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Toward Linguistic Justice: Conceptual Schemes for Immigrants, Refugees, and Migrants

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This conceptual essay argues that many access and equity issues facing marginalized populations in higher education is owed to a postsecondary polyglossia, or, a penetrable, learned, set of unique language registers necessary for one to access and navigate institutions of higher education both inside and outside of their physical and metaphysical walls. Facilitating the transmission of this postsecondary polyglossia is Donald Davidson's notion of the conceptual scheme, or, structures meant to interpret and transmit culture through language. Through Davidson and others, the postsecondary polyglossia is shown to permeate the totality of U.S. higher education, albeit inadvertently and through natural, institutional evolution. Ultimately, the postsecondary polyglossia must be made more accessible to immigrants, refugees, and migrants hoping to attend U.S. institutions of higher education and reap its many social, cultural, and economic benefits.

Keywords: Higher Education | Sociolinguistics | Agency | Language | Pragmatism

Near the end of his essay “A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs,” Philosopher Donald Davidson (1986) argued that there is no distinction “between knowing a language and knowing our way around in the world generally” (p. 173). This sense of linguistic agency—and its ability to help speakers know their way around diverse socioeconomic and sociopolitical worlds—was cleverly illustrated in William Shakespeare’s *The First Part of King Henry the Fourth* (1600).

Henry IV, Part I largely chronicles the tumultuous reign of King Henry IV, featuring the rebellious Hotspur attempting to overthrow Henry’s monarchy. Beyond the tales of bloodlines and bloodshed, therein operates a drunk, uneducated lout named Falstaff, slurring in what scholars have coined “comic prose,” (Riemer, 1980). Falstaff is an early incarnation of comic relief, often providing readers with a glimpse into lower class virtues and values held by many of Henry’s subjects. Falstaff represents the ignorant peasant, unable to transcend sociopolitical boundaries for lack of linguistic agency to do so. Foiling Falstaff, unsurprisingly, is a courtly, educated nobleman named Hotspur who recites eloquent, formal verse when communicating with members of the royal hierarchy. It is Hotspur—representing the new aristocracy—who recognizes linguistic agency and wields it as sword, a weapon, to dismantle Henry’s royal order.

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However, all that is well does not end well for Hotspur. Ultimately, Hotspur miscalculates his own linguistic agency and taunts Prince Harry into a duel of single combat. Unsurprisingly, a resilient Harry slays an overly confident Hotspur. Falstaff, however, cleverly turns a phrase into premeditated avoidance, pragmatically using his linguistic agency to transcend socioeconomic and sociopolitical boundaries and, quite literally, survive the battle and live to speak another day. Here, hundreds of years before anthropologists and sociolinguists gave birth to modern pragmatism in the 18th century, it was Shakespeare who first argued that linguistic agency—if used pragmatically—can help anyone overcome any boundary. And this linguistic agency determines whether one survives or perishes, flourishes or flounders.

To be clear, Shakespeare does not address U.S. higher education in his voluminous, prolific literary canon. However, over 400 years after Falstaff’s “comic prose” saved his own life, President Barack Obama acknowledged the importance of linguistic pragmatism just as Falstaff once did. In 2009, President Obama called for a simplification of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), including eliminating irrelevant questions, providing instant estimates of Pell Grant and loan eligibility during the application process, and incorporating college- or university-specific information into the application to better inform student borrowing and college choice (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). For President Obama, too many marginalized students and their support networks did not possess the linguistic agency to complete the FAFSA and procure the funding necessary for postsecondary education in the United States. Because of President Obama’s intervention, FAFSA completion rates soared, and the average U.S. family could complete the FAFSA in a mere twenty minutes (Office of the Press Secretary, 2015). Proliferating this sense of linguistic agency allowed marginalized students and their support networks the opportunity to act pragmatically and complete the FAFSA: a postsecondary education was now accessible.

