Competing Values Within Language Education Research

Jeff Bale

On April 7, 2015, leaders of the Toronto Catholic District School Board[1] announced $30 million in budget cuts. A week later, they announced plans to open a new elementary school by fall 2016 with an emphasis on language education. Specifically, the school would offer immersion programs[2] in four different languages: French, Spanish, German, and Mandarin. In its press release announcing the proposal, the board explained they would follow a "European-style international school model" (TCDSB 2015, n.p.) for using multiple languages to teach academic content. It stated the school would have a "strong academic focus, and may also include an elementary International Baccalaureate program option" (TCDSB 2015, n.p.). Speaking with the media, one board leader justified the choice of languages to be offered in terms of their being the languages of "economic superpowers." He continued, "There's a new, global mindset among some of the new urbane community parents who see language as opening up opportunities for commerce in the future" (Brown 2015, n.p.). In the same report, another district leader "confessed" (Brown 2015, n.p.) that they hoped the school would attract more students—and the funding they bring with them—to the board.

---

[1] In Canada, education is the domain of its ten provinces and three territories, not the federal government. Funding for schools is distributed to both public and Catholic school boards, as well as to separate Anglophone and Francophone boards in most provinces. In Ontario, there are four separate types of government-funded boards: Anglophone public, Anglophone Catholic, Francophone Catholic, and Francophone public (listed in order of total student enrolments).

[2] Immersion programs use the target language almost exclusively to teach the full curriculum, versus learning the language as a subject for 50 or 60 min at a time. Some models stay 100% in the target language across the grades, while others begin to introduce the national/official language back into the curriculum in the upper grades (see Baker 2011).

J. Bale (✉)
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON, CANADA
e-mail: Jeff.bale@utoronto.ca

The languages proposed for this new school are noteworthy for several reasons. First, they complement the board's extensive program in International Languages. This program, funded in part by a provincial policy, offers 2.5 h per week of instruction in some 20 languages outside the regular school day.[3] At the elementary level, 22 languages are taught, almost always after school. Typically, only one language is offered at a given school, often the language spoken at home by a plurality of students in that school. At the secondary level, 19 languages are offered on Saturdays, and students may receive up to one credit towards graduation from high school. At this level, language programs are clustered and distributed across the city to facilitate student attendance; adolescents are typically less interested in extra-curricular language education, even with the bribe of a graduation credit.

Second, the languages for this new school complement the board's popular French immersion programs, offered in nine elementary and two secondary schools. This model of language education was pioneered in Canada in response to a number of political developments in the late 1960s, including the naming of English and French as Canada's two official languages. While this model is internationally renowned, less acknowledged is that French immersion has taken on a sorting function in Canadian schools. Anglophone children who are considered high performing, often from a middle- or upper-middle-class background, and destined for university attend French immersion programs at disproportionately high rates. Indeed, even though there is widespread support among immigrant parents for learning both of Canada's official languages, their children are often discouraged from learning French until they have "mastered" English (Mady and Turnbull 2010). Streaming has been a contentious topic in public discourse about schooling in Ontario for several decades (Gidney 1999). Nevertheless, French immersion has provided a different—and politically more tolerable—mechanism for achieving the same end.

Third, the languages proposed for this new school stand in contrast to the languages most spoken in the Scarborough-Agincourt neighbourhood in which the school will be located. (The board owns a school in the neighbourhood that was closed in 2011 due to low enrolments and currently stands empty.) Data from the 2011 census for this part of Toronto indicate that 24% of residents landed in Canada after 2001, and that 75% speak a non-official language at home. The primary origins of immigrants to this neighbourhood since 2001 include China, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, and India, while in 2011 the most frequently spoken non-official languages were Cantonese, Mandarin, Chinese n.o.s.,[4] Tamil, and Tagalog (Statistics Canada 2011). Although there is some overlap between the frequency of Mandarin in this corner of the city and the inclusion of Mandarin in the proposed school, recall that board leaders explained their choice based on Mandarin's perceived global status, not on community needs.

---

[3] See https://www.tcdsb.org/programsservices/schoolprogramsk12/internationallanguages/Pages/default.aspx for more information.

[4] "N.o.s." indicates the respondent listed "Chinese" without further specifying a language or dialect.
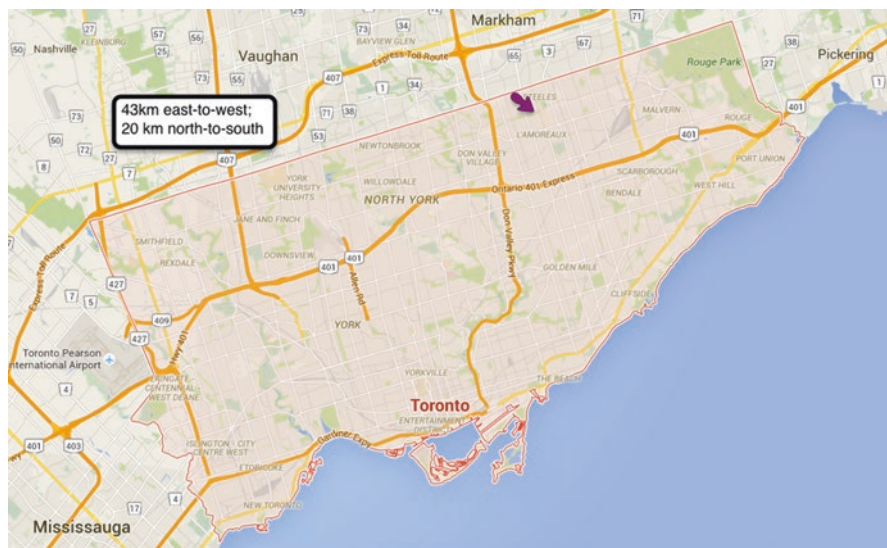
Fig. 1 Location of proposed language immersion school within the city of Toronto

