(En)Countering the 'White' Gaze: Native-Speakerist Rhetorics and the Raciolinguistics of Hegemony

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Abstract The present autoethnographic account challenges the 'myth' that we live in a 'post-racial' multicultural Canadian society; it provides an insider's perspective on the researcher's embodied experience of being socialised into the role of a non-native English-speaking teacher while striving for integration into K-12 public education in British Columbia, Canada. Taking a critical race theoretical perspective, informed by an intersectional discourse analysis of the (re)construction of professional identity as linked to the hierarchisation of power relations within academic spaces, this chapter investigates how the dominant Eurocentric academic discourses and practices tend to impose their ideological frameworks and rationalities on non-native educators by promoting a neo-racist narrative which serves to delegitimise the multilingual/multicultural capitals and the pedagogical skills internationally educated teachers bring to the Canadian teaching profession.

Keywords Critical race theory · Bearing witness · Indigenous peoples · Truth and reconciliation · Highway of Tears · White privilege · Intersectionality · Teacher education · Residential schools

1 Introduction

The present study explores the researcher's lived experience of (re)certification as an English language teacher in mainstream public K-12 education in British Columbia (BC) "not in terms of progress, development and reproduction, but in terms of being out of step, out of place and, possibly, productive of alternatives" (Weatherall &

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Ahuja, 2020, p. 406). My re-credentialisation trajectory took about one-year full-time campus-based coursework in curriculum methods and educational studies (coupled with an extensive 12-weeks practicum) at the Faculty of Education in a Canadian university. After my foreign credentials had been evaluated by BC College of Teachers, I was required to update my pedagogical skills to match Canadian 'standards'.

I successfully completed my BEd updating studies in June 2010 and was awarded a Teacher's Certificate of Qualification. As my practicum reports were excellent, I was very optimistic about getting hired as a teacher of English. However, after sitting for several interviews (mostly for French teaching positions), I realised that raciolinguistic ideologies naturalise hegemonic structures of power in a way that adversely impacts the career trajectories of non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) who choose to work in different sociocultural environments from the ones in which they were initially socialised.

Although speaking a language involves much more than just "accent," the status given to "native-speaker" English has consequential sociopolitical, linguistic, cultural, and professional implications. Whiteness trumps nativeness as a hiring benchmark (Holliday, 2014; Sian, 2019; Rivers, 2019; Moosavi, 2022). For example, in non-Anglophone countries it is "possible for native speakers of English to be employed as English teachers solely on the grounds that they are native speakers" (Kirkpatrick, 2016, p. 241). Likewise, about 60% of Intensive English Programs' administrators asserted that the "native-speaker" criterion is very crucial in hiring ESL teachers in Anglophone contexts (Mahboob, 2004), despite the fact that not all international students buy into the "native speaker fallacy" (Phillipson, 1992). Besides, the effectiveness of "pedagogical skills" of non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs), their higher level of "language awareness", "dedication", "strong collegiality", "creativity in the classroom" and "'curricular flexibility" is well attested in the literature (Moussu, 2010, p. 408; Murtiana, 2013). Hence, "racialized peoples are often disadvantaged, marginalized, and excluded because of their skin colour and its associated stereotypic beliefs" (Henry & Tator, 2009, p. 25).

This chapter is divided into three main parts. Following a brief introduction to critical autoethnographic narrative as a decolonial research method, the first section discusses the need to decentre 'whiteness' in teacher education curriculum as a crucial step in the transitional process of reconciliation and healing in Canada. The second section is an account of the researcher's personal practicum experience as a racialised professionally experienced foreign-educated teacher. The third section delineates how the practicum teaching experience could be transformed into a good opportunity to create educational spaces for equity and social justice. Finally, the study concludes with relevant pedagogical implications.

The present study addresses the following questions:

(a) Are student teachers trained to teach for equity, social justice, and reconciliation in the face of enduring manifestations and impacts of structural inequalities and conflicted narratives of Canadian colonialist history?
(b) How is the 'native speaker'/'non-native speaker' divide negotiated in a racially conscious Canadian teacher education context? And in what ways are linguistic variation and phenotypic traits co-naturalised in institutionally consequential

ways to the effect of (re)positioning teacher subjectivities according to a naturalised internalisation of hegemonic Centre-Periphery power hierarchies?

(c) How is the increasing diversity of student body in K-12 classrooms reflected in BC pre-service teacher education programs? And how can we, as educators, create spaces for intercultural dialogue in our classrooms, with explicit commitments to critical, antiracist, and inclusive pedagogies?

2 Critical Autoethnographic Narrative as a Decolonial Research Method

The present study adopts an analytic autoethnographic method that builds upon critical race theory and critical pedagogy as tools to interrogate 'whiteness' in Canadian teacher education context. By engaging in "self-conscious introspection guided by a desire to better understand both self and others through examining one's actions and perceptions in reference to and dialogue with those of others" (Anderson, 2006, p. 382), autoethnography addresses the importance that "affect" and "emotion" play in the construction of "individual identity" and "social agency" (Giroux, 2016, p. 67). Identity is regarded as the core locus of "writing the self and others into social and cultural contexts" (Weatherall & Ahuja, 2020, p. 410). Therefore, "autoethnographies could uncover contextualized knowledges and experiences, articulate individual privileges, elucidate discursive praxis, reveal intersectional identities, and validate affective experiences" (Swearingen, 2019, p. 11). In this sense, analytic ethnography seeks to generalise from self-experience by blending introspective 'counter-storytelling' with rigorous academic inquiry (Anderson, 2006, p. 388). Moreover, autoethnographic research methods are decolonial in that they problematise the presumptive universality of Eurocentric research perspectives contending that knowledge production should be 'neutral', 'objective', 'rational', and 'impersonal'. Dutta (2018, p. 95) notes that,

> As a storied form of voicing knowledge claims that works through/on the location of the scholar, autoethnography offers possibilities for making visible the contours of the personal, the political, and the professional, inviting us as participants to critically examine the terrains of power that disenfranchise the postcolonial voice, and the many possibilities of resistance that are opened up through our participation in the *telling of stories* (emphasis added).