Without such intervention, immigrants, refugees, and migrants cannot act as Falstaff once did to better their own lives in U.S. higher education contexts. “Comic prose” will simply not suffice. More so now than ever before in U.S. history, a postsecondary credential is the key to unlocking the gates of socioeconomic inequality, paving a pathway to the middle-class and breaking the cycle of poverty too familiar to scores of marginalized populations in the United States. Extant research has exhaustively documented the positive socioeconomic effects of a postsecondary credential, including higher employment rates and much higher starting and lifetime earnings (Kroeger, Cooke, & Gould, 2016). Yet, after President Obama’s linguistic intervention was proven immensely effective, no other nation-wide efforts have been made to dramatically increase the linguistic agency of marginalized students, especially those with first-generation college student status and without U.S. higher education knowledge required to successfully—pragmatically—navigate the system. Institutions of higher education in the U.S. have not followed President Obama’s lead, thus failing the thousands upon thousands of immigrants, refugees, and migrants hoping that U.S. higher education will catalyze their socioeconomic salvation and belonging in a 21st century democracy.

In this conceptual essay, I introduce the term “postsecondary polyglossia” and argue that the institutions of higher education in the U.S. have evolved to the point of establishing multiple registers, or context-specific languages, which unnecessarily stratifies and excludes immigrants, refugees, migrants, and those from other marginalized groups

through inadvertent denial of pragmatic linguistic agency. Ultimately, in the U.S. higher education system, there is no linguistic justice—no proliferation or simplification of the postsecondary polyglossia—despite decades of higher education research suggesting that the U.S. higher education system ought to become more inclusive to embrace an ever-changing, ever-diversifying U.S. society, including growing populations of immigrant, refugee, and migrant students (Araujo, 2011; Harklau, 1999; McBrien, 2005; Rincón, 2008). Here, linguistic justice may hold the key to diversity and inclusion of the system itself, and the path toward this justice begins with a definition of terms to better understand the exclusionary, oppressive nature of the language of U.S. higher education system.

Language, Register, and Polyglossia: Aims of the Work

Although its definition varies across academic disciplines, language is broadly defined as “the system of spoken or written communication used by a particular country, people, community, etc., typically consisting of words used within a regular grammatical and syntactic structure,” (Oxford University Press, 2018e). Within the parameters of this definition, a register is a “variety or level of language usage, especially as determined by social context and characterized by the range of vocabulary, pronunciation, syntax, etc., used by a speaker or writer in particular circumstances,” (Oxford University Press, 2018g). Reid (1956) first used the term “register” in a linguistic context to describe how people “will on different occasions speak (or write) differently according to what may roughly be described as different social situations” (p. 31). In the decades following, Romaine (1994) elaborated upon Reid’s definition, stating that a register is “variation in language conditioned by uses rather than users and involves consideration of the situation or context of use, the purpose, the subject-matter, and content of the message, and the relationship between participants” (p. 20). Here, it is important to understand that a register can be spoken or written, and that the act of speaking and/or writing can be non-verbal, such as the use of American Sign Language in the classroom or the automated closed-captioning of a video posted to an institutional website.

In 1975, the term “polyglossia” was first used in the *International Migration Review* to describe the “co-existence of two or more languages, or distinct varieties of the same language, within a speech community” (Oxford University Press, 2018f). Encompassing Romaine’s (1994) definition of a register, I argue that postsecondary institutions in the U.S.—and beyond—have developed multiple registers—a polyglossia—necessary for students to navigate in order to gain access to a postsecondary education. For instance, William Paterson University (2018) considered the register of postsecondary financial aid so complicated that it published a “Financial Aid Jargon” (para. 1) dictionary on its institutional website, defining terms such as “campus-based aid” (para. 4), “discharge” (para. 14), and “promissory note” (para. 44) in addition to context-specific acronyms such as AFDC, or, “aid to families with dependent children” (para. 1) and SAP, or, “satisfactory academic progress” (William Paterson University, 2018, para. 46). Similarly, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* published a lengthy article focused on the “admissions lexicon” and how “vast and confounding” (para. 1) terms such as “demonstrated interest,” “need-based aid,” and “holistic review” (para. 3) can be for prospective students and their support networks (Hoover, 2012). Ultimately, I use the term “postsecondary polyglossia” in this essay to refer to the multiple registers of the U.S. higher education system to

articulate how difficult it can be for immigrants, refugees, and migrants to know these registers, and thus, know the world around them, akin to Davidson's (1986) sketch of linguistic agency.