Beyond the languages to be offered, there were other noteworthy aspects of the board's announcement. For example, the reference to a "European-style international school model" (TCDSB 2015, n.p.) stands out because there is no such model recognized in language education research. It is indeed common for international schools to use a prestigious language as the medium of instruction. That choice is either determined by the country associated with the school,[5] or because of the prestige of the language.[6] Although other languages are typically offered in international schools, most often they are taught as subjects, not used as medium of instruction for delivering academic content.[7]

A final detail about this proposal concerns the school's enrolment and transportation policies. While all students in the Catholic board from across the city will be eligible to apply for admission, the board will not provide transportation. Parents are thus responsible to get their elementary-aged children to and from a school located on the northern edge of a city covering over 630km² (see Fig. 1).

These developments at Toronto's Catholic board reveal competing values associated with language education, values implicated in two fundamental questions: to

---

[5] For example the German school in Manila uses German as the medium of instruction for the program it offers to children of German nationals.

[6] For example, English is used as medium of instruction irrespective of where the school is located or what students' language profile is.

[7] For example, the United World College chain of international schools uses English as the medium of instruction, and then teaches the respective national/official language where the school is located to non-native speakers. See Fee et al. 2014 for a discussion of International Baccalaureate schools, some of which use multiple languages as medium of instruction.

what end and on whose behalf do we create opportunities to learn languages? In its proposal, the board has revealed its answers to these questions by: (1) referencing parents with a certain kind of "mindset" about the role languages can play in "opening up opportunities for commerce in the future;" while (2) establishing a contradictory set of attendance and transportation policies that will likely inhibit other kinds of families from taking advantage of the new school; (3) choosing languages based on perceived economic power rather than community interest or need, and creating space within the formal curriculum for those languages to occupy; (4) choosing a model for teaching those languages that has been shown to exacerbate the sorting of Canadian students; (5) excluding most of the languages already offered through their International Languages program, thereby leaving those languages on the margins of the curriculum where they have lived since the 1970s; (6) ignoring altogether any First Nations, Métis, or Inuit languages; (7) using references to prestigious, private school forms to index a particular kind of academic environment; and (8) doing so in the context of budget cuts that led to dozens of staff losing their job.

Taken together, the board has indicated that this new school, and by implication the language-learning opportunities it will create, are designed to attract and meet the needs of Toronto parents with a particular set of economic, social, and indeed linguistic resources. Meanwhile, the vast majority of Scarborough-Agincourt's residents are visible minorities with a migration background, living on a median income of just over $20,000 per year—less than one third of that for the city overall (Statistics Canada 2011). It remains to be seen whether these families will be included in the "new urbane community" the board has imagined and to which it targeted its proposal.

I start with this example from the north end of Toronto to demonstrate how competing values associated with language education reveal themselves in such everyday ways. In this paper, I argue that similar competing values are equally present in *research* about language education, but are sometimes more difficult to recognize. I develop this argument in two parts. The first focuses on the explicit juxtaposition in language education research between viewing language as a *resource* and language as a *right*. The first part of the paper historicizes this distinction by tracing the emergence of resource-oriented discourses to the demise of broad civil rights movements in North America in the late 1970s/early 1980s. The second part of the paper turns to more recent critiques of language rights within language education research. These critiques are rooted in post-structuralist approaches to understanding language that, in general, reject rights as a response to language-based discrimination. Part of the complication in identifying the values within this research is that its authors explicitly frame their inquiry in social-justice terms. The paper does not doubt these authors' commitments, but rather seeks to get beyond claims to social justice to clarify for what purposes and on whose behalf we conduct language education research.

Historicizing the Rights-Versus-Resource Distinction

In his seminal article just over 30 years ago, Richard Ruiz (1984) was among the first applied linguists to name and analyze the competing values associated with language education and language policy. He distinguished among three ideological orientations to language that guide policy-making, namely language as problem, as right, and as resource. By the early 1980s, the language-as-problem orientation had already enjoyed a long run. Not only was this the primary way in which settler-colonial societies such as the United States viewed speakers of minoritized languages, for example construing populations deemed unable or unwilling to learn English as a threat to national unity. But also, the nascent academic field of Language Planning and Policy had founded itself on the premise that language presented manifold problems that scientific investigation and rational planning could resolve (Ricento 2000). Especially in newly de-colonized states in Africa and Asia, a generation of (mostly Western) applied linguists set themselves the task of assisting state functionaries in deciding which language(s) (and which varieties of those languages) should be made official, in which combination and sequence they should be taught in schools, in which societal domains they should be used, and so on.

