read Patrice Nganang's *La terre du café, lettre à mon grand-père à propos de la France qui ment* [*The Land of Coffee, Letter to my Grandfather about France who Lies*], from the collection *Dernières nouvelles du colonialisme* [*Latest Short Stories on Colonialism*] (2006).[5] The collection was conceived as a response to *La loi du 23 février 2005* (Ranaivoson 2006). The law not only sought to recognize the work

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[5] All translations are mine except when a published translation is available.

accomplished in the colonies, but it also wanted it acknowledged in the curriculum:

> Les programmes de recherches universitaires accordent à l'histoire de la présence française outre-mer, notamment en Afrique du Nord, la place qu'elle mérite. Les programmes scolaires reconnaissent en particulier le rôle positif de la présence française outre-mer, notamment en Afrique du Nord, et accordent à l'histoire et aux sacrifices des combattants de l'armée française issus de ces territoires la place éminente à laquelle ils ont droit. ("La loi" 2005)
>
> [University research programs give the history of the French presence overseas, particularly in North Africa, the place it deserves. School curricula recognize in particular the positive role of the French presence overseas, particularly in North Africa, and grant to the history and sacrifices of French army combatants from these territories the eminent place to which they are entitled.]

As such, the short stories included in the collection engage students not only in conversations about colonialism and race but also in thinking about how or whose perspective/story is amplified and whose is erased. Nganang's short story is in the form of a letter written by a grandson living in France to his dead grandfather. In this letter, the grandson recalls his grandfather's life and criticizes how the colonizers imposed the monoculture of coffee in the West of Cameroon and how it negatively affected the land, the people, their bodies, the culture, the language, and the generations that followed. He also criticizes France's silence and "selective memory" (Raharimanana 2006, 5–24). The students recognized and analyzed all these different layers, practices, and legacies of colonialism.

In order to provide the necessary background information and the terminology they would need for the discussion, students are also assigned an episode from the podcast *Isolation Termique* of C.A.A.N (Coordination. Action.Autonome.Noire) on colonialism ("Colonialisme" 2020). Students are simply asked to take notes on the podcast, paying particular attention to the vocabulary used (e.g., conquête des corps [conquest of bodies], anéantissement [destruction], colonisation de peuplement [settlement], civiliser [civilize], etc.). This not only helps students build the vocabulary necessary, but it also further develops their ability to listen and extract the relevant information. Before the classroom discussion, I play Kery James' *Lettre à la République* [*Letter to the Republic*] (2012) as it also offers a virulent criticism of France, its memory of the past, its exploitation of its

colonies, and its treatment of second-generation immigrants in France. Students are asked to focus on the visual and on the repetition of key phrases or words. The video also includes subtitles in English, and although there are some translation mistakes, it is more than adequate for the students' comprehension. Students draw connections between James' song and Nganang's short story and the visual of the figure of Marianne, who appears in the music video intermittently surrounded by either guns or handcuffs, screaming and held by barbed wire, adds additional layers for discussions.

We continue with a couple of more works to solidify the students' understanding of the legacies of colonialism with stories such as Gary Victor's *La page blanche de la colonisation!* [*The White Page of Colonization!*], from the same collection, which is the story of a Haitian writer who is taken into custody by UN soldiers for a traffic accident and realizes the extent to which Haiti is still "colonized" (Raharimanana 2006, 229–238). Students also read Marlene Daut's "When France Extorted Haiti – The Greatest Heist in History" (2021) for the necessary historical context. This short story was particularly relevant given the 2021 protests in Haiti and the photos and stories that were circulating, which in some cases were perpetuating racist stereotypes about Haiti and Haitians. Rather than show the photos in class, I incorporate bright and vibrant Haitian paintings into the class to offer a different vision of Haiti. As Danticat states in *Out of Chaos, An Artist's Journey in Haiti*, Haitian artists use their art as a "kind of dream, as a kind of way to manifest a better world for themselves" (2019). However, I encourage the students to do their own research and use what they learned in this class to look at the images and the content critically.[6]

Perhaps one of the most challenging readings from the collection is Alain Mabanckou's *Propos abracadabrants d'un colonisé* [*The Absurd Remarks of a Colonized*], in which the narrator addresses the benefits of colonialism with sarcasm and uses "Y a que du positif!" [Nothing but positive things!] repeatedly (Raharimanana 2006).[7] It is a demanding reading for students because of the sarcasm and because within those nine

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[6] I will be including Michelle St. James' "Racist Stereotypes About Haiti in the Media Dehumanize Haitians" (2021) in the next offering of this course.

[7] This translation was proposed by the editors.

pages, there are references to Mobutu, Franz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, the myth of *Nos ancêtres les Gaulois* [*Our ancestors the Gauls*], Patrice Lumumba, Dany Laferrière's *Comment faire l'amour avec un Nègre sans se fatiguer* [*How to Make Love to a Negro Without Getting Tired*] (1985), "Y'a bon Banania"["sho' good eatin'"], les Tirailleurs Sénégalais [The Senegalese infantrymen], Yambo Ouologuem's *Le devoir de violence* [*Bound to Violence*] (1968), just to name a few (133–142).[8] The text expands the students' knowledge of Black experiences outside of the US and allows me to center Black stories and perspectives. As Cyn Awori Othieno and Annette Davis argue:

> bypassing the omnipresence of hegemonic North American Blackness is an inherently political act. The possibility of Black narratives not merely existing but being amplified in other territories than the United States is crucial to the future of Black representation. The acknowledgement of nuance, context and our respective colonial legacies is a revolutionary goal if we wish to value all Black narratives across the diaspora. (2019, 52)

A glossary is provided to help students with the breadth of information covered. For example,

- **Aimé Césaire:** poète, homme politique et un des fondateurs de la Négritude (mouvement littéraire et politique—Selon Césaire, "La négritude est la simple reconnaissance du fait d'être noir et l'acceptation de ce fait, de notre destin de noir, de notre histoire et de notre culture" (cité dans Senghor 1971, 6). En 1950, il a publié *Le Discours sur le colonialisme*. Une des parties les plus importantes: "… À mon tour de poser une équation: colonisation = chosification …" (23).[9]

  [poet, politician and one of the founders of Négritude (a literary and political movement—According to Césaire, "Negritude is the simple recognition of being black and the acceptance of this fact, of our destiny as Black people, of our history and of our culture" (quoted

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[8] "Y'a bon Banania" is a racist slogan from an advertisement for a breakfast drink. The slogan, which was in "pidgin" (Black colonial vernacular) French, was used on caricatures of a smiling Senegalese infantryman. The translation "sho' good eatin'" comes from Charles Lam Markmann's version of Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1986, 85).

[9] I quote the entire passage in the glossary (Césaire 1950, 23)

in Senghor 1971, 6). In 1950, he published *the Discourse on Colonialism*. One of the most important parts: "… My turn to state an equation: Colonization: 'thing-ification' …"]

BLACK WOMEN AND INTERSECTIONALITY

We also explore racism with Fatou Diome's *Le visage de l'emploi* [*The Face of Employment*] (2001), which is the story of Géraldine, an educated immigrant in France who finds a job as a babysitter for a French family, The Dupont, and is constantly subjected to their racism. The way they refer to Géraldine as "ça" [it] at the beginning or the infantilizing language they continuously use, as well as the passage at the end of the text—"Depuis que Jean-Charles (the father) sait que j'ai lu Descartes, il devine aussi que les fesses cambrées et chocolatées peuvent être confortables" [Since Jean-Charles learned that I read Descartes, he also surmises that arched and brown buttocks can be comfortable] (Diome 78)—opens a space for discussions on Black bodies, language, class, dehumanization, exploitation, and the hypersexualization of Black women. I expand these conversations with Amandine Gay's 2018 documentary *Ouvrir la voix* [*Speak Up*], as well as an episode of *Isolation termique* [*Thermal Isolation*] on Afrofeminism ("Afroféminisme" 2020) as "Afrofeminists in France have been building resistance against patriarchal, racist, capitalist, ableist, colonial French society by any and every means necessary" (Othieno and Davis 2019, 46).[10] I also include selections from *AfroTrans* (2021), a collection of poems, stories, interviews, essays by Black trans people published by Cases Rebelles. We discuss Kellysha Descieux's *Rage de vivre* [*Rage to Live*] in which she discusses her Black, Trans and Caribbean identity as well as the racism, the transphobia, the sexism, and the transmisogyny she faced (2021, 216–217). Students were especially affected by her poem, *Femme trans noire* [*Black Trans Woman*] and its use of "Tu dis que je …" [you say that I …] and "je dis que je … " [I say that I …] and the refrain "Noire est ma peau / femme est mon âme / trans est mon corps" [Black is my skin / woman is my soul / trans is my body] (218–219). These readings allow students to further contend with issues of intersectionality, objectification, dehumanization, and fetishization.[11]

[10] *Ouvir la Voix* documents the experiences of Black women living in France and Belgium.

[11] *Ouvrir la voix* and the selections from *AfroTrans* are examples of additions made to the 2018 version of the course. I continue to look for additional materials and additional themes to include in the course, including other marginalized sexualities.

Migrancy

After the midterm project (discussed below in the section on Assessment), the students analyze and discuss a broad range of topics, such as state and ethnic violence, and migrancy. It gives students the opportunity to engage with what is typically misrepresented or stereotyped and it allows me to center what is typically relegated to the margins. For the week on migrancy, students watch Moussa Touré's 2012 film *La Pirogue* [*The Pirogue*], the story of a group of African migrants and their perilous sea journey to Spain. They also read Velibor Čolić's *L'exil c'est avoir un accent partout y compris chez soi* [*Exile is Having an Accent Everywhere, Including at Home*] from the 2018 collection *Osons la fraternité: Les écrivains aux côtés des migrants* [*Dare Brotherhood: Writers Alongside Migrants*].[12] In the introduction to the collection, Patrick Chamoiseau and Michel Le Bris explain the importance of engaging with the stories that center the Other so that

> nous puissions renouveler un peu les bases de notre esprit, conjurer les entropies de la conscience, poursuivre notre interrogation sur ce que peut l'humain, sur ce que nous pouvons imaginer des devenirs du monde, sur la finalité de nos organisations, sur la cartographie de nos irresponsabilités, de nos manques et ressources, sur l'ampleur des dépassements qu'il nous faudra oser . . . [. . . we can renew the bases of our mind a little, ward off the entropies of consciousness, continue our questioning of what humans can do, on what we can imagine of the future of the world, on the purpose of our organizations, on the mapping of our irresponsibilities, of our shortages and resources, on the transcendences that we will have to dare …]. (2018, 14)

Ultimately, my objectives, which echo those expressed by Chamoiseau and Le Bris, are to foster a concern for social justice and for students to think critically of the world. By having students engage with stories about the Other and providing them the necessary historical and geopolitical contexts, students develop an awareness of interconnections across national borders. It also encourages students to examine these issues beyond the

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[12] In this short story, a narrator reports his conversations with a group of women about their difficult experiences of exile and his own reflections and thoughts about exile more broadly.

French classroom, whether it is simply approaching stories on social media with a critical eye, participating in outreach programs, or reflecting beyond their immediate community in whatever path they take.

Marginalization of Ethnic and Racial Groups in France and Police Violence

The course ends with a couple of weeks on the minoritization and marginalization of ethnic and racial groups in France, including the police violence to which they are subjected. Students watch *Qu'Allah bénisse la France* [*May Allah Bless France!*] (2014) and are asked to take notes on a video on police violence in France, "À l'air libre: Violences policières, racisme: 'un puissant déni'" [In the open air: police violance, racism: 'a powerful denial'] (2020), in which journalist David Perrotin and Professor Mame-Fatou Niang discuss the violent beating of Michel Zecler by police officers in 2020. Similarly to Nganang's short story, I pair the content with Kery James' *Blues* ft. Féfé (2020), a song about anti-Black racism in France. The lyrics and the video offer a space to discuss France's colonial past, racism, and police violence:

> Tu peux prendre une balle dans le cou quand tu t'appelles Fofana / Ton assassin plaidera la légitime défense / Pour eux t'es qu'un enfant illégitime de France / Ils trouvent à peu près convenable de t'appeler bamboula / Ils asphyxient l'Afrique et ils s'demandent c'qu'on fout là / Quand il ramène une coupe du monde un soir de juillet / Là, l'homme noir est français. (James 2020)
>
> [You can take a bullet in the neck when your name is Fofana / Your murderer will plead self-defense / For them you are just an illegitimate child from France / They find it more or less appropriate to call you bamboula / They asphyxiate Africa and they wonder what we do there / When he brings back a world cup one evening in July / There, the black man is French.]

The lyrics are close-captioned, and students are asked to focus on the repetition of words and the visual (the use of colors, the clothes they wore, their movements, and the images projected). All together, they compel students to think critically about stereotypes and injustices within the US and outside of the US, and to think of social justice in a global sense. Furthermore, the last short story of the semester, Mohamed Razane's *Garde à vue* [*In Police Custody*] from the collection *Chroniques d'une*

société annoncée [*Chronicles of a Society Foretold*] (2007), which tells the story of a young Arab man, encourages students to think about other groups that were minoritized and marginalized within France and other cultures that are relegated to the margins of French society.

Assessment

In addition to classroom discussions, the Flipgrid submissions, and written assignments on texts discussed in class, students engage with these topics in depth with their midterm project and their final project, which consist of an oral presentation and a critical essay on a text not covered in class. Both assignments are the most relevant assessment for their understandings of issues of inequalities, intersectionality, inclusion, and social justice.

For the midterm, students pick a short story from a curated selection that specifically focuses on colonialism, racism, and other related topics covered before the midterm. I meet with each student for about 30 minutes to refine their thesis and go through their arguments. While the project requires students to use their reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills in French, it also develops their ability to recognize and to analyze systems of oppression. For instance, one student presented and wrote a paper on Véronique Tadjo's *La nounou* [*The Nanny*], from *Les chaînes de l'esclavage: Archipel de fictions* [*The Chains of Slavery: Archipelago of Fictions*] (1998), which was meant to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the abolition of slavery in France and its colonies. The student analyzed the anonymity of all the characters, especially the nanny, and demonstrated how the exploitation of the nanny and the dehumanization of the nanny by the parents and the children was a "modern" form of slavery. Working on these stories independently, as well as recognizing, analyzing, and explaining the oppression depicted in the text allows students to think critically of power structures. It makes them aware of inequities outside their world; it undoubtedly sparks questions and reflections on racism, inequities, or legacies of slavery in the US and hopefully fosters a concern for and an interest in social justice in the US and beyond. As Lee Anne Bell explains in "Critical Teaching/ Learning about Racism through Story and the Arts", the arts provide "a realm where charged topics can be encountered and engaged on an embodied level and thus stimulate learning". They also can disrupt by "helping us question normative presumptions about the world" and "helping us envision new possibilities for challenging and changing oppressive circumstances" (2019, 14).

For their final project, students pick a Francophone film from the choices available on streaming services such as Kanopy or at the university library. Most of the choices are related to topics covered after the midterm, like Mostefa Djadjam's 2002 film *Frontières* [*Borders*], which is about a group of African migrants and their perilous journey into Europe. They could also pick themes not covered in class such as Ousmane Sembène's film *Moolaadé* (2004), a film on female genital mutilation. In addition, as 10% of the course included works by writers or filmmakers from the Maghreb or of Maghrebi descent, they could also choose films like Ismaël Ferroukhi's *Le Grand Voyage* (2004) [*The Great Journey*], which is the story of a Westernized son and his Moroccan father who embark on a road trip to Mecca. Analyzing these varied films independently, with some support of course (30 minutes meetings), but also listening to other students' presentations encourages students to seek other stories and other films, to ultimately broaden their social encounters beyond the classroom and beyond their world. It also allows them to apply the framework developed in the course and engage with a text in a manner that centers critical analysis and considers issues of positionalities, power, and social justice.

Conclusion

While the course participates in a reconceptualization of the French classroom and the French curriculum with its focus on social justice, it has also underscored the need to improve the diversity of learners in the course. The contributions, the engagement of a diverse group of students, and the inclusion of different ways of thinking, of being, of seeing the world would enrich the class in every way. Our French language classes, especially our upper courses, tend to be predominantly white. This underrepresentation has not been easy to fix, especially given all the structural realities and inequities of the educational system. As Uju Anya and L. J. Randolph Jr. stated in "Diversifying Language Educators and Learners": "African Americans do not participate in K–12 and postsecondary language education at rates comparable to Whites and other students of color, especially after first- or second-year courses, when their presence drastically declines or they disappear entirely" (2019, 24). In addition, I think that there is also a broad misconception about the possibilities of language classes, where our capacities are narrowed to developing language proficiency and to its applicability in the students' chosen profession. The top academic

programs at my university are nursing, psychology, pre-med, biology, and physical therapy. Most do not see the extent to which we offer an additional space for students to learn and apply a framework that centers intersectionality and social justice, and that engages students in questioning and challenging stereotypes, positionalities, and hegemonic structures. I hope the creation of more courses that exemplify inclusiveness at different levels and that cultivate a socially engaged global citizen will expand how others imagine the possibilities of a French classroom.

Students in "Francophone Short Stories and Films" not only engage in critical analysis and critical self-reflection, they also cultivate and acquire a way of engaging with texts in French that centers Blackness in the French classroom and the French curriculum. Ultimately, the course enhances students' awareness about inequities and injustices beyond their world and encourages them to be open to encounters outside their world. As Felice Blake concluded in "Why Black Lives Matter in the Humanities",

> We read not simply to marvel at the creativity of literariness, but to do so in ways that acknowledge that power as it articulates new ways of being, knowing, and engaging. Race-conscious reading practices point us toward a reorientation and transformation of the humanities and of the university itself. (2019, 324–325)

While the course may not have a service-learning component in which students may take critical action, it still awakens their engagement and the potential to disrupt and challenge the status quo that perpetuates or does not properly address the inequities of our world, which seems so crucial in this moment of a global struggle for Black lives and Justice.

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Honoring Native American Voices in the Francophone Studies Classroom: Restoring Oral Testimonies to Their Rightful Place in the Story of the Early Modern Americas

Charlotte Daniels and Katherine Dauge-Roth

Bowdoin is a small and selective liberal arts college in Brunswick, Maine, with an increasingly diverse student body. It was founded in 1794 on the traditional territory of the Wabanaki.[1] Following the lead of our colleagues whose research and teaching focus most directly on post-colonial issues, in 2015 our "French" program became "Francophone Studies," reflecting a

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[1] Bowdoin currently has just under 2000 students of which 35% are "students of color." The class of 2025 includes 40% students of color. 48% of students receive financial aid and the average aid package (including grants and work-study) is approximately $57,000. https://www.bowdoin.edu/ir/data/index.html.

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collective desire to transcend persistent and problematic disciplinary boundaries between the study of continental France and other French-speaking regions of the world. As a section, we committed to a global vision of our field, one that recognizes the many French-speaking areas of the world both in their specificities and as an ensemble. We rebuilt our curriculum from language-level courses through upper-level seminars, including two new "Introduction to Francophone Studies" survey courses, one of which we present in the following pages. From the outset, the authors would like to emphasize that the course and unit we present here would not have been possible without our colleague Hanétha Vété-Congolo's tireless visible and invisible work over the course of many years to bring about an epistemic shift in our department's curriculum. We are deeply grateful to both her and to our colleague Meryem Belkaïd for their leadership and crucial contributions to enriching and complicating ours and our students' understanding of the French-speaking world, without which this article and the perspective it promotes would not exist.

In the field of Francophone Studies, those of us whose research and teaching focus on earlier periods are facing the enormity of what had been left out of France-centered narratives and courses on the medieval and early modern periods: peoples, cultures, and traditions that, while very much a part of the story, have not been acknowledged as such. Though these actors and influences have always been present to some degree in French accounts of these eras, our access to them has been exclusively filtered through a colonial written tradition that intentionally frames them to perpetuate a fiction of European superiority.

Our reconfigured introductory survey course, "Spoken Word and Written Text," spans the period from the Middle Ages through the 1848 abolition of enslavement in the French Antilles. The course is, in many ways, an homage to Christiane Taubira, who introduced the law passed by the French National Assembly in 2001 recognizing the enslavement of and trade in Sub-Saharan Africans as crimes against humanity. Taubira, deeply aware that written knowledge about enslavement has its origins in the testimonies of men and women who profited from the slavery system, suggested a path for creating a broader and more truthful history. The Taubira law proposed a formal recognition of oral and archeological sources beyond the scope of the written archive. In particular, Article 2 emphasized the value of "coordination to allow dialogue between the written archives available in Europe and oral sources and archeological knowledge gathered in Africa, the Americas, the Caribbean, and all the

other territories where slavery had taken place" ("Loi Taubira").[2] Since the law's passage in 2001, more visibility has been given to what a broad variety of African and Caribbean sources—many of them oral—contribute to a more global history and to the dynamic potential that emerges when written and oral archives are placed into dialogue, each questioning and serving as a source of knowledge for the other. The resulting scholarship, much of it carried out by scholars whose ancestors personally bore the brunt of enslavement and colonial violence, is changing the way we tell the story of both France and the broader world. What Taubira encouraged for rethinking the role of enslavement and the slave trade is just as apt as we think about the medieval and early modern periods more broadly, and how we teach them. Taubira's call to incorporate the oral archive when telling the story of the Atlantic world challenges us to think more generally about what we in "literature" departments include and exclude as we build our syllabi.

We have been teaching "Spoken Word and Written Text" at Bowdoin College since fall 2016.[3] It is one of two chronologically organized "Introduction to Francophone Studies" surveys required to complete the major. Taught in French, it is designed for students who have had five semesters of college-level language or the equivalent, mostly first years and sophomores. In this course, students leave their grammar books behind and plunge into reading and listening to a broad selection of written and oral sources from across what is today the French-speaking world: tales, epics, poetry, theater, short stories, testimonials, essays, and a novel. The course moves chronologically through thematic units that foreground questions of identity, race, colonization, language, and power in historical and ideological context: the *Chanson de Roland* and the crusades, told from Arab and European perspectives; West-African oral traditions and the epic of Soundjata Keita; language, national identity, and empire in sixteenth-century France; French colonizers and Native Americans in North America; the enslavement and resistance of Sub-Saharan Africans in the French Antilles.[4] Throughout, students interrogate what sources and voices have traditionally been accounted for in both literature and history

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[2] All translations in this chapter are our own.

[3] For a more detailed presentation of the larger course structure, please see our "Globalizing the Early Literature Survey: Challenges and Rewards" (2019) and its accompanying online pedagogical dossier.

[4] Henceforth, we use the terms "Native American/s," "First Nation/s," as well as the adjectives "Indigenous" and "Native" to describe, in what are today the United States and

and how the inclusion of previously ignored perspectives changes everything. They deepen their understanding of the historical roots of the hierarchies, inequities, and ideas about differences that inform the French-speaking world today. This course also encourages students to reflect on these dynamics in relationship to their own positionality and lived experience. Course assignments include daily reading, listening, and collaborative annotation of texts; two short personal reflections (recorded orally or presented in writing); two essays based on close textual analysis; a group research presentation on a question or theme related to the course; and a final evaluation that includes short answers, analysis of quotations drawn from assigned sources; an argumentative essay or oral presentation based on the last unit of the course; and a final short personal reflection (recorded or written).[5]

The unit we present here, "First Nations and French Colonizers in North America," in keeping with Taubira's project, juxtaposes European colonial writing about the Indigenous people of what are today Québec and the northern United States with oral sources—age-old tales and contemporary testimonials—such that they both compliment and interrogate one another. Of particular importance in this conversation is our treasured collaboration with Executive Director of Maine-Wabanaki REACH Maria Girouard.[6] A member of the Penobscot nation, former tribal leader, Penobscot historian, author, educator, and environmental activist, Girouard has honored us regularly with her presence, her stories and personal testimony, and her vast knowledge of Wabanaki culture. The unit is made up of four class sessions:

Days One and Two: French colonial perspectives

- Excerpts of the *Relation of 1634* by Jesuit missionary Paul Le Jeune (1592–1664).

Canada, those whose ancestors first inhabited these territories. See detailed discussion of these terms and others in Dickason (2009, xii–xiii).

[5] To prepare for in-class discussions of texts, students use *Hypothesis* for collaborative annotation, open-source software that encourages them to share their reactions, interpretations, and research with each other and to teach and learn from each other. The annotated texts then become archived collective knowledge they can draw from in their written and oral assignments: https://web.hypothes.is/

[6] Maine Wabanaki Reach: https://www.mainewabanakireach.org/

- Article by Sara Melzer, "Une 'Seconde France'? Re-penser le paradigme 'classique' à partir de l'histoire oubliée de la colonisation française."

Day Three: Native heritage, traditions, experiences, and perspectives

- Article and video conference by Maria Girouard: "Penobscots et la montagne sacrée: K'taadn" and "Genocide and Maine: Shining the Light of Truth."
- In-class discussion with Maria Girouard.

Day Four: Colonial inheritances and Indigenous activism

- Canadian and American "Indian Schools," land claims disputes, and environmental preservation in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, discussed through newspaper articles, television reports, and continued reference to Maria Girouard's work.

In what follows, we provide an overview of the different parts of our unit, describing readings, videos, and assignments we have used to guide students to examine these oral and written sources from multiple perspectives, an important step toward decolonizing the study of the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries in the "French" classroom, especially with regard to the Americas.

Colonial Encounters: Jesuit *Relations*

Students begin the unit by reading excerpts from Jesuit missionary Paul Le Jeune's (1591–1664) *Relation de 1634* [*Relation of 1634*] that provides them access, from a European perspective, to on-the-ground interactions between First Nation peoples and new French arrivals.[7] In striking ways, the work links, events in continental France with what historian Sara Melzer has called "a second France": the French presence in the Americas that has been largely left out of the French literature classroom, but nonetheless deeply informed early modern French identity (Melzer 2008).

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[7] We are grateful to Sara Melzer, Micah True, and Ellen Welch for recommending this text, sharing sources, and providing helpful suggestions regarding teaching the *Relation*.

The Jesuits, who led the monarch's "civilizing mission" in "New France," converting Native Americans to the Catholic fold, sent lengthy narratives of their experiences among "the savages" back to France for publication and distribution. By the seventeenth century, *relations* of the sort written by Le Jeune had become a well-known and widely read genre, surpassing even novels in their popularity. These eagerly anticipated volumes appeared every year from 1632 to 1673 (Melzer 2008, 79) and had a profound influence on the French readers of the period. Even if they never set foot on land in the Americas, their voracious consumption of narratives created by travelers and missionaries like Le Jeune provided a sense of being there, of becoming part of the action among a community of "savages" who were a source of both fascination and fear. Safe in France, these armchair travelers internalized ideas about far-away peoples that bolstered their own sense of belonging to a "civilized" world that existed in relationship to and, indeed, depended upon this newly "discovered," "uncivilized" one.

If these texts help us understand European identity, it is true too that they serve as a precious, if problematic, source of information about the Native Americans with whom Le Jeune spent many years, whose lives have rarely been visible in the story of French modernity told in the classroom. Unlike sixteenth-century explorers whose observations were based on limited contact with the Indigenous peoples of the Americas, Jesuits became part of local communities and remained with them for extended periods of time, learning their customs and languages.[8]

Paul Le Jeune spent seventeen years living among First Nation peoples, arriving in Tadoussac in 1632 as a forty-two-year-old man and returning to France in 1649. His *Relation of 1634* recounts his first winter among a people whom he refers to as "the Montagnais" in what would become the French-speaking province of Quebec. As part of his project "for the conversion of these savages," he studies their belief system and cultural practices in depth, bringing alive and preserving in the written archive the cultural practices, beliefs, and day-to-day realities of a whole world that had existed long before contact with the French, when what was not yet known as the Americas belonged to Indigenous peoples.[9] Le Jeune's narrative treatment of Montagnais culture ranges from spiritual rituals, to oral

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[8] On the French assimilationist model, see Melzer (2008) and (2012), as well as Sayre (1997, 3, 7).

[9] Letter to his superior, Berthélémy Jacquinot (Le Jeune [1634] 1979, 538).

tradition, to social customs, to ways they hunt and preserve moose, all emerging from close observation and what Le Jeune calls his numerous "badineries" [silly chats] with the men and women with whom he shares his days. Despite their racist lens of European superiority, colonial written sources such as Le Jeune's *Relation* provide a remarkable wealth of ethnographic detail that might otherwise have been lost. As we will see, these written texts, when considered alongside oral sources, continue today to be useful to historians of Native Americans.

Nevertheless, the *raison d'être* of Le Jeune's text is the destruction of a cultural tradition, inseparable from centuries of oppression and, indeed, genocide. As we read Le Jeune's *Relation* with our students, we encourage them to think about the ways this text serves as both a source of oppression and a potential source of resistance.

As Le Jeune performs what might be considered a "proto-ethnography," he alternates between ardent admiration and ferocious critique of the Native Americans with whom he lives. Students are, at first, puzzled by these sudden shifts from praise to scorn. With the help of reading questions and in-class discussion, we invite them to unpack this complex rhetoric. They compare two major sections juxtaposed in his text: Chapter Five, "On the good things found in the savages," and Chapter Six, "On their vices and their imperfections" (Le Jeune [1634] 1979, 595–613). This guided analysis makes visible Le Jeune's use of a double strategy. As the chapter titles suggest, on the one hand, he emphasizes what he sees as the Montagnais's positive qualities, for example, their generosity, their ability to forgive, their religious fervor, and their kinship with Roman heroes that the French of the period so admired. On the other hand, he underlines what he sees as the numerous faults of these "sauvages" [savages] and "barbares" [barbarians] (Le Jeune [1634] 1979, 538–39). Through probing the "why" behind the Jesuit's double presentation of the Montagnais, students come to see that both the positive attributes—reinforcing the Montagnais's admirable qualities and common ancestry with the French that make them ready for successful assimilation—and the negative— affirming the Native peoples' need of the French to become truly civilized—together function as a seductive justification for French colonial expansion. Students see, at their very inception, the mechanisms by which are created a series of stereotypes about Native peoples that, to this day, haunt the American—and French—imagination.

According to Le Jeune, the Montagnais are "so busy scrambling for sustenance in the woods, they do not have time to save themselves,"

without the aid of the French (560). The challenge for missionaries lies in inciting the Montagnais to give up their migrant hunting habits and to adopt instead an agrarian model that will tie them to the land and facilitate sustained contact with French priests who could then more easily complete their catechism. We ask our students, in groups, to consider the concrete actions Le Jeune proposes for bringing "the light of Christian truth" to the Montagnais (538). On the board, they decipher and summarize the main elements of first, Le Jeune's letter to his superior that begins his narrative, and second, Chapter 3, "Methods for converting the savages" (538–539, 558–563). These include three proposals intended to disrupt the Montagnais way of life: (1) suppressing the Iroquois, whose warring ways are interfering with the conversion enterprise; (2) persuading the Montagnais to leave their itinerant life and settle into an agrarian lifestyle; and (3) establishing seminary schools for Indigenous children.

Le Jeune's efforts to force assimilation on a people at the cost of their centuries-old way of life inspire strong reactions in our students. Many are especially outraged at the role played by seminary schools in Le Jeune's vision, seeing in his text the model for boarding schools for Native children that would reach its apogee in Canada and the United States in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In Le Jeune's design, these schools are explicitly intended to keep children away from their families, a distance he deems necessary because of what he views as an unreasonable parental protectiveness: "These barbarians cannot abide by our punishing their children, not even with words, being completely unable to refuse anything to a crying child" (563). Students are taken aback not only by the enforced separation of children from their parents and their culture but also by the punishment that Le Jeune so blithely assumes Native children will experience at the hands of priests in residential schools. Students recognize that by stealing children and placing them in schools far from their homes, the Jesuits seek to forcibly convert a new generation while bending the older generation to its dictates. For, as an added "benefit" of his schooling project, Le Jeune believes that by effectively holding children hostage, Jesuits will experience less resistance from their parents. While Le Jeune's vision of residential boarding schools did not see the light of day in his lifetime, his model led to the later creation of the schools that exploded into the news early in the summer of 2021 with the discovery of the remains of hundreds of First Nation children near what had been residential boarding schools in Canada, as we examine further in depth on day four of the unit (Austin 2001).