Autoethnography is criticised for being 'subjective' and 'cathartic' ('epistemic therapy'), and thus "based on nonempirical think-pieces" and this "poses a clear danger to the [ELT] field" (Moussu & Llurda, 2008, pp. 333–334). The argument is that authorial bias may discount the autoethnographer's 'reliability.' In addition, the 'generalisability' test (i.e., how the autoethnographic account speaks to readers about their lived experiences) might also be contested. However, most of this criticism revolves around the need to differentiate between art and science, a dichotomy from which evocative autoethnography seeks to delink. "Autoethnographers view research and writing as socially-just acts; rather than a preoccupation with accuracy,

the goal is to produce analytical, accessible texts that change us and the world we live in for the better" (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 184).

3 Teacher Education in a Post-truth and Reconciliation Canada

Teacher training curriculum reforms are crucial as pathways to any healing and reconciliation effort, transitional justice, and the redressing of Canada's historical wrongs of which more will be reported below. Teacher education in British Columbia (BC) requires teacher candidates to "recognize and respect the diversity of students in schools to create safe, anti-racist, and socially just learning spaces that invite critical reflection on contemporary issues in society" (BC Teachers' Council, 2022, p. 5). BC professional standards also stress that "educators [should] contribute towards truth, reconciliation, and healing" by creating a "safe and inclusive learning environment that reflects the diversity of all students" (BC Teachers' Council, 2019, p. 2).

The purpose of this section is to reflect on BC teacher education's disengagement with knowledge and perspectives that interrogate Canada's residential school system and the continuous gender-based violence inflicted upon Indigenous women. The historical context of white settler domination is outlined. A "process of structural genocide is … visible in the historical narratives that either sanitise history or give the appearance of a temporal rupture where there is a past, present or future break from a colonial genocidal history" (Willsher & Oldfield, 2020, p. 204).

3.1 White Settler Colonialism and the Legacy of Residential Schooling

Canada's notorious Indian residential schools (IRSs) should be recognised as state-inflicted tools of "colonialism and genocide" (James, 2018, p. 840) in that they were "mandated, funded, and regulated by the Canadian federal government" (p. 832). They were run by the state and the church from 1883 to 1996 (Starblanket, 2018, p. 89), outlawing all Indigenous linguistic, cultural, and spiritual practices. More than 150,000 First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children as young as 3 years old were abducted and forcibly placed in 139 IRSs throughout Canada. The explicit goal was to "kill the Indian in the child" (TRC, 2015, p. 130), that is, "education for extinction" (Starblanket, 2018, p. 94).

From 2010 to 2015, Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) hosted 7 national (and 17 community or regional) truth and reconciliation hearings and collected testimony from over 6750 residential schooling survivors (Nagy,

2020, p. 219).[1] Some former IRS students testified before TRC that "priests at the schools had fathered infants with Indigenous students, that the babies had been taken away from their young mothers and killed, and that in some cases their bodies were thrown into furnaces" (Austen, 2021). According to Murray Sinclair, a former judge who headed the TRC commission, it is estimated that students who died or went missing from IRSs were "well beyond 10,000" (Austen, 2021). Therefore, in its six-volume final report of December 2015, TRC concluded its 7-year investigation by qualifying residential schooling as a form of "cultural genocide" (p. 133).

The recent discovery of the remains of 751 Indigenous children in unmarked graves on the grounds of former residential schools in southern Saskatchewan has rekindled debate over Canada's sinister colonial legacies of mass atrocity and provoked a general anti-Catholic sentiment amongst the Indigenous peoples. This came weeks after the discovery of 215 body remains in British Columbia, near Kamloops Indian Residential School (which was run by the Catholic Church from 1890 to 1969). Prime Minister Justin Trudeau described the tragic event as "a shameful reminder of the systemic racism, discrimination, and injustice that Indigenous peoples have faced" (BBC News, 2021).

TRC called for an apology from Pope Francis for the Roman Catholic church's grim role in running about 70% of IRSs. Therefore, on 25 July 2022, Pope Francis in his 6-day "penitential pilgrimage" of healing and reconciliation to Canada finally apologised to the Indigenous survivors of IRSs for the Roman Catholic church's prominent role in wrongs committed against Indigenous peoples, which he later described as 'genocidal' (White et al., 2022). In the same vein, a motion from Leah Gazan (a Member of Parliament for Winnipeg Centre, New Democratic Party) calling on the Canadian federal government to recognise residential schooling as genocide[2] was passed with unanimous consent in October 2022 (Raycraft, 2022).