However, Ruiz was writing at the tail end of a period in which significant social movements had imposed a new orientation on society, namely viewing language as a right. From this perspective, historical structures of discrimination could be dismantled in part by establishing the right for speakers of minoritized languages to use the language(s) of their choice throughout society, including at school. Demands such as these were central to the American Indian, Asian, Chicano, and Puerto Rican civil rights movements that had profoundly shaken US society (see Bale 2012), as well as to the Francophone (especially Québécois) and Indigenous movements that had challenged the legitimacy and even the existence of the Canadian state (Martel and Pâquet 2010). Indeed, with respect to the Canadian example, naming French and English as dual official languages and providing millions of dollars per year in federal funding to support official language education (e.g. the French immersion programs discussed earlier) were two important efforts to rescue the Canadian state in this period (Haque 2012; Hayday 2005; Martel and Pâquet 2010).

Although Ruiz (1984) acknowledged the social-justice gains made possible by a rights orientation, he also raised a number of pitfalls to this approach. I return to this topic in greater detail in a moment; for now, the point is to understand that the objective of Ruiz's paper was to elaborate a third orientation, language-as-resource, that could undo what he framed as the bind of problem-versus-rights. Ruiz defined the resource orientation in several ways. Most obviously, language serves as a resource for identity formation and social cohesion for those who speak and share a given language. In the context of multilingual societies, the resource orientation can also work to reframe societal multilingualism and/or individual plurilingualism as an asset to cultivate, not a deficit to redress. Indeed, Ruiz argued that a resource orientation has the potential to alleviate the social tension between speakers of different languages insofar as each has a linguistic resource to share with the other. It is the

social-justice intentions of this definition of the resource orientation that has made it so popular in language education research over the last 30 years.

Yet, there was an additional definition of the language-as-resource orientation that has since become the subject of sharp debate within language education research. Ruiz (1984) also defined language as a resource for military, political, diplomatic, and economic objectives. In the United States specifically, almost all formal language education policies at the federal level have framed language in this way; indeed, the paltry amount of money made available to fund language (education) research in the US has only ever been tied to explicit geopolitical and economic security objectives (Bale 2014). Following the events of September 11, 2001, the US government renewed its commitment to language education in the name of national security. This move touched off another round of academic fretting about the consequences of understanding language as a resource in this way. At issue was whether manifold definitions of language-as-resource could operate at once, thus appeasing dominant policy discourses in Washington, DC while simultaneously facilitating more scholarly and/or community ambitions for language education. Or, do some definitions of the resource orientation predominate, in effect limiting both our imagination and practice of language education (e.g. Bale 2011; García 2005; McGroarty 2006; Petrovic 2005; Ricento 2005; Ruiz 2010; Wiley 2007).

To make the terms of this debate more concrete, recall the example from Catholic board in Toronto that opens the paper. In the context of a budget crisis, the board managed to make room for new forms of language education; this is as laudable as it is unusual. Their choices for this language education opportunity are clearly informed by what Ruiz would call a resource orientation, namely construing language as a twofold resource: for its students, in the belief that they will then secure lucrative jobs in an increasingly globalized economy; and for the board itself, in hopes of recruiting new students and the provincial funding they bring with them. This particular approach solidified the position of community languages at the margins of the board's curriculum, where they have long lived, and ignored First Nations, Métis, and Inuit languages altogether.

As noted above, some language education research has endorsed the resource orientation precisely because it is conceptually malleable. In principle, it can be used both to serve dominant discourses (such as economic competitiveness and revival, as in the Toronto case) and to further community ambitions for language maintenance. McGroarty (2006) has referred to this malleability as "strategic simultaneity" (p. 1), arguing:

> A logical implication for those who consider themselves pragmatists or political realists is that advocates for positive language-in-education policies must constantly articulate the value of bilingualism, and be able to do so in varied terms that respond to a protean environment of public discussion. (pp. 5–6)

As we see with the case in Toronto, however, this simultaneity rarely presents itself in practice. Rather, more often than not, the resource orientation to language education functions to relegate minoritized languages—yet again—to the margins of society. Since McGroarty has introduced a claim to realism: the reality, then, is that

a resource orientation both contradicts and contravenes the social-justice goals of the language education researchers who espouse it.

While I was an active participant in the debate over the resource orientation, I have since come to see the terms on which it was carried out in a different way. In particular, what has made the resource orientation both significant and controversial is not only what Ruiz defined it to be, but also how he counterposed it to a rights-based orientation. By framing the rights orientation in a particular way, Ruiz is thus able to present the resource orientation as an alternative. Here, I offer an extended quote from Ruiz (1984) to give a better sense of his argument:

> What should be our attitude toward the [rights] orientation? To be sure, the importance of the legal argument in U.S. society is not to be denied. It is essential that for short term protections and long term guarantees, we be able to translate the interests of language-minority groups into rights-language…Yet, one cannot deny the problems of this approach. The most important of these could be that terms included in the legal universe of discourse do not incline the general public toward a ready acceptance of the arguments. Terms like "compliance", "enforcement", "entitlements", "requirements", and "protection" create an automatic resistance to whatever one is talking about. Their use creates confrontation. Confrontation, of course, is what the legal process is all about…This atmosphere creates a situation in which different groups and authorities invoke their rights against each other: children vs. schools; parents vs. school boards; majority vs. minority groups; some minority groups vs. others; states rights vs. federal authority; and so on. In the case of language rights, for example, the controversy could be seen as one where the rights of the few are affirmed over those of the many. (pp. 23–24)