Though student reactions may differ from institution to institution, or indeed from student to student, we are at a cultural moment where most students need little encouragement to notice the racism in a text. But they often need guidance to think about how this, in many ways, abominable text might have been so successful in convincing early modern readers to adopt a racist viewpoint. By looking closely at the language of Le Jeune's text, our students, many of whom are already suspicious readers, become more careful readers. We encourage students to notice the narrative techniques used by Le Jeune. His first-person text asks readers to identify with the author's perspective in multiple ways, including, for example, the consistent use of a jocular tone that invites us to be with him in a space of knowing while looking out at the Native Americans he casts as naive and silly—not in on the joke. For instance, in his chapter on the Montagnais religion, Le Jeune uses irony to invite his readers to laugh at and thereby dismiss the validity of "their religion or, more appropriately, their superstition" (Le Jeune [1634] 1979, 585, 595). He mocks the Montagnais's animism—the belief that all parts of the interconnected natural world have souls—ridiculing their prayers to porcupines, beavers, and moose. He invites his readers to be both mystified and astonished by their seemingly endless hours of repetitive "massive, … somber and unpleasant" chanting (576). Students see how techniques such as these (the use of first-person, tone, irony, and humor) naturalize a particular view among readers while, at the same time, closing out others.

By identifying these structures, it then becomes possible to resist them and to destabilize Le Jeune's portrayal of the Montagnais and his role among them. As we and our students learn to listen, we can hear in Le Jeune's text the distant voices of those he seeks to convert and even their resistance to his colonial project. We become what Judith Fetterly famously called "resisting readers," who refuse the generic call of the text by a kind of "reading against the grain" (Fetterly 1978; Bartholomae and Petrosky 2003). Students work in groups to examine citations of Montagnais speech, dialogues between Le Jeune and the Montagnais, and stories of their interactions that the Jesuit reports at length in his narrative. While Le Jeune includes these exchanges to display Montagnais inferiority, students find in them moments where the missionary's would-be converts overtly question and mock both the Catholic religion and him personally, as well as clear instances of outright defiance and resistance. Some students point, for example, to Le Jeune's frequent citation the Montagnais's negative reactions to him. Some note that Le Jeune's juxtaposition of what he casts

as the Montagnais's fantastical beliefs with equally incredible beliefs espoused within Catholicism undermines the authority of his critique. When his hosts respond with irony or with "You are ignorant," "you are stupid," students see that whatever Le Jeune wishes to communicate, his hosts do not seem to be buying it (Le Jeune [1634] 1979, 573, 589). What they learn in this unit about reading colonial texts deeply informs their approach to sources considered later in the semester, in particular those concerning the experience of Africans captured and deported to the Atlantic colonies.[10]

As we have shown, a colonial text like Le Jeune's *Relation* can be a valuable source for learning about Native Americans in the past. Yet, as historian Olive Patricia Dickason points out, for Indigenous peoples, entering history through texts like Le Jeune's remains problematic, to say the least. She underlines the limitations of a notion of history in which only documents "count," one that excludes anything that has not been inscribed as letters on paper:

> (H)istory has been described as a document-bound discipline. If something was not written, preferably in an official document, it was not historical. Thus were pre-literate societies excluded from history and labeled pre-historic, or perhaps proto-historic. The best (founding nations) could hope for was to become historic by extension, when they came into contact with literate societies. (Dickason 2009, viii)

Suggesting that the written archive be the *unique* authoritative source for Native American actions, beliefs, and practices of earlier periods perpetuates a Eurocentric idea of history that refuses to acknowledge that Native Americans did not come into existence when Europeans encountered them, but had a thriving culture for millennia before the arrival of white seamen in search of a new route to India.[11] Second, as we have seen, Le Jeune's text and other contemporary written narratives are riddled with biases central to France's colonial efforts, which leave them sorely lacking

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[10] Williard (2018) provides a helpful model for this approach to reading missionary texts in the context of the French Caribbean.

[11] Dickason notes that, rather than face this fact, Canadian historians have "found it much easier to ignore the earlier period; hence the blinkered view of Canada as a 'young' country" (2009, ix).

in their ability to represent with accuracy and cultural sensitivity the views and values of the ancestors of today's First Nations communities. However closely Le Jeune observed Montagnais practices and beliefs during his time living among them, reporting everything he "saw with (his) own eyes … while following them through the woods to learn their language," his ultimate goal in seeking to understand their culture was to eradicate it through replacement with French social and religious customs (Le Jeune [1634] 1979, 539). The systematic exclusion in our courses of the oral tradition—the only kind of "archive" created from a First Nations' point of view for sixteenth- and seventeenth-century encounters between them and the French—is, then, indefensible.

Talking Back: Local Penobscot Tales and Testimonies

In days three and four of the unit, in keeping with Taubira's charge, we place Le Jeune's European written narrative in dialogue with "oral sources and archeological knowledge" ("Loi Taubira") not typically found in an "early French literature" survey, but vibrantly alive in the territories inhabited by the Wabanaki, Algonquin, Huron, Iroquois, and Innu (whom the French called the Montagnais) that were colonized by the French. The urgency of our endeavor is palpable at Bowdoin College, which, like all American colleges and universities, was built on tribal lands. While students are at first surprised to find in "a French class" the inclusion of Native American tales and oral histories, they are quick to see the intersections between Le Jeune's French colonial narrative and the story told from an Indigenous perspective, so close to home.[12]

On day three, students meet activist-educator Maria Girouard, a member of the Penobscot nation, one of five tribes in Maine—the Mi'kmaq, Maliseet, Passamaquoddy, Abenaki, and Penobscot—who together make up the Wabanaki people from "the land first touched by the light of dawn." Through their interactions with Girouard, who honors us each

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[12] In some ways, we are catching up at the university level with what has been happening at the elementary and secondary levels. Since 2001, a Wabanaki Studies curriculum has been mandated in all Maine schools (Feinberg 2019).

semester with her visit, students come to see Native American oral traditions as a living and essential part of who the Penobscot are today in deep relation to who they have been. Girouard's contribution to our course cannot be overstated. Learning *with* a member of the local Native American community heightens the stakes of the historical encounters between First Nations people and Europeans in ways that written texts alone cannot. Students connect with Girouard, and through her, with a larger group of descendants of the very area in which they are living. While we are deeply fortunate to have forged this partnership with Maria Girouard in Maine, we want to stress that such a collaboration with tribal educators can be established anywhere across the United States. We encourage our colleagues to reach out to members of local tribal communities to share in the telling of a more complete and more vibrant story of the early modern period and its legacy today.

In preparation for Girouard's visit, students have read and reflected through reading questions on her article, "Penobscots and the Sacred Mountain" in which she shares the story of the origin and sacred significance of Maine's tallest mountain, K'taadn, that rises up in the heart of the Wabanaki homeland, the source of the Penobscot River (Girouard 2017, 4–5). They have also watched a video of her lecture, "Genocide and Maine: Shining the Light of Truth," delivered at the University of Southern Maine in Portland on November 20, 2014, and completed a listening sheet with questions designed to help them identify key terms, places, and moments in Maine's history (Girouard 2015). Students prepare questions for Girouard as well.

In her article on K'taadn, Girouard describes and discusses a series of legends, beliefs, and practices associated with the mountain—including an annual pilgrimage to its base participated in today by hundreds of Wabanaki men, women, and children. Our students, many of whom have climbed K'taadn during Bowdoin pre-orientation or outing club trips, are amazed to learn of a vast and living Wabanaki tradition surrounding a mountain that they have until now seen simply as a beautiful landmark, the endpoint of the Appalachian Trail. But it is Girouard's presence with them that brings the stories to life. When she enters the classroom, her first words are "Kwai kwai," hello in her ancestral Penobscot language. Students have read transcriptions of the Montagnais language in Le Jeune, and Girouard's greeting connects Native languages of the past with the here and now. From the beginning, Girouard emphasizes to the students that they are with her in this project of learning and sharing, that what they are learning

from Le Jeune and what she brings to them are the means to arrive together at a broader base of knowledge. Throughout her conversation she shares bits of tales that she adopted after hearing them told in her youth by elders in the home and at tribal gatherings. Girouard, a passionate advocate for environmental protection, uses legends to tell us about her work to protect the Penobscot River, a waterway that has been inseparable for centuries from Wabanaki livelihood and identity. She cites Wabanaki hero Gluskape's victory over the giant water monster Aglebemu, who had dammed up the great river and let it go dry. She shows rather than explains how the spoken word functions, the historical and the present blending in a kind of sharing with its own rules. Through their interactions with Girouard, students see the powerful role of the oral tradition in supporting a collective knowledge and way of life and as a tool for activism in defense of Native rights and values.

The consideration of sources drawn from Native American oral tradition brings students face to face with a lot of pain. Girouard's recorded lecture on "Genocide and Maine" graphically depicts the horrific violence and racism of the English and French colonization of Wabanaki lands, where 95% of the Native population was decimated, twenty tribes were reduced to five, and voting and religious rights were severely restricted until late in the twentieth century. As they listen to Penobscot versions of events that took place in Maine and recognize the names of nearby towns and regions, the violent history of colonial conquest becomes all the more real. Girouard shares with students Governor Phipp's 1755 proclamation that encouraged scalping Native Americans and how inhabitants in nearby Woolwich, Maine, took up the offer of a bounty for this chilling practice, each scalp serving as proof of the capture and killing of a local tribe member.[13] The combination of Girouard's orally transmitted knowledge of tribal history and this document from the written archive has a powerful impact. What students learn from Girouard deepens and challenges their understanding and their own relationship to the land and to the people that make up their adopted state. When signs go up on campus each fall, their white letters on a green background declaring "You are on Indigenous land," the message reverberates with them.

Girouard's testimony also brings alive a vision that goes far beyond the Penobscot. The values she shares traverse First Nation cultures,

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[13] As late as 2009, the offer for sale on the internet of Native American scalps and bones was investigated by the FBI (Erikson 2009).

countering a European mindset that since the sixteenth century has placed "man" at the center. As Dickason underlines,

> (The) dazzling variety of cultural particularities (of different tribes) has tended to obscure the underlying unity of the Amerindian world view, which saw humans as part of a cosmological order depending on a balance of reciprocating forces to keep the universe functioning in harmony. This contrasts with the Judeo-Christian view of a cosmos dominated by a God in the image of man. In this perspective man is in the privileged position, as up to a certain point he can control nature for his own benefit. (Dickason 2009, ix–x)

These shared values and worldview allow us to place the knowledge our students have gained from learning with Girouard and the Penobscot today in dialogue with what they have learned from reading Le Jeune's historical treatment of the Montagnais, both in class and in written assignments. Students see how the written narratives they have read provide them a context that helps them better understand the stakes of First Nation stories and testimonials told today. At the same time, they observe how reading, listening to, and interacting with the oral testimonials of Native people today changes and enriches their understanding of the texts they have studied. For instance, students note the remarkable consistency between the themes and characterizations of the Montagnais that fill Le Jeune's seventeenth-century written account and those of Penobscot oral tradition as shared by Girouard. Yet, they also note the significant difference in tone between the narratives. What is scorned in Le Jeune's *Relation*, is treated with respect and veneration by Girouard. While Le Jeune denigrates the Montagnais's intimate relationship with the earth, Girouard deeply values the Wabanaki's sacred connection with the land. While Le Jeune mocks Montagnais's belief in the presence of a spirit in all elements of the natural world, the Penobscot assert the intrinsic value and sacredness of all creation. They see the earth as an interconnected web of which human beings are just a part and affirm their role as its sacred stewards (Girouard 2017, 5). One prompt for the essay assignment that concludes this unit asks students to consider the ways in which their new knowledge of Wabanaki values and traditions can inform and complicate the way they read colonial texts like Le Jeune's: How do the sources and perspectives presented by Girouard and others about the Penobscot change our reading of Le Jeune's *Relation* about the Montagnais and

vice-versa? How does Le Jeune's interpretation of the characteristics, values, legends, practices, and beliefs of the Indigenous people he describes compare to how similar traits and traditions are presented by Native speakers and writers in Maine? How does Le Jeune's account inform our understanding of Native traditions of the past and how do Native story traditions and testimonials challenge and complicate Le Jeune's colonial narrative? This work makes apparent that when considered together, oral and written sources enrich and complicate each other, going a long way toward fulfilling Christiane Taubira's wish—and ours—to arrive at a truer and richer story through collaboration.

Talking Back: Testimonials from French Canada

On this final day of the unit, students examine stories and testimonies of Indigenous Canadians living now in the very land that Le Jeune wrote about in the seventeenth century. Extending their discussions with Girouard, students listen to recorded Native testimonials from the oral archive and read recent news articles that highlight painful connections between past and present from an Indigenous perspective that counters that of European colonizers.[14]

Videos of testimonials from First Nation peoples living in the province of Québec, who are closer descendants of those Le Jeune refers to as "les Montagnais," tell the horrific history of state-sponsored and church-run "Indian Schools," that existed in both Canada and the United States through the twentieth century. These schools, established to "kill the Indian, and save the man," vividly show the costs of the assimilationist project as it unfolds over time.[15] Given the emotional challenges and risks inherent in the act of witnessing other people's trauma, we prepare students to grapple with this material through explicit negotiation of the stakes: How do we create a "listening community," to use Wendy Hui Kyong Chun's term, that honors the subjectivity and truth shared by the speaker and allows us to welcome their testimony without judgment or

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[14] All the sources we draw on here are widely available online.

[15] Richard H. Pratt's 1892 speech, quoted in Girouard (2015). One hundred and thirty such residential schools existed across Canada during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries ("Les pensionnats" 2013). "Indian Schools" in the United States, that trace their origins to early seventeenth-century Jesuit missionaries, were even more numerous, with a few off-reservation schools still operating today.

voyeurism (Chun 2002)?[16] How does who we are and what we have experienced change our ability to identify with the speaker and the ways we receive and react to their experience of trauma? What defense mechanisms emerge for some of us? How do we increase solidarity through bearing witness to another's pain rather than reinforce the speaker's otherness? Our students then listen, with heightened awareness, to oral histories told in French by older Canadians who as children were forced to enroll in schools far from their families and tribes, where traditional braids were sliced away and tribal languages banished. Our students watch a short Radio-Canada news report produced in 2013, just as the Canadian Commission on Truth and Reconciliation was preparing to hold public meetings in Québec, part of a six-year series of events in cities across the country to reeducate citizens through finally hearing and honoring the testimonies of survivors ("Les pensionnats" 2013). Our students listen, for example, to the testimony of Marcel Petiquay, first sent at the age of six to a boarding school for Indigenous Canadian children. He describes his rape by a priest at the age of seven, the beginning of a long series of sexual aggressions that would be the source of enduring self-hatred, abuse of alcohol and drugs, and recurrent suicidal thoughts. He makes plain the heartbreaking cycle of violence that has swept up generation after generation. Students recognize in Petiquay's lived experience of state-sanctioned cultural denial and violence the modern-day persistence of the very schooling project first advanced by Le Jeune in the seventeenth century. As we have seen, Le Jeune's seminars, though initially unsuccessful, were brought to fruition with the advent of greater state control—still hand in hand with the church—in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[17] As through conversations with Girouard—who recounts her memories of the terror of Penobscot mothers at the approach of an unknown car, who hid their children from social workers for fear they would be taken away—students see in these testimonies the long-term costs of European-style progress. At the same time, students observe the remarkable resilience of tribal heritage and rituals that, in Petiquay's words, "a century of internment did not succeed in destroying" ("Les pensionnats de la honte" 2013).

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[16] See also Patricia Yaeger (2002), and other essays assembled in Nancy K. Miller's and Jason Tougaw's 2002 volume.

[17] For a detailed account of the history of "Indian Schools" in Canada, see the first volume of The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's final report (2015).

As noted by *Washington Post* journalist Brenda J. Child, herself a grandchild of Native American grandparents, "for many in the United States, the conversation is, perhaps, just beginning" (Child 2021). She reminds us that the question of Indigenous schools is an American tragedy as much as it is a Canadian one, calling attention to the mass deaths of children in similar boarding schools right here in the United States, "beginning with Carlisle in Pennsylvania in 1879 and ending with the Sherman Institute in California in 1903." These stories go a long way for students toward connecting Le Jeune's colonial ambitions in the "time of encounters" to the here and now, a time when many non-Native students have had little to no contact with Native Americans. First Nation youth attend college at rates much lower than the average for Americans overall and they often face enormous obstacles to attending prestigious schools like Bowdoin (PNPI 2020). This unit is a reminder of the importance of learning to listen for Native American history in the past but also in the present.

Students also read about several current cases of Native American activism that resonate with the colonial past they have studied. During their visit with Girouard in the previous class session, students had already begun the conversation about the Penobscot tribe's engagement with current-day environmental issues. Girouard and other members of the Penobscot tribe have long fought to protect their rights as stewards of the river that bears their name. Sherri Mitchell, an attorney and Indigenous rights activist, emphasizes the historical inseparability of the tribe and the river and its link to present-day concerns: "The Penobscot River is the first relative on our census, it's the first citizen of the Penobscot Nation. Because when you ask me who I am, where I come from, I answer with one word: Penobscot. That's who I am, that's who the river is, that's who the land is, and we are all one. All of us" (Carpenter 2021). When in 2012, the Maine attorney general informed the Penobscot that they had no right to participate in regulating water quality, so important for fishing, the tribe struck back with a lawsuit against the state, including "municipalities and businesses that discharge wastewater to the Penobscot River." Recently, the First Circuit Court of Appeals narrowly ruled in the state's favor but included an eighty-page dissenting opinion that has given continued hope to the tribe. The Penobscot will soon be petitioning the Supreme Court to hear the case.

Students examine another case in the news: Wolfdon Resources, a Canadian mining company, has been seeking zoning permits to build a precious minerals mine in the state of Maine that would adversely impact

hunting and fishing on tribal lands. The CEO of the company was caught telling shareholders that "there are no Indigenous Rights in Maine," clearly rejoicing in that "fact." Taking a page from Le Jeune's playbook, the company also told investors that the Penobscots supported the program when, in fact, they have opposed it from the beginning (MacDougall 2021).

Throughout their discussions with Girouard regarding her own activism and their reading and discussion of recent cases in the news, our environmentally aware students, many of whom are active in the fight for sound environmental policy, express gratitude for the contributions of Native Americans, environmentalists long before others took up the cause. As they often mention in their course evaluations, the inclusion of this material, drawn largely from oral sources, immediately links the continued fight for the rights and recognition of First Nations people today to their study of francophone literatures and cultures in ways many of them did not anticipate. They are moved by the experience of Native Americans here in Maine and note how important having a broad sense of history is to understanding the problems around race and exclusion that live on in both American and French culture today.

CONCLUSION

The clash of worldviews explored in this unit is not something we have left behind as we have moved into more modern times. Our university system, like the European institutions that informed Le Jeune's thinking some four hundred years ago, privileges a kind of knowledge associated almost exclusively with the written tradition. Earlier we considered Dickason's distinction between, on the one hand, the Judeo-Christian view "of a cosmos dominated by a God in the image of man" with "man … in the privileged position … controll(ing) nature for his own benefit" and, on the other hand, a Native American worldview that "saw humans as part of a cosmological order depending on a balance of reciprocating forces to keep the universe functioning in harmony" (Dickason 2009, ix–x). In *Teaching Across Cultural Strengths*, Alicia Fedelina Chávez and Susan D. Longerbeam similarly distinguish two broad cultural epistemologies in today's classrooms: a "culturally individuated worldview" that values privacy, compartmentalization, and abstraction, and a "culturally integrated worldview" in which interconnectedness and mutual dependence matter (Chávez and

Longerbeam 2016). Western institutions, including American and European universities, have traditionally given overwhelming preference to the "individuated" model, often leading students brought up in "integrated" cultures where the oral tradition has played an important role, to feel self-doubt and a sense of not belonging. Our focus on the value of Native American "integrated" cultures in this unit offers a helpful counterpoint. As Chávez and Longerbeam have shown, greater emphasis on the "integrated worldview" in the classroom encourages students from more "integrated" cultures to feel more included and to find their perspectives legitimized. Witnessing the spoken word valued in an academic setting transforms the playing field and invites different kinds of knowledge to take center stage for all students.

Clearly, the need to feel that our cultures and contributions are legitimate, acknowledged, and valued is not just true for our students, but for faculty as well. The issues raised here are not intellectual issues alone but deeply relevant, timely, and personal. As James Baldwin reminds us, "history is not the past. It is the present. We carry our history with us, We *are* our history" ([1980] 2010, 125).[18] Our work in rethinking how we teach the early modern period is about the past but also about us in the present. The borders between disciplines are changing but they, like territories, still matter. For those of us trained in earlier periods, engaging with this work means reaching outside our specialty and therefore entering the specialty of other scholars. As Hanétha Vété-Congolo addressed in her keynote, "Decolonizing the White French Curriculum: Which Ethics?", at the 2020 Conference on Diversity, Decolonization, and the French Curriculum, how do we do this and at the same time avoid a sort of academic neo-colonialism (Vété-Congolo 2020)? Our efforts are null if we, in our process, replicate the power structures that we are ostensibly attempting to tear down. Those of us whose primary specialties are not "francophone" literature or post-colonial studies must remember to honor those whose fields we learn from and draw on, particularly our colleagues of the global majority who have made possible this watershed moment. The work of these scholars, past and ongoing, must be given full credit at every turn, especially as some post-colonial concepts become widely used. While encouraging students to reflect carefully on their subject positions, we need to be constantly reflecting on our own.

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[18] Emphasis in original.

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Intersectional French Studies

Halte au capacitisme! A Toolkit for Creating Accessible French Language Classrooms for Neurodiverse Students and Students with Disabilities

Thea Fronsman-Cecil

In the last decade or so, following the Occupy protests, Black Lives Matter, the indigenous-led protests against the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL), the emerging trans rights movement, and other challenges to authoritarian politics, income inequality, systemic racism, and institutionalized oppression in the United States, educators have been thinking more about how to join this work for social and political justice through their

Note on positionality and identity-first language: in this chapter, I will be using identity-first language when speaking about disabled persons and autistic/ neurodiverse persons. This is the preference of many people in those communities, of which I am also a member.

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teaching. In Fall 2020, hundreds of colleges, universities, and national teaching associations such as the American Association of Teachers of French (AATT), professional organizations including the Modern Language Association, as well as working groups such as the Diversity and Decolonization in the French Curriculum (DDFC) collective have proposed policies and frameworks for changing our curricula. Examples of social justice-oriented curricular change include many universities' adoption of a black voices-centered reading list, or the collaboration between colleagues at Augustana College to change grading rubrics in writing classes to challenge the implicit racist, classist, regionalist, colonialist dynamics of "standard usage." Such a large-scale project cannot be implemented by individual educators working alone. It is a critical time to work with other engaged scholars to develop best practices, to consider how to do so for different groups of students who have lacked access to higher education, and to make findings accessible to the large contingent labor class in academia.

However, while this work for inclusion is critical to retaining students, higher education instructors often do not have the privilege of shaping institutional policy; for instance, they are not responsible for admissions or for ensuring that K12 students are all able to prepare for college and thus are already working with a pre-selected, more privileged population. University and college administrations work for the inclusion of underrepresented groups in academia by chipping away at various economic and material obstacles to enrollment via recruitment and scholarships. While administrators have a concrete set of numbers—of students enrolling and graduating in various majors, of funds for scholarships, of faculty hires—to gauge for a sense of what is effective, educators must rather use a more qualitative approach. They change their language, texts, and syllabi and hope to see these efforts reflected in students' progress. There is not only one way to work for inclusion, and pedagogical theories and practices in that area are constantly evolving. The main advantage of university and college instructors' and professors' role in the work of educational access and inclusion is that they have direct contact with the students. They determine the class policies, they determine the curriculum, and they determine the teaching methods. For these reasons, it is imperative that instructors ask whether they have done all that they could to avoid overlooking certain students.

It is easy for scholars of French and Francophone Studies to think of prominent models for "engaged intellectuals" and carry those practices

into research and course offerings on literature and culture. However, it is somewhat less obvious to imagine how to implement methods of radical pedagogy within the specialized field of second language acquisition and the unique sociolinguistic environment of the foreign language classroom. Although educators have come over the years to promote a discourse of care and community with students, they also do not always consider that "best practices" of teaching French are not best for all students. This discussion of care is frequently at odds with the prevailing American higher education framework, in which students are human capital. Students' ability to stay enrolled and lead healthy lives often becomes a secondary consideration to the push for the initial recruitment and enrollment. French foreign language (FL) educators also face challenges in enacting care due to training. We often feel that we must adhere to a scientifically proven method of language pedagogy to effectively teach students to use, analyze, and (hopefully) love French and Francophone language and culture.

Despite academic attention to language as a sociocultural performance and growing attention to inclusive pedagogy, many French foreign language teaching professionals must unlearn cultural conditioning to cultivate certain types of linguistic and communicative diversity. *L'Académie Française*, a hegemonic institution, is an instrument that delegitimates Francophone and regional dialects, slang, creoles, patois, and loanwords from immigrant communities, obfuscating white, colonial, bourgeois values and language behind a smokescreen of "neutral" "correctness." The educational communities that teach French as a foreign language often wield this instrument of "correct usage" and "patrimoine culturel" in our pedagogy in the name of authentic language learning without considering how this idea that there is only one correct way to speak or be French will influence the discipline, its research, and language classrooms. Undoubtedly, the discipline still has much progress to make on the literal decolonization of our curriculum through the expansion of language class offerings and a decentering of the canon. However, I am taking up a different, if still proximate, perspective on inclusion and diversity that also challenges hegemonic norms of language use and creates access and space for other intersectional identities. In this chapter, I propose a pedagogical method in French language classrooms that is not merely inclusive, but also accepting and welcoming of differences in communication related to neurodiversity and disability.

Although I have, after teaching French for 13 years, adapted my training in the communicative method to a social and linguistic justice model

through linguistic descriptivist, growth mindset, holistic, half-communicative, half-explicit grammar instruction, I have still wondered what I could do about student attrition. When my students' material conditions either became untenable or failed to fit the mold of the three-to-five-day a week, mandatory physical attendance, intensive, oral language-focused French classroom, I could not help them as much. Too many times, I had teary-eyed students across demographic groups at the University of Kansas and the University of California Los Angeles come to me asking how they could come back from a C on the first exam, telling me they wanted to drop. Some students disappeared from my classes for days or weeks. When I asked them about their situations and how I could help them, I discovered that they were all having some type of personal issues. While family struggles are common—parents lose their jobs, grandparents die, a sibling gets cancer, immigration status is imperiled—students most often told me that they had a chronic illness or disability that made attending class and doing the work harder, but that adequate institutional accommodations for chronic illness did not exist. One cannot go to the doctor for a note each day that they are not feeling well if they have a chronic condition, especially when going to multiple medical providers multiple times a month already makes scheduling a challenge, and no specialist can write a doctor's note. Eventually, after seeing this pattern repeat with my students and remembering my own challenges as a disabled student, I changed the way I taught.

Ableism and disability are subjects that are often raised in discussions on academic diversity,[1] but are rarely investigated more deeply in the context of creating inclusion for students who are autistic or who have psychiatric and chronic physical conditions, or "invisible disabilities," that affect their ability to use and process oral language. However, some communities prefer to frame their neurological differences (including autism) not as disabilities, but as neurodiversity that includes positive qualities (such as exact memory and the ability to understand complex abstract concepts quickly) from which they (and their employers and teachers) can benefit (Singer 1999). Accordingly, these activism and advocacy communities most often prefer identity-first language, for example, autistic people, or other language of identity (e.g., people on the [autism] spectrum). Those who are on the spectrum prefer this to the medicalized, pathologized

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[1] For a discussion of how a French curriculum can address the larger issues of ableism and disability, see Berberi (2021).

person-first "people with autism," which codes autism as an illness rather than a difference (Botha et al. 2021). Despite the insistence on difference, not disability, these communities note that some differences are impairments in unadaptable environments. The social model of disability contends that with adaptive changes in social environments, such as accommodations for work productivity or attendance or wheelchair ramps, many impairments related to physical and mental differences would disappear.[2] While this model presents a more optimistic vision, it also places an equal responsibility for adapting upon able-bodied people and institutions. It is evident any effort toward increasing academic diversity will not flourish without pedagogical methods that are welcoming to multiple differences in culture, socialization, expression, and situations of unequal accessibility.

However, existing research on pedagogy for university students with social and communicative differences related to medical conditions mostly addresses the needs of students with learning disabilities, hearing and visual impairment, and limited mobility. After looking in databases such as EBSCOHost and ERIC for hours on end, I found only one example of peer-reviewed research on accommodating college-age students with invisible disabilities. Amid a raft of papers on accommodations for K12 students (and many fewer about higher education students) that focused on social challenges and test times rather than cognitive and communication issues, I found a mention in one paper (on language anxiety for FL students) of one student with generalized anxiety disorder (Zheng and Cheng 2018). A greater wealth of literature on workplace accommodations for people with "invisible differences" was available, which likely reflects the larger cultural tendency to guide medically divergent people toward work instead of school.[3] Investigative journalist Meredith Kolodner reports that more than 800,000 people with disabilities found eligible for college funding received no assistance from vocational rehabilitation between 2010 and 2014 (Kolodner 2016). The same misunderstanding of disability or difference as incapacity to perform work leads students to keep mum about their needs. In 2010, the directors of Student Disability Centers at two major universities estimated that only half of their institutions' eligible students with disabilities sought accommodations, explaining that they feared that their instructors would treat them "differently"

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[2] See Oliver (1990).
[3] See Khalifa et al. (2019) and Scott et al. (2019).

(Walters 2010). Without an open discussion of disability and cognitive, behavioral, and communicative diversity in place, instructors frequently misunderstand students' distraction, communication issues, or lack of participation and attendance as laziness, rudeness, "entitlement," or other personality flaws.

Writer and educator Laurie Edwards described her experiences on both sides of the classroom: "My entire student career took place within the context of serious illness, a relentless cycle of missing classes and catching up. I wrote papers … from an ICU room, I chose courses based on (their) fit … with daily treatments. … As a college writing instructor, I've seen … (many) panicked emails … from students (asking for extensions) … and from advisors looking to support students" (Edwards 2014). Although the ADA protects disabled people's employment with day-to-day accommodations, university services for students with disabilities at many universities do not. I refer struggling students to services for students with disabilities, and if they will admit that they are disabled, they are only offered extra time or quiet environments during exams. Yes, they know they have missed many classes, not turned in homework, and not come to class on exam days. They could not focus with their attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), the social extemporaneous speech of the foreign language class is terrifying for autistic people, an autoimmune disease caused brain fog and fatigue, anxiety attacks made it impossible to concentrate or leave home, they survived a traumatic event but could not focus, high blood sugars made a diabetic student disoriented and sluggish, chronic pain kept another in bed. So many of them offered iterations of the same explanation: "I don't have a doctor's note for those absences; that's just how things are for me. I'll try to come next time." Disability services could only get them extended exam time or a special adaptive desk. This, paired with their sense of the need to succeed in all their classes and their anxiety about trying to work around an uncooperative mind or body, led them to feel that it was easier to disappear, drop the class, or take that D or F in silence. Many of them said in various terms that they were not "good at French" or "good at languages" or "right for college."

The experience of German language professor Mona Eikel-Pohen at Syracuse University, who faced challenges with adapting language pedagogy to a disabled student, resonates with me as an educator who has had to experiment quite a bit to provide language-learning environments adapted to neurodiversity and disability when I had students who needed support. "I did give up (on) seeking external help. Rather, I focused on

my actual situation, connected with other faculty, inquired about best practices, bothered Information Technology Services with innumerable technology-related questions, arranged for a competent native speaker tutor." In addition to studying medical concepts, Eikel-Pohen "prepared (her) lessons with much enthusiasm and hardly any expertise" (2019, 1–13). While one can applaud individual instructors for their commitment and ingenuity, inexpert solutions are not the road to educational equity; they increase demands on the instructors who do them and are not applied university-wide, some overworked professors will not choose to use them. More recognition of how invisible disabilities and neurodiversity affect language learning, as well as of universal design adaptations to everything from attendance policies to the sensory impact of our classrooms and our assignments and syllabi, will benefit instructors as well as students.