Moreover, this essay acknowledges the postsecondary work performed by Biber et al. (2002), namely the definition of multiple spoken and written registers employed by institutions of higher education in the United States in academic settings. In an important distinction, I argue that Biber et al.'s (2002) work is applicable to the multiple registers of postsecondary access, not merely the registers a student will encounter when they successfully apply to, enroll in, and attend a postsecondary institution. Therefore, I mean for the postsecondary polyglossia to refer to the common registers that nearly all students encounter on their path to accessing a postsecondary education, separate from Biber et al.'s (2002) multiple registers that are largely subject- or group-specific, such as the register of a textbook or an in-class lecture. Additionally, I mean to distinguish this essay from the incredible body of work dedicated to English-language learners and their academic progress at the postsecondary level (de Kleine & Lawton, 2015; Kibler, Bunch, & Endris, 2011; Roberge, Siegal, & Harklau, 2009). This extant research has articulated the struggles and successes of the English-language learner after they have already gained access to the postsecondary system in the United States. This essay means to elaborate upon this work and zoom out: I analyze the linguistic hurdles presented by the U.S. higher education system before the student has accessed an institution, framing the postsecondary polyglossia as a set of registers necessary for *access to the system*, not *success within the system*, thus filling a gap in the literature.

Darwinian Evolution: A Metaphor for the Origin of the Postsecondary Polyglossia

To better understand the concept of the postsecondary polyglossia, I argue that U.S. higher education can be likened to an evolutionary species that has developed its own set of idiosyncratic registers.

In his 1871 work *Descent of Man*, Darwin established the conceit that as human beings evolved, “articulate language” was “peculiar to man [the human],” beyond mere communicative sounds such as a dog barking out of eagerness or yelping in despair. Articulate language, for Darwin, is the “large power of connecting definite sounds with definite ideas; and this obviously depends on the development of mental faculties” (p. 53). Dogmatic of language development theory contends that as people assemble and form communities, the community invents new words, phrases, or concepts possessing a degree of in-group language utilitarianism, coupled with the strategic borrowing of familiar terms and concepts from other languages to facilitate rapid language growth: here is where the institution—the community—of higher education is undoubtedly human in a Darwinian, evolutionary sense.

As higher education evolved from its Ancient Greek and Latin roots to form early Italian and English universities and the powerhouse German research university (Kerr, 2001), these institutions developed vocabularies entirely unto itself and sufficiently borrowed a plethora of terminology to establish multiple registers across contexts, such as financial aid, admissions, student affairs, and other arms of the U.S. higher education body. Higher education's earliest foundational linguistic inventions were the codification of “college” and “university.” Early Roman societies coined the term “collegium” to define

several persons being united in any office or for any common purpose (Smith, 1875). Likewise, the Latin term “universitas” referred to a whole or a collective of individuals associated into one body, society, company, community, guild, or corporation (Lewis & Short, 1879). *Universitas Bononiensis*, or the University of Bologna, was the first institution of higher education to use the term “universitas” in its official title at its founding in 1088 (Università di Bologna, 2017).