This excerpt, as with the entire article itself, contains many hedges, suggesting that Ruiz is thinking out loud as much as he is making a fully developed argument. Yet, it also reveals certain conceptual moves that since have come to be taken for granted within much language education research. The first of these is to discuss rights primarily in terms of formal legal discourse and legal processes. Absent here is any sense of the immediately recent history in the United States that made language rights possible to discuss at all. In addition to the linguistic implications of civil rights legislation from the mid-1960s, the Bilingual Education Act was first passed in 1968, and a series of four Supreme Court decisions between 1974 and 1982 had expanded the definition and scope of formal language rights, up to and including the rights of speakers of non-standard varieties of English at school. None of this "legal process" would have been possible without the breadth and strength of popular social movements, yet there is no sense of the connection between the two in this excerpt (or in the article). In fact, there is little historical evidence that the social movements advocating for their "rights" were much interested in the particular legal form those rights would take. Even in the instances of individual families serving as plaintiffs in cases that reached the Supreme Court, these cases were typically seen as one tactic as part of mass civil rights movements (see San Miguel 2004). In other words, these broad movements set their sights on transforming US society, not necessarily on codifying rights as an end unto themselves.

Another important consequence of conflating rights with formal legal processes within language education research is that it suggests the primary venue for contesting rights is within official channels of government. The history of language

education rights, by contrast, suggests that the primary battlegrounds were the front steps of schools, where students, parents, community members, and political activists picketed; the board rooms of local school authorities, where the same collection of people sat-in or submitted petitions signed by hundreds, at times thousands of people demanding bilingual and bicultural curricula; or in church basements, where teachers and community activists set up *huelga* and other forms of liberation schools as alternatives to the regular schools that students at times struck or boycotted (e.g. García 1997; Navarro 1995; Miguel 2001, 2004; Trujillo 1998).

Perhaps it is these experiences from the civil rights movements that Ruiz (1984) is referencing at the end of the above excerpt, with his mention of different groups squaring off against each other as they invoke their rights. Yet, even here there is a conceptual flattening of the contesting parties. In running through the various configurations in which conflicts over language rights can (and do) play out, Ruiz suggests that, like roses, a conflict is a conflict is a conflict. Yet, surely there are vast disparities in the social, material, and ideological resources available to the different parties named in each pairing, disparities that make some of those conflicts qualitatively different from others. To suggest otherwise is to fundamentally misunderstand how power is exerted and resisted in society.

Finally, and most consequentially, Ruiz's critique of a rights-based approach identifies a particular—and peculiar—source of backlash against those same rights. He lists a number of terms specific to US legal discourse and argues that, "their use creates confrontation" (p. 24). While he goes on to acknowledge that policy-making is by nature about confrontation, this particular formulation suggests that it is the *codification of specific rights* that creates discord between majority and minority language groups in society—and not the *existence of language-based discrimination or racism* in the first place.

This conceptual slippage has since become commonplace in language education research addressing the history of language rights in the United States. To offer but one example, Kenji Hakuta was honoured in 2010 for his remarkable career as a scholar of bilingualism and bilingual education by giving a prominent lecture sponsored by the American Educational Research Association. In fact, the lecture series at which he spoke is named for the Supreme Court case that marked the legal end of school segregation in the US. Hakuta (2011) used his own career as a foil to analyze the history of policy-making and research on bilingualism and bilingual education. As his discussion turned to the same period in which Ruiz was writing, namely the early 1980s, Hakuta stated,

> Although the bilingual programs were primarily transitional in intent … this transitional period also supported a zeitgeist of maintenance bilingualism fortified by a spirit of "affirmative ethnicity" … Advocacy for the value of bilingualism created a counterforce from new coalitions such as U.S. English … and other defenders of the melting pot ideal who wanted to support the common language of English and saw bilingual education as needless pampering of immigrants. (p. 163)

(Some of the terms Hakuta uses are specific to the US and require brief explanation. For example, transitional bilingual models, as their name suggests, use the student's home language in decreasing proportions over time to prepare the student to join

English-only classrooms; typically that transition from the home language to English occurs between kindergarten and grade 3 or 4. Maintenance models, by contrast, have as their goal that students become bilingual and biliterate. U.S. English was an organization founded in the early 1980s that aimed to have English declared the official language of the US. While they failed repeatedly at this, their state chapters have been more successful: 31 states have declared English as their official language.)

Different from Ruiz's (1984) discussion, Hakuta (2011) does make mention, albeit oblique, to the social movements that produced what he calls a zeitgeist of affirmative ethnicity. Similar to Ruiz, however, Hakuta locates the cause of the anti-bilingual education backlash *in that advocacy itself* and, again, not in the deep wells of anti-immigrant racism that characterize US society. The implication is the same: demands for maintenance language education, demands animated by "a spirit of 'affirmative ethnicity'" create, rather than resolve, social divisions based on language.