The Canadian federal government has made significant efforts to settle the historical injustices inflicted upon the Indigenous peoples through commemorative initiatives, official apologies (e.g., Stephen Harper's 2008 'weak' parliamentary apology), inquiries and financial reparations to survivors and families of the victims. For example, in 1998, a $350 million "healing fund" was offered by Jean Chrétien's Liberal government after a brief "quasi-apology" by the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs (Jane Stewart) for the horrific sexual and physical abuse endured by residential school students. In 2007, the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement provided $2.1 billion as reparation for past harms. This came as a direct result of the residential schooling survivors' tough struggle for justice

[1] It is important to note that TRC was a victim/survivor-centred independent truth commission, convened as part of a court-ordered class-action settlement involving tens of thousands of Indigenous plaintiffs, the churches, and the Canadian federal government (James, 2018, p. 832). It lacked any judicial powers as it did not seek perpetrator accountability.

[2] Article II of the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide defines genocide as an intention to "destroy in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group." Genocidal acts include "[f]orcibly transferring children of the group to another group" (United Nations, 9 Dec. 1948).

extending over 20 years and their ability to get their class action suit about "loss of culture" certified by the Canadian courts. Hence, "the decision was significantly due to looming liabilities rather than a desire to see justice done" (Nagy, 2020, p. 223).

It is argued that "the goal of Indigenous residential schooling was to seed patriarchy and displace [Indigenous] women" (Grey & James, 2016, p. 314) as they represent "the agents of the intergenerational transmission of a powerful claim of settler illegitimacy" (p. 312) and the bearers of Indigenous counter-imperial order (Lavell-Harvard & Brant, 2016, pp. 2–4), as I will delineate in the following section.

3.2 Highway of Tears: Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

In Northwestern British Columbia, Indigenous women continue to disappear while hitchhiking along the remote and underserviced Highway 16 ('the Highway of Tears') since 1950s. The former Prime Minister Stephen Harper's deprioritisation of the issue was motivated by the need to invisibilise the intersectional violence Indigenous women suffered (Grey & James, 2016, p. 305). In its March 2015 report, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (UNCEDAW) condemned the ongoing failure of Canada to effectively address the widespread disproportionate rates of sexualised and racialised violence against Indigenous women and girls. A 2017 report released by Firelight Group (an Indigenous-owned consulting group) revealed a strong correlation between Coastal GasLink pipeline's workforce accommodation sites and increased rates of sexual assault against Indigenous women (Morin, 2021). Hence, the intersection of race, gender, (auto)mobility and violence is crucial to the understanding of the continuities of such disproportionate number of femicide acts against Indigenous women and girls (Morton, 2016, p. 300).[3] Their poverty is a major factor of their vulnerability to male violence.[4] They have been "forced" and "trapped" into "extreme poverty", "homelessness", and "street-level prostitution"[5] (Bentham et al., 2016, p. 241). Calls to decriminalise prostitution in Canada will further increase the racialised sexual violence that has led to the killing and disappearance of over 1200 Indigenous women and girls across Canada (Kappo, 2014).

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[3] Over a quarter of the missing and murdered Indigenous women disappeared in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and the Highway of Tears, British Columbia (Razack, 2015, p. 54).

[4] One highly publicised case of white men perpetration of egregious violence against Indigenous women is the notorious case of Canada's worst serial killer Robert ("Willy") Pickton. When he was arrested in February 2002, the DNA of 33 missing women was found on his Port Coquitlam pig farm (Culbert, 2022).

[5] In Vancouver, where Indigenous peoples make up about 2% of the city's population, studies estimate that about one third of women in street prostitution are Indigenous (Bentham et al., 2016, p. 241).

However, the Canadian criminal justice system consistently fails Indigenous women because they are framed as "willing victims" who bring violence upon themselves (blaming the victim strategy) because of their precarious lifestyles. The conflation of hitchhiking with immorality positioned Indigenous women "outside of the conventional boundaries of privileged femininity" (Morton, 2016, p. 303). The colonial context of violence against Indigenous women can be traced back to the Indian Act of 1876, which, in addition to confining First Nations peoples to reserves, helped to disempower Indigenous women by stripping those who married non-Indigenous men (or Indigenous men from other nations) of their Indian status, and thus this "sexist policy" contributed to the "uprooting and displacement of thousands of Indigenous women and damaged the ties to their families by denying Indian status to their children and grandchildren" (Bentham et al., 2016, p. 232). Besides, Christian charity and Victorian racist and sexist ideas provided the ethical-ideological foundation for such assimilationist attitudes (Grey & James, 2016, pp. 311–312).

Settler colonialism in Canada is an ongoing structural process which is aimed at "control over indigenous bodies, resources, and territories" (James, 2018, p. 837). It is also a deculturation process. For example, dysfunctional parenting is invoked to justify the ongoing systematic forcible transferring of Indigenous children into white foster care homes. Although Indigenous children make only 7.7% of the Canadian child population, they represent 52.2% of children in foster care. In 2018, the chairman of the TRC on residential schools (Senator Murray Sinclair) said, "The monster that was created in the residential schools moved into a new house [...] and that monster now lives in the child welfare system" (Morin, 2021). State-sponsored removal of Indigenous children from their homes and communities has detrimental health impact on Indigenous mothers (e.g., depression, social isolation, displacement, and 'survival' prostitution) (see Caplan et al., 2020).

Hence, transitional justice and reconciliation should start with "settler decolonial learning" (Nagy, 2020, p. 235) by encouraging teacher educators to "reach beyond ourselves through affective learning and responsiveness to the agency and self-determination of the [Indigenous] other" (Nagy, 2020, pp. 237–238). They should interrogate the ontoepistemological and axiological racism in Canadian teacher education and promote a (re)politisation of pedagogical spaces to encourage decolonial learning.