To attend to the question of language learning and neurodivergence more specifically, we must first consider a few notable cognitive and communicative differences between neurodivergent (ND) and neurotypical (NT) people. Neuroscientist Anne-Marie de Pape has observed that autism spectrum disorder is correlated to several differences in cognitive processing of language, namely in processing voice pitch and phonemes and difficulty filtering speech out from ambient sounds (2012). Linguist and psychologist Olga Bogdashina explains that autistic people find cognitive processes of language, or expression of their thoughts, easier because they think clearly in conceptual, visual ways (2004). On the other hand, autistic people struggle with communicative processes of language, which reflect the speaker's applied awareness of how the other person thinks and needs to hear a message conveyed in speech or writing to interpret it correctly. Autistic people have weaker connectivity between the amygdala and temporal lobe, which is a pathway involved in the identification of facial expressions, making it harder to recognize the emotions of others and observe other metalinguistic cues that aid communicative language processes (Monk et al. 2010). Psychiatric and neurological disorders (which are considered other types of neurodiversity in disability communities) also impair cognitive processing, attention, executive functioning, energy levels, and cognitive fluency—a congeries of symptoms colloquially known as "brain fog." "Brain fog" is common in certain chronic illnesses such as Type 1 diabetes, lupus, cystic fibrosis, and asthma during flare-ups (Morley 2017). A wide spectrum of research attributes these issues to changes in blood sugar, hormonal levels, oxygenation of the blood, or neurotransmitter activity that affect different areas of the brain, such as the

hippocampus, the dorsolateral prefrontal right cortex, and Broca's area, Wernicke's area, and other gyri on the cerebral cortex—responsible for memory, perception of time, and processing language (Moheet et al. 2015).[4] Such cognitive differences can create delays, interference, or functional differences in the construction and comprehension of social, abstract, and communicative spoken language. This can pose significant problems in communicative language classes where classwork and participation grades center around spontaneous oral production in simulated social settings.

Accordingly, as instructors of French decolonize their classrooms, they should consider how instructor-constructed social learning environments oppress students with any social or communication differences and consider who feels like they have the right to speak and how they speak and hear others. The emphasis on spontaneous oral production in the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) proficiency benchmarks and can-do statements often gives discursive privilege to students who already speak from a hegemonic social position. Many students from underrepresented groups already report feelings that students with more social, racial, and class privilege dominate discussions and speak over people from marginalized groups, even in discussions of social justice topics (Jaschik 2019). Instructors often must undo these power structures that silence students by empowering them through inclusive teaching methods, and this is no exception. Fortunately, as the pedagogical theories of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), used at Ohio State University and San Francisco State University, emphasize, "practices designed for disabled students can and should benefit all students" (Walters 2010). Such pedagogical changes not only benefit students with medical and neurological differences, but also support students from varying cultural, socioeconomic, and linguistic backgrounds who feel shy.

First, to make space for all differences—medical, social, and cultural—instructors can begin working in multiple modalities of language. This means using a wider mix of audio, visual, tactile, temporal, or spatial communication. They can also exercise different forms of language production and comprehension such as reading, writing, and listening. The communicative classroom often focuses on social language scenarios, but other language skills, scenarios, tasks, and modalities are sometimes more

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[4] See also Leslie, B. and SF Crowe (2018), Chadwick, Helen, et al. (2021), and Rhyou, Hyo-In, and Young-Hee Nam (2021).

normative for students with any communication differences. Autistic people commonly use "scripting," or prepared and repeated speech, in everyday conversations. While older clinical views of autism treated scripting as disruptive and inappropriate to be discouraged, contemporary education models point out its utility. Scripting helps autistic people acquire language, engage in small talk, express themselves comfortably and appropriately, enjoy social relationships, and communicate in work and school settings. Scripts get more complex over time, reflecting and integrating the person's new knowledge, including vocabulary and grammar (Arnold 2019). Accordingly, shifting attitudes toward temporality of communication by giving autistic students topics the day before and letting them script allows them to join discussions more freely and learn more readily. This chance to feel more prepared could also help students with social anxiety, other cognitive roadblocks, or simple hesitation about speaking related to their cultural backgrounds (due to bias against linguistic differences such as accents or dialects) develop their speaking skills (Terenzini et al. 1996). With more chances to prepare, they can become more confident and need less preparation over time. This practice promotes realistic social language use in communicative pedagogy by allowing these students to do what they do before any new language task or social encounter.

The shift to hybrid and online learning during the pandemic has been a struggle for many students, but some of my chronically ill students have told me how much they appreciate being able to participate over a streaming class on bad flare-up days. Previous research on online classes has explored how UDL principles in course design and the distance learning format can provide benefits to disabled students, although research into specific applications of UDL and online learning with FL pedagogy for disabled students, aside from students with learning disabilities (LD), is lacking.[5] This obviates the issue of repeated absences for rough illness days, although it is important to reconsider attendance policies as we return to in-person classes; most students with disabilities drop out of school due to attendance problems. For these students, asynchronous communication is easier than all-synchronous classes. Furthermore, for some students with cognitive and social differences, writing is easier than

[5] For an examination of UDL and online course design, see Simoncelli, Andrew, and Janice M. Hinson (2008). See also Poore-Pariseau, Cindy (2010). Some discussions of UD and online learning for FL students with LD include investigation into best practices for students with ADHD. See Leons, Eve, Christie Herbert, and Ken Gobbo (2009).

speech. Therefore, introducing more synchronous and asynchronous multimedia writing exercises, such as in-class collaborative reading and culture journals, forums, Flipgrid videos, and classroom chat groups empowers them. In keeping with Universal Design for Learning, this also helps other students develop important writing and presentation skills that are often underused in language classes, despite being tested on exams and in-class projects. Having the ability to see what other people think and feel in words that can be reread aids communicative language processes and gives students from diverse social backgrounds a chance to investigate any unfamiliar concepts before jumping in. Autistic students and other students with language processing delays might be compensating with other sensory input, so bringing in objects, projecting photos, drawings, or symbols, or using Total Physical Response (TPR) language pedagogy can be useful when doing vocabulary work, including learning new verbs. Accessible PowerPoints and websites are key to effective visual language processing. Keep text at 12-point font or higher on paper and at least 20-point font on PowerPoint with adequate white space, use easy-to-read fonts such as Helvetica and Arial, add alt text descriptions for images, use heading styles, and capitalize titles. Many of the same guidelines that apply to creating accessible syllabi and course materials for low vision and blind students and for students with reading disabilities also help students with ADHD and illnesses that cause brain fog.

If a student's perception, reasoning, and response processes are slowed down or altered by depression, anxiety, or an illness or medication that creates "brain fog," they can take a different role in exercises. For instance, while others are speaking, they could practice with active listening and writing. These students could cultivate oral comprehension and spelling skills as they type up a transcript of the speech of other students, asking their classmates to take pauses between sentences or repeat themselves when necessary. This transcript of what is essentially a spontaneous "dictée" could be projected for the class to view, to expound upon, to change to a different verb tense or use another structure, to modify to discuss a different topic, or to correct when they notice errors that they made. We can allow fatigued, anxious, or less spontaneous students to read prompts for exercises or culture and literature readings aloud or generate questions for class discussions ahead of time. Students who deal with sensory overstimulation in classroom settings, such as autistic students or students with anxiety and ADHD, are welcome to fidget or "stim" with small tactile objects, sketch while doing listening work, or sit in spaces of the classroom

that are less bright or prone to echo. I have also normalized the "Take 5" policy—any student who needs a five-minute break, to use the restroom or use a stim object like a fidget spinner or take deep breaths and pace in the hallway, can hold up a hand with five fingers spread and go; however, they must come in quietly.

These methods not only benefit students with learning, social, cognitive, or communication differences of any type, but they also help able-bodied students who have temporary impairments such as sleep deprivation, personal distractions, headaches, or allergies. However, fostering a classroom that is inclusive cannot be done only with the idea of accommodating differences as impairments; we must remember that diversity in any group creates strength. Neurodivergence celebrates the potential of different types of brains and their cognitive styles. As medical ethicist Thomas Armstrong remarked in 2015, "(H)ow (is) any individual human brain or mind … abnormal or normal? … Two decades of studies sugges(t) that many disorders of the brain … bring with them strengths as well as weaknesses" (348–352). Armstrong also cites autistic people's gifts with analyzing complex systems, such as language. Additionally, psychiatric researcher Kay Redfield Jamison has demonstrated a correlation between psychiatric illness and choices of arts, music, and writing professions (Johnson et al. 2012). People with chronic illnesses are ingenious multitaskers and time managers. In 2018, psychologist Ruth Karpinski advanced what she calls a "hyper brain/hyper body theory": "Studies point to an association between gifted IQ, particularly high verbal ability, and various mental and immunological outcomes (of illness)" (8–23). Instructors must remember students' gifts, too.

With that in mind, I have tried to create classes that let these difference-based abilities shine. I have asked autistic students who freeze during the social give-and-take of dialogues to instead give short presentations over a perseverative interest or "special interest," which has proven successful as a tactic for helping autistic people feel a sense of social belonging and maintain focus in studies of school and workplace accommodations for autistic people (Koegel et al. 2012). Drawing on the previously mentioned knowledge that autistic people are skilled at identifying and describing patterns of complex systems, I have found that autistic students are often happy to explain how they have noticed that a verb conjugation pattern works in a certain tense.

Opening a class with a sharing moment is also useful during the pandemic or any other time of collective anxiety. As vocational disability

studies researcher Damien Mellifont argues, employers should "recognize the complex relationship between anxiety and performance. … Anxiety can have a positive (i.e., functional) influence. … For example, Brooks (2013) and Mortensen (2014) found that reappraising anxiety as excitement may assist performance" (Mellifont et al. 2016, 71–86).[6] Asking students to start class by sharing their excitement about something can mobilize anxiety into enthusiasm. Vocational disability research demonstrates that people with anxiety and depression benefit from weekly meetings during which goals, needs, and coming events as well as areas where workers need help to improve are discussed with supervisors (McDowell and Fossey 2015). Instructors can give students weekly updates on class topics and learning objectives, while remaining attentive to areas where individuals or the class are in need of more support, and consider asking them if they would prefer certain activities. People with anxiety and depression have been shown to give more realistic appraisals of their own skills and abilities (Alloy and Abramson 1988). Therefore, students with anxiety and depression can offer valuable input about which activities they see as most helpful for the class and for their own learning. One way to solicit this feedback without creating additional stress and anxiety is to do so in the form of informal anonymous questionnaires given to the class, such as a Google poll.

Although anxiety and depression do not inherently make people more creative, and can slow motivation to produce creative work even when inspiration exists, there is nevertheless a statistical correlation between these psychiatric conditions and careers in arts and music. Furthermore, depressive and anxious people, including students, can become animated and expressive with creative work thanks to the motivation of needing to complete an assignment, which reduces stress and anxiety through movement and enjoyment of beauty and imagination. One can ask classes to perform vocabulary in charades or draw images of it in Pictionary, write poems, act out a play, or listen to music. Many of these embodied language activities are used in Total Physical Response, or TPR, language pedagogy, which posits that body movement with language aids with memory and recall of language (Asher 1969). From the perspective of universal design, these exercises are also beneficial to other students' learning. Joyful movement increases a sense of comfort and happiness that can help with student retention and could even improve performance.

[6] See also Mellifont (2019).

Before concluding, I wish to provide some examples of texts that center disability and neurodiversity to fuel class discussions around dis/ability in France and the Francophone world and counter underrepresented students' sense of invisibility. The disability issues addressed in these texts will impart information to students about French and Francophone cultural mores and topics such as education, health care, urbanism, sports, the arts, family life, friendship, and political activities and controversies. For the context of the higher education teaching environment, I privileged texts about the experiences of older teenagers and adults rather than children.

Films:

- *Ben X* (2008) (based on the novel of the same year by Nic Balthazar)
- *De rouille et d'os* (2012)
- *En route pour le milliard* (2020) (Congolese-French-Belgian coproduction)
- *L'homme de chevet* (2009)
- *Le huitième jour* (1996)
- *Hors normes* (2019)
- *Intouchables* (2011)

Novels:

- Johanna Almos, *La Norme et nous* (2018)
- Henry Bauchau, *L'enfant bleu* (2006)
- Virginie Despentes, *Bye Bye Blondie* (2004)
- Hélène Jousse, *Les mains de Louis Braille* (2019) (on the inventor of the Braille alphabet)
- Vincent Mondiot, *Tifenn: 1 − Punk: 0* (2013)
- Monique Proulx, *Homme invisible à la fenêtre* (1993) (Quebec)
- Didier Van Cauwelaert, *La Demi-pensionnaire* (2001)
- Jean-Didier Wolfromm, *Diane Lanster* (1978)
- Cara Zina, *Handi-Gang* (2017)

BD/Comics:

- Sandrine Allier-Guepin, *Je suis sourde, mais ce n'est pas contagieux!* (2010)
- David B., *L'Ascension du Haut Mal* (six volumes published from 1996 to 2003, collection of all six published in 2011)

- Eric Corbeyran, *Paroles de sourds* (2005)
- Julie Dachez, Mlle Caroline, *La Différence invisible* (2016)
- Arnaud Gautelier, Renaud Pennelle, *Des Fourmis dans les jambes* (2012)
- Guillaume Pervieux, *La Fantôme* (2004)
- Paul Samanos, *Fauteuils en état de siège* (2009)

Music:

- Grégoire, *Mon Handicap* (2014) https://youtu.be/bzVApc-Or4g (Grégoire has other songs related to disabilities and ableism)
- Renaud, *L'Enfant différent* (2016) https://youtu.be/gES5lfKq3jI (Renaud sings about the joy of music and its consolations for people with disabilities)
- L'Originale K, *Handicapés* (2019) https://youtu.be/vkeByl3RroA (Militant disability rights rapper and mom to an autistic child)
- Grand Corps Malade, *Sixième sens* (2010; disabled slam poet GCM has a number of other compositions about different disabilities) https://youtu.be/96RKHanO778
- Lou, *Lou, je m'appelle Lou* (2012) https://youtu.be/VumaWumENEk (composed, played, and sung by a young autistic musical prodigy who is also blind and has sensory impairments)
- Pomme, *Anxiété* https://youtu.be/WphQffikt-Q

Videos related to disability, ableism, accessibility, illness, mental health, and treatment:

- Tataki, *Santé mentale: Pourquoi les rappeurs pètent les plombs* https://youtu.be/Ld4e_h82Lkk
- Tibo InShape, *JE TOMBE AU RUGBY FAUTEUIL ROULANT !!,* https://youtu.be/-WfkBsHlvJI
- Yadebat, *Instagram mauvais pour ta santé mentale ?* https://youtu.be/Dr3PWH9geUU
- Guyane 1ᵉʳ Guyane Soir, *Handicap, un spectacle de danse contemporain* https://youtu.be/kYOtF6_8s9w (FranceTV report on French Guyana)
- France's Got Talent, *Disabled Boy the Shocked Judges with His Dance Performance* https://youtu.be/PbdYh-Rs8_o (Breakdancing with limited mobility)

- Jacques Halon, *Peinte aveugle visite de son atelier* https://youtu.be/pnqz7a78yo8
- Faber Rice, *Aspie Rap/Artiste Autiste*, https://youtu.be/2v-afbm1nbI
- Aspi, *J'réalise* https://youtu.be/qz7LDr9MNc0

Finally, France Culture has many excellent podcasts on mental health, mental illness, and accessibility at https://www.franceculture.fr/theme/psychiatrie. One can also find over 1500 different podcasts about various disabilities and issues of accessibility, some of which are less than 7 minutes long and ideal for short in-class listening and discussion, at https://www.franceculture.fr/recherche?q=handicap.

Conclusion

Without question, individual instructors who attempt to implement these changes to their curricula and teaching methods have their work cut out for them. Up to this point, professional discourse around accommodating disability in higher education has centered on making exceptions for exceptional students—a concept of health and dis/ability that is extremely individualized. Without wishing to open an entire ontological can of worms at the end of this chapter, I would like to point out that it is an oversight to discuss dis/ability without being attentive to the idea of health not as a physiological phenomenon in which individuals are functional/able/normal or not, but as a holistic framework that depends on various human material, social, and psychological needs being met. Future research into the topic can make more relevant discoveries by noting the social, racial, and economic justice issues at stake. Students of color, whose families face hiring discrimination and other institutionalized racism, including the racism of the medical establishment, often lack access to health services due to unequal access to health insurance and the insufficient care and concern of medical professionals (Anderson and Bulatao 2004). These factors impede official diagnoses and therefore limit access to accommodations. People in lower economic brackets face their own issues of medical access and (under or mis-)diagnosis; 26.1 million Americans had no health insurance during the calendar year of 2019 (U.S. Bureau of the Census). Fatphobia causes doctors to overlook chronic illnesses in people who weigh more (Okwerekwu 2016). On one hand, men are less likely to be diagnosed with depression and anxiety than

women due to presenting symptoms that look more like anger and withdrawal; male students with these illnesses often struggle without diagnoses and accommodations in college until a crisis precipitates a diagnosis (Lamm and Ying 2015). On the other hand, neurodivergent women with ADHD and autistic women are less likely to be diagnosed in their childhood than men due to the diagnostic models for these conditions adhering to how male-identified people present traits of the condition, so they do not come to college with diagnoses and accommodations in place (Bargiela et al. 2016).[7] LGBTQIA+ youth face significant social and institutional discrimination that can create situational depression and anxiety. Indeed, any type of social or institutional discrimination creates stress, which can trigger all manner of physical and psychological health concerns that impair cognitive function and day-to-day wellness (Scott et al. 2015). Many students have invisible disabilities and internalized stigma that makes them ashamed to use accommodations or consider themselves disabled, despite their struggles.

As eager as many educators are to embrace diversity, not all differences can be seen without a certain lens. By applying universal design principles and a social justice agenda and sharing methods with other educators in these collectives and professional networks, instructors can—and should—work together to build a comprehensive vision of accessibility for every student.

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[7] See Quinn and Madhoo (2014).

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Language Policy and Change
in the Classroom: Teaching the Feminization
of Professional Titles in Intermediate French

Alisha Reaves

On February 28, 2019, the *Académie Française* [French Academy][1] announced that they had reconsidered the feminization of professional titles and grades and had decided to let nature take its course and accept that all professions, titles, and grades could be used in the feminine (Rérolle 2019). Upon reading this news, I immediately felt as if a weight had been lifted and I had suddenly been given permission to use (and teach) the French language in a way that felt appropriate to me. I was no longer *un professeur* [a professor, masculine] but could now say without reproach *une professeure* [a professor, feminine]. I immediately shared the online news article I was reading with my colleagues in my department, partially to share my excitement for the change and partially to buffer

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[1] Unless otherwise specified, all translations are my own.

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myself and justify the changes I was about to immediately implement in how I taught the lesson on professions in the classroom. As a non-native speaker of French, I have often been restricted both in my training as a French teacher and in my understanding of what was acceptable in French. It is inherently more difficult to breach pedagogical norms when you cannot claim membership in the group that sets them. Thus, with the *Académie*'s announcement, I decided to give myself and my students permission to take advantage of the ways in which French was actually being used by its speakers, rather than just how it was being presented in formal prescriptive grammars. Despite the *Académie*'s lack of real authority over the teaching of French, the "pedagogical norm" of French language teaching in the United States still heavily reflects traditional prescriptive standards from France.[2] This is especially notable given that our closest francophone neighbor, Quebec, has feminized professions for decades.

This chapter reviews how and why I incorporated the teaching of the feminization of professional titles into my intermediate French classroom. It first begins with a very brief overview of the history of feminization in the French-speaking world. This is followed by a summary of current teaching practices concerning the feminization of professional titles in the French as a foreign language classroom. I then describe the primary goals and motivations for the lesson on feminization followed by a detailed explanation of the lesson itself. I conclude the chapter with a reflection on the role of teaching the feminization of professional titles in the French as a foreign language classroom and its relationship to teaching other controversial changes in the French language such as *l'écriture inclusive* [inclusive writing] and non-binary language use.

While feminized forms of nearly every profession had been established in France in 1999 with the publication of *Femme, J'écris ton nom* [*Woman, I Write Your Name*] (Cerquiglini 1999), they were publicly criticized by the *Académie Française* and widely rejected by French academics, scholars, and teachers (Cerquiglini 2018, 159–162). This stance has been maintained in the United States, which largely follows the French standard as the pedagogical norm—a practice which, as mentioned above, largely ignores our French-speaking neighbor to the north who has

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[2] The *Académie*'s only real "powers" are the creation of a dictionary and the self-ordained "défense de la langue française" [defense of the French language] which consists of prescribing grammar and usage rules on their own website. They hold no legal authority, although their members are often included in government commissions for neologisms as a courtesy.

aggressively pursued the feminization of professional titles since the early 1980s through concrete actions from the *Office de la langue française* [Office of the French language] (Vachon-L'Heureux 1992).[3] France in fact stood in contrast to much of the French-speaking world with its resistance to feminization. The French-speaking community of Belgium published its first guide to feminization in 1993 and it is now in its third edition. Similarly, Switzerland published its first guide in 1991 and adopted legislation at the federal level acknowledging the importance of non-sexist language in official documents in 2007 (Dawes 2003, 197).

How Has Feminization Been Taught?

Despite the progressive changes in the rest of the French-speaking world, French language education in the United States has followed the model of France, designating professions such as *professeur* [professor] and *médecin* [doctor] as strictly masculine in gender, while sometimes indicating in a footnote that feminized forms are possible in Quebec, but not in France. This practice not only restricts students' and teachers' abilities to describe themselves in French in a manner that conforms to their identity, but also reinforces the concept of France as the center of the French-speaking world, relegating other French-speaking communities to outlier status. As Giovanangeli highlights, in the language classroom, teachers have to regularly navigate language policies enforced by (French) governments and institutions while simultaneously addressing the realities of French language use in contemporary society, leaving them with two choices: they "may either contribute to the preservation of normative positions in regard to dominating social practices or they can challenge them" (Giovanangeli 2009, 10).

An examination of a few beginner- and intermediate-level textbooks available for university study in the United States highlights a range of approaches in teaching grammatical gender with regard to professions. On one end of the scale, some continue to follow the traditional French roles, noting that professions such as *professeur* [professor], *médecin* [doctor], *maire* [mayor], and *ingénieur* [engineer] exist only in the masculine. Others mention the possibility of certain feminine forms in Quebec but

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[3] Today known as the *Office Québecois de la langue française* [Quebecois office of the French language].

include the unpopular *femme médecin* [woman doctor] as accepted alternatives in France while proceeding to reinforce the masculine only in their exercises and associated homework. Most recently, the newest edition of the textbook *Chez nous*, released after the *Académie*'s announcement, lists all professions in both the masculine and feminine. It also includes an explicit explanation of the change through a brief *Vie et Culture* [Life and Culture] lesson provided in the same chapter (Scullen et al. 2020).

While there has been much scholarly work on the question of feminization in France and Quebec (e.g., Arbour et al. 2014; Houdebine 1987; Paveau 2002), few scholarly or pedagogical articles address the feminization of professional titles and grades in the French as a foreign language classroom. Fracchiolla conducted a review of pedagogical materials and found that they largely fail to address feminization in a meaningful way, often including only a small note referencing variation in Quebec, Belgium, or Switzerland, or these materials provide incomplete rules regarding masculine default forms (Fracchiolla 2008). Pérez Lacarta proposed a lesson for teaching the feminization of professional titles, which began with reminding students of the concept of gender in French and familiarizing them with the debate. She then selected feminized forms from print media for students to analyze in comparison with the rules provided in the guides. Students then looked for examples themselves to present to the class, wrote a job post for a newspaper using the new forms, and finally prepared a debate on the topic to reflect upon their use of feminized forms in their first language (Pérez Lacarta 2015). Pérez Lacarta hits upon several key points in drawing students' attention to the different dimensions of the controversy, the variation in forms, and the relationship to the students' own first language use. While these studies represent a promising start, there is much work to be done in both examining how feminization is taught in the classroom and actually incorporating it into pedagogical materials.

MOTIVATIONS FOR TEACHING FEMINIZATION

Shortly after the announcement in the spring of 2019, I was set to teach grammatical gender with professions to my Intermediate I (third semester) university students. I decided then that I would at least introduce the controversy to my class and provide them with options for forms that their textbook did not. The students were genuinely interested and after that semester, I decided to develop a series of workshop-style lessons on

feminization and other controversial language policy issues in France. I prepared a sequence of three lessons that I taught at the Intermediate level. In Intermediate I, I prepared a lesson on the feminization of professional titles. For Intermediate II, I prepared two lessons, one on *l'écriture inclusive* [inclusive writing] that concluded with an introduction to non-binary pronouns in French and a second on the national spelling reforms.

A common goal of this series of lessons was to help students begin to understand the complex relationship between the French language and French national identity. This relationship is often difficult for American students to comprehend, as the United States has no official language designated in its Constitution, as does France. There exists no higher linguistic authority regulating what is and is not proper English, as with the *Académie Française*. And although widely considered a lingua franca and a global language, there is not a pervasive narrative in the United States about the beauty and purity of the English language compared to all other languages, as there is with the French language in France. Thus, I wanted to address all these language policy questions partially from the perspective of French national identity as a means of introducing culture and linguistics into the classroom. An additional goal of all these lessons was to raise students' awareness of their use of their first language and the inherent challenges that they may take for granted. I particularly wanted to avoid the trap of presenting France, and France alone, as problematic with regard to language and reinforcing the foreignness or otherness that students may already feel. It is for this reason that all the lessons began with reflections in English on similar phenomena in the English language.

The lessons were intended to demonstrate contemporary French language use. It is not a surprise to any French teacher that there is a pronounced contrast between the prescriptive pedagogical norm enforced in the classroom and the contemporary use of the language. We, as language teachers, have grown far too accustomed to reinforcing arbitrary rules in the classroom, based on ideals imposed by language authorities that are rarely heard in spoken contexts and often limited to academic writing. Too often, students are left to discover common colloquial features of spoken French such as "ne" deletion[4] and the formation of contractions with the subject pronoun and verb such as "t'as" for "tu as"[5] if they choose to study abroad. And while the feminization of professional titles was

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[4] The first (of two) element(s) of grammatical negation of a verb.
[5] Both are translated as "you are" in the singular and informal use.

considered officially not accepted in many spheres, that did not prevent these forms from propagating and being used by women, even in France.[6]

A final goal of the feminization lesson was to decenter the discussion of grammar away from France and inform students of other potential "linguistic authorities" to which they could turn as a model of acceptable French. By highlighting the French language in Quebec, Belgium, and Switzerland and providing an alternative accepted standard, we can perhaps alleviate anxiety students may feel in straying from what is written in their textbooks and give them a reference point to turn to if they desire one.

Outline of the Lesson

I now turn my attention to describing the lesson as I implemented it in my classroom over two semesters. While I describe the lesson in detail, it is meant more as an example, rather than a model, of how one might address the question of feminization until textbooks have caught up to the change or even after, as the debate is still relevant from the point of view of interrogating France's cultural identity. The specific goals of the lesson were to (1) have students reflect upon their own language use in the first language (English), (2) make students aware of language change in both English and French, and (3) begin to explore the relationship between language and cultural identity in France. The lesson had two components: a homework assignment completed using Google Forms and a 50-minute classroom lesson. The lesson was scheduled in my syllabus to follow the formal grammar discussion on gender and professional titles.

The homework assignment consisted of a series of questions in English. First, I gave them a sequence of pairs (and sometimes triplets) of professional titles such as "policeman" versus "police officer," "fireman" versus "firefighter," and "waiter" or "waitress" versus "server." For each pair, I asked students to indicate which term they were more likely to use. Students then answered a few reflective questions about their responses to these pairings.

1. What do you notice about the five questions you just answered?
2. Do you think there is a trend toward one word or another in society today?

[6] See Fujimura (2005) for a description of how the use of feminized forms increased after 1998.

3. Should some terms be "phased out"? Why or why not?
4. Do you think French has a similar situation to English?

In the next section of the homework assignment, students read a brief newspaper article from *Le Monde* about the *Académie*'s decision titled *L'Académie française se résout à la féminisation des noms de métiers* [The French Academy Finally Decides to Feminize Job Names] and answered a series of comprehension questions about it in English. Students were instructed to print out their responses and bring them to class the next day for discussion.

1. What was the big announcement from the *Académie Française*? (Multiple choice)
2. The vote was unanimous (True/False)
3. Why did the Academy finally support this official change? (Open-ended)
4. What are some grammatical methods for the "féminisations des mots" [feminization of words]? (Open-ended)
5. Why is "auteur" [author] more challenging than "écrivain" [writer] according to the article? (Open-ended)

The class on feminization began with a small group discussion in French of students' responses to the English pairings to first emphasize that questions of linguistic gender are not limited to French, but also pose a challenge in English. They shared their responses with their classmates, and then we discussed them as a class. Students' preferences for terms varied, sometimes by the profession itself, and sometimes by the students' regional origins. One interesting comment highlighted that the supposedly gender-neutral forms such as "police officer" was more likely to be used for women only, whereas "policeman" was still acceptable or preferred for male police officers. Thus, the gender-neutral title in English is perhaps not as neutral as perceived to be. However, my students rejected variants such as "policewoman" in favor of the gender-neutral form. When comparing the issue in French and English, students acknowledged the similarities, but generally perceived the question as more difficult in French because of the role of grammatical gender throughout the entire language.

After the discussion, I provided students with a brief history of the *Académie Française* and its role in French society, which I followed up

with a listening activity. Students listened to a 90-second news segment from *France 24* reporting on the *Académie*'s announcement and answered the following comprehension questions.[7]

1. What was the topic of the dispute between the man and the woman?
2. What does the linguist think of the *Académie Française*?
3. How old are the norms enforced by the *Académie Française*?
4. Are all professions easy to feminize?

This news clip highlighted the cultural controversy that feminization provokes by referencing a now infamous interaction between a deputy of the *Assemblée Nationale* [National Assembly][8] and the session president on October 6, 2014. Deputy Julien Aubert of the Vaucluse UMP (now LR, France's right-wing party) uses *Madame le Président* [Madam President, masculine] to address Session President (and Vice-President of the *Assemblée Nationale*) Sandrine Mazetier instead of *Madame la Présidente* [Madam President, feminine]. Through the course of the exchange, President Mazetier corrects Deputy Aubert, reminding him of the operating procedure of the *Assemblée Nationale*, which specifies the use of feminine titles when appropriate (*Règlement de l'Assemblée nationale* 2019). The deputy then invokes the *Académie Française* as justification in his refusal to refer to the Session President as *Madame la Présidente*. The news clip also included an interview with linguist Bernard Cerquiligni, one of many scholars partially responsible for *Femme, j'écris ton nom*, who explains how the *Académie Française* had been operating under outdated thinking.[9] Finally, it highlights some of the more controversial forms for which French people have not collectively agreed upon a feminized form.

Following the listening activity, I provided students with a brief history of feminization in Quebec, Belgium, and Switzerland and gave them a table of the feminized forms, based on the Quebec model, that were

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[7] These questions were presented to the students in French.

[8] The popular house of the French parliament.

[9] It is worth noting that support for feminization does not imply support for other progressive language change movements currently active with regard to French. While Cerquiligni has openly supported feminization, he has also spoken out against inclusive writing, often making disingenuous arguments against it. His inclusion here is simply a description of the video that the students watched and is not meant to imply that he is a champion for all progressive language changes currently in flux.

absent from their textbooks. This table is reproduced below with forms from the Belgian and French guides included to highlight the overwhelming consensus in how to feminize these professions.[10]

Quebec	France	Belgium
une ministre	une ministre	une ministre
une médecin	une médecin(e)	une médecin
une écrivaine	une écrivaine	**une écrivaine**; une écrivain
une docteure	une docteur(e)	**une docteure**; une docteur; une doctoresse[11]
une mairesse; une maire	une maire/mairesse	**une maire**; une mairesse
une professeure	une professeur(e)	**une professeure;** une professeur
une auteure; une autrice	une auteur(e)	**une auteure**; une auteur
une diplomate	une diplomate	une diplomate
une ingénieure	une ingénieur(e)	**une ingénieure**; une ingénieur

The class concluded with small group discussions in French of the following two questions.

1. What do you think of this change? Why do you think France (the *Académie*) was slower to change than other francophone countries?
2. These forms are not present in our textbook, should they be? Why or why not?

The second question was included specifically to give students some ownership over their learning. Each student has their own goals and motivations for learning French, and those should be taken into consideration as we teach. The overwhelming response to that question was yes. After this lesson, some students began to incorporate the feminized forms into their writing, while others did not. However, they at least now had a choice that reflected the reality of the French language. Unfortunately, until pedagogical materials and textbooks have caught up to this new reality, most students do not have this choice in the assignments they complete as they still reflect the conservative norm. Instructors themselves must ensure that their classroom materials and assessments reflect the choices available to students today, even when those choices are lacking in mass-produced textbooks.