This conceptual slippage is similar to that identified by Fields and Fields (2014) with respect to race and racism in the United States. They name this slippage *racecraft*, that particular brew of ideology, social practices, and structures that functions to transform racism into the social construction of "race" so as to organize social life. To explain the term, they reference an incident in 2009 in New York City in which an off-duty, African-American police officer died. The off-duty officer had encountered a car theft in process and decided to pursue the thief. As on-duty officers joined the pursuit, one of them, a white officer, concluded his off-duty colleague was the thief, and shot him. As Fields and Fields write:

> The instant, inevitable—but, upon examination, bizarre—diagnosis of many people is that black officers in such situations have been "killed because of their skin color." But has their skin color killed them? If so, why does the skin color of white officers not kill them in the same way? … Everyone has skin color, but not everyone's skin color counts as race, let alone as evidence of criminal conduct. The missing step between someone's physical appearance and an invidious outcome is the practice of a double standard: in a word, racism. (p. 27)

Applying the same rhetorical questions to the case at hand, all parents make demands of the school system, but not all parents' demands are seen as controversial, let alone as the *cause* of a concerted political backlash. Indeed, as bizarre as it is to claim in the US that a cop has shot and killed someone "because" the victim is black, it is equally bizarre to argue that bilingual education comes under political attack "because" speakers of minoritized languages have demanded it.

Finally, it seems to me that it is no coincidence that this conceptual slippage emerged at the same historical moment in which the social movements that had won those rights in the first place were in decline. By the late 1970s and early 1980s, the most radical wings of these movements had either been disrupted by state infiltration or had grown demoralized by the failure to achieve more revolutionary change; while more mainstream (and some radical, especially Maoist) wings entered and became stable constituents of the Democratic Party. The election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 only hastened the rate of decline, insofar as his administration worked

quickly to turn back as many gains as possible from the civil rights era. This contributed to the widespread sense that a period of fundamental transformation had ended, indeed, had failed (see Smith 2006). To be sure, the world has changed dramatically in the 35 years since. It is telling, though, that within language education research the dominant read on this era has not.

The Current Critique of Rights in Language Education Research

Part of those changes in the last 30 years includes the development of post-structuralism as an intellectual current and its subsequent spread throughout the academy. Post-structuralism has had a profound impact on language (education) research, both in terms of challenging our very understanding of what language is, and in re-conceptualizing the role language plays in society. Interestingly, post-structuralism's impact in many wings of the academy is often referred to as "the linguistic turn," in reference to discourse as the unit of analysis and how it structures disciplinary knowledge. Since language, of course, is the bread-and-butter of applied linguistics, the impact of post-structuralism within our field is more often labeled "the social turn," referencing a shift away from the putatively objective investigation of language as the domain of a single individual (or their mind) and instead understanding language—indeed, discourse—in its social, historical, and value-laden contexts (see, e.g. Block 2003). Nevertheless, despite the considerable theoretical differences between the interpretation of language rights as discussed in the first part of this paper and the critique of language rights from post-structuralist perspectives, the conclusions drawn by both are remarkably similar.

This second part of the paper focuses on examples of recent language education research informed by post-structuralism, namely Makoni and Pennycook (2007), Pupavac (2012), and Wee (2011). Although they get there by different paths, they arrive at the same conclusion: that language rights exacerbate rather than ameliorate social divisions based on language. Moreover, while each of them uses history in different ways, each intends to write useful history (Inoue 2004). While I fundamentally disagree with the conclusions this research draws, I am extremely sympathetic to the questions it poses and to the critical historiography it represents.

In each case, this research begins by raising ontological questions about language itself. Makoni and Pennycook (2007) do this by describing language as an invention in two ways. First is the more widely acknowledged idea that what counts as a "language" is, in fact, the historical product of specific forms of nationalism that attended the advent of capitalism (e.g. Anderson 1991; Hobsbawm 1990; Wright 2004). The division of Latinate, Germanic, Slavic vernaculars into things called Portuguese, French and Romanian, or German, Dutch, and English, or Croatian, Czech, and Russian, are historical artifacts—or social constructions, as per the preferred term of the moment. That division had nothing to do with any

objective properties of humans' capacity for language or of those language families themselves. Second is a more novel and controversial argument that many of the languages now considered to be "indigenous" to post-colonial contexts are also invented; that is, they are equally the artifacts of historical processes and conflicts. Colonizers with limited proficiency in the language practices they encountered in turn codified those practices using grammars based on Western languages. Employing an Enlightenment sensibility to categorize and enumerate the world around them, they transformed linguistic practices among those they colonized into discrete, named "languages." In most cases, the peoples being colonized had not recognized these divisions historically, but suddenly found themselves assigned to this or that language as "native speakers."

Wee (2011) opens with a similar move, but extends the argument by defining the nature of language as both hybrid and unavoidable. To be sure, there is no shortage of examples of policies that have attempted to repress the use of a given language, or to enforce the separation of various languages (e.g. the traditional 50–50 approach to bilingual education, in which language x is used exclusively for one part of the day, language y for the other, or permitting only one language to be used in the media, etc.). Moreover, this repression and separation also exists relative to varieties of the same language, for example how the English forms "mines" (for "mine") or "aks" (for "ask") are racialized and stigmatized. Yet even in the most restrictive context, languages—and different varieties of the same language—are always in contact with one another, influencing, shaping, displacing, re-creating each other. In this sense, language can only ever be hybrid and unstable. Language is also unavoidable insofar as it mediates nearly every human interaction. Wee thus distinguishes language from other cultural practices and artifacts, such as religion, diet, and dress. It is on this ontological basis that he argues, "There will always be cases of discrimination simply as a consequence of human interaction and communication, even within what is ostensibly the same variety" (p. 92).