3.3 (Re)politicising Pedagogy and Decolonial Learning

The fact that Alexie Sherman's *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* featured among the required reading list entries in one of my teacher education courses ("Teaching Adolescents' Literature") was a good step towards the adoption of a decolonial learning approach. Alexie fictionally re-explores his precarious Indian childhood and revisits the intergenerational traumas being suffered through the painful memories of his character (Junior), who has experienced many disheartening losses in his family. Junior's sense of estrangement and the desire to find a

place to belong describes the plight of Aboriginal youth in a very satirical way. Alexie's use of multi-layered dark humour addresses absurdity predicated upon such adverse conditions as unemployment, poverty, alcoholism, mental illness and eroded cultural traditions. His goal is to point out the connections between historical and contemporary conditions of inequality generated by white hegemony and persistent assimilationist practices.

However, I noticed that the "Teaching Adolescents' Literature" course deployed categorising appellations (e.g., 'First Nations literature' vs. 'Holocaust literature') to mitigate the devastating loss and grief of 'non-deserving' Indigenous others. "Colonial horrors perpetrated in the Americas" (MacDonald, 2020, p. 582) were massive acts of a government-sanctioned history of unspeakable atrocities. Hence, the concept of "Holocaust" as a "unique" traumatic experience (i.e., "judeocide"[6]) is deployed to deflect attention away from "the reality of Indigenous genocide", and thus help to "erase the memory" of "extermination" of "between ninety and one hundred million Indigenous people over five centuries" (MacDonald, 2020, p. 582).

When I raised the issue of double standard and the "power exercised over the production and control of knowledge" (Giroux, 2016, p. 59), I sensed a strange insensitivity from both the students and the instructor to the issue. I felt that "diversity is outwardly championed albeit on the internal condition that it aligns with the approval of those in positions of power" (Rivers, 2019, p. 382). It seems that "critical modes of agency" (Giroux, 2016, p. 59), which advocate the rational management of difference, are silenced because challenging deep-seated racialised Euro-Canadian "regimes of truth" (Foucault, 1980) is unwelcome. Though my argument was legitimate, it was too hard to sustain when my body was too exposed to be subsumed into mainstream 'white normativity'. So, I felt 'out of place'. Racialised students who dare to speak openly about white domination in the curriculum "often face denial or backlash in doing so, usually in subtle forms" (Henry & Tator, 2009, p. 48).[7]

Dominant discourses are articulated through Canadian universities' Eurocentric curricula, pedagogy, research priorities, methods, and recruitment gatekeeping (Tator & Henry, 2010, p. 376). For example, "current mainstream teacher education programs do not typically introduce the importance of Indigenous language education to teacher candidates, who are the next generation of K-12 teachers" (Jacob et al., 2019, p. 126). Though the federal Parliament of Canada adopted the *Indigenous Languages Act* in June 2019 (which recognises Indigenous language rights), it failed to provide effective implementation procedures (Nicholas et al., 2023, p. 235). Moreover, "the structure of many Native studies departments' curriculum reflects non-Indigenous ideologies and ideas about people (and even a variety of colonial biases)" (Monture, 2009, p. 82).

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[6] The use of the term implies that "Jews were by no means the only 'human group' upon whom genocide was inflicted by the Nazis" (Starblanket, 2018, p. 36).

[7] The grade I got in the course was below 'average' (82%).

Hence, as "education and pedagogy do not exist outside of relations of power, values, and politics" (Giroux, 2016, p. 66), racialised student teachers should critically engage with texts, images, and all other forms of meaning-making as they are transformed into pedagogical practices by openly registering their own 'subjective' involvement in how and what they are supposed to 'learn' (and later teach to their students). They should resist "all calls to depoliticize pedagogy through appeals to either scientific objectivity or ideological dogmatism" (Giroux, 2016, p. 66).

Diversity initiatives need to be reflected in curricular and staffing policies. As BC schools have become more ethnically diverse so have concerns that the teacher corps and the teacher education curricula should reflect the communities they serve. Although many Canadian universities have an increasingly diverse array of student population that spans a variety of demographics and identities, such diversity is poorly matched with research perspectives and pedagogical methodologies as racialised academics are noticeably underrepresented (especially within the senior ranks and in the social sciences and humanities) (Henry & Tator, 2009, p. 42). Besides, there is a strong lingering "tendency to make appointments based on the perceived capacity of the candidate to 'fit' into the existing [white] culture of the faculty" (James, 2009, p. 132). Qualified racialised faculty members "continue to be underrepresented in the senior ranks of university governance" (Johnson & Howsam, 2020, p. 687). For example, a recent study, which investigated 324 listed senior administrators across all publicly funded Canadian universities, corroborated the dominance of whiteness in academia. It revealed that even though racialised people constitute 22.3% of Canada's population (Statistics Canada, 2017), racialised senior university leaders (mainly from STEM disciplines) only represented 13.3% (2.2% of whom were women, and only one was a university president) (Cukier et al., 2021, p. 569).

4 Racialisation and Hierarchical Positioning of Foreign-Trained Educators

Stories of "practicums gone wrong" abound among racialised adult male African teachers of French and their associate teachers, which sometimes necessitates the interference of the Professional Ethics Committee to take disciplinary action or mediate a reasonable resolution of the problem (Dalley, 2020, pp. 151–152). Issues raised mainly relate to African teachers' heavy French 'accents' (different from 'Anglicised' Ontarian French) and their alleged "arrogant" and "sexist" attitudes (framing gender violence as an immigration problem). It is claimed that African immigrant teachers tend to "lecture rather than teach" and "they discipline rather than manage the classroom" (pp. 152–153). Therefore, the pedagogical skills and teaching experiences of teacher candidates of colour are represented as

"problematic", "foreign", "invisible", and "invalid"[8] in an educational space predominantly inhabited by white, female, middle-class, monolingual, Canadian-born practising teachers (Schmidt, 2021, p. 441). Any failure to meet the expectations of whiteness is penalised with "derision and the threat of exclusion and punishment" (p. 444).