Later in the 13th century, the term “college” was borrowed by European churches to describe religious clerics for eleemosynary learning and charity—“Religious and grete colegies [colleges] and cathedral chirchis maken many false eieris” (Oxford University Press, 2018b)—and societies of scholars—“Custos et scholares Domus Scholarium de Merton. Collegium [college] Domus prædictæ,” (Oxford University Press, 2018c). In text, Edmund of Abingdon—the Archbishop of Canterbury and an adjunct lecturer at Oxford University—first used the term “university” to describe the experiences of a student at Oxford: “So þat he bigan at Oxenford of diuinite, So noble alosed þer nas non in al þe vniuersite [university]” (Oxford University Press, 2018i). Elaborating upon the concept of the college, pre-Renaissance historian William Harrison asserted in 1567, “In each one of these colleges, they have one or more treasurers whom they call bursars,” (Oxford University Press, 2018a), the first usage of the term “bursar” in a postsecondary context. Subsequently, William Laud, the Archbishop of Canterbury, first used the term “undergraduate” to describe the time necessary to earn a postsecondary credential in 1630: “I think fourteen years is little enough for a bachelor of arts or undergraduate abroad,” (Oxford University Press, 2018h).

Slowly, and over the course of centuries, the institution of higher education codified its many registers, and today, its evolution is entirely idiosyncratic to the system itself. Words such as “college,” “university,” “undergraduate,” and “bursar” have since been elaborated upon to encompass such terms as “liberal arts colleges,” “R1 universities,” “nontraditional undergraduates,” and “payment of segregated fees to the campus bursar.” Nowhere outside of a postsecondary context would the following sentence find meaning: “Upon successful completion of the FAFSA, your EFC will be calculated, after which you will need to contact the financial aid advisor of your college to help you estimate your cost of attendance, including tuition, fees, room, and board at our university.” This utterance of the financial aid register—part of the postsecondary polyglossia—is crucial for immigrants, refugees, and migrants to comprehend and proceduralize to access an exclusive, yet benevolent U.S. higher education system: when and where will they develop their linguistic agency to gain access to this system?

The Postsecondary Polyglossia: Bourdieu, Fish, Gee, and Davidson

A turn toward linguistic justice for immigrants, refugees, and migrants requires the acknowledgement of universities as anthropomorphic entities with the agency to develop and speak distinct registers: the postsecondary polyglossia. This anthropomorphic development and employment of the postsecondary polyglossia can be articulated through the philosophies of Pierre Bourdieu (1976, 1977), Stanley Fish (1976), James Paul Gee (1990), and Donald Davidson (1973), as each philosopher has maintained that languages can be learned and disseminated through cultural reproduction, the phenomenon necessary for immigrants, migrants, and refugees to find their place in U.S. higher education.

Bourdieu and Cultural Reproduction

Nearly three decades of research contends that first-generation college students—namely immigrants, refugees, and migrant students—do not experience the same level of postsecondary success as their second-, third-, and fourth-generation peers. First-generation students—which can include immigrants, migrants, and refugees—tend to have a distinct disadvantage when it comes to knowledge about postsecondary education, have less financial support from family, experience a more difficult transition from secondary school to a postsecondary institution, and are less likely to enroll in four-year institutions and graduate from the same institution within six years (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004). The struggles of the first-generation college student can be negotiated by Bourdieu's (1977) cultural reproduction theory: members of a social class maintain cultural practices to reproduce existing social structures and their cultural advantages over members from lower social classes. This process, reproduction, allows for entire cultures—such as the college and university culture—to be passed on from member to member or from institution to institution. Undoubtedly, U.S. higher education owes its current culture to those established by early Italian, French, English, and German universities. Kerr's (2001) notion of the “multiversity” only came into existence in the United States after German research universities elaborated upon the postsecondary organizational scheme of Italian and English universities, resulting in the German model being directly replicated by Johns Hopkins University in 1876, the first graduate school in the United States. Today, nearly every public and private four-year institution in the U.S. has at least one graduate program, along with dozens—if not hundreds—of undergraduate degree plans. In no uncertain terms, the U.S. higher education system is a product of cultural reproduction.