[10] For a (more) complete history of the feminization process, see Houdebine-Gravaud (1999) for France and Vachon-L'Heureux (1992) for Québec.

The Importance of Teaching Feminization and Language Change

Incorporating the teaching of feminized forms in the French as a foreign language classroom allows for students to develop a fuller picture of contemporary use of the French language and discussion of the controversy provides an avenue of inquiry in understanding French culture and questions of French national identity.[12] It can also help to affirm students' identity and their sense of belonging in the world. A study by Chatard, Guimont, and Martinot (2005) found that the incorporation of the teaching of feminine professional titles increased students' self-confidence in relation to prestigious occupations. While this study focused on French middle school children, it is not unreasonable to extend their conclusions to young adult learners in the French as a foreign language classroom. Anecdotally, I can attest to some students expressing feelings of disappointment and feeling restricted by masculine only professional forms in French, especially after explicitly being taught that there is a masculine and feminine form for everything else in the French language.[13]

As current pedagogy continues to promote inclusive identity-affirming teaching practices (Pilon 2020), teaching the feminization of professional titles in French could be seen as reinforcing the gender binary, as it explicitly only references two grammatical genders: masculine and feminine. However, this conflict is not necessary if the subject is broached from the perspective of contemporary language use and language change. Simply providing students with the feminine forms without any context or history of the movement does exclude those students who do not fit into the societal gender binary. Thus, adding the feminine forms to a list of vocabulary words is insufficient. What is particularly important in this lesson, and the sequence of lessons I designed, is the discussion surrounding the controversy of the change. Women and scholars who have been pushing for the feminization of professional titles have argued that it is not simply a question of grammar, but of visibility within the language. This was, in fact, the explicit motivation of those in French-speaking Switzerland in choosing forms that were not only visibly feminine (e.g., *la professeure*)

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[11] "une doctoresse" is designated only for the medical profession

[12] See Fleischman (1997) for a discussion of how language and "bon usage" are intertwined with French national identity.

[13] See Houdebine-Gravaud (1987) or (1999) for a detailed explanation of the history of feminization in France.

but also audibly feminine (e.g., *la mairesse*) (Moreau and Dister 2014). And Pilon (2020) notes that in Quebec there is also a similar push toward audibly feminine forms to increase visibility, such as using *autrice* instead of *auteure* for "author" (196). It is this question of *visibility* that has motivated the movement behind the still controversial *écriture inclusive* [inclusive writing]. The same argument can be (and has been) used to provide support for the use of non-binary forms in French (e.g., Knisely 2020, Pilon 2020). If approached from this perspective, visibility within the language, and as a cultural as well as linguistic question, the feminization of professional titles does not have to be yet another barrier to non-binary students in the French as a foreign language classroom. The lesson on feminization should be followed with a lesson on *l'écriture inclusive* [inclusive writing] and another on trends in non-binary language use. These lessons should be introduced in the same way as the lesson on feminization, providing students with parallels of the debate in their first language to reflect upon and inviting them to consider the universal nature of such debates. It is important that we as teachers provide these students with these forms, but also with the appropriate cultural context to implement them. We can affirm students' individual identities while also preparing them for how they may be received in the target cultural context.

Conclusion

In this brief chapter, I set out to demonstrate how and why we should teach the feminization of professional titles and grades in the French as a foreign language classroom in the United States. My primary motivations were to highlight the need to represent the French language as living and changing, engage students in a discussion of the role of language and national identity, and underscore how we can affirm students' individual identities through our language teaching practices. The teaching of the feminization of professional titles is just one part of a series of lessons on language change and language policy that can help to broaden our students' understanding of the French language. Incorporating discussions of language change and language controversies into the classroom must be careful and systematic. We do not want to reinforce (or create) negative cultural stereotypes and we want students to develop a deeper awareness of their own preconceptions so that they may better understand their own language use. In engaging students in critical thinking about their first and second language use, we can help them become more conscientious, purposeful, and reflective language users.

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Teaching French Feminisms
from an Intersectional Perspective

Blase A. Provitola

During graduate school in the 2010s, I was struck by the discrepancy between the decolonial feminist activism and scholarship I was discovering and the French feminist theory I had learned as an undergraduate. When designing my first undergraduate French course devoted to feminism, I wanted to decenter prevailing American understandings of "French feminism," create a classroom environment that would better reflect students' multifaceted identities, and enrich their knowledge of social justice movements in France. Since, as Sara Ahmed has affirmed, living a feminist life includes creating citational practices that center the long-standing intellectual and political labor of queer, poor, and/or racialized women and gender minorities, then this chapter sketches out some preliminary ideas of how curricula might contribute to such a web of citationality (Ahmed 2017). This chapter will present the upper-level undergraduate French seminar "Intersectional French Feminisms" that I taught at Trinity College

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in Fall 2020.[1] I will first outline my motivations designing this course and present an overview of its content. I will then walk the reader through two sample units in more detail, before concluding with a brief reflection on what I would do differently in the future.

THEORETICAL AND POLITICAL MOTIVATIONS

The term "French feminism" has taken on a life of its own in the United States. Several feminist scholars have explored what Christine Delphy has called the "invention of French feminism," whose canon has been constituted since the early 1980s by anthologies that overrepresent the psychoanalytically inflected theories of femininity popularized by the "Holy Trinity" of Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Julia Kristeva (Moses 1998; Delphy 2000; Costello 2016). Such anthologies tend to minimize explicit discussions of power dynamics related to race and class (Marks and De Courtivron 1981; Moi 1987; Oliver 2000; Cavallaro 2003; Oliver and Walsh 2004), though a few have sought to place greater emphasis on materialism and activism (Leonard and Adkins 1996; Greenwald 2019). In a similar vein, courses on this topic often remain predominantly white-authored and theory-heavy, focusing on thinkers such as Simone de Beauvoir, Cixous, and Monique Wittig.

However, a growing body of scholarship in France is counteracting the erasure of women and queer people of color (Bacchetta 2009, 2016), underscoring the links between colonialism and white feminism (Vergès 2017, 2019b), and challenging deterministic understandings of gender from a transfeminist perspective (Baril 2016; Espineira and Bourcier 2016). This has come on the heels of the so-called *affaires du foulard* [headscarf affairs] and the rise of women's groups such as *Ni Putes ni soumises* [Neither whores nor doormats] in the 1990s and early 2000s, which has brought the long-standing Islamophobia of self-proclaimed feminists like Elisabeth Badinter into sharp focus. Contemporary antiracist feminist collectives such as Mwasi and the *Lesbiennes of Color* have also drawn attention to the work of those who came before them. These paradigm shifts can and should make French curricula more inclusive and intersectional.

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[1] Trinity College is a selective liberal arts college of approximately 2200 students located in Hartford, Connecticut.

I decided to call my course "Intersectional French Feminisms" to signal content to students using a word that might be familiar to them, while also showing through my choice of texts that while "intersectionality" may be an English word, multi-dimensional minority struggles have of course been articulated and undertaken by activists in the French-speaking world long before the translation of that concept.[2] Recent French discussions and publications exploring the concept of intersectionality have often focused on Anglophone sources, which, as many researchers have demonstrated, has paradoxically led to the elitism and whitewashing of intersectionality rather than giving voice to formerly colonized populations (Aït Ben Lmadani and Moujoud 2012; Kian and Falquet 2015; Bilge 2015). I thus sought to contest the problematic divide between theory and praxis that feminist and antiracist theorists and activists have long critiqued, and to show students that grassroots organizers have for decades raised awareness about social justice issues that have only recently been considered a legitimate object of university research in France.

Course Scope and Overview

It was with those concerns in mind that I designed an advanced undergraduate seminar to expose students to contemporary feminisms in "hexagonal" France. Since this course would be the first exposure of most students to French feminism of any kind, I decided to put lesser-known texts in conversation with canonical ones, asking how these diverse works enrich, contradict, and complicate each other. This meant showing the constitutive role played by slavery and colonization in the very definition of "French," foregrounding immigrant and diasporic voices, and expanding the definition of feminism beyond authors and movements typically associated with this term. I felt that accomplishing those many aims would require an interdisciplinary and multimedia approach that would put

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[2] The concept of intersectionality was officially introduced in a French university context in the mid-2000s. In 2005, *Cahiers du genre* published a translation of Kimberlé Crenshaw's foundational article as part of a special issue titled "Féminisme(s): penser la pluralité" ["Feminism(s): Thinking Plurality"] (Crenshaw 2005), kicking off a spate of publications on the topic that continues today (Lépinard and Mazouz 2021; Boussahba et al. 2021). Unfortunately, certain recent studies of intersectionality (Fassin 2015) have problematically excluded or minimized the contributions of French feminist journals that have long taken an interest in overlapping issues of race, class, sex/gender, and/or sexuality (Degraef 1990; Cecchet 1999; Curiel 1999).

literature and film in dialogue with historical, theoretical, and political sources; I also wanted to limit the number of dense theoretical texts that might prove especially frustrating to students coping with the trauma and challenges of life during the Covid-19 pandemic. Ultimately, I came up with the following course description:

> In 2017, Amandine Gay released the groundbreaking documentary *Ouvrir la voix* (released in English as *Speak Up*), which features Afro-French women speaking out about their lives and experiences. This course is guided by the wordplay in that film's title: it seeks to simultaneously "ouvrir la *voix*" (open up a space for new voices) and "ouvrir la *voie*" (open up new paths forward) by exploring French feminisms from the 1970s to the present as they are influenced by race, class, and gender. Along the way, we will ask what "intersectionality" means, looking critically at the canon by putting it in dialogue with lesser-known texts. This interdisciplinary course will use sociological, literary, and audiovisual material to cover issues such as reproductive rights, colonization and legacies of slavery, queer sexualities, working-class experience, and transgender identities. Classes will be conducted in French, though a few readings will be in English. In this course, students will learn to:
>
> - Identify issues, thinkers, and authors related to different strands of feminist thought in France;
> - Analyze, present, and discuss the aesthetics and politics of primary texts (literature, film, political pamphlets);
> - Summarize and analyze arguments made in secondary literature (articles, essays);
> - Refine oral and written vocabulary, grammar, and argumentation skills in French.

This class was taught virtually over ten weeks with an enrollment of eleven students, meeting synchronously via Zoom (as per university mandate) twice a week for an hour and forty minutes (rather than meeting for seventy-five minutes twice a week for thirteen weeks). Students were evaluated based on their participation (both synchronous and asynchronous), one in-class presentation, three response papers, and a final paper or project on a topic of their choice.

We began by watching and discussing Gay's *Ouvrir la voix*, whose interviewees explain the inseparability of different aspects of their identities, the persistence of colonial worldviews and racial stereotypes, and the

difficulties of naming racism within France's model of "colorblind" abstract universalism. This allowed us to discuss the dynamics of multiple oppressions without the need for lengthy theoretical texts during the first "shopping" week of classes.[3] The remainder of the course was then divided into five units, summarized in Table 10.1. We began by examining Hélène Cixous's and Monique Wittig's analyses of knowledge, gender, and power, with a special attention to the ways in which slavery and colonization are evoked as historical realities and analogies for sexual difference. We then moved on to study movements for bodily autonomy and reproductive rights in the 1970s through the work of the Women's Liberation Movement (MLF) as well as Annie Ernaux's *L'Événement* (2000) [*Happening* (2001)], an autobiographical novel about her traumatic experiences with clandestine abortion as a young woman from a working-class background. We concluded that unit by looking at two films highlighting voices often excluded from so-called "second-wave" feminist historiographies: Algerian immigrant women in Yamina Benguigui's *Inch'Allah dimanche* (2001) [*Sunday God Willing*] and women in rural French farming communities in *La Belle Saison* [*Summertime*, 2015].[4] As a transition to the next unit on legacies of slavery, we studied the 1970s texts of the *Coordination des femmes noires* [*Organization of Black Women*] and Awa Thiam's *La parole aux négresses* [*Speak Out, Black Sisters*[5]], before examining Françoise Vergès's recent theorization of decolonial feminism rooted in the historical struggles of "marrons" (maroons, meaning slaves who refused their condition by escaping plantations). We then read Léonora Miano's *La Saison de l'ombre* (2013) [*Season of the Shadow* (2018)], a work of historical fiction whose dense prose traces the slave trade's decimation and transformation of family and kinship structures in a fictional West African community. The following unit about feminism and the nation featured articles and primary documents related to the Islamophobic

[3] We read and discussed quotations from Kimberlé Crenshaw's original article in conjunction with the film (Crenshaw 1991).

[4] I explicitly raise the issue of the exclusions inherent in the "waves" model of feminism (Thompson 2002; Pavard 2018).

[5] When assigning this text, I gloss the white supremacist and colonial history of the terms *nègre* and *négresse*, and I make it clear to students (especially to non-black students) that they are never to use those terms unless directly citing a relevant portion of an assigned text. Then, after we complete the reading, we discuss the politics of what it means for marginalized groups to use such terms to refer to themselves, and I introduce the critiques of Thiam made by other members of the *Coordination*.

Table 10.1 Course overview

Week(s)	Unit	Course materials (* = assigned for historical/political context)
1	Introduction	Amandine Gay, *Ouvrir la voix* (2017, film) Optional: Mwasi, *Afrofem*, preface and Ch. 1 (2018)*
2–4	"Second-wave" feminism and bodily autonomy	Hélène Cixous, "Sorties" (1978, pp. 114–33) Monique Wittig, "On ne naît pas femme" (1980) Rita Thalmann and Régine Dhoquois, "La lutte pour le droit à l'IVG" (1995)* "Le Manifeste des 343" (1971)* Annie Ernaux, *L'Événement* (2001) Catherine Corsini, *La Belle Saison* (2016a, film) Yamina Benguigui, *Inch'Allah dimanche* (2001, film)
5–7	*Un féminisme de marronnage* ("feminism of marooning)	Mwasi, *Afrofem*, "Postface: 1976, l'affirmation d'un féminisme noir en France" (2018)* *Coordination des femmes noires*, pamphlet (1978) Awa Thiam, *La parole aux négresses* (1978, pp. 17–22, 73–85) Françoise Vergès, *Un féminisme décolonial* (2019b, pp. 29–41) Léonora Miano, *La saison de l'ombre* (2015, abridged and annotated)
8	Feminism and the nation	Explore the websites for *Ni Putes Ni Soumises* and the exhibit "Les Mariannes d'aujourd'hui" Fadela Amara, "NPNS: Pour une nouvelle mixité fondée sur le respect" (2005) Office Français de l'Immigration et de l'Intégration, "Contrat d'accueil et d'intégration" Miriam Ticktin, "Sexual Violence as the Language of Border Control: Where French Feminist and Anti-immigrant Rhetoric Meet" (2008)*
9–10	Queer sexuality, precarity, and transgender identities	Dalila Khadri, *Lucioles* (2004, short film) Groupe du 6 novembre, *Warriors/Guerrières* (2001) Alain Berliner, *Ma vie en rose* (1997, film) Joao Gabriell, "Réflexions sur l'idée de 'déconstruction du genre' en contexte afro" (2019)* Sébastien Lifshitz, *Wild Side* (2004, film) Interview with Giovanna Rincon of ACCEPTESS-T (see Enda 2019)

State's instrumentalization of discourses of gender equality through a case study of *Ni Putes Ni Soumises*, the headscarf debates, and justifications for border policing. Finally, in the last unit on queer sexualities and transgender identities, we focused primarily on films coupled with short texts as students began work on their final papers. We began with Dalila Khadri's documentary *Lucioles* [*Fireflies*] and excerpts from the anthology published by the lesbian of color collective known as the *Groupe du 6 novembre* [*Group of November 6*] to look at how culture and migration shape sexual identity. Lastly, we watched the divergent representations of transgender experience in Alain Berliner's *Ma vie en rose* (1997) [*My Life in Pink*] and Sébastien Lifshitz's *Wild Side* (2004). I will now discuss two of the above units in further detail.

Race, Class, and Reproductive Rights

In the unit on bodily autonomy, I wanted to emphasize the struggles of marginalized women within France prior to the legalization of abortion, as well as show that for many racialized women from and/or in France's former colonies and neocolonial territories, reproductive rights are just as much about freedom from forced sterilization and the right to safely *have* children as they are about the right to abortion. To establish historical context, I began with the "Manifesto of the 343" and an abridged, annotated version of an article in which Rita Thalmann describes her work as co-founder of the association *Choisir*.[6] She foregrounds the white supremacy of anti-choice discourse, describing politicians hurling racial slurs at Gisèle Halimi and recalling that Michel Debré's hostility to abortion access only concerned "little white babies, not café au lait fetuses" (Thalmann and Dhoquois 1995).[7] Then we read Annie Ernaux's short autobiographical novel *L'Événement*, which demonstrates that prior to the legalization of certain forms of abortion in 1975, poor and working-class women and girls were particularly at risk because they could not afford to travel to neighboring countries where it was legal and struggled to afford clandestine providers in France.[8] Students explored how, as a young

[6] *Choisir* is short for *Choisir la cause des femmes* [*Choosing the cause of women*]. Other co-founders included Gisèle Halimi and Simone de Beauvoir.

[7] All translations are my own unless otherwise specified.

[8] Abortion was partially covered by social security starting in 1982, and it was not fully covered until 2012.

unmarried woman from a working-class family, Annie's pregnant body is differently read and judged based upon others' perceptions of her social status cultural capital. At school, she is stigmatized and sexualized by her classmates and male friends when they learn that she is pregnant; a doctor becomes less condescending toward her once he learns that she is a student and not "just another" poor girl pregnant out of wedlock.[9]

Lastly, we turned to the *Coordination des femmes noires.* Their writings from the late 1970s have recently been contextualized and partially reproduced in the postface to Mwasi's *Afrofem*, which I assign along with brief excerpts of the *Coordination*'s political pamphlet published in July 1978, which I had photographed in archives. The section "Sexuality and Contraception" describes clandestine abortion methods and denounces how "the Debrés defending the moral order shout 'LET THEM LIVE' in the West and put a stop to the 'UNCONTROLLED DEMOGRAPHY OF PEOPLE OF COLOR [GENS DE COULEURS]'" ("Recueil de textes" 1978, emphasis in original).[10] I asked students to reflect on the different experiences of reading the neatly organized partial reprint of the manifesto in *Afrofem* compared to the scanned excerpts of the original pamphlet. They noted that while the latter were less legible, they enjoyed seeing the original typesetting, illustrations, and handwriting, which brought the text alive. We had a productive discussion on the question of archives, as students commented that without the work of activists and researchers, groups like the *Coordination* would remain virtually unknown.

SLAVERY, FEMINISM, AND *MARRONNAGE* [MAROONING][11]

The most conceptually ambitious and complex aspect of this course for me was its exploration of the relationship between slavery and feminism. One of the course's first texts was Monique Wittig's essay "One Is Not Born a Woman," which analogizes sex and race by explaining that they are both social constructs masquerading as "nature" and compares lesbians to "marrons" (maroons, or runaway slaves) because they refuse to participate

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[9] This book contains explicit descriptions of medical procedures and bodily trauma, so I recommend giving students a content warning.

[10] It is unclear to me whether the plural of "color" in the original text is intentional or not.

[11] My translation reflects Vergès's use of "maroon" and "marooning" in her English publications (Vergès 2019c).

in heterosexual society (Wittig 1980, 1992).[12] We reflected on whether such an analogy enriches understandings of race and promotes solidarity across racial lines, or else whether it reductively flattens experiences and centers whiteness. Throughout the class, I took notes on that discussion while screen-sharing and then posted them online afterward so that we could relate our thoughts on Wittig to the subsequent class's reading: a ten-page excerpt of Françoise Vergès's *Un féminisme décolonial* (2019b) [*A Decolonial Feminism* (2021)].[13] Vergès's vision of decolonial feminism anchors gender justice in the historical figure of the maroon, positing such a genealogy as a form of resistance to white and neocolonial feminisms (Vergès, 2019a, b, 2020). Since this is a dense text, I split students into three groups, each of which was responsible for one of the three subsections: "Against eurocentrism," "For a critical decolonial pedagogy," and "Decolonial feminism as utopian imaginary." Each group was asked to present two key quotations to the class and explain how they related to that section's overarching point. Students were able to identify a few ways in which white feminists marginalize the experiences of feminists of color (including their neglect of histories of forced sterilization) and to define the concepts of "féminisme de marronnage" [feminism of marooning] and "decolonial feminism." Once students had an overall grasp of Vergès's main ideas, I pulled up our previous class notes and asked them how Wittig and Vergès differently employ the figure of the maroon. I asked students to compare and contrast the analogy of lesbians to runaway slaves (Wittig), on the one hand, with, on the other hand, the rooting of contemporary feminist struggles in historical resistance to slavery (Vergès). Some students commented that they were unsure of whether Wittig takes into account the range of identities contained within the term "lesbian," whereas Vergès more explicitly unpacks the differences that are often collapsed within terms like "woman" or "feminist."

This discussion laid the foundation for what would come next: reading Léonora Miano's *Saison de l'ombre*, whose narrative follows a fictional West African tribe's progressive decimation at the hands of another

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[12] I assigned this in English due to its theoretical difficulty, though I also made the French version available so that we could look at them side by side during class. I also recommended that they read Louise Turcotte's Foreword, and students reported finding it extremely helpful (Turcotte 1992)

[13] In an in-person format, I sometimes ask students to take notes on the board, which I photograph in class, post online, and ask students to re-examine in discussion questions for the subsequent reading.

belligerent tribe that is collaborating with European slave traders. I present this novel by asking students if and how the characters in this story—including the few who escape slavery and go on to re-establish a new community—might be understood in light of Vergès's stress on maroons as an inspiration for contemporary decolonial feminists; what does this novel tell us about how the slave trade has impacted understandings of kinship, gender, and resistance? This novel is very challenging, so I created a class reading guide in a Google doc in which pairs of students would take notes on the characters and main events of each section, and the entire class would answer comprehension questions. Students' response papers, which they completed after class discussion, explored themes such as Miano's descriptive style when representing the unprecedented horrors of the slave trade, the nuanced depiction of tradition as both potentially oppressive and also often necessary for community cohesion, the importance of spirituality, and the creation of new kinship structures. Despite the difficulty of Miano's rich language, students reported that it helped them develop strategies for more efficient reading comprehension.

Lessons Learned and Future Directions

Reflecting upon this class a year after teaching it, I can think of many ways to improve course materials politically and intellectually. First of all, I would like to devote more time to teaching grassroots women's movements outside of the Hexagon, using texts such as Myriam Paris's research on Reunionese feminism (Paris 2020). Second of all, I would like to re-organize the syllabus such that material relating to queer sexualities and transgender identities is distributed throughout the semester rather than left at the end in a problematic "additive" way. For example, I could expand the unit on bodily autonomy by adding texts from the Cases Rebelles collective's recently released volume *AfroTrans* (Danjé 2021).

The most important lessons I learned while teaching this class, however, relate less to specific course content than to trauma-informed pedagogy during the Covid-19 pandemic. Ultimately, I realized that one of the most important ways that I could make this class intersectional was to attend to the individual needs of my students, create a space in which they felt a sense of community, and invite collective reflection on challenging topics. This sometimes meant sacrificing content in order to support my students' mental health. For instance, since *La Saison de l'ombre* is such a challenging novel, I decided to abridge it (making one section optional)

and spend an extra class on it, rather than moving on to the third unit about feminism and the nation. Instead, I gave students the option of exploring the latter theme in their final paper, and a few of them did. The next time I teach this class, I will reduce the overall amount of reading and spend more time helping students develop a final research project related to their individual interests.

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Teaching Trans Knowledges: Situating Expansive Possibilities in an Intermediate French Course

Kris Aric Knisely

Understandings of gender have been stretched, challenged, and made to evolve throughout history. As a part of this long historical arc, contemporary language educators are—in step with broader society—increasingly recognizing the critical impetus to engage with gender in expansive ways for equity, justice, and competence development (Knisely 2021; Knisely and Paiz 2021). Despite a proliferation of resources about broadly trans-affirming pedagogies, a paucity of training and materials for French language educators persists. This chapter thus builds upon existing broad starter-kit and introductory approaches (e.g., Knisely 2022a, b; Kosnick 2019; Provitola 2019) to address continued challenges that educators experience in reimagining their French language classrooms and in applying trans knowledges to the everyday. The primary objective is to support educators in building and maintaining curricula, classrooms, and

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pedagogies that engage with and affirm the lives of trans French language learners and users by outlining one possible way of making said goals manifest in a conversation and pronunciation course.[1]

TAQIBPs

Throughout this chapter, trans-affirming queer inquiry-based pedagogies (TAQIBPs) are used as a guiding theoretical framework (Knisely and Paiz 2021). This frame can support efforts to treat gender as a substantial component of individual identities[2] as well as the structural, social, and political construct that it is (Love 2014; Provitola 2019). Further, it can focus attention on the linguistic and rhetorical skills that navigating these interconnected manifestations of gender entail while simultaneously engaging with critical thinking, intercultural competence, and symbolic competence (Knisely 2020a, 2021; Moore 2016; Paiz 2020). However, much like the queer and trans cultures that inform such an approach, there is very little that is *always* true of TAQIBPs. Specifically, TAQIBPs aim to (1) unearth and question all forms of normativity, (2) raise awareness of LGBTQ+ lives, (3) actively create and maintain space for marginalized perspectives, (4) keenly attend to respecting individual agency and a right to self-definition, (5) focus on fostering respectful engagement with disparate worldviews, and (6) always leave room for fluidity, flexibility, and complexity (Knisely 2021, 2022a, b; Knisely and Paiz 2021; Paiz 2020). These principles and aims can be realized in limitless, contextually responsive ways, including those discussed herein.

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[1] Throughout this chapter trans is used in its broadest possible sense to denote people who flout cisnormative ways of thinking and being in the world, including but not limited to people who use trans (either in connection with a grammar of transition or as in the Latin prefix meaning across, beyond, or on the other side of) or culturally specific terms (e.g., two-spirit) as well as those who may or may not self-situate under trans as an umbrella term (e.g., nonbinary people) or in a trans/cis dichotomy. For more on the limits and challenges of existing terminology, see Knisely (2020b, 2021).

[2] This includes any relationship an individual may have to gender, including the absence of having any particular gender, being neutrally gendered, having an unknown or undefinable gender, and/or not caring about gender, among infinite other possibilities.

The Example Course

To help educators envision their own courses as sites for expansive linguistic, pedagogical, and cultural possibilities, this chapter presents one concrete set of applications of TAQIBPs to the teaching of an intermediate, fifth-semester, undergraduate French conversation and pronunciation course. Major course objectives include developing students' oral/aural communication skills while equipping them with

1. an applied knowledge of the phonetic and phonological components of French;
2. a familiarity of certain aspects of contemporary French-language cultures, including how cultures are made and reflected in and through language; and
3. an introductory understanding of the connections among language, identity, and power, assuring that students are keenly aware that standard forms of language are ideologies.

These objectives begin applying TAQIBPs in contextually specific ways by laying groundwork for a consistent attention to critical thinking, close reading,[3] and restive problematizing of all identities, discourses, and normativities.[4] They are likely students' first invitation to consider French in its pluralities or to deepen any previous experiences with polyvocality, linguistic co-cultures and variation, or other such concepts.

The Syllabus

This foundation of possibilities must continue to be opened up throughout the entirety of the syllabus. This can take many forms, including avoiding *il/elle* [he/she] language that reifies binary conceptions of gender and replacing those constructions with the singular they, invariable *quelqu'un* and *personne*, or other ways of avoiding differentially marking gender (see Knisely 2020a).[5] Often, directly addressing students by writing *to* rather than *about* them (e.g., "In this course, you/we will") can help to avoid

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[3] Herein reading and texts include all possible modalities, not only written language.

[4] That is, a constant habit of identifying assumptions and beliefs and critically calling them into question (Nelson 2009; Paiz 2020; Pennycook 2001).

[5] All translations and glosses in this chapter are the author's.

heavily gendered language and begin to model a relational pedagogy of care. This is one way to begin decentering the classroom by constructing the students and instructor as an inclusionary *we* whose members will all learn with and alongside one another.

Display Names In maintaining space for expansive possibilities, questions will arise that go beyond the syllabus itself, including choosing platforms for coursework. One major implication thereof entails the extent to which individual agency and a right to self-definition are respected. For example, where do students have complete control over their display names? This can often rule out the use of institutionally managed systems in favor of alternatives.[6] Even when institutions have an official name change policy, myriad financial and legal obstacles often persist (Nicolazzo and Marine 2015). Thus, the more agency any given student retains over how they present themself and the more explicitly this agency is articulated, the more potential that environment has to be inclusive. Consider the below as one example.

> Please include your first and last name in your display name. Use the name you'll go by in this class, whether or not it matches what I might have been given by the university or the name you use in other contexts. Feel free to add the pronouns you use in this class (e.g., il, elle, iel, øl), if you'd like/feel comfortable doing so. Please contact me with any concerns or if you'd like support in navigating how to best represent yourself in French.

Building on the above, some (though not all)[7] instructors may choose to list their pronouns in display names, in email signatures, in syllabi, and/or on badges to signal that pronouns cannot be assumed.[8] This can further model ways of sharing pronouns, particularly for students who have limited experience with such practices.

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[6] Gender-just pedagogies must always be intersectional (Baril et al. 2020; Harris and Nicolazzo 2020; Knisely 2021; Knisely and Paiz 2021), attending to myriad forms of accessibility (e.g., does the forum function well with screen readers, on mobile devices, etc.).

[7] Pronoun sharing should never be obligatory for anyone, instructors included.

[8] See Knisely (2022b) on the ways that pronouns gesture toward, but are *not* inherently indicative of gender. This de-coupling reminds us that we know very little about the genders of the people in our classrooms and that we are, nonetheless, able to unscript gender in our classrooms. See also Nicolazzo (2019).

Classroom Culture It can also be helpful to explicitly address how pronouns enter into the process of co-constructing classroom culture, as illustrated below.

> In our roles as students and instructors, we have a shared responsibility to build and maintain an environment that is conducive to learning with and alongside one another. We want a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment where all of us are able to fully and respectfully engage with one another and can challenge ourselves to succeed. Remember that this means checking our assumptions, including about the pronouns people use. If you're unsure how to refer to someone, please ask them one-on-one or in a way that doesn't put them on the spot publicly (e.g., *Quels pronoms utilisez-vous?* [What pronouns do you use?]) and remember that those pronouns might not be the same in every context. For those of us who use gender-neutral pronouns (e.g., *they*, *ze/zim/zir*) in English, there may be some linguistic hurdles to overcome. French has traditionally had binary *grammatical* gender (e.g., category *un* and category *une*, which are often—albeit problematically—referred to as masculine and feminine forms) but there are alternatives in the language being created, adapted, and used by nonbinary Francophones for talking about nonbinary *social* gender. Although these forms have not always yet made it into mainstream media, including our textbook, they're part of a valuable linguistic co-culture and will be used throughout the semester. We'll work together on being able to use these forms to show respect and on being able to explain where they are and are not traditionally used so as to be able to advocate for ourselves and others. If at any time you make a mistake, say *pardon* and correct yourself. With time and practice you'll improve on using these forms in interculturally and symbolically competent ways.

This statement signals expectations and focuses on respectful engagement, which can proactively aid with buy-in (Paiz 2020). Simultaneously, it introduces tensions between social and grammatical gender in relationship with how identities are indexed and performed in and through language.[9] This begins to equip students with some of the linguistic and rhetorical skills needed to advocate for themselves and others while honoring that we are all at different points in our level of experience with trans-affirming practices via detailed explanations. These early moves set up a shared goal of TAQIBPs and this course: to make explicit how language and assumptions work together to construct our perceptions of reality.

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[9] On the overlaps, dissonances, and resonances between grammatical and social gender in French, see Knisely (2020a, b).

Assessment Often, we first engage with the goals of TAQIBPs via names and pronouns because of how salient they are in the initial processes of forming social relationships and beginning classroom conversations. However, these goals must carry into assessment, which is equally relational in nature. Assessment criteria and practices concretize and synthesize that to which we accord value. They show (or fail to show) the importance of gender in language learning and use, and they communicate how we conceive of the relationships that we have to students and that they have to one another.