My experience of the practicum placement in a British Columbia (BC) secondary school was not different from the situation described above (see also Cushing (2023) for similar issues of "language oppression" in the British teacher education context). The first hurdle I encountered was the need to ape the 'native speaker' model. In his 'progress report', my associate teacher didn't cease to draw attention to my 'accented' English. As a 'professional improvement plan', he proposed that I should take an 'accent reduction' course at University of British Columbia to develop a native-like 'pronunciation' (a Pygmalion-like 'accent shift' dressage). Therefore, as a racialised and 'accented' teacher, I was relegated to the status of a "culturally deficient 'non-native speaker' subaltern" (Holliday, 2015, p. 20), and thus, a forever foreigner to the teaching profession (perpetual invisibilisation strategy). Ironically, these 'accent policing' courses "target students who have already successfully completed advanced-level English courses" (Saarinen & Ennser-Kananen, 2020, p. 120). Hence, it seems that "what stands [in] the way of non-white students' success [is], in fact, deficit perspectives on racialized students' linguistic practices, in other words, racism inherent in the [Eurocentric] higher education system" (p. 120). As Ahmed (2012) pointed out, "if whiteness is what the institution is oriented around, then even bodies that do not appear white still have to inhabit whiteness" (p. 41).

My associate teacher considered me as a disentitled newcomer to the ELT profession by including a specific accent-based assessment in my practicum report, suggesting that "Ahmed should take a methods course in French[9] … to make himself more employable as a *French* language teacher" (emphasis added). It seems that I simply don't fit into his ideal 'white nativeness' realm to qualify as being a 'good' teacher of English in an Anglophone context ('gatekeeping' role). His judgement was mainly premised on my 'foreign' accent. However, as pedagogical skills and language proficiency are both crucial in language teaching, ethnolinguistic background should be regarded as inconsequential. My associate teacher's presumed role as "modeler of teaching" and "advocate of the practical" discounted other more important responsibilities, such as "supporter of reflection", "purveyor of context" and "convenor of relation" (Clarke et al., 2014, p. 163); this demonstrates his underpreparedness to engage in a more inquiry-based and "developmentally appropriate" support for pre-service teachers (p. 191). Effective mentorship is more than mere matching of willing school-based instructors to student teachers; there is a

[8] Such a deficient view is extended to international students, who are constructed as "incapable" of rational reasoning (e.g., sustaining an argument) and critical thinking because they are "passive," "uncreative" and "rote" learners. This is an instance of "cultural determinism that reproduces colonial relations of Self and Other" (Pennycook, 2007, p. 21).

[9] I successfully completed a three-credit course, "Teaching & Learning French as a Second Language: Elementary & Middle Years" (LLEE 324), at UBC.

conspicuous lack of intercultural awareness amongst some 'cooperating' teachers who tend to homogenise racialised teacher candidates based on preconceived essentialist stereotypes (Schmidt & Schneider, 2016).

However, it seems that making appropriate school placements of student teachers is strategically challenging because associate teachers are basically volunteers. Hence, some school principals may even object to accepting "immigrant or new Canadian teacher candidates" (Dalley, 2020, p. 156) because some white teachers may be unwilling to help a student teacher "who does not correspond to their image of a good teacher" (p. 161). In this sense, evaluation tended to be based on "individual" and "social acceptability" criteria rather than on teaching ability. Besides, ineffective mentors create an "ethos of subservience in their working relations with preservice teachers by not attempting to balance the asymmetrical power relations in their roles" (Cherian, 2008, p. 95).

The subtle (usually well-intentioned and gentle) silencing of non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) is a clear manifestation of the racialisation of the teaching profession under the mask of 'accent' ('accentism'). Such discrimination is a clear instance of ethnocentrism as "there is no 'scientific' evidence to support any notion of an inherent superiority or inferiority, premised on phenotypic difference between the so-called races" (Henry, 2021, p. 308). Raciolinguistic and ethnocultural stereotypes co-articulate with diverse forms of racialised othering in ways that are intersectionally constitutive of persistent 'white' privilege. These oppressive societal dynamics merely serve to uphold 'normative whiteness,' which is inherent in colonialist language ideologies that reinforce a chauvinistic view of an imagined ideal monolingual linguistic order through the 'native speakerist' 'deficit' discourses that serve the interests of "colonial and/or nation-building and neoliberal processes of governmentality" (Saarinen & Ennser-Kananen, 2020, p. 121).

Such Orientalist thinking is deeply rooted and sustained within the fabric of mainstream ELT professionalism which associates 'nativeness' with 'whiteness.' For example, "many self-identified monolingual white teachers in a Chicago high school viewed their bilingual Puerto Rican principal, who held a doctorate in education, as intellectually and linguistically inferior" (Rosa & Flores, 2017, p. 629). Likewise, even non-white native speakers of English who were born and raised in Anglophone countries are not considered as 'legitimate' language models. ESL students also believe that "only White people can be native speakers of English and that only native speakers know 'real' English" (Norton, 1997, p. 423). Similarly, "any Caucasian speaker of English (even Eastern Europeans who speak it as a second or foreign language) are automatically considered to be native speakers of English" (Braine, 2010, p. 74).