On an individual level, the absence of postsecondary socialization most directly affects immigrants, refugees, and migrants arriving to the United States and hoping to attend one of its many colleges or universities. For Bourdieu (1977), socialization is the process by which individuals learn and adopt social norms and group behaviors of a certain culture, allowing those individuals with cultural agency necessary to act within a culture to reflect and reproduce the culture. The result of this socialization process is the “habitus” or the “end product of structures which practices tend to reproduce in such a way that the individuals involved are bound to reproduce them, either by consciously reinventing or by subconsciously imitating already proven strategies as the accepted, most respectable, or even the simplest course to follow. [They]... come to be seen as inherent in the nature of things,” (Bourdieu, 1976, p. 118). These structures and practices, so critical to the survival and reproduction of a given culture, requires the use of language to disseminate and replicate its ideals, norms, and values. Hearken back to the adoption of the research university by Johns Hopkins or the struggles of second-generation students versus their first-generation peers: cultural reproduction is impossible without the language to interpret and mediate its many practices and traditions. However, immigrants, refugees, migrants, and others occupying marginalized groups in the United States simply are not socialized into U.S. higher education culture: more specifically, the many registers of the U.S. higher education culture are not being transmitted to these populations.

Immigrants, refugees, migrants, and other marginalized populations cannot reproduce the culture and language of U.S. higher education because these individuals lack the pre-existing social structures to gain access to such an exclusive set of registers. Access to a social security number and bank account immediately allows access to the register of postsecondary financial aid through the many channels of communication between students, their families, and education finance corporations in the United States (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Attendance in a primary or secondary school whose staff is comprised of educators holding advanced degrees facilitates the dissemination of the postsecondary polyglossia from teacher to student: member to member cultural reproduction (González, Stoner, & Jovel, 2003). Having a college-educated parent or family member gives second-generation college students an incredible advantage that first-generation students do not have (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004). However, these social structures only facilitate the transmission of the postsecondary polyglossia with the assistance of a cultural member or translator: a bank's college advisor, a teacher with a postsecondary education, or a friend or family member with a degree or some postsecondary experience. For immigrants, refugees, and migrants to learn and reproduce the postsecondary polyglossia, these populations must be invited into the interpretive community of the polyglossia to render their cultural socialization and reproduction processes both persistent and autonomous.

Fish and Interpretive Communities

As a member of the reader-response tradition, Stanley Fish (b. 1938) believes that the reader is responsible for producing the meaning of a given text: President Obama's simplification of the FAFSA emphasized this very notion of differentiated interpretation. In his 1976 essay "Interpreting the 'Variorum,'" Fish (1976) introduced "interpretive communities" and defined them as groups of people who employ the same strategies for composing and interpreting text (p. 484). To illustrate his point, Fish engaged with "Lycidas" by John Milton and argued that as a scholar, he approached "Lycidas" with the prior knowledge that the poem is a pastoral elegy written by John Milton, the same poet of *Paradise Lost*, therefore positioning Fish in a certain interpretive community (p.481). In short, Fish approached a poem with prior knowledge and experiences that others do not possess, thus separating Fish from those without said knowledge and experience into a different interpretive community. Furthermore, Fish argued that interpretive communities embrace interpretive strategies that are not natural or universal but learned: Bourdieu's habitus can indeed be taught, as can the postsecondary polyglossia, made painfully apparent in Armstrong and Hamilton's (2015) *Paying for the Party: How Colleges Maintain Inequality*.