It is, in part, from this ontological perspective that these authors object to language rights. They argue that rights in their liberal democratic form require a stable and fixed object to protect. But if language by nature is unstable and fluid, it cannot be the object of rights in the first place. Moreover, not only do language rights reinforce otherwise invented boundaries between this or that language group, they also ignore the variation in language practice within a language group, and thus fail to resolve the competing interests among speakers of the same language. For Makoni and Pennycook (2007), their objection is even stronger. Insofar as liberal language rights target putatively indigenous languages (which, for them, are colonizers' inventions), those rights continue to inflict "epistemic violence" (p. 16) on the very populations they aim to protect. This violence is carried out through mother-tongue education policies, for example, which allow for instruction in "indigenous" languages in the early grades, when in fact there are considerable differences between the language being taught and the language practices of the children whom these policies were designed to support.

A second objection to rights raised by each of these authors is that language rights reproduce the historical structures and processes that led to language-based

discrimination in the first place. Wee (2011) and Pupavac (2012) focus in particular on liberal political theory (e.g. the work of Will Kymlicka and Alan Patten) and how that theory has been taken up with applied linguistics (e.g. the work of Stephen May and Tove Skutnabb-Kangas). They draw our attention to an implicit hierarchy written into language rights in their current forms around the world, which position some minoritized language groups (indigenous and national minorities) as more deserving of formal protections than others (immigrant and refugee groups). As Wee argues, a liberal approach to language rights "merely attempts to replace a set of historical processes that have worked to the advantage of one language historically (the current dominant language) with another set of the same processes that are now intended to work to the advantage of another language (the current minority language)" (p. 68). Makoni and Pennycook cite the work of Selma Sonntag (2003) to make the same point more emphatically, by connecting the reproduction of these historical processes within a given nation-state to the reproduction of imperialism. As Sonntag argues, using a rights-based approach to oppose the English-Only movement in the United States has had little impact on how that country imposes its interests around the globe in the name of liberal democracy.

The relationship between language and international governance regimes are in fact the core of Pupavac's (2012) argument. For her, international language rights have grown into a new kind of restrictive, neoliberal governance. Regulating how and what we speak is based on anti-humanist assumptions that individuals are incapable of negotiating the interactive, generative nature of language on their own. In one of the sharper iterations of her thesis, she writes:

> Contemporary language rights advocacy, like human rights advocacy more broadly, is wary of the *demos* and believes that it is necessary to circumscribe democracy in order to protect minority rights. In short, expert international or regional governance is preferred over popular national government. Language rights advocacy seeks to preserve diverse, plural societies, but its cultural and linguistic identity strategies are at the expense of political speech and experimentalism. Maximising such rights fixes divisions between people. Identity rights governance mummifies cultures in the name of cultural authenticity, and is antithetical to fostering diverse experiments in living and communication between people. (p. 250)

Pupavac (2012) links the rise of liberal language rights advocacy (and the broader human rights advocacy of which it is part) to the demise of emancipatory social movements in the early 1990s. This lowering of political horizons has had two important consequences. First, language rights advocates have romanticized past cultural practices as the object of revitalization policies. She argues, "The collapse of belief in future-oriented politics and political movements has fostered attraction towards *ante*-capitalist solutions" (p. 166) that attempt to resurrect essentialized notions of past linguistic and cultural practice. Second, such advocacy relies on the state, rather than on individual or group agency, to resolve conflict through increased governance. The irony, Pupavac notes, is that language rights advocates in effect have swapped linguistic imperialism for legal imperialism; that is, they provide political and moral cover for Western states and governance regimes (such as the United Nations) to intervene internationally in the name of "human rights."

As I suggested in the introduction to this second part of the paper, I am extremely sympathetic to many aspects of the language education research discussed here. For one, not only has it expanded our understanding of language in society from Western contexts to post-colonial ones. But also, it has challenged and fundamentally changed many of the core assumptions that past language education research had made, even and especially when it was conducted in non-Western contexts. For another, this research takes a critical stance towards historiography so as to make history available to us for contemporary analysis and debate. Finally, each of the authors whose work I have discussed here sets their research and scholarship in service of social justice, in this case, on behalf of those people around the world whose language practices are stigmatized, restricted, or even formally repressed. My argument is that these claims to social justice can make it more difficult to recognize the values that are embedded in this language education research, values that may in fact contradict the social-justice aims these authors have so clearly expressed.