In today's globalised world, multilingual teachers are driving forces in implementing a culturally sustainable pedagogy into their teaching, and thus are key educational stakeholders (Kirkpatrick, 2016, p. 241). Therefore, a paradigm shift away from the 'native/non-native speaker divide should be promoted by delinking from the fallacious attitudes that "English is best taught monolingually; the ideal teacher of English is a native speaker; the earlier English is taught, the better the results; the

more English is taught the better the results; and if other languages are used much, standards of English will drop" (Phillipson, 1992, p. 185). A "non-native speakerist" curriculum would be necessary to empower ELT educators to focus on "an English that expresses the cultural realities of their students" while preparing them to engage creatively with the world "on their own terms" (Holliday, 2014, p. 3). As Jenkins (2006) eloquently puts it, native speakerist deficit ideologies are the result of a "monolingual bias" that is "unable to comprehend" the multilingual experience (p. 167).

5 Discursive (Re)Construction of Self Through Storied Transformative Agency

In this section, I will delineate how I tried to encourage my students to view language as a vital medium for the creation of modes of being and belonging and a crucial tool for social struggle over competing meaning constructions in dialogue (Fairclough, 1995). In the first part, I will outline my endeavour to decentre Eurocentric media narratives by proposing a counter-hegemonic account of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (micro-teaching project). In the second part, my attempt to adopt a resource-based instruction approach that helps to meet the specific needs of my students during my practicum is outlined.

5.1 Critical Media Pedagogy and Decolonial Learning

During my teacher education program, I noticed that very little effort had been made to invite discussions on the social dimensions of education and the importance of situated critical pedagogy-oriented practices. Hence, an opportunity to bridge such a gap was seized in "Curriculum and Instruction in English" course. I prepared a micro-teaching project about "teaching editorial political cartoons in Canadian high school" and my case study was Naji Al-Ali (1937–1987), the Palestinian Cartoonist, who transformed the victimhood discourse of Palestinians into a narrative of graphic remembering of the *Nakba* (Catastrophe) and resistance to the dominating Zionist narrative. As texts are becoming increasingly multimodal, and students are being more exposed to an abundance of visual images that dominate their daily lives, my goal was to promote students' (in this case my colleagues') critical visual literacy skills by fostering a decolonial critical media pedagogy curriculum that aims at providing some "spaces of relief from whiteness" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 37) and 'edutainment'.

Al-Ali's child-character graffiti became the national/global symbol that bears witness to the injustices inflicted on the Palestinians by the Israeli occupation. *Handala* (a 10-year-old barefooted, raggedly dressed Palestinian refugee camp

child) epitomises Palestinian national consciousness and struggle for self-determination. *Handala*'s hands are always clasped behind his back as a sign of defiance and the just struggle for the right of return (Barnes, 2019, p. 234). Al-Ali's cartoons evoke nostalgic themes that solidify national narratives of a sense of statelessness, uprootedness, as well as resistance and steadfastness. These visual discourses of endurance and defiance are instrumental in the memorialisation of the Palestinian plight. They also display several layers of meaning, targeting global audiences. The use of Christological images (the crucifix symbol) is meant to mediate the Palestinian experience and evoke global empathy with the Palestinian cause. As Barnes pointed out, "Al-Ali's art – banned by the Israeli state – represented a reclamation of the Palestinian past, a reversal of the discourse of Orientalism through a colonised population asserting its own narrative, rather than being written (or, in this case, drawn) into history by the coloniser" (p. 233).

Such counter-narratives can create intercultural encounter spaces in class in a way that promotes a critical self-reflection by interrogating 'our' roles in the structures of domination. They can also encourage students to engage critically with visual discourses of social experiences of Palestinians against all forms of 'memoricide', 'epistemicide', and mystification of history (e.g., 'ethnic cleansing' is reframed in Western media discourse as 'voluntary exodus' and 'occupation' as 'settlement') by promoting transitions from cultures of impunity and human rights abuse. Preservice teachers should be encouraged to engage in a process of "decentring dominant narratives with the stories and experiences of the oppressed" (James, 2017, p. 364) by striving to "achieve a deep understanding of the colonial forces which continue to reproduce structural racism, territorial invasion and structural genocide" (Willsher & Oldfield, 2020, p. 208). This process of de-linking from the colonial episteme will help student teachers to "rethink the cultural and ideological baggage they bring to each educational encounter" (Giroux, 2016, p. 66). It equally will sensitise educators to the need to be ethically and politically responsible and self-reflective for the "stories they produce, the claims they make upon public memory, and the images of the future they deem legitimate" (p. 66).

Implementing a curriculum grounded in decolonial critical media pedagogy is empowering for students as such multimodal approaches can help them to develop a critical lens and analytic skills required to deconstruct images in the media (see Sahlane, 2022). Likewise, conventional educational spaces could be transformed into humane sites of 'struggle' over pedagogical content for educational equity. Critical media pedagogy can also encourage educators and students to critically discuss contentious topics around cultural otherness to learn to "move beyond their traditional roles as mere consumers of policy and media discourses" (Schmidt, 2021, p. 441).[10] For example, as British Columbia has recently welcomed many refugee families from the Middle East, engaging with multimedia accounts of their lived experiences can help teachers to "honour different backgrounds and realities

[10] "[I]n the US, faculty in Texas were prohibited from criticizing the Israeli government's oppression of the Palestinians and were prohibited from advocating for the boycott of Israel" (Waite & Waite, 2021, p. 172).

and most appropriately meet the needs of the students and families they serve" (p. 442). These refugee children had experienced traumatic events, compounded with the precarity engendered by interrupted or no schooling because of continuous displacement. Hence, a "transformative intellectual" is the "one whose intellectual practices are necessarily grounded in forms of moral and ethical discourse exhibiting a preferential concern for the suffering and struggles of the disadvantaged and oppressed" (Giroux, 1988, pp. 174–175).