Consider, for example, the degree to which students are accorded agency in grading. One possible way of leaning into student agency is to have students self-reflect on attendance, participation, and preparation and choose their own grades in full or in part. Other possibilities could entail offering multiple paths toward shared learning objectives and requirements and/or engaging in collaborative decision making about the material and questions that collectively interest the class.[10] Resources on participatory grading, specifications grading, and ungrading may offer support in crafting a contextually responsive, TAQIBP-informed pedagogy of assessment (see, e.g., Kelly Biers's chapter in this volume; see also Blum and Kohn 2020). As TAQIBPs broadly encourage exploring *with* and *alongside* students, such practices can be some concrete ways of making learning more individualized, decentering power in the classroom, and queering students' perceptions of expertise. Other ways to support collaborative learning and student buy-in can include discussing not knowing, asking questions, and making mistakes as integral to learning. The below is one such example from sections of the syllabus that address participation and preparation.

> This course is designed to introduce difficulties. It is expected that you will struggle, make mistakes, and have questions that arise during preparatory work and class time alike. These mistakes, challenges, and moments of confusion are valuable. They afford us the opportunity to identify the current limits of our knowledge as individuals and collectively. With these insights we can formulate better questions to ask ourselves and one another. In this

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[10] For example, I often take a jigsaw-inspired approach to homework, wherein students choose one of various multimodal texts. In the following class, students are placed in groups with those who engaged with the same material to refine their understanding. Then, students are re-grouped with others who have engaged with different material to collaboratively negotiate shared understandings about the collection of texts via guiding questions.

way, making mistakes, figuring out what we don't know, asking questions, and thinking together actually constitute the process of (un)learning. In class and in self-evaluations, I will ask about your most important or salient mistakes, challenges, and questions. As we learn with and alongside one another, I will also share my own.

Course Goals One of the most important tools for student and administrative buy-in, however, is explicitly connecting trans knowledges to language learning and other course goals. In the example course, there are four modules guided by the following questions: (1) How do language, culture, and identity relate to and co-construct one another? (2) How are time and health linguistically and culturally constructed? (3) How do the arts challenge and reflect cultural perspectives? (4) How are human rights linguistically and culturally constructed? Starting module one with an intersectional approach to language, culture, and identity steeps the course in the idea that language does not exist without the people who use and thereby (re)shape language.[11] Herein, we begin with a focus on how our language use may signal information about who we are, which affords opportunities to discuss how individuals and groups may realize sounds, syllables, intonation, and other aspects of language to construct both meaning and belonging. In and through this focus, we look to meet communicative and linguistic goals alongside those related to intercultural and symbolic competence development, such as: I can

- identify the sounds of French when I listen;
- mark syllable boundaries;
- use intonational cues in conversations;
- engage with multimodal texts, participate in conversations, and express my thoughts on language and identity;
- compare and contrast my own and others' ways of conceptualizing and engaging in the linguistic work of identity;
- understand some of the ways that language and power relate to one another; and
- use this knowledge to begin to advocate for myself and others if/when I so choose.

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[11] This entails gender, race, class, national origin, and a myriad of other identity fractals. On intersectionality in applied linguistics, see Paiz and Coda (2021).

Foregrounding linguistic variation in module one allows us to consistently return to questions of how we language, as groups and as individuals, throughout the course. In this way, when we consider vowel production and distribution, liaisons, and prosody in module two, students are already thinking about whether and how these features might be realized differently by various speakers across the French-language world in relationship with their sociocultural contexts and identities. This knowledge continues to remind students that there is no singular target that they must precisely replicate in order to consider themselves successful language users, allowing them to focus instead on the collaborative nature of meaning making. This means that students are readily asking questions about *what* language, about *whose* language we're observing in each multimodal text and are reflecting on the ecology of these language varieties. As we ask questions about how various language users and utterances might relate to one another and how power may enter into these relationships, we are building intercultural and symbolic thinking. Thus, as we discuss phonetics, phonology, and other linguistic topics in modules three and four, it is already evident that their roles in meaning making are never devoid of their relationship to the people who are using them.

Day One

Syllabi that engage with identity in meaningful, inclusive, and affirming ways can act as a promise about the course as a whole. This can further set up ways of thinking that are informed by and resonate with trans knowledges. Yet, this document does little if the ideas therein are left to be forgotten. Any possibilities offered by a carefully crafted syllabus must be explicitly taken up from the first day forward.

Introducing the Syllabus Instructors may even wish to introduce critical close reading and discussion by analyzing the language of the syllabus and the classroom culture that its verbiage puts forth with students in the first few days of the semester. Working with the syllabus as language, as text, as a cultural product can exemplify course goals and strategies and can communicate the value of both its form and content to students.

Introducing One Another On the first day of class, it is not uncommon to set time aside for introductions. I often use milling activities to accomplish the initial getting-to-know-you task because it inherently structures introductions as one-on-one interactions, and I include "*Comment t'appelles-tu?/Comment est-ce que tu veux qu'on t'appelle?*" [What is your name?/How do you want us to refer to you?] to underscore the syllabus language regarding agency over one's own name. However, I avoid any common follow-ups that ask students to speak about one another in the third person, so that pronouns need not be discussed in the very first interaction students and I have with one another. Rather, students are invited to fill out a private, voluntary first-day questionnaire that includes information about their language experience, motivations and concerns, and the name, pronouns, and agreements they will use in this course (as in the below).

The pronouns I will use in this course are: _____ (English) _____ (French)

The agreement pattern I will use in French in this course is: _____

☐ Please check here if you'd like to have a private conversation about possibilities for pronouns and agreement, about if/when you'd like me to correct others when they make mistakes, or anything else.

Note: This is an invitation to share your pronouns and agreements with me. The question is optional, and I recognize that this information might change at any time or vary by context. You're welcome to contact me at any time with any questions or concerns.

   This is one of many possible approaches, however, I recommend that all pronoun sharing be private and explicitly voluntary. This is due to the risks associated with any direct asking that could be read as a demand, even unintentionally. Such risks are further exacerbated by inherent teacher-student power dynamics. These potential harms can include, but are not limited to, someone (1) feeling pressure, tokenized, or other negative social impacts, (2) experiencing harassment or backlash associated with the pronouns they use, (3) fearing that publicly sharing pronouns might signal to others that they are trans when they do not wish to share such information and/or when it is unsafe for them to engage in any kind of public disclosure, and/or (4) feeling like they are being asked to misgender themselves, perhaps because they are privately questioning their

gender or pronouns or because they do not know what options are available to them in the language they are learning.

Introducing the Course Although important, if we stop at pronouns, we've deeply mistaken the meaning of trans-affirming and gender-just pedagogies. As TAQIBPs remind us, gender-just language pedagogy is more than solely a function of linguistic veneer or even of interpersonal care and respect. Course content must also be bound up in critically thinking with trans knowledges, de-sensationalizing both trans topics and linguistic variation. Consider the following questions, which I use to begin to co-construct our classroom culture in and through dialogue. Between each question, we discuss each group's answers and create a shared definition for the class, which I then add to a revised version of the syllabus.[12]

> Instructions: Ensemble, nous allons voir quelques questions qui vont guider notre réflexion pour mieux comprendre ce dont on parle dans ce cours. Vous n'avez pas besoin de déjà connaître les réponses à ces questions. Elles sont là simplement pour nous aider à commencer à réfléchir à certains concepts et à établir des définitions avec lesquelles on va travailler dans ce cours.
>
> 1. Avec un.e partenaire,[13] essayez d'écrire une petite définition de la linguistique.
> 2. Avec un.e nouveau.elle partenaire:[14] Qu'est-ce que c'est que la langue?
> 3. Avec quelqu'un d'autre: Existe-il un français standard?
>   [Directions: Together, we will consider a few questions to guide our thinking so as to better understand what we are talking about in this course. You don't need to already know the answers to these questions. They are here simply to help us start to think about certain concepts and to establish definitions with which we will work in this course.

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[12] We regularly engage in collaborative syllabus revision throughout the semester as a part of our shared ownership of the course.

[13] Orally: "Avec une autre personne" [With someone else].

[14] Orally: "Avec quelqu'un de nouveau" [With someone new].

1. With a [inclusive punctuated suffixation [IPS]] partner, try to write a short definition of linguistics.
2. With a new [IPS] partner: What is language?
3. With someone else: Does a standard French exist?]

As we debrief, we talk about linguistics as a scientific and descriptive (not prescriptive) study of language and begin to introduce the idea that standard language is an ideology more than it is anything else, firmly anchoring the course within the aforementioned frame of polyvocality and linguistic variation.

Follow-up This first day is as critical as syllabus design for thinking with trans knowledges. So too is the follow-up that must punctuate the entirety of the semester. Students have likely been invited to share pronouns or experienced other forms of signaling inclusion in the past, only to have this engagement be abandoned in whole or in part. It is thus critical to follow up individually with students who indicated a desire to discuss linguistic possibilities or other topics on the first-day questionnaire and, separately, with the class as a whole to invite continued dialogue. The latter may be a note that is added to a message about homework. It can include some optional, starting resources for students who may not already be familiar with language forms, discursive strategies, and inclusionary practices, which should be taken up in more detail throughout the semester. It is important that the themes and strategies introduced in the syllabus and on the first day be carried through into the full breadth and duration of the course.

Assignments and Assessments

On assignments and assessments, this will mean continuing to use inclusive language, maximize student agency, leverage opportunities to learn with and alongside one another, and foreground the ways that we dialogically co-construct knowledge in and through language, as discussed in relation to the syllabus above. Any number of assignments can be adapted to meet these criteria. They might include having students map and reflect on their language history and imagined future with guiding questions that focus attention on how factors such as place, communities, and identities may contribute thereto. Similarly, we might use WebQuests to invite

students to observe and collaboratively reflect upon a variety of forms of linguistic variation. These ways of thinking, however, can be applied just as well to assignments that do not explicitly center identity and linguistic variation by naming and upending subtler instances of normativity with and alongside students.[15] Assignments and class discussions that meaningfully engage trans knowledges will naturally lead to opportunities to weave these into other forms of assessment, which is an integral part of sustaining the assertion of their value. In keeping, assignment and assessment headers should include an invitation to explicitly state the pronouns and agreement strategy that a student will be using on that particular assignment, as in the below.

Name: _____

Pronouns:*_____

Agreements:*_____

*This is an invitation to temporarily pin down the grammatical structures you are using in this specific assignment so that I may provide more relevant linguistic feedback.

CLASS DISCUSSIONS

To the same degree, we must seek out all opportunities to bring trans knowledges to bear in class discussions. The possibilities for doing so are limitless and include the following from the example course. When discussing elision (e.g., the contraction of *le* in *l'arbre*), students can be invited to reflect on how ambiguity—and developing a tolerance thereof—can be both a challenge and an opportunity. As a part of this discussion, we can explore how we might leverage elision to allow us to mask instances where we might otherwise be made to differentially mark gender. This same lens for considering ambiguity and clarity as tools in meaning making might be extended and revisited in discussing other concepts (e.g., *enchaînement*, *liaisons*) in order to invite students into realizing agency and exploring forms of linguistic creativity and/or language play. These questions can also resurface as we talk about various abbreviations, regionalisms, register, and slang. Consider how *intello* [intellectual, abr.] and

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[15] For assignment, course content, and other ideas, see Knisely (2022a, b). For sample handouts, see krisknisely.com

prof [teacher, abr.] can mask gender-inflected endings or how playing with formality and register might allow us to find invariable forms such as *fortiche* [ace, really good] *and feignasse* [lazybones]. Similarly, when discussing consonants, we can invite reflection on their role in meaning making when they're in word final position in terms of grammatical gender (e.g., *petit/petite*), number (e.g., *vend/vendent*), and mood (e.g., indicative *tu dis/*subjunctive *que tu dises*) and collaboratively imagine how we might use or subvert such pairs to linguistically represent ourselves and others. As we scaffold students' thinking with trans knowledges, they are likely to notice that nasal vowels in word final position also contribute to ways of indexing gender (e.g., *grand/grande*, *intelligent/intelligente*) and call into question activities that ask them to identify whether a referent is a man or a woman based on such adjectival forms alone.

Although instructors might be tempted to skip over problematic exercises and pretend they do not exist—if they cannot be entirely removed and replaced—it is often more beneficial to engage students in calling out and rectifying the missteps a textbook might make. To imagine possibilities for de-sensationalizing trans topics while also not ignoring them, we might draw on our experiences pointing out, critiquing, and correcting other shortcomings in our materials (e.g., neocolonial ideas and omissions of certain varieties of French). For an exercise like the below, we might have the students complete the task as presented in the three left-hand columns and then leverage it as an opportunity to collaboratively create a list of possibilities including inclusive punctuated suffixation and discursive strategies for avoiding differentially marking gender, as in the right-hand column.

Instructions: Écoutez l'audio et indiquez si on parle d'un ami ou d'une amie.

DESCRIPTION	*UN AMI*	*UNE AMIE*	*UN.E AMI.E*
1. allemand/allemande			Iel est allemande.e (à l'écrit)
			Iel est de l'Allemagne/
			Iel est né.é en Allemagne/
			Iel est une personne allemande/
			…parmi d'autres possibilités! (à l'oral)
2. amusant/amusante			Iel est amusant.e (à l'écrit)
			Iel est drôle/
			Iel est comique/
			…parmi d'autres possibilités! (à l'oral)

(*continued*)

(continued)

DESCRIPTION	UN AMI	UNE AMIE	UN.E AMI.E
3. étudiant/étudiante			Iel est étudiant.e (à l'écrit)
			Iel étudie à l'université
			Iel se concentre sur ses études
			…parmi d'autres possibilités! (à l'oral)

Notez: On a utilisé iel pour un.e ami.e mais beaucoup de possibilités existent!

[Directions: Listen to the audio and indicate whether we are talking about a friend [grammatically marked masculine (GMM)] or a friend [grammatically marked feminine (GMF)].

Description	A friend [GMM]	A friend [GMF]	A friend [IPS]
1. German/ German [GMM/GMF]			They[16] are German [IPS] (written)
			They are from Germany/
			They were born [IPS] in Germany/
			They are a German person [GMF, invariable]/
			…among other possibilities! (spoken)
2. funny/funny [GMM/GMF]			They are funny [IPS] (written)
			They are funny [invariable synonym of *amusant.e*, *drôle*]/
			They are comical [invariable synonym of *amusant.e*, *comique*]/
			…among other possibilities! (spoken)
3. student/ student [GMM/GMF]			They are a student [IPS] (written)
			They study at university
			They are focused on their studies
			…among other possibilities! (spoken)

Note: We used *iel* [gender-neutral pronoun] for a friend [IPS], but many possibilities exist!]

In addition to these language-focused examples, it is also important to include trans, nonbinary, and gender non-conforming people among the authors, artists, scholars, and other individuals who we feature in course

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[16] Herein singular they is used as a gloss for *iel*. This may obfuscate important differences between these terms (see Knisely 2020a).

content (see Knisely 2022a for examples). Such visible engagement with and valuing of trans people is particularly important for avoiding allegories of gender and linguistic diversity, in keeping with the aforementioned course goals and TAQIBPs.

Conclusion

As the preceding sections have begun to illustrate, there are limitless ways of applying trans knowledges to the everyday of language teaching, learning, and use. Guided by TAQIBPs, we can and should continuously reimagine our classrooms, curricula, pedagogies, and materials as sites for expansive possibilities of knowing, being, and languaging. To realize increasingly equitable and just forms of language education and to fully engage with intercultural, symbolic, and linguistic competence development, it is essential that we recognize the importance of and take action toward a sustained commitment to gender-just and trans-affirming practices across the full breadth and depth of experiences had by all educational stakeholders.

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Beyond the Textbook: New Teaching Strategies

Queering the French Language Classroom: A Social Justice Approach to Discussing Gender, Privilege, and Oppression

Hasheem Hakeem

Homophobia and transphobia in schools have devastating impacts on LGBTQ+ youth. In a national climate survey on homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in Canadian schools, two-thirds of LGBTQ+ students reported that they feel unsafe in school (Taylor et al. 2011). This number climbs to 78% for trans youth (Taylor et al. 2011). Schools remain particularly hostile environments for trans students (Chamberland et al. 2011; Haskell and Burtch 2010; McGuire et al. 2010; Taylor et al. 2011). Despite this troubling reality, "no education ministry in Canada has taken concerted steps to ensure that there is instructional attention to sexual diversity built into the overall school curriculum" (Rayside 2014, 205). Whether in Canada, the United States, Europe, or elsewhere in the world, the classroom is a place where LGBTQ+ people are invisible (Kjaran 2017; Richard 2019; Sadowski 2016). Although many Canadian schools

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prohibit discrimination based on sexuality and gender identity and expression, their anti-bullying policies and efforts to support diversity and inclusion do nothing to challenge the cisheteronormative perspectives found in curricula, educational materials, and teaching practices. For example, in September 2016, the ARC Foundation, in collaboration with the British Columbia Ministry of Education and other partners, developed SOGI (Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity) 1 2 3, a series of policies, procedures, and curriculum resources that aim to promote the inclusion of sexual and gender diversity in all public and independent schools.[1] However, SOGI is part of an inclusive pedagogical approach that promotes tolerance and acceptance but offers no interruption of the status quo because it is designed and articulated in such a way that considers the apprehensions, emotions, and sensitivities of a heteronormative and conservative readership (Hakeem 2020). On the other hand, queer pedagogy, which is a form of critical and anti-oppressive pedagogy, has the potential to transform the classroom into a truly equitable and critical space wherein students can learn to question the social norms and power relations that work to exclude and oppress LGBTQ+ people (Britzman 1995; Bryson and de Castell 1993; Meyer 2019; Neto 2018; Pennell 2019; Richard 2019).

Drawing on qualitative data from a case study of Canadian French Immersion high school students' (ages 17–18) perceptions of sexual and gender diversity, I will provide an example of what queering the French language classroom can look like through the use of two webcomics developed by Canadian trans writer, cartoonist, and activist Sophie Labelle: *Les vestiaires* [*Locker Rooms*] and *Jour du Souvenir trans* [*Trans Day of Remembrance*].[2] As Pennell (2019) explains, queering refers to the idea of questioning norms, with the goal of making students critically aware of how these norms are reproduced, how they came to be, and how they influence and construct our sense of who we are (Kjaran 2017; Richard 2019). To illustrate this process in practice, I will apply DiAngelo and Sensoy's (2019) social justice framework to the teaching of both comics to show how students can be guided in (1) "*critical analysis* of how mainstream knowledge is presented as neutral, universal, and objective; (2) *critical self-reflection* of their own socialization into structured relations of oppression and privilege; (3) *developing the skills* with which to see, analyze, and challenge relations of oppression and privilege" (2, emphasis in

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[1] See https://www.sogieducation.org/
[2] Both comics draw from the larger webcomic *Assignée garçon* [*Assigned Male*] (2014) that broadly addresses issues of gender norms, privilege, heterosexism, and transphobia.

original). This framework can be considered part of a queer pedagogical approach because in order to deconstruct and challenge gender norms, students must first learn to question the knowledge claims on which these norms are based, as well as their socialization into these norms. Not to mention that relations of oppression and privilege emerge from the naturalization of dominant norms. I will begin by giving a brief overview of each comic and the questions used to initiate student discussion. I will then provide examples of student discussions using audio-recorded group conversations carried out in class with the goal of showing how certain remarks can be used as entry points to guide students in thinking critically about gender, privilege, and oppression.

THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT GENDER IN *LES VESTIAIRES*

In *Les vestiaires*, Sophie Labelle tells the story of a young trans girl who dreads her high school physical education class because she is forced to use the boys' locker room where she is bullied and physically beaten.[3] She finds herself helpless with no allies, except her grade 11 ("secondaire 4" in Quebec) teacher who finally acknowledges her struggles and confronts her aggressors. Prior to the student discussion, I presented a brief overview of Sophie Labelle's work. I then read aloud the comic with students (a content warning was provided to warn students of images of trans violence). The main purpose of reading the text aloud was to ensure all students access the material and understand the story. I then asked them to discuss the following questions in small groups: "(1) Pourquoi l'anxiété du personnage principal augmente-t-elle avec l'âge ? (2) Pourquoi l'espace des vestiaires en particulier n'est-il pas sécuritaire pour le personnage principal ? (3) Selon vous, quel est le principal facteur contribuant à la transphobie dans la bande dessinée ? Pourquoi ? (4) Pourquoi le personnage principal dit-il : 'L'oppression dont j'étais victime, je n'avais jamais eu l'impression qu'on la prenait autant au sérieux'?" [(1) Why does the anxiety of the main character increase with age? (2) Why is the locker room space in particular unsafe for the main character? (3) What do you see as the biggest factor contributing to the transphobia in the comic? Why? (4) Why does the main character say: "I never thought the oppression I suffered had been taken so seriously"?].[4] Given that the goal of the study was to

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[3] The full comic can be accessed here: http://assigneegarcon.tumblr.com/post/102552095635

[4] All translations are my own.

activate students' prior knowledge about gender and sexual diversity, and identify their knowledge gaps, concepts such as sex, gender, or transphobia were not defined prior to the discussion.

It is important to note that within a queer pedagogical framework, questions are merely a springboard for discussion. I included a statement on this by encouraging students to answer the questions to the best of their ability, but to not hesitate to take the discussion in another direction when appropriate. Part of queering the classroom is accepting that there does not necessarily need to be an end goal for discussion (Pennell 2019), as this uncertainty can lead students to raising questions and ideas that, although not directly related to the comic, can serve as entry points to helping them think critically about the knowledge they produce and validate about gender, and how the latter is connected to their socialization (Sensoy and DiAngelo 2017). In the first discussion of *Les vestiaires*, one group of students, in the process of answering the first question, became confused over the gender identity of the protagonist, ultimately concluding that *she* is a boy:

D: Je pense que l'anxiété du personnage principal augmente avec l'âge à cause du fait que la puberté commence à être une chose pour elle, donc elle commence à voir qu'elle est une fille.

P et E: C'est un garçon.

D: C'est un garçon?

P: Oui, c'est un garçon.

D: « Well, fuck ».

P: Oui, je comprends pourquoi tu penses que c'est une fille parce que c'est un garçon qui ressemble à une fille dans les images de la bande-dessinée.[5]

[D: I think the anxiety of the main character increases with age because puberty starts to become a thing for her, so she starts to see that she's a girl.

P & E: It's a boy.

D: It's a boy?

P: Yes, it's a boy.

D: Well, fuck.

P: Yeah, I understand why you think it's a girl because it's a boy who looks like a girl in the images of the comic.] (Dis-Vest-May-2019)

[5] For ease of readability, grammatical errors in participants' quotations were corrected while retaining the original content.

Although the protagonist identifies as a girl, her gender identity is dismissed by her peers and teachers, as it is also dismissed by two participants (E and P). Indeed, they assert that the protagonist is a boy. This suggests that for them, gender is not only binary, but determined by biological characteristics. In fact, participant D makes this point explicit in the introductory discussion about gender identity: "À mon avis le genre c'est quelque chose que tu es né avec, donc c'est ta biologie qui te fait mâle ou femelle. Et c'est des caractéristiques biologiques qui déterminent ton genre" [In my opinion, gender is something that you are born with, so it's your biology that makes you male or female. And it's biological characteristics that determine your gender] (Amr-D-May-2019). The claim that gender is biological is presented here as objective, neutral, and universal. Following Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017), there is here an opportunity to guide students in a critical analysis of this knowledge claim. The idea is to ask questions that can help them understand gender as socially constructed. For example, whose perspective is reflected in the idea that gender is biological? Who benefits from this claim? Which groups are invested in challenging this notion? These follow-up questions, which would be part of a large class discussion, is a scaffolding strategy that can allow students to become critically aware of how their knowledge about gender (in this case, that it is biological) is connected to "who they are" and "where they stand" (Sensoy and DiAngelo 2017, 30). Although this type of intervention may appear to be off-topic or unrelated to the comic, it allows students to move beyond surface-level comprehension to a place where they can use their French to question knowledge claims often taken for granted. The goal is to accompany students in the deconstruction of ideas that are at the root of oppression (i.e., gender as biological), rather than simply attributing the transphobia in the comic to a few bad apples. This is because more often than not, students will agree that the bullying of the protagonist is unacceptable and that everyone should be accepted. However, within a critical social justice framework, it is important to move past consensus to a place of discomfort where claims deeply rooted in students' socialization can be deconstructed. Before students can critically recognize the causes of oppression (Freire 2018) and begin to challenge its mechanisms, it is imperative that they first become aware of how their own socialization shapes the way in which they understand and think about gender, as well as trans realities. This deconstruction of ideas is therefore scaffolded through asking questions that allow students to see and understand the connection between their social position and

worldviews. Reflecting on those same questions individually at home, as part of a weekly journal, can further deepen this understanding and build on ideas emerging from class discussion.

Interestingly, when one student was asked about which key factor contributed to the transphobia in the comic, she mentioned the lack of education about the topic all while establishing an implicit comparison between more progressive societies (i.e., British Columbia) and more conservative ones (i.e., the southern United States): "Je crois que le facteur principal contribuant à la transphobie, pas seulement dans la bande dessinée mais dans la vie, c'est le manque d'éducation à propos du sujet. Pour nous, c'est assez ok parce qu'on est en Colombie-Britannique et il y a les Pride Parade ici et tout cela et on connaît beaucoup à propos du sujet. Mais dans beaucoup d'endroits qui sont plutôt conservateurs, comme dans les États-Unis du sud, ce n'est pas le cas" [I think the biggest factor contributing to transphobia, not only in the comic but in life, is the lack of education about the topic. For us, it's mainly ok since we're in British Columbia and there are Pride Parades here and all that, and we know a lot about the topic. But in many places that are rather conservative, like in the southern United States, it's not the case] (Dis-Vest-I-May-2019). Although it is true that certain parts of the world may be more progressive (both legally and socially) than others when it comes to gender and sexual diversity, the comparison is problematic because it functions to hold oppression in place and echoes other forms of homonationalism (see Puar 2007). If transphobia is not a *serious* issue in British Columbia and that for the most part, people are well educated about the topic, it follows that no solution to improve the status quo is necessary and the latter is therefore maintained. This student also fails to recognize that if Pride Parades are necessary, it's also because many LGBTQ+ people are still marginalized, subjected to violence, and deprived of basic human rights. Therefore, it is important to create opportunities after class discussion for students to rethink such knowledge claims through, for example, researching news articles about the current situation in British Columbia or analyzing statistics around LGBTQ+ hate crimes. By doing so, students learn that there is in fact a high degree of resistance from religious and white supremacist groups against the SOGI 1 2 3 education program in British Columbia (MacLeod 2019) or that anti-LGBTQ+ hate crimes increased by 77% from 2017 to 2018 in British Columbia alone (Statistics Canada 2020). After completing their inquiry, a teacher can then ask students to present their findings in small groups to the class and reflect on why there may have been a

disconnect between the reality of transphobia in British Columbia and their impression of a more open and progressive society.

As a follow-up to the presentations, students can be asked to individually reflect on a series of questions (this can take the form of a blog or online discussion post) that can help them process how their social position (gender, class, sexuality, race) influences what they believe to be *true* or legitimate knowledge (Banks 1996; Sensoy and DiAngelo 2017). For example, who benefits from the claim that transphobia is not an issue in British Columbia or that it is a thing of the past and found only in less progressive societies? Which groups may be invested in staying silent about transphobic bullying (as seen in the comic)? When students become critically aware of the relationship between the knowledge they validate and how it is deeply connected to their socialization, they can begin to deconstruct their worldviews, especially those that reinforce oppression and maintain the status quo. Positionality is hence a crucial tool for queering the French language classroom; by helping students understand that knowledge is never neutral nor objective, rather that it serves particular social and political interests (Kincheloe 2008), they can "develop the skills with which to see, analyze, and challenge ideological domination" (Sensoy and DiAngelo 2017, 29). The comic *Jour du Souvenir trans* is one example that can guide this type of critical analysis.

Challenging Cisgender Privilege and Transphobic Oppression in *Jour du Souvenir trans*

In *Jour du Souvenir trans*, Labelle tells the story of a father who questions his daughter about the purpose of a trans day of remembrance, deploring the fact that such a day does not exist for cisgender folks.[6] His daughter responds by insisting on the specificity of the trans experience, evoking the example of trans women of color who continue to face daily violence. The final panel, which shows the father visibly concerned and holding his daughter in his arms, suggests that he becomes aware of the reality of this violence, especially given that his daughter (who is trans) could very well become a victim. This comic, although quite short, is very rich in terms of its potential for deepening students' understanding of the systemic nature of transphobia and of oppression more broadly. Given its complexity, I use

[6] The full comic can be accessed here: http://assigneegarcon.tumblr.com/post/103111386410/jour-du-souvenir-trans-la-violence-envers-les

this comic to encourage students to challenge ideological domination (reference to *cisphobia*, for example) once they have become aware of their positionality and of the social, historical, and political dimensions of knowledge (Sensoy and DiAngelo 2017).

The following discussion questions were used when piloting this comic as part of my qualitative study: "(1) Quel est le message central que l'autrice a voulu véhiculer dans cette BD? (2) Pourquoi la fille trouve-t-elle le concept de cisphobie inapproprié? (3) Pourquoi le père est-il bouleversé dans la dernière planche?" [(1) What is the central message that the author wanted to convey in this comic? (2) Why does the girl take issue with the concept of cisphobia? (3) Why is the father distressed in the final panel?]. In their discussion of *Jour du Souvenir trans*, some students demonstrated a capacity for critical reflection, evoking and explaining concepts such as privilege and oppression without them being mentioned explicitly in the comic:

F: Je pense que souvent des personnes, dans ce cas ce sont des personnes cisgenres avec le privilège, ne veulent pas nécessairement que les personnes qui n'ont pas ce privilège aient d'autres avantages ou soient plus considérées. Elles veulent encore être connues comme importantes. Alors la petite fille trouve que la cisphobie est vraiment inappropriée, parce que ce n'est pas vraiment quelque chose de vrai. Parce qu'il n'y a pas de problèmes avec leur vie. Il n'y pas de discrimination envers les personnes cisgenres.

T: Oui comme F a dit. Souvent quand les personnes cisgenres réalisent que d'autres personnes n'ont pas le même privilège qu'elles ont, elles veulent garder ce privilège même s'il n'est pas égal à d'autres personnes. Et quand d'autres personnes reçoivent plus de privilèges, elles pensent que c'est de la discrimination contre elles.

[F: I think that people often, in this case it's cisgender people with privilege, do not necessarily want others without this privilege to have access to other advantages or be given special consideration. They still want to be seen as important. So, the young girl takes issue with cisphobia because it's not really something that's true. Because there are no problems with their life. There is no discrimination against cisgender people.

T: Yeah, as F said. Often when cisgender people realize that other people don't have the same privilege as them, they want to hold on to that privilege even if it's unequal. And when others receive more privileges, they see it as discrimination against them.] (Dis-Jrtrans-May-2019)

Both students explain the extent to which cisgender people, despite being unequally advantaged, often try protecting their privilege. The students' mention of *privilege* is an opportunity to provide them with a definition and further their reflection about the concept as not simply being the outcome of luck or fortune, but rather of systemic advantages afforded to those who are members of a dominant group (Sensoy and DiAngelo 2017). Building on this opportunity should nonetheless be done with caution. It is best to avoid the "one step forward" exercise, wherein a teacher reads aloud a series of statements (e.g., "No one has ever asked me if I was a girl or a boy") and each time one of the statements corresponds to a student's lived experience, they take a step forward. Those moving forward hold the greatest number of privileges, while those left behind are least privileged. Although the "privilege walk" has been popularized in some social justice classrooms, this exercise is deeply problematic given that it uses the marginalization, pain, and trauma of minoritized students as a pedagogical tool to teach the privileged about their socialized position of dominance (Turner III 2014). Rather than place privileged students at the center of the learning experience (since marginalized students are reminded daily of their societal disadvantages), I would recommend unpacking the concept of *privilege* through a text. For example, in *Jour du Souvenir trans*, participant T recognizes the extent to which the father, due to his privilege and position of power as a cisgender man, perceives equity as discrimination. This comment can be used as an entry point to develop probing questions during a large group discussion or reflective assignment. In other words, why does the father view a trans day of remembrance as unequal or unfair? What does his initial reaction tell us about his social position? These types of questions create a more meaningful opportunity to reflect on the difference between *equity* and *equality*, as well as how certain disadvantages are rooted in a history of oppression.