Drawing on a single case-study, Armstrong and Hamilton (2015) followed a cohort of freshman female students who occupied the same floor in the same dorm at a Midwestern flagship public research university—dubbed Midwest University or "MU"—from 2003-2004. Included in this study were two girls and roommates from opposite ends of the socioeconomic spectrum: Hannah, an affluent, second-generation college student, and Alyssa, a first-generation college student occupying a lower socioeconomic class. The researchers learned that Hannah was unaware of Alyssa's lack of socioeconomic privilege because Alyssa rarely spoke about it: "I didn't ever bring it to their [Hannah and the other

girls’] attention. I’m pretty sure they probably knew that I wouldn’t just go shopping and spend money. I would just kind of seclude myself to where, you know, they wouldn’t even ask me to go,” (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2015, p. 27). Despite their lack of interpersonal communication, Hannah and Alyssa both felt the divisive effect of the postsecondary polyglossia, especially when financing their education. One night, while Alyssa and Hannah were at a basketball game, Hannah overheard that a friend of hers had charged all of their expenses to “the bursar.” Another friend in their group asked, “What’s the bursar?” and Hannah replied, “It’s the thing your parents pay for.” The friend responded, “My parents don’t pay for it. I pay for everything.” Shocked, Hannah exclaimed, “What? I can’t imagine paying for everything!” (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2015, p. 27).

Here, Hannah did not need to subject herself to an enculturation of the postsecondary polyglossia and into the interpretive community: she was already a member because of her college-educated parents and the successful reproduction of culture, and thus, language. Alyssa, on the other hand, needed to dedicate intellectual resources to the learning of postsecondary financial aid’s register to properly navigate the postsecondary system and finance her education. Given their socioeconomic positioning, Alyssa and Hannah interpreted the notion of a “bursar” in drastically different ways. For Alyssa, the bursar was *where* she needed to pay for her postsecondary education. Hannah’s conception of the bursar was an incurred cost outside of her responsibility; it was *what* her parents, fellow members of the interpretive community of university culture, needed to pay for. Fish’s notion of the interpretive community is crucial to understanding the postsecondary polyglossia as it is learned and disseminated.

This energy dedicated to the pragmatic socialization into U.S. higher education culture and its polyglossia could be the difference between Hannah earning her degree in four years and Alyssa becoming another first-generation statistic, bouncing from institution to institution and leaving the university in debt and without a degree (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2015, pp. 232-233). How can immigrants, refugees, and migrants avoid this outcome? In short, U.S. institutions of higher education need to acknowledge their own D/discourse and educate members outside of their own culture and interpretive community.

Gee and the d/Discourse of U.S. Higher Education

James Paul Gee (1990) differentiated between “little d” discourse and “big D” Discourse by explaining that “little d” discourse is “connected stretches of language that make sense, like conversations, stories, reports, arguments,” whereas “big D” Discourses are “ways of being in the world, or forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, social identities, as well as gestures, glances, body positions, and clothes” (p. 142). What makes the language of U.S. higher education so difficult is that each register is, for Gee, a “big D” Discourse: the register of admissions includes wholly different words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities than does the register of financial aid, student affairs, philanthropy, or any other postsecondary context. The postsecondary polyglossia is a collection of “big D” Discourses. As a result, it is not enough for immigrants, migrants, and refugees to know the postsecondary polyglossia: they must know how to pragmatically use the polyglossia to perform certain tasks, with each task mediated by a different register, or, a different “big D” Discourse.

Early in the field of study, Hossler and Gallagher (1987) explored the postsecondary search process and found that students of color, students from low-income families, and students without college-educated parents “conduct searches which take longer and are less efficient” (p. 214). In addition, these marginalized students were more likely to engage with the free services from high school counselors, while high-ability students—evidenced by higher SAT scores and family income levels—tend to conduct more sophisticated searches. Here, marginalized students were found to seek membership in the interpretive community because they were outsiders, whereas their privileged peers already belonged. These findings were echoed in McDonough’s (1997) *Choosing Colleges: How Social Class and Schools Structure Opportunity*, as the author chronicled the college choice process of female students from four different high schools of four different socioeconomic classes. Most interesting was McDonough’s discussion of language as a barrier to postsecondary access, namely the admissions essay and application process. On multiple occasions, students from the wealthiest socioeconomic classes—with second-generation college parents and individualized college counseling provided by their school—still hired private, professional college mentors and tutors to refine admissions essays and complete the application process (McDonough, 1997, p. 23, p. 25, p. 51). Moreover, the college counselor at the most prestigious, elite high school in the study was “an admissions officer for thirteen years at a competitive Eastern state university and knows what kinds of information and what level of detail is useful to admissions readers,” (p. 103). For Gee (1990), wealthy students bought access to an interpretive community member fluent in the “big D” Discourse of the college application and essay.