However, my project about "teaching political cartoons" drew some criticism from a few ('white') colleagues. It is not uncommon that racialised student teachers feel that their knowledge could be easily "discounted and devalued by their peers" (Guo & Guo, 2020, p. 16) simply because the decentring of the dominant whiteness most often translates as a vulgar promotion of particular forms of 'anti-Western' agendas. Should not teachers avoid "pushing [their] political views down [their] students' throats?" (Pennycook, 2017, p. 301). However, if all educational spaces are potential sites of cultural politics, then it is fallacious to suggest that Eurocentric forms of knowledge formation are neutral. Adopting a critical pedagogy approach invites educators to contest the "inclusion/exclusion divide in the global knowledge pool, where only certain knowledge is legitimated and codified to be seen, used, trusted, and valued" (Xu, 2022, p. 37). Critical educators should maintain their roles as agents of 'reform' through the 'social justice' topics they address, as well as the decolonial pedagogical perspectives they tend to support. For example, neocolonialist 'epistemic violence' in discourses of 'enlightenment' and 'emancipation' (e.g., in Bushspeak rhetoric during the lead to war on Iraqi in 2003; see Sahlane, 2012, 2013, 2019) should be challenged by contesting the "Western ways of knowing and the Western ways of *languaging*" (Kumaravadivelu, 2016, p. 78; italics added).

5.2 Creating Educational Spaces for Inclusive Pedagogy

As I got to know my students well over the 12 weeks of my practicum, I tried to incorporate a more relationship-centred teacher identity in my teaching approach. For example, when I was teaching English literature (e.g., Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*), I invited students to reflect upon how marriage has become a transaction involving the transfer of money. I encouraged them to examine gender roles across historical and cultural boundaries (group project). I also included world 'literatures in English' from non-Anglophone linguacultures to balance the hegemony of the traditional ELT curriculum. I introduced students to *Pretty Flowers*, which is part of Deborah Ellis's book, *Lunch with Lenin*. The book contains a variety of short stories about how drugs affect the youth in modern societies. The story was about a 12-year-old Afghani girl, whose father had defaulted on his debts to a rich old man. His opium fields were bulldozed by the Afghani government, and he had no money to pay his loan back. As a consequence, the father had no choice except to marry his daughter to the creditor or go to jail ('child brides' issue). After exploring the plot

development and the themes of the story, students were invited to engage in a role play activity to decide how to reach a reasoned ethical solution to the problem.

My faculty advisor and associate teacher were very impressed with students' construction of social difference and the struggle for voice. However, in the beginning my host teacher expressed some reservation vis-à-vis what he called teaching with an "agenda." Hence, I had to manage the debilitating task of coping with this 'intersectionality identity space' (speaking English [linguistic border crossing] with a 'foreign' accent [false documents], having a Middle Eastern appearance [cultural otherness], being a newcomer to Canada ['outsider' and 'not like us'] and my status as veteran recertifying teacher [trespassing my mentor's territory/'domain of authority']).

'White privilege' erodes any possible sense of academic belonging and eventually personal wellbeing as 'tokenised' bodies are required to make greater efforts to 'fit in'. As a racialised teacher, I felt disempowered by being stigmatised as a 'non-native' speaker of English despite being highly qualified (a holder of Masters and Ph D degrees from well-ranked British universities). Linguistic imperialism "serves to establish inequalities between native speakers of English and speakers of other languages, and teachers from different backgrounds, irrespective of their qualifications" and this is a "clear evidence of linguicism structurally and ideologically" (Phillipson, 2016, p. 86).

My attempt to reshape curriculum and pedagogy in a way that meets the needs of diverse students turned the classroom into an inclusive and supportive community of learners and created rewarding learning opportunities as students were engaged in 'authentic' self-expression often experienced beyond the classroom walls. My faculty advisor acknowledged that I "respected the multicultural nature of the classroom and aimed for students to see themselves and their heritage reflected in the lessons. Ahmed has a strong commitment to social justice" (Practicum report, 2010). As educational resources that reflect Indigenous perspectives are essential to advancing an inclusive curriculum, I tried to embed Indigenous pedagogy in teaching Ben Mikaelsen's *Spirit Bear* in grade 9. I used 'circle of justice' as a role-play activity. The 'healing circle' starts with assigning roles (Elders, keeper, judge, culprit, victim, parents, etc.) and explaining rules (Indigenous justice protocols). Then, in 'circle hearings' community members (students) voice their 'feelings' about the committed offence (Cole's smashing of Peter's skull into the sidewalk, which resulted in a serious head trauma) and how to reach a just resolution to the conflict. 'Focus questions' (that were 'social justice'-oriented) served to guide students' discussions. The act of 'yarning' (respectful listening to community members) proved to be an engaging activity because it encouraged students to respectfully relate to other members of their community (of learners) in a more authentic and empathetic way. My associate teacher was very impressed by this role-play activity and characterised it in my practicum report as "a particularly successful event" (Practicum report, 2010).