Participant F goes even further to affirm that cisgender people do not experience discrimination. Although it is oppression (and not discrimination) that "occurs when one group's prejudice is *backed by legal authority and historical, social and institutional power*" (Sensoy and DiAngelo 2017,

62, emphasis in original), his remark suggests an implicit understanding of this distinction because he is challenging the notion of reverse oppression (referred to as *cisphobia* in the comic). Despite not always using the correct terminology, these students were able to articulate a relatively sophisticated reflection of critical concepts such as oppression and privilege, thereby showing the comic's pedagogical potential in guiding students toward an understanding of transphobia as a systemic form of discrimination. It also becomes an opportunity to provide students with the terminology that they often lack for critical reflections.

Connections can even be made to understand other forms of oppression, but also to highlight the intersections between racism and transphobia, as mentioned in the comic. In fact, one student uses the concept of reverse racism to dismiss *cisphobia*: "Vous ne pouvez pas être raciste contre les personnes blanches à cause du fait que la plupart du temps les Blancs sont les personnes qui sont les oppresseures. Alors c'est la même chose. Vous ne verrez pas des personnes cisgenres opprimées. Mais au contraire, on parle de quelqu'un qui est oppresseur. Alors vous ne pouvez pas être cisphobe à un groupe de personnes qui ne subissent pas de discrimination" [You can't be racist toward white people because most of the time white people are the oppressors. So, it's the same thing. You're not going to see cisgender people oppressed. But on the contrary, we're talking about somebody who is an oppressor. So, you can't be cisphobic to a group of people who don't experience discrimination] (Dis-Jrtrans-S-May-2019). Although this student does not distinguish between being an *oppressor* and benefiting from a system of oppression, she nonetheless grasps the notion of oppression from a critical perspective because by using the concept of reverse racism—which she acknowledges does not exist—to advance that cisgender people do not experience discrimination, she shows an implicit understanding of the idea that power relations do not flip back and forth, "one day benefiting one group and the next day the other" (Sensoy and DiAngelo 2017, 149). The student's analogy hence becomes a way of similarly understanding transphobia as oppression, that is as a form of discrimination that does not occur at the individual level, but that is "built into society as a whole and becomes automatic, normalized and taken for granted" (Sensoy and DiAngelo 2017, 62). Furthermore, the student's reference to racism opens the possibility for introducing the concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989), especially given the mention of violence against trans women of color in

the comic, with the aim of encouraging students to reflect upon what it means to be both trans and racialized, as well as how and why this intersection of identities shapes the experience of oppression differently.

CONCLUSION

Through an examination of student discourses on gender and transphobia as represented in two webcomics, my goal in this chapter was to show how student-centered discussion can be a useful tool for queering the French language classroom, in both high school and postsecondary contexts. Drawing on Sensoy and DiAngelo's (2017) social justice principles, I would argue that allowing students to discuss LGBTQ-themed texts often relegated into the realm of invisibility in language classrooms, and intervening accordingly to ask questions that guide them in critical analysis of "objective" knowledge and reflection on their own socialization is key to helping them develop the skills to understand the mechanisms and ideologies that function to reinforce and hold oppression in place. Teachers must play a central role in combating all forms of systemic discrimination in the classroom and in schools, and need not only become allies of queer students, but "activists" through incorporating LGBTQ+ realities in their classroom practices and speaking out against social injustice (Blackburn 2012). In the context of my study, the participants' teacher welcomed queer works in his French classes and had in fact been studying Quebecois author Simon Boulerice's novel *L'enfant mascara* (2016) [*Mascara Child* (2016)] with his grade 12 students. Although this was encouraging, there is still a high degree of resistance to LGBTQ+ education and anti-oppressive values in teacher education programs (DiAngelo and Sensoy 2009; Robinson and Ferfolja 2002). Not to mention that my study was rejected by four school districts prior to receiving approval.

A critical social justice approach must therefore go beyond merely *including* LGBTQ+ people; it must *deconstruct* the very norms on which relations of oppression and privilege are founded. In other words, challenging dominant perspectives about gender requires that the norm (i.e., cisgender identity) be made visible and not sheltered from critical analysis. This recommendation stems in part from the fact that many students indicated not knowing the meaning of the term *cisgender* when discussing Labelle's comics. This suggests that cisgender identity (like heterosexuality) does not have to be defined, as it constitutes the default position that

is automatically imposed on students. Unlike trans and non-binary folks, cisgender people are often presented as not having a gender that can be contested critically. This is why it is especially important that cisgender teachers (like myself) name their gender in order to show that the latter is part of an ongoing process of construction for everyone and not only for trans and non-binary people (Airton 2019), thus helping to "desensationalize" LGBTQ+ people and content (Knisely 2020). A queer pedagogical approach anchored in social justice values should hence not center its focus on marginalized groups, but on the dominant models (Richard 2019) that shape the ways in which students see and understand the world. It is only through such a commitment to queer, critical, and anti-oppressive pedagogies integrated transversally through the entire curriculum that we can begin to imagine a truly "democratic education" (Richard 2019, 12) for all students.

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Decanonizing Contemporary Culture Courses: Teaching Culture with Twitter

Daniel N. Maroun

Institutions of higher education in the United States have traditionally integrated historic-cultural courses into their curriculum at the advanced level aiming at introducing students to methodologies and practices for social and cultural study.[1] For the most part, these courses are taught alongside the aid of a manual of cultural history, in this case, *La France contemporaine* (2015) and *Alliages culturels: La société française en transformation* (2014) both published by Cengage, as well as *La France: société, culture, histoire* (2018) published by Canadian Scholars Press. These texts introduce students to socio-cultural concepts (e.g., cuisine, the Republic,

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[1] For the purpose of this chapter, "advanced" refers to any course after the fourth semester of language.

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social security, *laïcité*), and contextualize it historically while engaging with excerpts from primary sources. However, I argue that these manuals tend to cognitively frame contemporary French culture in a predominantly positive light and tend to focus on the Hexagon as a locus of opportunity. As we will come to see, these manuals approach contemporary culture as a result of past phenomena, as something that is complete. However, this type of structure fails to connect the past to present debates or cultural developments, and ultimately it keeps the past in the past instead of drawing upon it to showcase how past experiences can intervene and intersect with contemporary culture. This chapter seeks to move beyond the textbook and turn to Twitter in order to help instructors build content-based instructional courses (CBI) that teach contemporaneity. As we shall see, this method affords students an opportunity to interact with authentic material and authentic language producers. Using Twitter, furthermore, allows them to build cross-cultural competency and awareness as they become part of a larger dialogue surrounding a social event thus enabling a more genuine and diversified language learning interaction.

Contents of a Culture Course in French Curricula

The aforementioned French cultural textbooks have been selected due to their widespread availability and thus popularity in higher-education institutions across the United States. *La France Contemporaine* is used in just over eighty institutions in the U.S.A. whereas *Alliages Culturels* is in about nineteen.[2] It should be noted that these figures are only representative of institutions that purchase directly from Cengage and do not account for programs that use these manuals from other vendors. These textbooks structure their information by introducing a large social institution or concept (e.g., the Fifth Republic, social welfare and healthcare, secularism/*laïcité*) and framing its current iteration as the result of a historical phenomenon. Overall, these manuals discuss the same sociocultural institutions in an umbrella-like fashion. We can group the material students will examine in these manuals as follows:

- Politics: this section typically includes a history of the Fifth Republic as well as an introduction to laws, legislation, elections, and parliamentary systems.

[2] Email to the author.

- Social structures: this section is very large and covers social structures like *la protection sociale*, healthcare, worker rights, family life, sexuality (gay marriage, PaCS), and education.
- Culture: topics in this subsection can include regional or geographical information about France as well as food. It also has larger topics that include religion and immigration.
- Francophone world: in sections devoted to this topic, these manuals review the historical background of the colonial project and explain France's presence globally. They also include additional discussion on immigration patterns and populations in France.

Furthermore, all three manuals mentioned earlier include a unit about France and the European Union or France on the global stage. Regarding the language practice and cultural learning aspects of these manuals, they are structured similarly. Each has a historical contextualization of a particular sociological institution or concept, followed by some comprehension questions designed as free written recall tasks to promote reading comprehension. Each chapter also has students engage with a cultural artifact—excerpts of texts, video clips, maps, news transcripts, interviews, ads—followed by more open-ended reading comprehension designed to push communicative expression. Additionally, *La France Contemporaine* features some multiple-choice reading comprehension questions which contribute to the variety of language learning methodologies that this specific manual promotes. This additional feature is important because research shows that open-ended and multiple-choice questions measure different aspects of comprehension (Ozuru et al. 2013).

From a cultural studies perspective, these manuals pose a critical pedagogical issue; they treat contemporary culture as a static, historical ideal that students read about, and ignore that contemporary cultures are evolving. There is no doubt that the historic information these manuals contain is of paramount importance to a student's understanding of modern iterations and performances of culture. However, the content focusing on the colonial history of France's former empire does not lead students to unpack the contemporary intercultural problems the republican and universalist models have with non-western immigrant populations—it simply teaches colonial history. These manuals present French history as modern culture while amalgamating former colonies or French territories as a

homogenous colonized population that just so happens to speak French.[3] Furthermore, they also adopt a reductive perspective on contemporary France. For instance, they suggest that postcolonial communities exist with one goal—to immigrate to France. Such viewpoint renders students as touristic voyeurs and places the non-French territories on exhibition for their gaze in an artificial museum of language learning.[4] This approach also promotes what Flores and Rosa call the "white gaze" (2015, 150), which endorses a hyper-standardized view of language and culture that is relegated to the Hexagon.[5]

The most utilized cultural textbooks in our field continue to exoticize immigrants and positivize the opportunity France gives. *Alliages Culturels* explains to readers that immigrants "fuient la misère de leurs pays" [escape the misery of their home countries] (Allen and Dubreil 2014, 136) in order to arrive in France and work because of the industrial opportunities post-World War II France created. It does not however discuss the consequence of a large, non-western population entering France. In fact, the manuals seem to suggest that racial differences are erased as soon as these individuals become French, furthering the aforementioned concept of "white gaze." Note the following from *La France Contemporaine,* the largest selling culture book in the U.S.: "Bien que les ressortissants européens soient plus nombreux, les autres groupes d'immigrés sont plus visibles, précisément parce qu'ils viennent de cultures non européennes et qu'ils introduisent en France des différences raciales. La proportion des immigrés dans la population française est à peu près stable depuis 1975. Ce n'est pas parce que les immigrés ne viennent plus en France, mais plutôt parce que beaucoup d'étrangers sont devenus français." (Allen and Dubreil 2014, 221) [Even though European immigrants are the most numerous, other immigrant groups are more visible, precisely because they come from non-European culture and because they introduce in France racial differences. The proportion of immigrants in the French population has been relatively stable since 1975. This is not because

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[3] See *Alliages Culturels* for a long "liste des anciennes colonies françaises" [list of former French colonies] that ultimately homogenizes all former colonies as "other" for the student's reading consumption (2014, 237–239).

[4] See Fischer (1996) and Fleig-Hamm (1998).

[5] "White gaze" as defined by Flores and Rosa is "a perspective that privileges dominant white perspectives on the linguistic and cultural practices of racialized communities" (2015, 150–151).

immigrants are no longer coming to France, but rather because a lot of foreigners are becoming French citizens].[6]

Naturalization is postulated as the ultimate goal with cultural distinction effaced since everyone eventually becomes French. Additionally, the notion that these populations "introduce" racial distinction in France continues to foreignize the non-white individual, highlighting how their alterity is visible.

This depiction of French immigration distorts an authentic understanding of contemporary France. Units dedicated to French gastronomy fail to incorporate a discussion, for instance, of growing halal consumerism in France and the ensuing debate of halal products in school cafeterias, on supermarket shelves, or even at fast food chains (Wright and Annes 2013). Units dedicated to the French educational system and secularism may not elaborate on the consequences of the law of 15 March 2004 that banned religious attire in public schools. And the impact continues with other units like regional identities, social welfare, or religion. If we remain uncritical of the negation of cultural plurality of "French" and teach a Eurocentric definition of French culture, we are contributing to the supremacy of one and unique definition of Frenchness that does not represent contemporaneity. It is also important to nuance contemporary culture because research indicates that far too often, second language classrooms fail to delineate what race, ethnicity, and culture mean for a specific country/group (see Kubota and Lin 2009, 2). In failing to truly underline what we are studying and the pluralities of cultures that are at play in a specific area, language instructors are avoiding a discussion about structural and institutional equalities that affect citizens differently (Kubota and Lin 2009, 4). This is why we must acknowledge the role that textbooks play as "an elitist tool in the neocolonial agenda" (Licata 2021) that ostracizes non-white populations in France and as tools that inhibits students' understanding of what contemporary culture is.

Considering the popularity of culture courses in higher education, it is critical to interrogate the definition of what contemporary French culture is and how we can use Twitter to enrich the course content as well as expand and multiply the points of view that will help define it.[7] This is where Twitter's utility as a micro-blogging function serves as a useful

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[6] All translations provided in this chapter are my own.

[7] Culture courses are arguably the most popular courses across curricula in higher education. In fact, the top twenty national universities (as ranked by U.S. News and World Report)

means to expanding how a student understands and consumes culture. It additionally serves as a medium for "students to gain exposure to native speaker input" in order to analyze the "sociopragmatic" and socio-cultural elements of the target language and its content (Lomicka 2019, 407) underlining the critical, intercultural skills students develop in these types of courses. Culture courses have an imperative importance in the second-language classroom. Culture is present in various forms: there is the culture of the learner and additionally, there is the culture of the target language (Brody 2003, 38). These courses afford students an opportunity to analyze their locale through the lens of the global, in this case France, which is a foundational element to the concept of intercultural competency that second-language instruction purports to develop.[8] I suggest therefore that Twitter (and arguably other forms of social media) is a serious tool foreign language educators can employ to help develop cultural awareness and linguistic proficiency (Knisely 2018).

Twitter and Language Education

Utilizing Twitter is one of the stronger ways for instructors to find a contemporaneous debate that introduces cultural concepts to students. Cultural courses in French curricula in the United States tend to appear after the fourth semester of study, at a transitional intermediate-to-advanced moment. At this level of language proficiency, research indicates that guided inductive learning is more effective than traditional deductive learning methodologies (Séverine Vogel et al. 2011) for both content discovery (culture in this case) and language learning. Guided induction is a process of learning where students are exposed to new material in a specific context and then after viewing the object in context, are deductively taught the formal structures. This approach works both linguistically for students as well as culturally since, in both situations, students are exposed first to a contextualized example of a concept and then later taught its official function within a given scenario. For culture courses, this means discerning contemporary civilization through authentic primary sources and working backward to establish the socio-cultural context that

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all have a culture course in either their bridge sequence or advanced sequences; ten of the top twelve liberal arts colleges have unique culture courses in the advanced level as well.

[8] For an extensive analysis of how the language classroom builds intercultural competency, see Sandra López-Rocha (2016, 106–108).

produced the cultural phenomenon under examination. Guided inductive learning is a rich method for content driven courses because this pedagogical method allows the student to engage with a cultural artifact first, form a reaction and opinion, and then be "guided" to a comparison between what is known as surface culture and deeper culture.[9] Furthermore, by utilizing authentic sources we are privileging natural language acquisition since authentic sources fill a social purpose as well as a linguistic purpose, i.e.: communication (Little et al. 2017). Twitter is uniquely situated to provide these authentic sources through original tweets. It also provides interaction with those tweets through replies, retweets, and quote tweets consequently creating a linguistic "community" for second-language learners through the form of language input (Antenos-Conforti 2009).

This chapter focuses on Twitter, among other social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, or Snapchat, because it has a large number of registered users—340 million of which 196 million are active daily (Twitter Investor Relations 2021). Moreover, there is a growing body of research on the use of Twitter in the educational setting and the micro-blogging functionality that mimics discussion between individuals (Borau et al. 2009; Fewell 2014; Harmandaoglu 2012). Twitter stands out because it is "participatory, authentic, immediate, and it engages (a) community" (Antenos-Conforti 2009); it plays a valuable role for both "synchronous and asynchronous modes of communication" (Antenos-Conforti 2009). Twitter exhibits multiple beneficial qualities for language learners—linguistic benefits (grammar, vocab, idioms), cultural benefits (access to native speakers and their opinions), and social benefits (learning outside of the classroom).[10] My goal here is to highlight the opportunities Twitter offers foreign language educators, in particular those with cultural analysis courses.

Twitter is a free, interactive micro-blogging site. Micro-blogging is a form of multimedia blogging that permits users to post short text updates or micromedia (photos, short videos, or audio clips) to be viewed by a restricted group of individuals or everyone publicly. The brevity of these messages creates an "individual's sound bites" (Antenos-Conforti 2009). Twitter users create text-based posts called "tweets" that are read by a community of followers or publicly by anyone depending on the account

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[9] See Edward Hall (1989).
[10] See Daniel Craig (2012) and Fernand Rosell-Aguilar (2018).

holder's settings. The absolute immense library of material on Twitter thus facilitates language acquisition because it provides language input as well as a potential audience for language learners' output (Hattem 2014). Using Twitter or any other social media for that matter, in the language learning setting, does raise ethical questions regarding privacy. Research indicates a reticence for using social media in the educational setting because of a desire to keep public and private spheres separate; however, most of the research that suggests using social media for language learning also reports the success in its implementation when students are encouraged to setup privacy parameters or create unique accounts just for this educational purpose (Knisely 2018).

Thus, Twitter can be utilized in both formal and informal settings which aids in the advancement of language proficiency as it extends learning outside of the classroom (Lomicka 2019). In fact, Bahrani and Tam (2012) and Bahrani et al. (2014) both highlight that students at the intermediate and advanced level show better linguistic proficiency and subject matter understanding when exposed to both formal and informal audiovisual material. The key component for success in these studies were informal material which is, by definition, material that can be consumed outside of the classroom away from pedagogical structures. Using Twitter, language educators can intervene to carefully groom material of the appropriate linguistic level for the course as well as continue to scaffold the guided inductive learning process regarding contemporary French culture. Indeed Bahrani et al. (2014) emphasizes that choices of material are ultimately more important than amount of exposure.

One of the more convincing benefits of integrating Twitter into the classroom is the possibility that language learners will enjoy the content they are exposed to and they will continue to use it after the course is completed. This provides continued, authentic language exposure as well as continued exposure to cultural events that students can engage with. In turn, it prolongs the language learning and cultural learning experience for students outside of the classroom. By integrating Twitter (and by extension other social media) into the classroom, a language educator is potentially able to increase language investment for the students not only during the actual class timeline, but also past it. Finally, now that instructors see the value in what a platform like Twitter can bring to the classroom for both language and cultural learning, it is equally important to investigate the unique features and abilities that Twitter allows that other platforms or social media systems do not. Unlike other massive social

media systems, Twitter has an open-source code that allows users with coding knowledge to analyze tweets, hashtags, user engagement, and even target ad displays. Such a distinctive feature has led to a plethora of creative tools language educators can utilize that increase and diversify language and cultural input for students.

Twitter Tools for Language and Cultural Learning

The abundance of media on Twitter can be overwhelming. Educators, having their units planned out, should have targeted certain accounts that they will use regularly to amplify language input for students as well as provide a corpus of cultural material that will allow students to execute cultural evaluation. The most efficient way to discover accounts that may be of interest is to search by hashtag. Twitter's desktop and mobile apps allow users to search a hashtag to find instances of its use. However, the desktop version allows for a more advanced search that permits users to filter their results even further based on additional search criteria. Twitter also has a "trending" tab, but it tends to use an algorithm that caters trending hashtags to specific user interests; therefore, it is best for educators to have a list of hashtags students will use to uncover issues in contemporary French culture.

To facilitate learning and truly develop cross-cultural critical thinking skills in our students, websites have been designed to analyze hashtags, the accounts that use them, as well as other hashtags that are often used in conjunction with the initial. Websites like Hashtagify.me, Sproutsocial. com, and Talkwalker.com offer some of these services and give students an opportunity to investigate how a cultural phenomenon is morphing in society at that very moment. Talkwalker.com, for example, allows registered users to analyze hashtags. Using this tool, students can search an assigned hashtag and evaluate a plethora of information. Talkwalker analyzes the following categories for a hashtag: metrics (number of uses), key themes (associated hashtags being used in conjunction with primary), influencers (accounts that are using the hashtag the most), demographics (gender, age), world map (where the tweet originated), and finally conversations (sample tweets of the hashtag in action). The caveat to this website is that it only analyzes tweet usage and users from the past seven days. Of course, a paid version would allow a much larger analysis, but the information is still useful especially if the hashtag has been trending at all within the previous months.

The data that Talkwalker and other websites provides is useful because it brings us back to what Craig (2012) suggests are the benefits of authentic texts and why they are paramount to learning: seeing additional hashtags used in association with the initial hashtag gives both cultural and social context to the student; seeing recent example tweets of the hashtag in action gives students immediate and authentic linguistic and cultural insight; finally, analyzing the key metrics highlights the positive or negative sentiment associated with the hashtag and thus gives students social benefit. Each of Talkwalker's analytical categories opens the door to monumental opportunities for students to engage with media that underscore present day cultural phenomena. For example, if my unit is on French Politics and the Fifth Republic, I could start with #presidentielle2022. Students are immediately met with intra-cultural context: #islamogauchisme, #MarineLePen, #Macron, #antirepublicaine, #wokisme and so on. The students are witnessing contemporary culture in action and additional assignments guide them to discover what "islamogauchisme" or "antirepublicain" means in the context of the upcoming presidential elections. For example, educators can ask students to select two additional cross listed hashtags with #presidentielle2022 and have them evaluate the content of four or five tweets on the following criteria: main users of the tweet, issue of debate (immigration, taxes, climate change), and the connotation associated with hashtag (positive or negative). It is then from this starting point that we can work backward to explain what the political system is in France and how that came to be in the Fifth Republic—all of which helps to contextualize the contemporary moment of users' discussion of the 2022 presidential elections.

Furthermore, the way I am suggesting we use Twitter, and tools like Hashtagifyme and TalkWalker, is to focus on tweets as cultural productions that our students can study and draw conclusions from. For example, using Hashtagifyme, educators can have students examine the difference in usage for hashtags like #biodiversité or #changementclimatique or even the gender and age of users who employ those hashtags. This type of insight allows students to glean more cultural knowledge by exploring demographics and making some larger claims about their observations; the course then truly adopts a cultural analysis format. Furthermore, tweets become language input, and the cultural output is the analysis students develop from looking at the said tweet, its hashtags, and the intertextual dialogue it shares with other tweets. This strategy avoids the need for monitoring the number of posts students make, how they interact, and

who they interact with. Indeed, there are benefits to a controlled approach that involves students producing language on Twitter, but the focus in culture courses is the cultural content and therefore using Twitter analytics provides us with digital tools to untangle the various braids of contemporary French culture and develop tangible evaluative skills.

Conclusion

The implementation of Twitter in the language classroom has the additional benefit of not treating the cultural diversity of France as an afterthought and instead permits educators and students to talk about the complexity of modern French culture and racial tension which, as Kubota and Lin (2009) analyze, is something cultural language manuals in higher education avoid. But it does beg the question of what should we use manuals for? Manuals can play a key role in buttressing the background and historical information students need to understand a polemic or debate. They can also be used to support lexical needs by thematically structuring a student's vocabulary usage, building a proficiency and fluency in various topics being covered in a cultural course. Furthermore, they can cover various levels of language proficiency facilitating how an instructor develops appropriately leveled language content. Cultural manuals in the language classroom are inherently informative but are not contemporary and often didactically approach the instruction of French culture in a positivist manner and this why Twitter can play a new role in cultural discovery for language learners with historical context.

Instructors in higher educational settings comprehend that culture courses in a language curriculum can provide rich opportunities for students to grasp the complex social structures that edify modern France but ultimately reveal a cultural confrontation. Educators cannot and should not rely on sterile, epitomized representations of French culture that do not truly unpack the politics of contemporaneity. Rather, educators should seek out examples of culture in action and have students engage with these examples. Culture is often positioned as the "marginalized sister" of language (Hennebry 2014, 135) in second language curricula, but this is one way to move away from a focus on language production and incorporate a focus on cultural evaluation. Twitter can facilitate this skill development by increasing language input for students as well as cross-cultural critique. A content-based cultural course seeks not only to promote linguistic proficiency, but also to force students to confront the complicated

intersections of separatism, communitarianism, and republicanism so that they can execute those various tasks as citizens of their micro-communities. When we push students to confront the culture issues that France faces, we are also asking them to confront the issues their communities, locally or nationally, are facing. In decolonizing and diversifying our curriculum in cultural studies, we are also decolonizing and diversifying students' thoughts and actions while also decentering the power of the textbook by highlighting other mediums that provide educational benefit in the language learning classroom.

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Approaching Plurality and Contributing to Diversity Through Podcast Pedagogy

Thomas Muzart

In the *New York Times* of March 6, 2019, journalist Jaclyn Peiser reported on the growing audience of the medium we know now under the name of "podcast." Resulting from the combination of "iPod" and "broadcast" that Ben Hammersley coined in his piece for *The Guardian* entitled "Audible revolution" (February 11, 2004), the term podcast refers to audio programs directly downloadable from the Internet to any kind of listening device similar to iPod and now smartphones. Beyond the production advantages for journalists who no longer face programming regulations and shortage of airtime when using this format, Hammersley's article underlines the benefits from the side of the consumers and the change that ensued in the media industry. The ability to listen to radio programs whenever and wherever one likes was met with such enthusiasm that a company like Audible, initially specializing in audio-books, identified downloadable audio programs as its fastest growing market. Fifteen years later, the revolution glimpsed by Hammersley is fully on in the

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United States with, according to Peiser's 2019 article, one person out of three listening to at least one podcast a month. The fact that a year earlier, in 2018, the number was one person out of four, attests to a significant increase in podcast consumption. The number is even more impressive for people between the ages of 12 and 24, with 40% of them having listened to at least one podcast the month before.

In this article, I consider how such a tendency observed in society further informs students' media use and argue that the inclusion of podcasts in pedagogy, both as listening material and as creative projects, constitutes an opportunity for disciplines, and particularly the humanities, to motivate and stimulate students by staying connected with the world that surround them. Based on a survey that I circulated the first day of class in an advanced grammar and composition course and a literature course taught at Colby College[1] in the academic year 2020–2021, the proportion of students listening to podcasts is even higher than the number advanced by the 2019 *New York Times*' article. Nine out of ten students in the grammar course and six out of eight in the literature one reported that they listened to podcasts regularly, the majority while commuting, practicing a physical activity, or doing chores. These forms of use observed in students from a small liberal arts school in Maine correspond well to the preference for multitasking that Meghan Grace and Corey Seemiller identified in their essay *Generation Z Goes to College*[2] (2016).

More than appealing to students' way of consuming media, the inclusion of podcasts in courses of French language, culture, and literature, can contribute to the ongoing efforts of decolonizing and supporting diversity in the curriculum. This observation is particularly true to native podcasts, which will be the main object of study in this article. Unlike radio shows making their episodes available afterwards online, native podcasts are independently produced from start to finish. Such a freedom led to a revolution of content that, in October 2020, the French magazine *Les Inrocks* encapsulated in the opening interview of its special feature on the medium as "faire entendre des voix qui n'ont pas été entendues." [allowing to hear voices that have not yet been heard]. According to interviewees Charlotte

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[1] Colby College counts a total of 2003 students. The institution ranks 79 out of 3514 colleges in overall diversity, which means there is high variety on campus in racial/ethnic diversity, ages, gender, and location: https://www.collegefactual.com/colleges/colby-college/student-life/diversity/#overall_diversity

[2] Coming after the generation known as Millennials, Generation Z refers to people born between 1995 and 2012.

Pudlowski, creator of *Louie Media* and Victoire Tuaillon, editor-in-chief of *Binge Audio,* two major podcast studios that respectively appeared in 2017 and 2016, what distinguishes podcasts from regular radio programs is the approach to knowledge and information. By giving more space to subjective experience, podcasting does not subscribe to the so-called neutrality of journalism, which, they describe as nothing else than the dominant point of view, characteristically known as white, male, cisgender, and heterosexual. Instead of offering approaches deceptively presented as impartial, the podcasts emerging from their studio use insights from social science to bring to the fore analysis taking into account intersectional perspectives on social class, gender, race, and sexuality[3] (*Les Inrocks* 24).

The first part of this study will consider how podcasts as course material can complement scholarly resources on complex notions and traditional media's treatment of events in a way that enhances reflections on intersectionality and power dynamics. In addition to mobilizing listening and analytical skills, podcasts' low cost and technical needs can allow students to create their own program and showcase their individual grasp on issues related to social justice. In the second part, I will explain how in my course on advanced grammar and composition, I developed a project on podcasts that supported students' language acquisition, intercultural education, skills in conducting research, and contribution to the community on campus and beyond.

Podcasts as Course Material: Active Listening in Intercultural Contexts

Following Kate Lacey's insights in "Listening Overlooked" (2011), I challenge the preconceived notion that listening is passive and demonstrate instead that it constitutes a communicative and participatory act guaranteeing the plurality of expressions and a training for public life in the classroom. In parallel with the freedom of speech, which tends to remain central in discourses on freedom of expression, Lacey proposes the

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[3] Even though this article focuses on the recent cultural phenomenon of French podcasts highlighting diversity issues within France, there are podcasts created in French speaking countries and regions that would further reinforce the teaching goals of diversifying the classroom. In Québec, where a podcast is called a "balado," there are programs such as *Les dialogueuses* or *Les francos oublié·e·s.* In Africa and the diaspora, *Queer Afro* and *Entre-Elles* offer interesting insights on sexuality and gender. Many other voices and accents can be heard in podcasts from the French speaking world on platforms like Spotify.

freedom of listening, which not only as a right but also as a responsibility, expands the ways in which voices can be received and therefore acknowledged: "If the public sphere is to be understood as a space in which a plurality of voices can be heard, then those voices must be able to express themselves in a plurality of ways, not just in the image of a dialogue" (16). As an alternative to conventional dialogic and interactive forms of mediation, podcasts and the act of listening place students in a condition of plurality and intersubjectivity. By listening to different voices from other locations and backgrounds, students learn how to listen and develop their democratic sensibility (18).

The openness of listening is also what Kristi Kaeppel and Emma Bjorngard-Basayne observe in their article "The Pedagogy of Podcasts" (2018), which identifies five main components about the medium: relevance, authenticity and vulnerability, simplicity, storytelling, and experiments. With the exception of the latter, which will be the focus of the second part, I am going to show how my students and I experienced these features attributed to podcasts, which led to reflections and reevaluations on the meaning of equality, justice, freedom, and democratic engagement in an intercultural context. While I argue for the use of podcasts as course material, I should specify that they need to be adapted for pedagogical purposes and turned into learning objects (Cebeci and Tekdal 2006). I recommend the use of segments of no longer than two or three minutes and an ordering of segments that take into account the progression of students toward the learning goals. Prior to the listening practice in class, I also ask students to listen to the podcast as homework and provide a guide with vocabulary and questions helping them to write a response that they share in the course blog or forum.

Relevance

By addressing issues attuned to what is happening in society at a given moment, podcasts can be helpful resources to bring context and elements that can initiate a conversation in the classroom. For example, following the mobilization against police brutality and the organization of a "#ScholarStrike: Teach-in on Anti-racism" at the instigation of Anthea Butler and David Gannon on September 8 and 9, 2020, I used in my advanced grammar and composition course the news podcast *Program B* (produced by Binge Audio)*,* whose episode 300 from March 4, 2020 was entitled "Adama, une histoire de la violence" [Adama, a story of violence].