Let us return to the ontological case these authors made, in particular that of Wee (2011). As mentioned above, to make his case about the distinct ontology of language, Wee compares it to other cultural practices, namely religion, diet, and dress. Besides categorizing language as a subset of culture, it is noteworthy that Wee does not consider conflicts over language in relation to those over other categories of difference, such as race, gender, or sexuality. This is a revealing move insofar as these categories are as much a social construction—they are as unavoidable and hybrid— as language is. That is, there is an objective and fluid spectrum of human phenotypes, gender expressions, and sexual orientations. As with language, there are a number of ideological, social, and material processes, situated in specific historical contexts, that have transformed each into social categories of "race," "gender," and "sexual orientation." Whole systems of oppression have been constructed based on those invented categories so as to organize social life to the advantage of some at the expense of others. As with language, these social categories are also at odds with the hybridity and unavoidability of the continua on which they are based. This begs the question whether Wee would be equally critical of formal rights meant to mitigate the oppression based on them, such as affirmative action in hiring or protections from police violence and harassment, abortion rights and equity-in-pay policies, same-sex marriage rights, equal housing or bank lending policies, and so on. Clearly, each of these policies or rights is incomplete, partial, and at best relieves a bit— sometimes even the worst bits—of oppression, rather than ending it. Would Wee consider these policies or rights as merely reifying the invented differences between "races," "genders," and "sexualities," or swapping an old set of discriminatory processes with a new one? This is the logical extension of his argument about language and language rights. However, such a stance would be much more controversial, and rightfully be subject to much greater scrutiny. It is thus extremely revealing that Wee avoids the topic altogether by comparing language to how we might pray, eat, or clothe ourselves.

A second concern relates to the relationship assumed or expressed in this set of language education research between ideology and material reality. Debates over this relationship are nothing new. Yet, it is worth acknowledging that while the

language education research discussed here is able to nod towards the material consequences of the conflicts over language they examine, their arguments frame the causes of those conflicts in purely ideological ways. This assumption can be difficult to see, since, as with Makoni and Pennycook (2007), they make explicit statements about the material consequences of the ideas they explore. They write, "while our argument is not one that could be described as materialist in the sense that languages are nothing but the product of real social and economic relations, it may be seen as materialist in that it is a way of conceptualizing language that focuses on the real and situated linguistic forms deployed as part of the communicative resources by speakers to serve their social and political goals" (p. 22). I agree with how they characterize their argument. However, their analysis of invention—"the invention of Africa and African tradition" (p. 5), of the "British colonial project…to turn Indian languages, culture and knowledge into objects of European knowledge" (p. 5), indeed the "inventions of a very specific ideological apparatus" for regulating the colonial world (p. 9)—offers no explanation of what impelled Europe into these spaces in the first place. That is, why did Europe need or want to carry out these inventions at all? Without considering the social and materials processes that fuelled European colonialism, we are left at best with a description of this language invention, but remain in need of an explanation for it.

Finally, each author focuses on individual solutions for getting out of—and for getting over—conflicts based on language. Makoni and Pennycook (2007) are explicit: "Through [language] disinvention we prefer to argue that it is more realistic to think in terms of alternatives than solutions" (p. 30). In each case, those alternatives are based on individual linguistic practice, even when that practice is theorized in a social context. For Wee, the alternative to language rights is also individual language practice, but in conditions that support individuals in participating in "deliberative democracy" (p. 164) over language use in society. Here, Wee applies a theoretical framework from political science to the question of language use, but it is noteworthy that this framework is premised on individuals and their participation in the public sphere, not on collective or group deliberations. Pupavac (2012) arrives at the same conclusion, but from a considerably different direction. Her response to the linguistic governance regimes she analyzes focuses on individual free speech and, from a left-libertarian perspective, limiting the state's encroachment on regulating individual speech. This pattern of individual alternatives to the social problem of language-based discrimination brings a certain irony to "the social turn" applied linguistics is presumed to have made. Individuals and individual language use are still at the heart of the matter. To be clear, the critical historiography this research conducts and the ontological questions it poses are firmly rooted in social analysis. In fact, it is this focus that makes this work so compelling to read. And yet, with conclusions based mostly on individual alternatives, we end up not very away from the methodological individualism that has long characterized applied linguistic research.

Conclusion: Reading Across Language Education Research

In considering both sets of language education research and their critique of language rights, there are considerable similarities in their argumentation and the conclusions they draw. This is striking to me, given the significant differences in theoretical orientation of each. In both cases, rights and how they are codified are seen as the source of ongoing conflict over language, not ideological, material, and structural systems of oppression in the first instance. In both cases, language rights are viewed predominantly, if not exclusively, in terms of the legal forms they take or the governance regimes they comprise. Absent is any sense of the historical processes (which most often include considerable grassroots social struggle) that created these rights at all. In both cases, appeals to realism and pragmatism are made to frame what should be thought of as alternatives, rather than solutions, to social conflict. The effect is to lower our political horizons for what is possible. Instead of imagining, and then working towards changing the social constellation we encounter, we are urged to be realistic and pragmatic and merely react to it. Finally, the question of individual versus collective alternatives is present in both sets, as well, albeit in different ways. In the former case, there is an implicit focus on the individual insofar as the collective, group-based struggles of civil rights movements are either absent from the analysis or criticized. In the latter case, language rights are seen as getting in the way of individual language practice in one way or the other.

There is no question that the language education research discussed here is motivated by social-justice values and aims to serve the interests of speakers of minoritized languages, whether in Western or post-colonial contexts. What is unclear, however, is whether the assumptions informing this research and the conclusions it draws on can deliver. By restricting analysis of rights to formal legal processes and not including popular efforts to campaign for those same rights; by misidentifying the source of hostility to certain forms of language education meant to alleviate language-based discrimination, while framing alternative forms of language education with dominant discourses in the name of pragmatism or realism; and by eschewing collective alternatives to language-based discrimination for individual ones, it seems to me we are leaving ourselves both theoretically and practically hamstrung to respond to everyday experiences of language-based discrimination.