I equally introduced Grade 12 students to critical race theory by teaching Alice Walker's 'Flowers' (a short story) to invite them to reflect upon the racialised processes of discrimination in the U.S. I used this short story to teach plot development

in narrative writing. I also invited students to read Holocaust literature by teaching Innocenti's *Rose Blanche*. Then, I scheduled a session to watch David Heyman's film, *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas,* as a follow-up activity. One of the goals of showing this video was to engage students in discussing the intersectional experiences of oppressed others in late modern societies. Likewise, I introduced my students to Albert Camus's *The Guest*, one of six stories in the collection *Exile and the Kingdom*. The story focuses on the ethical dilemmas faced by Daru (an instructor and a native of the French-occupied Algeria), and the two visitors he receives one day: Balducci (a 'gendarme', who arrives on horseback), and an unnamed Arab prisoner (who has his hands bound and is on foot). Balducci informs Daru that he has to deliver the prisoner to police headquarters. Daru treats the Arab very respectfully by providing food, bed, and a chance to escape. The following morning, Daru and his prisoner set off on their journey. When they reach an intersection, Daru gives him the choice (he refuses to hand him over) either to take the path that leads to the prison (captivity) or walk towards a local nomadic tribe that will protect him (freedom). The prisoner chooses the first (a fatal decision). After Daru returns to the schoolhouse, he finds a note on the blackboard left by tribesmen, threatening to revenge their handed-over 'brother.' What is appealing about the story is that it is pregnant with multiple reading possibilities.

As my intercultural perspective conflicted with my host teacher's, I had no reservation questioning his 'native speakerist' mindset manifested in his "cultural disbelief" and "deficit" discourses (Holliday, 2015) and I refused to play "subservient and enslaved roles to [his] idiosyncratic demands" (Cherian, 2008, p. 101), an attitude he ultimately penalised me for by qualifying my "response to criticism" as "can sometimes be stubborn" (in contrast to my faculty advisor's description of my collaboration as "reflective of his practice" and "open to suggestions and advice") (Practicum report, 2010). The way my associate teacher conceived of his role was very traditional: either as a "placeholder" (no co-teaching or co-planning assumed) or as a "supervisor" (overseeing my performance with a dominating stance). Both conceptions expect the student teacher to assume a 'compliant' role to be able to navigate the racialised practicum successfully. Post-lesson feedback tended to be "more confirmatory (positive) than investigative (reflective) in nature" (Clarke et al., 2014, p. 175). However, the presence of a NNEST who is ready to return the gaze and talk back contests the authority of a NEST as the sole legitimate 'knower.' Reflective teaching practice dictates that native speakers should cast the analytic gaze on themselves first by recognising their biases and being ready to unlearn their prejudices.

During my practicum, I participated in teacher-parent conferences and acted as liaison with parents. I also managed to motivate disengaged students by inviting them to work on group projects with serious classmates. Some parents had some concerns about my NNS professional 'competence', only to support me later after realising the great progress that had been achieved by providing extra help to the struggling students in the school's Learning Centre. Similarly, some reticence was initially experienced from a few students who were worried about getting proper preparation for upcoming provincial and university entrance exams. This challenge was partially alleviated by assigning graded project-based group activities (e.g.,

researching stereotyping in relation to their ethnic communities in BC). This project-oriented learning encouraged students to bring their lived experiences as complex people into the classroom, by capturing moments of community hardship and growth, and thus offering their classmates a glimpse into their lifeworlds. Therefore, teaching in Canadian K-12 context offered me ample opportunities for identity negotiation in that the effort to adjust my pedagogical skills and theoretical knowledge to the potential institutional constraints (while also incorporating my values and teaching ideals in my daily teaching practice) constituted a dynamic part of my professional identity development. This autoethnographic account, thus, reflects on how the friction I experienced from being 'out of place' opened up new opportunities for me to learn how to become an ELT professional on my own terms.

6 Conclusion

My experience of teaching mentorship—though partial in its truth and incomplete in its telling of critical moments—provides a snapshot in time of my journey as a process of peril, hope, and potential in the struggle for authentic voice, professional legitimacy, and pedagogical agency. It is pregnant with moments of tension and good collegiality. It also provides a cautionary example of how colonialist white supremacist language ideologies continue to mould and shape teaching practices and educational policies that serve to devalue the linguistic and cultural capitals that both multilingual students and racialised language educators bring into classrooms.

The present study has also made the case that teacher education programs should refrain from training student teachers solely for jobs through the reproduction of a meritocratic system of competitive, disempowered, ethnocentric and deskilled educational technicians and clerks (Giroux, 2016). Prospective teachers should be encouraged to develop their own teaching approaches around themes that align with students' own lived experiences and that serve to counter all forms of discriminatory and exclusionary views and practices in educational spaces. More importantly, teacher preparation programs need to be (re)structured around the foreign-educated teachers' realistic needs by designing training courses that accommodate and recognise their prior skills and professional expertise; they should not be treated the same as the novice domestic pre-service teacher students ('one-size-fits-all' approach).

Besides, as school-based master educators play a very influential role in training (re)certifying practised internationally-educated teachers (IETs), they need to develop theoretically informed and interculturally sensitive mentoring strategies to be able to assist prospective teachers to recontextualise and put into practice their accumulated theoretical and practical knowledge. Mentoring programs premised on monolingualist ideologies and a deficit view of racialised teachers fail to encourage re-certifying IETs to reflect critically on their own transcultural experiences and multilingual/multicultural perspectives and fail to recognise social constructions of white privilege and inequality. Failure to contest the structured racial hierarchisation prevalent in educational spaces and beyond is "tantamount to committing 'mentacide'" (Henry, 2021, p. 305).

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