This 20-minute episode explains in detail the case of Adama Traoré, a French victim of police brutality. His story has been compared to George Floyd by the media in France but also in the United States with articles such as the one entitled "Assa Traoré and the Fight for Black Lives in France" written by Lauren Collins in *The New Yorker* of June 2020. In class, students listened to segments that I had selected and orally answered a list of questions, first multiple choices such as:

- Où est-ce qu'Adama Traoré habitait ?   [Where did Adama Traoré live?]
  1 – À Paris   2 – En banlieue parisienne [Paris suburbs]   3 – À Marseille
- À quoi Adama Traoré voulait-il échapper ?   [What did Adama Traoré want to escape]
  1 – Un contrôle d'identité [an identity check] 2 – une arrestation [an arrest]
  3 – un contrôle d'alcoolémie [an alcohol check]

and then open-ended ones to generate conversations:

- En quoi les circonstances de la mort de George Floyd rappellent celles d'Adama Traoré ? Quelles conclusions pouvez-vous en tirer ? [To what extent the circumstances around the death of George Floyd are reminiscent of the ones around the death of Adama Traoré? Which conclusions can you draw from it?]
- Quelles sont les réactions de la police face à ces drames ? Et celles de la famille ? Et des populations ? Que révèlent-elles de nos sociétés actuelles ? [What are the reactions from the police toward these tragedies? And the ones of the family? And the ones of the population? What do they reveal of the current state of our societies?]

Through this activity, students came to the realization that issues of police brutality were also happening in France. Benefiting from the critical distance afforded by the French context, they were able, in their comparisons of the situations between the two countries, to talk about a sensitive topic that was at the forefront of the news and a national preoccupation through relevant content-based instruction (Spenader et al. 2020).

Authenticity and Vulnerability

In the advanced literature course "Time for Outrage"[4] that I taught in the spring of 2021, students particularly encountered the aspects of authenticity and vulnerability with the episode 5 of Rokhaya Diallo and Grace Ly's podcast *Kiffe ta race* dedicated to the antiracist march organized in France in 1983. The guest, sociologist and anthropologist Nacira Guénif-Souilamas, showed a vulnerability that made students connect with her and what she said in the podcast. On *Kiffe ta race,* the ritual established by the hosts is for the guests to situate themselves racially at the beginning of the episode. Drawn from feminist studies, particularly in the United States,[5] this exercise, which demonstrates the way people are perceived and perceive themselves, often leads to personal stories from the guests.[6] A woman of Algerian origins, Guénif-Souilamas shared one of her experiences of racism, which deeply resonated with the students. It was the first aspect that they brought in class conversation and that they had extensively analyzed in their responses to the study guide asking them to identify how the hosts and the guest introduce the political topic of the episode. By listening to someone's story, students felt also less intimidated by the rest of the content, which sometimes used complex interpretations and vocabulary.[7] While Guénif-Souilamas demonstrated her expertise through the historical and sociological analysis she provided on the antiracist march, she was not placed in a situation of superiority. Instead, she engaged in a dialogue with the two hosts that was casual and pleasant for students to listen to. Challenging the usual distance between host and guest, serious and casual, theoretical and personal, the podcast created a welcoming and safe environment, which notably increased class participation that day and contributed to the sharing of vulnerable stories that reinforced student-professor and student-student connections and collaboration in the construction of knowledge.

[4] This course provided an overview of major political struggles that shaped France's understanding and commitment to social justice from the 1960s to today. Through the study of films, manifestos, novels, podcasts, and political discourses, students discussed issues of citizenship, communitarianism, identity politics, and social privilege.

[5] For example, Donna Haraway's notion of "situated knowledges," which I discuss in the second part of this article.

[6] In another show like *La Menstruelle,* the hosts and guests talk about their menstrual cycle and how they are feeling in the moment before delving into a specific topic.

[7] I usually provide a list of specific terms that we overview before this kind of listening activities.

Simplicity and Storytelling

In front of the complexity of a concept or its abstract quality, podcasts can be helpful when they use techniques of storytelling to present concrete actions. For example, in the course "Time for Outrage," the program *Un podcast à soi* by Charlotte Bienaimé allowed students to progressively learn about ecofeminism. Instead of starting with a theoretical essay that students would have found too abstract and hard to understand, I preferred assigning the podcast's episode that introduces the concept of ecofeminism through the example of a resistant group of women who organized camps on the land of what is supposed to become a landfill site for nuclear waste in Bure, a village located in northeastern France. The testimonies of some of these women who talk about their emotions and their life experience leading them to political resistance, the sound recording of collective moments, and of nature, manage to capture an environment in which students were immersed. Through active listening of the segments that I selected, students had to write down keywords from the interviewees' testimonies and analyze the soundscape. The analysis of words such as "patriarcat" [patriarchy], "cisgenre" [cisgender], "puissance" [power], "prise de parole" [public speaking], "rituel" [ritual], generated class discussions that led to students' progressive understanding of the main notions at stake between ecology and feminism. Beyond learning, Kaeppel and Bjorngard-Basayne assert that neurosciences demonstrated that storytelling also facilitates retention. The empathy that students develop by listening to someone's story and the reflections that ensues about their own experiences contributed to the caring and human aspects that tend to be overlooked in what Dee Fink calls significant learning (2003, Fig. 2.1). The personal and emotional dimensions advocated here do not replace the study of complicated theories but constitute instead a way through which students can get interested in a notion that they can further explore in scholarship. For example, a student from the course subsequently read excerpts from Françoise d'Eaubonne's essay *Le féminisme ou la mort* (1974) and the analysis of such an essay by philosopher Myriam Bahaffou for a paper on decolonial ecofeminism. Two other students were inspired to create a podcast on the environmental crisis in Maine as part of a semester project.

Podcasts as Creative Projects: Students' Own Contributions to Diversity

The final feature that Kaepek and Bjorngard-Basayne attribute to podcasts is their openness to experiments. Far from being a fixed form, this medium can be reworked and adapted by anyone and to any kind of contexts. In order to demonstrate the pedagogical potential of podcasts, I will examine the semester project based on such a medium that I conducted in the advanced grammar and composition course that I taught in the fall of 2020. This course is considered as a bridge-course in the curriculum of the French program at Colby College, which means that, after taking three semesters of language (elementary 1, 2, and Intermediate), students take this course to acquire the necessary skills to move onto advanced literature and culture courses. This in-between state is often challenging for students who encounter increased expectations in their ability to understand grammatical concepts and to use them in their writing. Similarly, professors usually struggle finding activities that stimulate students intellectually and are not too linguistically complicated for their current level. This issue proves to be even more difficult when considering the great difference of levels students frequently have at that stage of their language instruction. That was the case in my advanced grammar course and composition, where among the eight students, some were very comfortable using complex grammatical concepts and syntaxes while others needed time to review some topics that they had not yet fully assimilated.

As an individual project throughout the semester, the creation of a podcast allowed students to adapt what they learned in class to their own level and current ability. In addition to learning independently, this project provided them with the opportunity to develop their creativity through eight written exercises, which constituted the main steps leading to the production of their podcast. Before delving into the description and rationale behind each of these exercises, it is necessary to specify that, while the creative process was individual, the scaffolding approach that I implemented generated collaborative work at two levels: between students and professor through weekly review and between students during three workshops. In the weekly reviews, I evaluated their use of the grammatical concepts studied in class and included in their text as well as the content and the style. Students had then one week to take into account the feedback that I had provided. The workshops took place at the three main stages of the production of the podcast: in the beginning when they wrote

the proposal for their program, in the middle of the semester when they completed half of their segments, and at the end when they had their script ready for audio-recording. Students had to upload their work on the course management system (Moodle) so that the peer with whom they were paired could prepare their review prior to the workshop in class. The decision to organize three workshops instead of a weekly peer-review comes from the fact that this is a time-consuming and challenging process for students. Three times a semester seemed more manageable for them and gave them enough opportunities to develop their skills as reviewers.

Turning now to the eight written assignments that I designed for this course, I will explain the learning goals for each one of them and provide results from students' productions and responses. I present these activities in the order in which I assign them to the students. Because it was an advanced grammar class, each written exercise required the use of specific grammar concepts. I did not include this part of the assignments since it is not related in itself to podcast production. Instructors may choose to focus on writing style, content, phonetics, or any goals they find the most adapted to their course. Similarly, among the eight activities, some may not appear necessary, other exercises may be added, and the order may be changed to suit students' and professors' specific needs.

Podcast Analysis (250–300 Words)

Instead of jumping right away into the creative process, which could have run the risk of generating lack of inspiration or the infamous writer's block, the first activity implemented consisted in listening and analyzing one episode of an existing podcast in French. In doing so, students developed their critical cultural awareness by discovering that, similar to the United States, podcasting is a growing trend in the French media and by comparing the programs they know with the ones they selected to study. In *Generation Z Goes to College*, Seemiller and Grace observe that the student population we encounter today in our class particularly express concerns over issues around civil rights, especially gay rights, women's rights, and racial equality (131). That is why I made them pick podcasts from *Binge Audio,* a studio offering a wide variety of programs on topics that are very current and may likely appeal to students. Whether it is an episode of Diallo and Ly's *Kiffe ta race,* addressing racial issues in France, of *Camille* who, as a lesbian, explore LGBTQI+ culture, or of *Miroir miroir* with Afrofeminist Jennifer Padjemi deconstructing femininity and beauty

standards, students gained access to the current discussions prevailing in France and often realized the numerous similarities they shared with what they cared about in their daily lives. However, this commonality did not prevent students from observing the cultural specificity of France and French-speaking regions. It presented on the contrary an opportunity to listen to personal and first-hand points of view.

In their analysis of the episode that they chose, students had to include comments on the title of the podcast, its topic, the style of the host, the guests, the music, and the different sections within the episode, from introduction to conclusion. While some students expressed concerns over the speed at which people talked in many of the podcasts, the focus on form alleviated their anxiety and helped them to accept they may not understand everything in the episode.[8] I would even add that their analytical approach on style and structure helped them to grasp the content of the podcasts better. By uploading to an online forum their analysis and presenting it to each other in the following class, students learned about a variety of styles of programs and developed their knowledge of minority issues and social justice, which could inspire them for the creation of their own podcast. For example, after listening to an episode of *Kiffe ta race,* a student decided to work on racial discrimination in sport.

Proposal (250–300 Words)

This second assignment consisted of writing a proposal for the creation of a new podcast for the studio *Binge Audio*. Following the instructions provided in the section "Soumettre un projet" [Submit a project] on Binge's own website, students needed to provide a title and explain the main topic of their program and show its originality (content, tone, approach…) in comparison to the other podcasts already offered on the platform. They were also asked to think about their targeted audience, the format that they would choose, and the guest that they would like to invite since an interview was part of the upcoming assignments. At this stage of the development, students' concepts were more tentative than fully determined but this process was helpful for them to lay out ideas and plan for the various tasks that they had to complete to arrive at the desired final

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[8] While I recommended they listen the episode at the regular speed, I also informed students on the possibility provided by most listening applications to slow down speech by half the speed.

product. Focusing on the goals they wanted to reach with their podcast from the beginning facilitated retro planning, which consists of starting from conceiving the end of the project in order to determine the various stages and timeline needed to achieve it. In doing so, students could better assess the level of their ambition and make decisions on how to proceed. For example, a student who wanted to interview a renowned chef for his podcast on cooking and food accessibility, realized that he needed to find a contact and reach out as soon as possible to this potential guest and also to think about an alternative guest in case the first one could not be available.[9] As said earlier, students presented and discussed their proposal during the first workshop of the course so they could benefit from others' feedback in the choice that they made for their podcast.

Introduction (250–300 Words)

Setting the tone for the rest of the podcast, the introduction is a very important exercise in which students present themselves, the concept of the podcast, the main theme of their pilot, the structure of the episode, and their guest. As students observed in their analysis, the majority of podcasts available on *Binge Audio* favored a serious yet casual style in which friendly interactions with the guests could go as far as using the informal "tutoiement." I emphasized this aspect, which, in my opinion, showed students how they could be comfortable and have fun during the completion of this project. I encouraged them to express themselves and their personality in the creative process as it often plays a significant role of the podcast. As discussed in the first part, *Kiffe ta race*'s introduction constitutes a good example with the two hosts describing how they are perceived and how they perceive themselves racially and asking their guests to do the same exercise. Students discussed the implications of such a presentation and the importance of showing how everyone on the podcast occupies a specific position from which they speak. While students did not have to conform to this particular ritual in their own program, the discussion on *Kiffe ta race* led them to discover what feminist Donna Haraway defines as "situated knowledges," that is the fact that all knowledge comes from positional perspectives (1988). Subsequently, I encouraged them to be aware of their individual and personal standpoint on the knowledge

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[9] I will go back in further detail to the issue of choosing a proper guest in the section dedicated to the interview.

that they were going to display. By reflecting on why and how they connected with their topic, students further increased their degree of involvement with their podcast.

Contextualization (250–300 Words)

The work of contextualization represented an opportunity to introduce students to methods of academic research, which they will eventually have to conduct in more advanced French language classes or any other disciplines. For this specific assignment, they needed to do a review of literature including at least five sources about the topic that they chose to develop in their episode. Because it was a bridge-course, I decided to require at least two scholarly pieces in order to familiarize them with the aspects of research. Among the other sources provided, the majority of students chose online articles. One of them selected a documentary that she found on YouTube. In retrospect, I would encourage more video and audio sources since they provide material that can be included and illustrate the content developed in the podcast.[10]

Critical Analysis (250–300 Words)

The critical analysis constitutes the step that follows the review of literature. In this assignment, students focused on one particular source and explained their position about the ideas and arguments developed by this source. While contextualization favors a general perspective, critical analysis requires close-reading and attention to details. Because students had trouble distinguishing the difference between the two assignments, the critical analysis was the work that generated the most edits on my parts and for which I had to spend the most time assisting students. This observation for a project that required a low amount of research revealed the gap existing between intermediate and advanced language courses and further provided an explanation for the anxiety that I had identified in students for the writing of their first academic paper in French in literature and culture courses.

[10] For example, from the French National Audiovisual Institute, INA.

Advertisement (150 Words)

After two activities centered on research and academic writing, the transition to a more creative exercise was welcomed by students. They had to create two ads for products or services that were related to the theme of their podcast. As it is often the case, podcasts rely on sponsors to produce their episodes. That is why they include promotional messages on products that could potentially attract their targeted audience. Here again, students had total freedom to create their content. While some imagined new products like a magic mic that would make anyone sing in tune for a podcast on music, others opted for existing services or brands. For example, a student who produced a podcast on student athletes envisioned a partnership with *Décathlon,* a famous French company specialized in sporting goods.

Interview (500–750 Words)

The interview played a significant part in the overall structure of the podcast. It was the longest section and the one that required the most time and preparation. From the beginning of the semester, students knew that they had to find a person to interview for their episode. Given that their podcast was in French, I recommended them to select a French-speaking guest. The increasing use of videoconference due to the pandemic of COVID-19 enabled students to contact people with whom they would not have been able to communicate otherwise. This alternative could be particularly helpful for universities, like Colby College, which are located in places where there are little to no French-speaking communities. The local or virtual connections made with French-speakers through this exercise participates in the development of students' intercultural citizenship, which, Michael Byram and Manuela Wagner define as "the acquisition of the knowledge and skills necessary to act in a community which is multicultural and international, and comprises more than one set of cultural values, beliefs, and behaviors" (2017). For instance, a student took this project as an opportunity to keep in contact with the family that hosted her while she was in an exchange program in Dijon, France. She and the mother of the hosting family exchanged information about traditional dishes and cooking recipes for the holiday. Other students preferred to interview people on campus, particularly their friends who also study French. This collaborative work reinforces, in my opinion, the cohesion of

the students taking French at the university and participates in itself in the promotion of our discipline. There were also other students who were not able to find a French speaker and opted for an English-speaking guest. In order to keep the focus on language acquisition, these students had to translate their interview and have one of their classmates doing the voiceover. This alternative provided extended opportunities for students to connect with community members on campus. For example, the student working on racial justice in sport was able to interview her soccer coach who is a member of the Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion implemented by the Department of Athletics at Colby College. She discovered the existence of such a committee thanks to her podcast project.

Conclusion (100–150 Words)

Despite being the shortest written exercise of the semester, the conclusion is a very important segment that wraps up the entire episode. Some of the podcasts that students listened to on *Binge Audio* have rituals like *Les couilles sur la table,* where the guest is asked to provide a cultural recommendation for the audience. Others summarize the content of the episode and announce the topic of the next episode or the name of the next guest. Students took inspiration from these techniques or simply used some of the idiomatic expressions used by podcasters to conclude their episode.

Recording, Oral Delivery and Editing

Once the various segments were written, it was time to think about the recording of the podcast. At that stage, students had already recorded their interviews, but they still needed to prepare for the oral delivery of the remaining parts. Instead of recording right away, students needed to read out loud their script in order to work first on phonetics and pronunciation and then on rhythm and modulation. For the latter, I encouraged them to underline the important words or expressions that they should stress when recording. The importance given to the voice and the auditive reception, which was mainly new to students, was met with enthusiasm. They enjoyed embodying the role of the host, especially when they used the professional microphone from the recording booth available at Colby College's Language Resource Center. However, this kind of equipment is not necessary for producing podcasts of quality. A smartphone for recording and a

computer with the open access software *Audacity* for editing are enough. While the main features of *Audacity* are somewhat easy to grasp for a generation who was born in the digital age, students benefited from two training sessions with a member from the Information Technology Services of the college to hone their skills in sound extraction and editing. Colby College also has a subscription to *Storyblocks,* a website that provides students with an extensive catalogue of royalty-free music and sound effects, which they included in their sound design.

Conclusion

While I have not implemented an activity on documentation and reception in the course that I have described in this article, I would like to briefly reflect on these two components that mobilize the listening and producing aspects of podcasts that I discussed. Considering the quality of the works produced by students and the role played recently by podcasts to give access to voices that had not yet been heard, it seems necessary to find a platform that would allow students and possibly everyone to listen to the programs created for the course. In "Ideas for Incorporating Podcasting into Your Pedagogy" (2020), Professor of Journalism and Mass Communication Kim Fox had her students post their content online on Blogger and stored the audio files on Internet Archive-IA. Podbean, Soundcloud, Spotify, and iTunes also allow users to upload and make their work easily accessible. The website ArcGIS StoryMaps, which supports the sharing of maps in the context of narrative text and other multimedia content, could also be an interesting option to promote the soundscape emerging from the various contributions of students. One last class activity could be, in the similar fashion as the first assignment I designed, to write an analysis of the podcast produced by one of their classmates. They would then, during the following class, present their classmate's podcast to the rest of the class, thus giving value to each other's contribution to diversity and the community.

In their evaluations, students shared their appreciation for using podcasts as a learning tool. In a class setting that mostly focused on grammar and writing, the creation of podcasts allowed them to keep working on their speaking skills and their accent. They also enjoyed the fact that in addition to the feedback provided on their use of grammatical concepts, I also gave them ideas for their podcast and helped them work on their style so they could find their own voice. While some of them found the weekly

assignments and revisions to be a difficult pace to follow, they felt at the same time satisfied with the effort they made throughout the semester. Expressing the desire to work more in group settings, one student's feedback finally leads me to envision having students working collectively to create a program in which each of their contributions would be an episode of the season. Podcast pedagogy offers many possibilities for instructors and students to develop projects that emphasize the construction of knowledge that includes every aspect of significant learning and the construction of diversity that involves every aspect of our lives.

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Les dialogueuses by the Collectif Les Péripatéticiennes.
Les francos oublié·e·s by Ahdithya Visweswaran and Janie Moyen.
Miroir miroir (Binge Audio) by Jennifer Padjemi.
Queer Afro by Gaelle et Elsy.

Beyond the Book: Multimodal Texts and Assignments as Anti-Racist Pedagogy

Bethany Schiffman

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire argues that "(i)n their alienation, the oppressed want at any cost to resemble the oppressors, to imitate them, to follow them" (2005, 62). In other words, almost against their will, the oppressed will adopt the practices of their oppressors in hopes of joining their ranks (or even taking their place). In *A Small Place*, Antiguan-American essayist Jamaica Kincaid likewise problematizes this idea and writes, "For isn't it odd that the only language I have in which to speak of this crime is the language of the criminal who committed the crime?" (1988, 31).

Applied to academia, Freire's ideas suggest that students want to learn the traditional forms of expression (e.g., literary and/or scientific analysis, argumentative papers) in order to join the elite. Given the realities of today's world and job market, these are indeed necessary skills. But what of Kincaid's critique? If we understand Kincaid's quote broadly to refer to questions of genre, media, form, and other aspects of cultural creation,

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then she is elucidating a problem echoed by American Black lesbian feminist poet Audre Lorde: "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" ([2007], 110). The murder of George Floyd and resurgence of the Black Lives Matters movement render this issue even more pressing. Ultimately, how can the oppressed ever find their voices, crystalize, and communicate their identity, express their oppression using the forms handed to them by their oppressors?

While I have written elsewhere about how some authors and creators respond to this issue by creating new genres and forms, in this paper I focus on the role of educators and pedagogy to address these issues (Schiffman [2020]). I argue that, for the instructor, the answer to this problem lies, at least in part, in multimedia and multimodal forms of expression. Specifically, I demonstrate that incorporating multimedia and multimodal texts (including post-digital and non-western texts) into the classroom—both as objects of study and as student assignments—is an integral part of anti-racist pedagogy.[1]

THE TRADITIONAL APPROACH

The traditional French classroom revolves around cultural objects of study and student assignments that are problematic in several ways. These cultural objects generally consist of a few particular kinds of texts (published books—often novels, films, professional songs, etc.) which must gain the imprimatur of cultural gatekeepers in order to be disseminated.[2] These mediators wield a lot of power and influence in society, granting

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[1] "Anti-racist pedagogy" is often used and thus fluid and variable in meaning. In this article, I am referring to the conceptualization of it as expressed by Yale's Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning: "To be antiracist is to recognize the unearned power and privilege of some in our culture and to work to redistribute that power more equitably. This means going beyond inclusive teaching strategies to reconsider which voices are heard, who counts as an authority, and what kind of discourse is valued in the classroom. Inclusion is crucially important to teaching well, but antiracist educators also critically examine what they are inviting students to join" ("Antiracist Pedagogy" [n.d.]). In other words, I define anti-racist pedagogy as instruction that aims to recognize and counteract structural, systemic, and institutional inequities through a variety of practices.

[2] When I say "cultural gatekeepers," I am referring, per Bourdieu's definition, to those who "perform the tasks of gentle manipulation" of creating consumers' cultural "tastes," or mediating between cultural producers and cultural consumers ([1984], 365). This includes all participants in the bureaucracies of cultural production, including publishers, editors, studios, record labels, critics, literary award committees, and so on.

legitimacy and deciding which productions will be distributed to audiences (and even, inasmuch as they influence and control economic capital, who can afford to remain a cultural producer at all). Janssen and Verboord point out the increasingly critical importance of "institutions and agents … in the development of artistic careers and reputations as well as the formation of cultural tastes and consumption patterns" (2015, 1–2). In short, it is these gatekeepers, or taste-makers as Bourdieu calls them, who wield the most power in the decision of what constitutes "high" art, culture, or literature and who should create it.

Of course, these power brokers are not neutral; rather, they generally represent a particular sector of society. Indeed, scholars have demonstrated that, despite an appearance of inclusivity, the selection of who has access to the market "is subject to vagaries of personal subjectivity (David Manning White, 1950) or to bureaucratic routine (Walter Gieber, 1964)" and is controlled by a privileged few and thus reflects "the preferences and judgements of a small, relatively elite educated, middle-class, white male faction (Negus, 2002: 512)" (Adema 2016). As the "taste-makers" represent a select, privileged few, so too does the art they perpetuate, creating narrow definitions of what constitutes culture, which in turn reifies cultural inequities.[3] France, with its *Académie Française* and prestigious literary and cinematic awards and centuries-long obsession with high art and elevated/elevating cultural creation, is particularly problematic in this regard.[4] Ultimately, in France, "(w)ith a few exceptions, like the young Moroccan-born novelist Leïla Slimani, (young/cisgender women/POC) voices … are rarely heard in the very closed French world of publishing, which is dominated by white men" (Francini 2021).[5]

Even texts that seem to represent alternative views (e.g., those by "postcolonial" authors such as Slimani) are not immune to these vectors.

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[3] Indeed, it is important to remember that Bourdieu introduces this topic as part of his broader project of understanding how class distinctions are created and perpetuated.

[4] This tension in France gained international attention recently when literary critic Frédéric Beigbeder criticized young, Algerian-French YouTuber Léna Situations (née Mahfouf)'s new book. The *New York Times* published an article describing the tensions between young, (female) voices of color and the French literary establishment, including sociologist Delphine Naudier's idea that "As a gatekeeper, Mr. Beigbeder aims to protect the entrance of the literary field by using a classic disqualification strategy in the world of letters: stigmatizing social media sensations" (Francini 2021).

[5] It is significant that France's (white male) president, Emmanuel Macron, chose Slimani to be the "représentante de la francophonie" [representative of *la francophonie*].

Both the educations that have made it possible for these authors to write in the first place, and the necessity of relying "on Parisian literary institutions to obtain consecration" (regardless of whether they are writing from hexagonal France, overseas departments, territories, or former colonies) impose Western influences on these texts (Vincenot 2009, 73). Since the people educating these authors and making the decisions of whom to publish or reward represent a restrictive worldview, so, too, must the texts. They conform (more or less) to the formal and generic expectations—to the language—of the oppressor, in order to partake in the dialogues reserved for the privileged elite.

Beyond this, the educator's choice of which texts to study adds yet another layer of (potentially problematic) gatekeeping. In traditional "literary criticism and comparative literary history," the selection of texts to analyze is "usually in conformity with the definition of literariness derived from *classical and western models*" (Barber 2007, 32, my emphasis). In other words, on top of the bias influencing which texts get published or gain acclaim, students are also frequently subject to the (Western) biases of canonization—what "counts" as literature. Studying the traditional canon, then, provides our students access to only a narrow range of privileged, culturally specific voices that reify existing systems of power and silence or ignore the lived reality of many of our students and the world.

There are similar issues with the texts that traditional French instruction asks students to create: the focus is again on a very reiterative subset (e.g., exams or literary or cultural analysis) which poses many of the same problems.[6] These types of texts have very particular rules that are often invisible or inaccessible to outsiders.[7] Indeed, as discourse in classrooms and on the internet show, our students find that these unwritten rules surrounding assignments and discussions create barriers to access and trauma

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[6] See Bruce Horner's book *Terms of Work for Composition: A Materialist Critique*, especially his sixth chapter, "Writing," for a discussion of both discursive and metadiscursive aspects of writing that the elite often take for granted but which can be insurmountable barriers to less-advantaged individuals participating in written discourses. For further discussions of questions of biases and inequities in English Composition courses, please also see Canagarajah, Fontaine and Hunter, Gates, Horner and Trimbur, Myhill and Watson, and Shor.

[7] Arguably, this is not an accident, but it is outside the scope of this paper to trace the history of the ways in which academia reifies existing power structures and privilege hierarchies.

from being exposed as Outsiders.[8] Traditional assignments, then, much like the exclusive study of so-called canonical texts, create inequities and reflect a student's knowledge of (and access to) unwritten rules, or "the hidden curriculum," as much as inherent intellectual capabilities. It is thus vital that we, as academics, systematically unpack these affiliations and explicitly teach the unspoken rules and generic expectations. However, this alone leaves the "master's house" intact and is therefore not enough; students must also be given new and different tools.

Multimodality as Anti-Racist Pedagogy

Before I discuss the benefits of and reasons for incorporating multimedia and multimodal texts into the French classroom, I must first define them. Multimedia is anything that combines more than one medium and thus includes traditional forms such as film (which combines images, sound, text, etc.) and less-traditional forms such as, say, a video game. Similarly, multimodal is any text that combines different modes of communication, including quotidian examples such as a weather report or PowerPoint presentation or more non-traditional pieces such as TikTok videos. However, these technical definitions, in their broadness, include many traditional media problematic for reasons discussed above. Therefore, when I refer to multimedia and multimodal texts as essential for anti-racist pedagogy, I am particularly referring to those texts, usually accessed via the internet, that are less regulated and codified and thus, arguably, more democratic. This can include creative writing, visual art, podcasts, YouTube videos, blog posts, social media posts, folk productions, and more.[9] Specifically, I am arguing for instructors to add unpublished and/or internet texts to their

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[8] Two examples from internet discourse: On June 26, 2020 Twitter user @AnnaMeierPS posted a thread of "things (she) didn't know when" she started her PhD program as a first-generation graduate student. It includes ideas such as "I didn't know that citing your undergraduate thesis was a bad idea and would get you ridiculed in a department workshop. I thought I was signaling experience and skill development" (diversityinacademia 2020). Similarly, on Tumblr, user ot3-old posted a definition of the concept "academia is inaccessible" as "much academic writing is financially difficult to acquire and also a lot of it builds on context and area of study-specific vocabulary that the author expects you to already be familiar with, making it difficult to 'break in'" (smarterthantheaverageblonde 2020). Both of these discourses traveled widely across a range of social media.

[9] Of course, vectors such as marketization, commodification, and globalization do still create and influence genre in these forms.

syllabi as objects of study and then ask their students to create work beyond traditional essays and exams.

Beginning, then, with the incorporation of non-traditional, multimodal texts as objects of study, this practice is beneficial and anti-racist for several reasons. First, by virtue of bringing these texts into the academic sphere, we are lending them credibility. Again, academics are among the "taste-makers." As Barber notes, texts "are set up to be interpreted: as a challenge, a puzzle or a demand. And the means to interpret them – the repertoires of arguments, analyses, explanations, expansions and inter-textual linkages – are themselves a tradition … The exegesis is part of the process by which text is established" (2007, 5). Our study of texts, both what we say about them and what we feel "worthy" of bringing into a classroom, establishes legitimacy in important ways. By analyzing things like YouTube videos, blog posts, or social media posts, we are showing students that the material they consume everyday not only matters, but even plays important roles in both reflecting and shaping culture, language, and discourses.[10]

Second, because many of these multimedia and multimodal texts bypass cultural gatekeepers (or at least have completely different gates to pass through), by incorporating them into our classrooms, we can diversify the voices with which we are engaging.[11] The voices of those posting on the internet are often very different from the privileged voices of authors or filmmakers. Bringing these voices into the classroom, alongside the traditional canon, allows us to put them into dialogue with each other. This, in turn, allows our students access to a wider range of understandings, concerns, and worldviews. In short, we can use our classrooms and our privilege as academics to amplify the voices of the historically silenced, oppressed, and/or underprivileged, to "reconsider which voices are heard, who counts as an authority, and what kind of discourse is valued in the classroom" ("Antiracist Pedagogy" n.d.).

Third, bringing in such texts is likely to help us draw in our students more successfully. Generally, students are more actively engaged with multimedia and multimodal texts of any kind (indeed, texts incorporating

[10] While all texts can generate discussion, some are more relevant or rich than others. Whether the instructor or the students curate the list, this can be an opportunity for teaching critical thinking and encouraging critical engagement with a range of texts.

[11] For a more thorough analysis of the new forms of gatekeeping arising online and affecting internet cultural productions, please see Janneka Adema's article "New Media Gatekeepers."

several media and/or modes engage the brain in multiple ways), and particularly with non-traditional texts. These are interesting simply for their novelty and are also more likely to represent or reflect student interests and the types of content students consume in their free time. By incorporating different media, instructors have the opportunity to incorporate students' pre-existing interests and passions and put them in dialogue with other course texts, issues, concepts, language, and more.

A fourth advantage of incorporating multimedia and multimodal texts into course syllabi is more purely pedagogical. If we assume that we are asking students to not only write essays but also create multimedia and multimodal texts, then first analyzing such texts as a class is a key pedagogical practice. This provides models for the types of work students are then asked to create, and analysis of them helps students strengthen the muscles necessary to complete the exercises themselves. Especially when asking students to deviate from what they have been trained is the norm, we must provide as much help (in the form of scaffolding, mentoring, and modeling) as we can.[12]

This, of course, supports the second of this two-pronged approach: the incorporation of multimedia and multimodality into classroom assignments. This includes methods of student assessment, where I am arguing that as part of anti-racist pedagogy instructors should think beyond the exam or essay. As I will show in the next section, this could take multiple forms. But, regardless of the specifics, asking students to create a range of different types of works, across a range of media, genre, and form, has (again) multiple advantages.