References

Anderson, B. (1991). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origins and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso Books.

Baker, C. (2011). *Foundations of bilingual education* (5th ed.). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Bale, J. (2011). Tongue-tied: Imperialism and second language education in the United States. *Critical Education, 2*(8), 1–25.

Bale, J. (2012). Linguistic justice at school. In J. Bale & S. Knopp (Eds.), *Education and capitalism: Struggles for learning and liberation* (pp. 77–107). Chicago: Haymarket Books.

Bale, J. (2014). Heritage language education in the "national interest". *Review of Research in Education, 38*, 166–188.

Block, D. (2003). *The social turn in second language acquisition*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Brown, L. (2015, April 28). Multi-language elementary school proposed by Toronto Catholic board. *Toronto Star*. Retrieved from http://www.thestar.com/yourtoronto/education/2015/04/28/multi-language-elementary-school-proposed-by-toronto-catholic-board.html

Fee, M., Liu, N., Duggan, J., Arias, B., & Wiley, T. (2014). *Investigating language policies in IB World Schools: Final report*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Fields, K. E., & Fields, B. J. (2014). *Racecraft: The soul of inequality in American life*. London: Verso Books.

García, I. (1997). *Chicanismo: The forging of a militant ethos among Mexican Americans*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

García, O. (2005). Positioning heritage languages in the United States. *The Modern Language Journal, 89*, 601–605.

Gidney, R. D. (1999). *From hope to Harris: The reshaping of Ontario's schools*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Hakuta, K. (2011). Education language minority students and affirming their equal rights: Research and practical perspectives. *Educational Researcher, 40*, 163–174.

Haque, E. (2012). *Multiculturalism within a bilingual framework: Language, race, and belonging in*. Canada: University of Toronto Press.

Hayday, M. (2005). *Bilingual today, united tomorrow: Official languages in education and Canadian federalism*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill and Queen's University Press.

Hobsbawm, E. (1990). *Nations and nationalism since 1780: Programme, myth, reality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Inoue, M. (2004). Introduction: Temporality and historicity in and through linguistic ideology. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology, 14*, 1–5.

Mady, C., & Turnbull, M. (2010). Learning French as a second official language: Reserved for Anglophones? *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy, 99*, 1–23.

Makoni, S., & Pennycook, A. (2007). Disinventing and reconstituting languages. In S. Makoni & A. Pennycook (Eds.), *Disinventing and reconstituting languages* (pp. 1–41). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Martel, M., & Pâquet, M. (2010). *Langue et politique au Canada et au Québec: Une synthèse historique*. Montréal: Éditions du Boreal.

McGroarty, M. (2006). Neoliberal collusion or strategic simultaneity? On multiple rationales for language-in-education policies. *Language Policy, 5*, 3–13.

Navarro, A. (1995). *Mexican American youth organization: Avant-garde of the Chicano Movement in Texas*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Petrovic, J. E. (2005). The conservative restoration and neoliberal defenses of bilingual education. *Language Policy, 4*, 395–416.

Pupavac, V. (2012). *Language rights: From free speech to linguistic governance*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ricento, T. (2000). Historical and theoretical perspectives in language policy and planning. *Journal of SocioLinguistics, 4*, 196–213.

Ricento, T. (2005). Problems with the 'language-as-resource' discourse in the promotion of heritage languages in the U.S.a. *Journal of SocioLinguistics, 9*, 348–368.

Ruiz, R. (1984). Orientations in language planning. *NABE Journal, 8*, 15–34.

Ruiz, R. (2010). Reorienting language-as-resource. In J. E. Petrovic (Ed.), *International perspectives on bilingual education: Policy, practice and controversy* (pp. 155–172). Charlotte: Information Age Publishing.

San Miguel, G., Jr. (2001). *Brown, not white: School integration and the Chicano movement in Houston*. College Station: A&M University Press.

San Miguel, G., Jr. (2004). *Contested policy: The rise and fall of federal bilingual education in the United States, 1960–2001*. Denton: University of North Texas.

Smith, S. (2006). *Subterranean fire: A history of working-class radicalism in the United States*. Chicago: Haymarket Books.

Sonntag, S. (2003). *The local politics of global English: Case studies in linguistic globalization*. Lanham: Lexington Books.

Statistics Canada. (2011). *National household survey, Scarborough-Agincourt, Ontario, 2011* [data file]. Retrieved from https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E

Toronto Catholic District School Board. (2015, April 23). *TCDSB considering first ever multi-language Catholic elementary school* [Press release]. Retrieved from https://www.tcdsb.org/news/othernews/2015/pages/proposed-multi-language-school.aspx

Trujillo, A. L. (1998). *Chicano empowerment and bilingual education: Movimiento politics in Crystal City, TX*. New York: Garland Publishing.

Wee, L. (2011). *Language without rights*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wiley, T. G. (2007). The foreign language "crisis" in the U.S.: Are heritage and community languages the remedy? *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies, 4*, 179–205.

Wright, S. (2004). *Language policy and language planning: From nationalism to globalization*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.