First, and most simply, it encourages students to engage more thoroughly with their projects. Asking students to create new kinds of texts across media and genre promotes active learning and involves multiple senses, thus requiring greater cognitive and neurological engagement from the students (Anastopoulou et al. 2011; Oviatt et al. 2004; Sepulcre et al. 2012). These types of projects are also more likely to require students to understand their material well enough to explain it (and their choice of media) to others, again fostering active learning and mastery of

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[12] Teaching traditional and multimodal forms side-by-side is not only important for diversifying the voices and discourses in the classroom, but can also help students strengthen their grasp of both forms through explicit discussion and comparisons of implications of genre, form, and intended audience. For more specific examples of possible multimedia and multimodal assignments, and how to scaffold them, for a French classroom, please see the next section of this article.

the material. Additionally, by giving students novel assignments, or even a choice of medium, they often feel more invested in the project (not just the grade), their contribution to the discourse, and the contributions of their colleagues than they would with a traditional exam or paper.

Second, multimodal and multimedia projects allow students to cultivate their own talents and interests. Especially when such an assignment gives students a choice of different types of projects, or even asks them to choose the medium in accordance with their own goals and target audience, they have the freedom to pursue a project that directly relates to their existing skills and passions. This integration of students' outside knowledge with course material enriches class discussion. And, in allowing them to utilize their existing skills, students have the opportunity to showcase their abilities, sharing a part of themselves with their instructor and classmates for which academia rarely makes space.

Third, and relatedly, these types of projects allow students to use (or even find) their voices. By giving them the freedom to explore, to bring in outside interests and skills, and to spend less time and mental energy learning written and unwritten rules, students can focus more on content. In cases where they can use forms that they already know (as consumers if not producers) and thus have some facility, students can put more energy into thinking and communicating that thinking. While it is important to help students master unfamiliar forms, anti-racist pedagogy requires the inclusion of assignments that amplify students' voices, rather than limiting them, by allowing them to also engage with the familiar. Additionally, these types of projects are a great opportunity to get students to think critically about the fact that how they communicate ideas correlates with the ideas themselves. It is this focus on their ideas that lets the students access their voices in ways they may otherwise struggle to find.

Fourth, having accessed their voices, students can then participate in discourses outside the classroom in new and significant ways. When students choose the form of their assignment, they are able to engage more critically in those extra-curricular dialogues and discourses that they already consume in their free time. This again boosts student engagement in that they can participate in and bring course content to bear on whatever discourses they feel most invested in. A student may feel much more engaged by, and comfortable with, discoursing about food differences across cultures, for example, by creating a food blog or instructional cooking video than by writing a research paper. By giving students this kind of

power, they can truly and effectively enter conversations that are important and meaningful to them.

Finally, by allowing students to engage with course material in their own ways, we are recalibrating the power dynamic in the classroom. Edward Said famously highlighted the power differential created between the one who knows and represents that knowledge, and the one being known and represented (Said 1979).[13] In controlling *how* students express themselves, and requiring adherence to strict and narrowly-defined conventions, instructors are controlling the knowledge and representation of it. In contrast, by moving away from controlling the forms of how students are represented or how they represent themselves, we are moving toward truer self-representation. We are giving students the power to represent not just their ideas, but also how they express and communicate them.[14] Multimedia and multimodal assignments can play a key part in empowering students to be the knowers and representers.

In short, multimedia and multimodal texts and assignments are an essential addition to French curricula and syllabi. Studying multimodal internet texts lends them legitimacy and encourages students' critical engagement with them in their day-to-day life; diversifies and amplifies a broader range of voices; engages students in new ways; and represents good pedagogical practices in that it provides students models for their own expression. Similarly, multimedia and multimodal assignments, and especially the choice of form, do not inhibit access or agency in the ways that traditional assessments may (or at least have different limitations), which in turn fosters student engagement and agency, helps them integrate academic and private life and articulate and share their lived experience both in and beyond the classroom.

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[13] While he described this dynamic in the context of Occidental and Oriental, and the Occidental self-positioning as knower of the Oriental and the cultural and political power that comes with that, this same concept can certainly be applied to the power differential between instructor and student.

[14] This evokes Freire's argument that "Attempting to liberate the oppressed without their reflective participation in the act of liberation is to treat them as objects that must be saved from a burning building" (2005, 65). By giving students the power to decide how to represent their ideas, we are encouraging (or even requiring) their reflective participation in ideas and discourses. This, in turn, makes them active participants. We are thus treating them less like objects that need saving and more as agents of their own liberation.

Possible Practical Applications

So much, then, for the *why* of including multimedia and multimodal texts and assignments in the French classroom; but what about the *how*? Many instructors, imagining a complete overhaul, are intimidated by the prospect of reworking and rethinking syllabi. This, however, is generally neither true nor necessary. Many French instructors, either already or almost, are often experimenting with such practices; incorporating them into a syllabus may be easier than it appears. And, once one has dipped their toe in the water, they will find that the possibilities are endless. That said, below is a short list of possibilities to spark ideas and interest and reassure instructors that the water is warm and welcoming.

In beginner and intermediate French classes, introducing multimodality as objects of study and assessments is easy: for each chapter the instructor simply asks students to find and analyze real-life samples and then create their own. Take, for example, the very first model of Beginner French where students are learning *être* [to be] and adjectives. The instructor could use a description of a pet available for adoption on a French pet website as a way of introducing the grammar points.[15] Students could then find their own descriptions of pets online for homework and identify the targeted points in them as a class activity or homework, before discussing what they found in groups and then as a class (thus fulfilling the first levels of Bloom's taxonomy of remembering, understanding, applying, and analyzing). Then students could create their own pet description using the targeted grammar point, whether of a pet they find online, a dream pet, a celebrity's pet, and so on, (thus reaching the peak of Bloom's taxonomy of evaluate and create).[16] In this way, with careful scaffolding, students can use all orders of cognitive skills to advance from analyzing authentic,

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[15] See Myhill and Watson for a more in-depth discussion of what I mean by a grammar point's function.

[16] There are two added benefits to the approach of asking students to find pet descriptions on real French websites and in asking them to describe an ideal or famous example. First, in having students find "authentic" texts that have been created by real French speakers and not for a textbook, students are engaging with authentic language creation (and not curated vocabulary) and real language communities with all their real-world complexity rather than a limited and limiting imagined community (Uzum et al. 2021, 7). Second, this shift to pets removes the emphasis on self that many French textbooks have and which can be detrimentally limiting to students' identities, or force them to label or "out" themselves to peers in the name of language learning (especially true given the complexities of gender in French). Please see Uzum et al. for more on these issues.

online materials written by everyday people (not only "scholarly" authors) to actually creating their own.

There are many other such possibilities for first-year French. When studying housing vocabulary, students could first analyze apartment listings and then create their own, again based on an ideal or TV characters'—or they could browse real estate listings and then describe the property they found.[17] This can be a great way to practice not only vocabulary but also prepositions and possessives. Biographies and descriptions on dating websites can be a great tool for studying emotions and subjunctive; cooking videos can target food vocabulary and commands. Really, an instructor could take any targeted grammar point, think about what that grammar point is typically used to communicate and then find examples of that outside of curated texts (and perhaps find a few of their own to ensure a diverse range) and then use the pedagogical model of asking students to find and analyze examples before making their own version. In this way, a range of voices and perspectives unfiltered by cultural capital demands (or at least different ones) can enter the classroom and new discourses become valued.

In fact, although the canon is problematic, it is still worth noting that even more traditional, canonical texts can play such roles, depending on how they are used. For example, an intermediate French class can be a great space to study and analyze Guillaume Appollinaire's *Calligrammes* both for content *and form* (perhaps by having students turn in guided reading responses about individual poems' meaning, shape, and connections between the two) before asking students to create their own Calligrams on topics of their choice or related to course content (including, of course, at least one opportunity for peer review).[18] This can be an effective lesson for students on the connection between form and meaning, as well as a chance to express their creativity and share it with their peers. Analyzing and then emulating the form and style of other types of French literature, from Medieval *lais* to Corneille to Balzac to Baudelaire to Perec can be equally interesting and fruitful, for instructor and student.[19]

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[17] Again, asking students to engage with authentic texts created by the French-speaking community and removing the students' "self" from the discussion is key to building and supporting a diverse and inclusive classroom.

[18] For examples of how this particular assignment might work in first-quarter, second-year French, please see bethanyschiffman.wixiste.com/ucla

[19] Indeed, I have omitted another (fairly obvious) advantage of multimodal and multimedia assignments because it is not relevant to the student experience or student engagement and learning: they can be more fun for the instructor.

Beyond this fairly simple example-analysis-creation system, there are other ways to incorporate multimedia and multimodality into beginner and intermediate French courses. Students could start off the semester following a French celebrity's social media account(s). Then, they could create their own (separate from whatever accounts they already have—most likely in English), and post to them over the course of the semester targeting the vocabulary and grammar they are learning.[20] Similarly, both buzzfeed.fr and postsecret.fr can offer rich, genuine cultural objects that students can both study and emulate.[21] Given the notoriety of Buzzfeed's general lack of journalistic worth, it could be an effective and entertaining assignment to ask students in an intermediate class to write their own Buzzfeed "articles" such as "20 Raisons pour lesquelles le passé est le pire!" [20 Reasons Why the Past Tense is the Worst!] or "Quel temps de verbe êtes-vous?" [What Verb Tense are You?] or "Pouvez-vous identifier tous les pays où le français est/était une langue officielle?" [Can You Name Every Country Where French Is/Was an Official Language?]—all with pictures, GIFs, and links, of course!

Advanced French and literature courses offer even more opportunities. In a literature class, students could find layperson reviews, such as those posted on Goodreads or Amazon, of the books on their syllabus. In-class discussion of these reviews—both their form and their content—could inspire fruitful conversations (in French, of course) about the themes of the texts, about lay reactions to classic texts (versus canonical critiques), about the role of today's readers, the internet, and about authentic French expression. This would deepen and enrich students' understanding of how French is used in the "real world" as well as inspire self-conscious reflection on the role of privileged and marginalized voices and our role as consumers. Finally, students could create their own review (or portfolio of reviews) of books from the syllabus and actually post them online as their final projects.

There are many other possibilities in an Advanced French classroom. Students could, for example, study and then write their own folktales, which can be a particularly useful method of studying the past tense as well as an exciting way for them to incorporate their own cultural backgrounds

[20] For privacy reasons this could also, of course, be done via university websites or platforms.

[21] Please note that the Postsecret project can engage with serious, difficult, and triggering subjects and may require some sensitivity or even content warnings on the part of the instructor.

and traditions.[22] Or students could make videos of themselves analyzing French cinema in the style of French film critics or Roger and Ebert. Students in a Business French class can scour job listings on sites like fr. jooble.org or fr.indeed.com and write French resumes tailored to particular posts. Students can write their own creative piece (in a form of the instructor's choice or theirs) that incorporates and is inspired by the themes and forms studied in class, thus including their voices in original ways. In Advanced French classrooms, the list is only limited by your imagination—or by theirs. Letting the students decide what they want to create is an empowering option. Simply tell them that they must make something that fits certain parameters (perhaps targeting certain vocabulary, grammar, and/or themes from the semester, or analyzing a particular text from the syllabus, etc.), and let them decide what they would like to create and how.[23] Generally, in such instances, instructors are surprised at the quality and caliber of such projects in terms of creativity, analytical thought, grasp of material, and student engagement.

By Way of a Conclusion

To be clear, I am not suggesting that French instructors eliminate study of the canon or teaching of literary analysis and the argumentative essay. Indeed, as Mark Davis argues in "Who needs cultural gatekeepers anyway?", we need to be wary of conflating democratization with anti-intellectualism (Davis 2018). Intellectual rigor and critical thinking are more important than ever. But I am suggesting we teach these texts and forms more thoughtfully, aware of the influence of gatekeepers and unwritten rules that make these texts difficult or impossible for certain groups to access. We need to make the invisible rules visible and encourage students to interrogate these mediators. Ask them to think about the purpose of literary analysis. Who is its author? Who are its intermediate producers? Who is its audience? How does this affect how it is written? How is it

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[22] The website *conte-moi.net* is a valuable, if problematic, resource for any French or francophone folktale study, featuring examples of folktales, biographies of the tellers, background on the regions and languages, pedagogical tools, and more.

[23] Unsurprisingly, for such open-ended assignments, thorough scaffolding (e.g., proposal, draft, peer review, final) and feedback along the way are essential. Low-stakes assignments throughout the process, class-made or student-driven grading rubrics, a focus on the quality of communication over artistic ability, and so on are all also helpful in guiding students through (and assessing) such multimodal assignments.

embroiled in questions of power and privilege? As Davis argues, "(r)ather than seek(ing) to recreate modernity the greater challenge is to reinvent intellectual practice, consistent with the changes that the post-digital environment creates for democratic culture" (2018). He also asks, "What is the relationship between those who have such knowledge and the broader public in a post-digital environment where access to information and knowledge is easier than it has ever been?" (2018).

I have argued that this new, post-digital, more democratic, and hopefully anti-racist intellectual practice does not just mean interrogating traditional forms with our students (although that is an important practice). It also means moving beyond them. It means adding multimedia and multimodal texts and assignments to our syllabi in addition to these traditional forms. Because, in the end, introducing students (and other scholars) to a range of voices over a range of media; engaging with them thoughtfully and critically and promoting discussions about their entanglement with questions of power (racial, ethnic, national, gendered, etc.); and then allowing students to explore their own voices outside of the existing discourses and conventions using these same methods, helps decentralize white, privileged voices and empower student voices. These changes begin at the level of course design—by expanding beyond the literary canon and traditional assessments—and, in so doing, promoting a diversified, decolonized French curriculum. In opening the classroom to tools beyond the master's, perhaps we can begin to dismantle his house together.

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Decolonial and Feminist Course Design and Assessment in the First-Year French Curriculum

Kelly Biers

Introduction

World language education programs, and French studies in particular, are in need of a careful examination of their colonialist roots and a significant reworking of their missions and practices. French studies programs have long played a role in establishing Hexagonal French as one among a tiny elite class of global languages, at the expense of local minority and indigenous languages. The ability to speak French is advertised as a means for access to travel and doing business in the Francophone world, playing into what Kramsch (2019, 58) refers to as the "neo-colonial globalism" of the current foreign language landscape. Although intercultural competence is often stated as a goal of language education programs, the underlying agenda is not necessarily to develop empathetic world citizens, but rather

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S. Bouamer, L. Bourdeau (eds.), *Diversity and Decolonization in French Studies*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-95357-7_16

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effective cross-cultural communicators for global capitalist purposes. In other words, learning about world cultures is always secondary to, and a complement of, language proficiency.

This has created a stratification of students who are perceived to be a good 'fit' (or not) in language classes. The factors that determine which students will likely choose to continue, or will be encouraged to continue on in their language programs relate to language proficiency: high performance on written and oral assessments, excellent reading and listening comprehension skills, ample time to dedicate to memorization of vocabulary and practicing grammatical structures, and means to travel or study abroad and learn the language in an immersive environment, to name a few.[1] Those students who may be genuinely interested in languages and cultures, but whose progress in proficiency is hindered by a lack of time or resources, are repeatedly penalized in points-based assessments. These students appear to be 'behind' their peers, even though they may have a reasonably solid foundation in their language proficiency and high performance in intercultural competence or metalinguistic/metacognitive work. The colonialist structure of language education thus breeds inequities in assessments and in the classroom.

The work of decolonizing language education must of course extend beyond pedagogical innovation, since our classrooms are still at work within the larger colonialist and globalist machinery of education. Nevertheless, I will argue, inspired by the analogy of retooling colonialist machinery to sabotage itself (paperson 2017), that implementing decolonial and feminist course design in our introductory language courses, particularly in our assessment tools, can serve as an important immediate action to begin shifting our curriculum away from neo-colonialist agendas.

DECOLONIAL AND FEMINIST PEDAGOGIES

My approach to teaching is informed by decolonial and feminist pedagogies, both of which resist definition by their very nature, but which share some important overlapping features. In particular, these pedagogies ask instructors to identify and resist practices that contribute to the replication

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[1] See Freed (1995) for a discussion on the perceived versus real linguistic benefits of study abroad, and Pinar (2016) for a review of studies on language acquisition and study abroad programs.

of oppressive hierarchical power structures in the curriculum, teaching environments, and in the assessment of student learning.

This particular paper is largely inspired by the various works in Macedo's (2019a) edited volume on decolonizing foreign education. A decolonial pedagogy for language education would resist the perpetuation of colonialist attitudes toward the lands we currently occupy and the rest of the world, decenter colonial entities in language education (DeGraff 2019; Macedo 2019a, b), and resist the use of language education as a neocolonial globalist tool (Kramsch 2019; Tochon 2019). Reagan and Osborn (2019) call for a complete shift in the mission and curriculum of world language programs. They argue that if our goal is to create a multitude of bilingual adults, this is a fairly tall order in places like the US where people fundamentally operate under a monolingual English mindset, even though, as Benaglia and Smith show in this volume, 20% of the US population speaks a language other than English at home. Prioritizing proficiency and intercultural competence as a tool for entering into the global marketplace is both resting on imperialist attitudes and also destined to fail since most students already expect English to serve them well enough for these ambitions. As our enrollments trend downward, and as we reckon with our purpose in education, we need to completely reimagine our purpose.[2] Reagan and Osborn propose a model of language education that serves two different populations in entirely different ways: for some students who desire it, language education could indeed focus on gaining fluency in one or more foreign languages. For others, language education could be a study of and about languages, providing "a broad understanding of the linguistic, social, political, and historical aspects of human language and language diversity" (95). In this way, learning about language and culture has nothing to do with global capitalist ambitions. This would be in line with Mohanty's (2003) call to shift from a "tourist" model of education (518–19), where students observe diverse perspectives but do not critically reflect on them and their own perspectives, toward a "solidarity" model (521–24), where students engage meaningfully in understanding connections in learning and in human experiences.

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[2] A 2018 report from the Modern Language Association of America shows a continued decrease in enrollment since its previous report, and concludes that the decrease is part of a larger trend. The report was widely cited in news coverage on education, such as a 2018 article in Inside Higher Ed entitled "Foreign language enrollments drop sharply."

This kind of reflection into purpose and method—what we are doing, to what end, and what students are to do with their learning—is at the heart of feminist pedagogy.[3] It is rooted in the resistance of the dominant paradigm. This applies to colonial and neo-colonial power structures not only in the content we deliver, and whose points of view are presented and prioritized, but also in our own practices and learning environment. It asks us to reflect on racist, ableist, cisnormative, heteronormative, and otherwise marginalizing attitudes and practices that are upholding the hegemonic masculine order. It asks us to challenge hierarchical structures and power imbalances such as that between instructor and student, and to put our attention back to truly empowering students. This would mean challenging the structures we have in place that make students feel small and powerless, such as grading schemes that students find opaque and arbitrary, and course procedures that limit student autonomy.

A language education program that operates under decolonial and feminist course design should, among other things, do the following:

1. It should intentionally challenge the dominance of global capitalist-driven language proficiency over the studies of culture and metalinguistic awareness.
2. It should challenge not only the hierarchies of what is learned, and from which perspectives, but also how learning is happening. It empowers students by recognizing their autonomy and their ability to make decisions about how their learning happens.
   a. This is accomplished in part by scaffolding goal-setting and reflective self-motivated learning, and unambiguously rewarding these in assessments, so that students are encouraged to develop the metacognitive strategies crucial to life-long language learning.
3. It should offer a study of language and culture in which students are meaningfully engaged in the history, culture, and sociopolitical practices of the French-speaking world.

I will argue that there already exists a powerful tool that we can leverage toward these goals, which is a course design and assessment model called Specifications Grading (Nilson 2014). Nilson's book provides a clear description and several examples, so I only provide here a very brief

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[3] See Vanderbilt Center for Teaching (2018) for a useful selection of resources.

overview, followed by an example of its application to a first-year French program, with reference to how it can be used for decolonial and feminist purposes.

Specifications Grading (Specs) is built on backward design, meaning course planning begins with identifying the learning outcomes students should achieve at the end of the course, and works backward to determine how the instructor will help students to meet those outcomes, how work will be assessed, and so on. The basic premise of Specs is that outcomes are crucially and explicitly tied to assessment such that grades have a clear and obvious link to outcomes, which Nilson argues is often not the case in traditional grading. When I first began teaching French, a typical end-of-unit assessment took the form of a 100-point exam, linked to outcomes such as "student is able to describe friends and family" and "student is able to construct simple sentences in the present tense," and so on. Setting aside the question of exams as an appropriate form of assessment for these kinds of outcomes, the tasks can at least be clearly linked to outcomes. What is not clear, however, is how a point grade resulting from this exam should be interpreted, with regard to outcomes. A grade of 70, for example, could be achieved by doing very well on one portion of the exam, such as vocabulary, but rather poorly in another, such as grammar, in which case the student has shown evidence of meeting one outcome but not the other, but the grade itself does not communicate this. Nor does a final grade necessarily indicate a student's achievement of any particular outcome in the course.

An unfortunate message students receive from traditional grading is that language proficiency is by far the most important objective of language studies courses, and that deficiencies in language proficiency significantly undermine whatever gains students might be making in other areas like intercultural competency or metacognitive/metalinguistic awareness. Conversely, a student might be able to finish the course with a very high grade, without having to do much cultural or metalinguistic reflection at all. In our course designs, we ought instead to incorporate a grading scheme that properly communicates to our students what it means to excel in language studies, which should extend beyond proficiency so as not to perpetuate globalist capitalist agendas.

In Specs, assignments are linked to outcomes and the assessment is based on whether the outcomes are met (pass/fail grading). Students are therefore motivated not by the points, but by meeting outcomes. The

next section of this chapter outlines how we can leverage this system in our decolonial and feminist reimagining of language education, such that:

1. The hierarchy of proficiency, culture, and metalinguistic learning outcomes is leveled.
2. Student autonomy is respected by providing opportunities for decision-making, transparent grading and scaffolded pathways to success.
3. A decentered study of the history, culture, and sociopolitical practices of the French-speaking world is a core component of the course.

A First-Year French Course with Specs

I now present one possible model of what this might look like in a first-year French course.[4] This is based on the most recent Specs-based version of an accelerated first-year French course that I have taught two semesters in a row. Following Specs and backward design, the course outcomes are identified first, and they are grouped into three main categories: I. Proficiency, II. Cultural knowledge, and III. Metalinguistic awareness.[5] The outcomes related to proficiency are designed with ACTFL (formerly the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) standards and my own department's curricular goals in mind, so those things we expect students to be able to do with the language by the end of the first year. The culture-related outcomes are similarly informed, but they also include demonstration of basic knowledge of the French-speaking world. Crucially, this includes knowledge of the history of French as a colonial language, and current linguistic politics and practices in the Francophone world. The third category encompasses both metalinguistic and metacognitive outcomes, which ask students to identify and regularly apply several language learning strategies, in addition to recognizing the linguistic similarities and differences between French and English (and any other languages they may know).

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[4] Because of space limitations, I can only provide here the general overview. Interested readers are welcome to contact me at kbiers@unca.edu to see a syllabus and sample assignments.

[5] I recognize that this particular ordering of goal areas symbolically reinforces the primacy of proficiency, even though the actual grading system levels the three areas. They are presented this way for ease of comprehension for students and administrators, since proficiency is the first goal that comes to mind. A different ordering that further challenges the typical hierarchy could certainly be considered.

Table 16.1 Learning goals and outcomes

Goal areas	Basic outcomes	Advanced outcomes
I. Proficiency	Demonstrate novice-mid level proficiency in French	Demonstrate novice-high level proficiency in French
II. Cultural knowledge	Be able to compare and contrast between French/Francophone cultures and your own, identifying products and practices relating to everyday life.[a] Be able to communicate with others from another culture, showing basic cultural awareness. Be able to identify appropriate and inappropriate behaviors in everyday situations. Demonstrate basic knowledge of the Francophone world	Demonstrate deeper and broader knowledge of Francophone cultures Demonstrate in-depth knowledge of some topic relating to the Francophone world
III. Metalinguistic awareness	Apply basic principles of language learning to your own studies. Be able to make cross-linguistic comparisons between French and English	Demonstrate a consistent application of multiple learning strategies, including regular monitoring of your progress.

[a]Adapted from NCSSFL-ACTFL (2017)

Each goal category has a set of basic outcomes and a set of advanced outcomes, summarized in Table 16.1. The basic outcomes are the elements I have identified as fundamental to the course and that every student should be able to achieve when they pass the class with at least a C grade. The advanced outcomes, on the other hand, are those that I only expect of students who are seeking higher grades. They are typically higher-order learning outcomes involving more reflection and analysis. For example, students demonstrate the basic outcomes for cultural knowledge with short critical assignments and end-of-unit reflections. The advanced outcomes are demonstrated by completing more of these assignments, plus a research project.

Course grades are then associated with the outcomes that students achieve by the end of the course. To earn a C, students need to demonstrate all the basic outcomes (illustrated in Table 16.2). This places each category on an equal level, eliminating the hierarchy of assessment. They are all required in order to succeed in the course. The C grade

Table 16.2 Final course grades

Outcomes achieved	Final grade
Basic outcomes in all three areas + Advanced outcomes in two areas	A
Basic outcomes in all three areas + Advanced outcomes in one area	B
Basic outcomes in all three areas	C
Basic outcomes in two areas	D
Basic outcomes in less than two areas	F

corresponds to a basic, sufficient mastery of the course goals (not that they excelled in one area but ignored another).

For grades of B or A, students choose among the advanced outcome areas to complete. If they achieve the advanced outcomes in any one of three areas, they earn a B. For an A, they must achieve the advanced outcomes in any two of the three areas. This gives all students options and decisions to make. First, they must decide what grade they want and how much work they are willing and able to put in to get it. For students aiming higher than a C (most of them), they get to choose the area(s) in which they would like to focus their attention. At the beginning of the semester, students are given a worksheet through which they reflect on their short- and long-term goals for the course, and then identify their grade goal and corresponding pathway to that grade. Throughout the semester, students regularly update their worksheet to track their progress.

Respect for student autonomy and agency is built into this system. The idea of letting students choose to aim for a B or a C may seem uninspiring, but the fact of the matter is that many students enroll in language classes only to fulfill their language requirement, and have no expectation or desire for an A, or even a B. These students have shared, either in their goal-setting worksheets or in conversation, that passing the class is their only goal, often because they have other courses or demands in their life that they need to prioritize over their required language course. Many students don't have the privilege of dedicating the ideal amount of time to all their classes because they are working to pay for school and take care of their families, so being able to aim for a C and having a clear path to do it might be very important. For these students, in this system, the C will still be meaningful and a sign of success. They don't have as much work to do, but they still need to do it well since, at least in the version of Specifications

Grading I employ, assignments are pass/fail, and standards for passing grades are reasonably high. In this way, a grade of C does not mean a student did a mediocre job on all the work, it means they did a good job on the most important work.

An important effect of this is that many students who enter the first-year French course, expecting to do poorly because of proficiency-related performance anxieties, seize the opportunity to surpass their own expectations by choosing to focus on the culture category in order to achieve at least a B. This, incidentally, provides these students an inroad to motivation to engage more with the language itself. Ultimately, all students who achieve a final grade of B or an A, regardless of which grade path they take, are encouraged to continue in their French studies and pursue a minor or major. Crucially, this communicates to students that preparation for future French studies involves well-roundedness in the three grading areas[6] *plus* motivation to engage deeply in at least one of those areas, as opposed to a traditional trajectory that simply emphasizes strong linguistic performance for continued studies.

Since this system levels the hierarchy between proficiency and cultural knowledge, and provides students the option of delving deeper into the latter, we must carefully consider the content and assessment of that knowledge. While the focus of this paper is the outline of the course structure and assessment system, I provide here some guiding principles and examples of my own approach to cultural knowledge. Importantly, it decenters France as the locus of Francophone culture. Four thematic units in the course involve lessons and assignments featuring a different region of the Francophone world for each unit. Of equal importance is avoiding the 'tourist' approach to these places and cultures. Lessons involve a combination of examining authentic, relatively accessible texts in French in order to retrieve some basic information, then using that information to engage in a more in-depth, critical reflection on sociopolitical norms and practices. For example, a reading activity involving an infographic on English speakers in Quebec leads to a discussion on language politics and

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[6] An interesting and intentional consequence of this is that students who perform very strongly in proficiency cannot rely solely on that performance to achieve a high grade in the course. They *must* attend to the culture and metalinguistic components in order to receive a passing grade and be encouraged to continue into the minor or major. They would also have to put in the effort for the advanced requirements of at least one of those categories to achieve an A. This further communicates to students that French studies is about more than proficiency.

planning, and ideological multilingualism/monolingualism. A listening activity involving a weather report in Martinique leads to a discussion on how climate (and climate change) impacts economy and social practices. Assessments then include reflections on these topics, in addition to a series of assignments in which students are asked to choose two (or four, for the advanced outcomes) Francophone areas to research, and demonstrate understanding of the history and long-lasting effects of colonization there. Students are asked to identify their own biases, consider topics through diverse perspectives, and indicate changes in their beliefs and attitudes.

Reflections and Conclusion

The pass/fail approach to grading assignments is often the main point of resistance in adopting Specifications Grading, especially in language courses where many of us have come to see the awarding of points to particular tasks as a means of indicating to students where their strengths are and where more work is needed.[7] Once again, however, even if students are looking at their points in this way, their motivation is to figure out how to gain more points on the next assignment, rather than to reflect on their learning. Nilson (2014) discusses advantages of pass/fail grading in detail, but I will point out briefly two observations drawn from student work and comments in their course feedback or in conversation. The first is that students express much less anxiety over grading, especially as it relates to linguistic performance. While this may seem counterintuitive given the high stakes of pass/fail grading, Specs accounts for this by requiring the instructor to give clear, detailed guidelines on passing criteria for any assignment, and also by allowing students limited opportunities to fail and recover. This is done through a system of 'tokens,' an imaginary currency, that affords students a *limited* number of late submissions, revisions, forgiven assignments or quizzes, and so on. Students are therefore encouraged to do their best work each time, but they feel significantly less stressed over assessments with a safety net in place. In my experience, this has consistently resulted in high quality work, with very few students needing to turn in revisions. Secondly, students feel much more comfortable taking risks and making mistakes, a language learning skill they are

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[7] Of course, in some cases it is because of administrative policy that faculty are unable to adopt such a system. In this case, Nilson offers useful suggestions of how to adapt Specs to a point-based system (2014, 67–68, 119–122).

encouraged to adopt. As long as all the passing requirements have been met, students cannot be penalized for experimenting with complex structures or new vocabulary, and consequently the creativity of oral and written expression has noticeably increased.

I do not yet have sufficient data to show that linguistic performance has otherwise increased, though once again, the main objective is not necessarily to boost overall proficiency among all students. I can only share here anecdotally that the quality of student performance has at least been sustained. Those students who wish to focus their attention on proficiency have performed just as well in this system as those who performed in the top tier in previous points-based classes. What is noticeably different is that by allowing students to choose between basic and advanced proficiency targets, students who might have performed poorly in a traditional assessment are able to focus their study on a narrower range of grammar and vocabulary, and consequently they have been able to consistently meet and often exceed the basic requirements I have set.

Student responses to this model, when asked to comment on it in their end-of-semester course feedback, have been overwhelmingly positive, with a few neutral or slightly negative comments. Because it is an unfamiliar grading system to many students, some have mentioned that it caused some confusion. I have found that providing students with the previously mentioned grade progress worksheet, and requiring them to update it periodically as well as turn it in at the end of the semester in order to receive their final grade, has significantly reduced confusion. Only one student so far has expressed a clear preference for a traditional grading method.

The positive comments on the other hand have been very positive. The most common themes related to students enjoying having options and feeling much less anxiety over their grades. Many comments referenced their learning (not just enjoyability). They could see and articulate the connection between grading and learning outcomes. Overall, the system makes sense to them, and the grading is more meaningful. Some students also articulated awareness that language proficiency is not the solitary goal of language education, expressing their appreciation that time was spent learning about history and culture in the French-speaking world, especially from non-Eurocentric perspectives.

In this paper, I have illustrated a means of using Specifications Grading as a framework for reimagining the first-year curriculum from the ground up. Students in this model are not just learning French language skills so

that they can be more competitive in global capitalism, they are spending a significant amount of time learning about culture and language learning itself, making personal connections with French and the places where it is spoken, and these things are valued and reflected in assessment and course outcomes. Students are given the autonomy to set their own course goals and structural support for meeting them. This system meets students where they are, building on their strengths and working through their challenges. While the work of decolonizing language education must run much deeper and wider than a pedagogical toolkit, we can and must begin with tangible action in the reimagination of our current course designs.

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[1] Note: Page numbers followed by 'n' refer to notes.

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