The emergence of private college counselors and the evidence proffered by Hossler and Gallagher (1987) and McDonough (1997) speaks to the notion that the postsecondary polyglossia has become increasingly difficult to navigate but that this navigation can be bought. Privileged students—ones who could afford “big D” Discourse translators in McDonough’s (1997) study—access U.S. higher education at a much greater rate than their marginalized peers, namely immigrants, migrants, and refugees. For these populations, the only interpretive community member accessible may be their school counselor (Fitzpatrick & Schneider, 2016), and even then, longitudinal research has demonstrated that these secondary school counselors are overworked and carry caseloads in the hundreds, leading to high levels of burnout and position turnover (Bardhoshi, Schweinle, & Duncan, 2014). A similar phenomenon has occurred in the international student recruitment sector, as international students who are wealthy enough to afford an international student agent—a member of the interpretive community—often find institutions of a better fit both academically and financially (Zhang & Hagedorn, 2011).

Ultimately, institutions of higher education in the U.S. must acknowledge the oppressive nature of their many “big D” Discourses, as wealthy students and their support networks can buy membership into an interpretive community, thus translating the postsecondary polyglossia and accessing the U.S. higher education system, especially its elite and socioeconomically-stratifying institutions. This why is even the most elite high school students hired private college counselors in McDonough’s (1997) study: these individuals understood that the most elite institutions of higher education require high levels of postsecondary polyglossia proficiency to maintain the elite status of the college or university. Fish’s (1976) interpretive community was one created to ensure cultural survival, transmission, and reproduction through language.

However, the cultural reproduction of the postsecondary polyglossia need not be contingent upon class in modern contexts. For U.S. higher education to lift its veil and reproduce its culture on a massive scale to socialize immigrants, refugees, and migrant students to the system, these institutions must acknowledge the exclusive, oppressive nature of their many registers or “big D” Discourses. Yet, registers can be taught to and learned by all: language can be translated. In a reverse-engineering of Bourdieu’s (1977) cultural reproduction theory, it is language education, not extant cultural (and class) membership, which dictates the cultural reproduction of the postsecondary system and its polyglossia. In this sense, an acknowledgement of these “big D” Discourses becomes the curricular foundation to educate immigrants, refugees, and migrants of the postsecondary culture and language, unlocking its many social, cultural, and economic benefits.

Davidson’s Conceptual Scheme: Disseminating a Final Vocabulary through Interpretive Communities

In his presidential address to the American Philosophical Association, Donald Davidson (1973) argued that as languages evolved, they differ in their resources for dealing with one or another range of phenomena: “What comes easily in one language may come hard in another, and this difference may echo significant dissimilarities in style and value,” (p. 6). In essence, languages evolve idiosyncratically and cause difficulties in interpretation. For Fish (1976), the notion of the interpretive community requires socialization of a culture’s members to develop language fluency and fluency of interpretation. However, Davidson (1973) elaborated on this idea by asserting that any changes or contrasts across different languages can be “explained and described by using the equipment of a single language,” (p. 6): Language requires a conceptual scheme to learn, interpret, and act upon a language. Davidson’s notion of the conceptual scheme is one that provides order and organization of a language so that unintelligible languages and empirical content become intelligible, as language is not a “medium independent of the human agencies that employ it; a view of language that surely cannot be maintained,” (p. 7).

This maintenance of language—the cultural reproduction of the postsecondary polyglossia to ensure its survival—currently lacks a large-scale conceptual scheme to render the language intelligible for immigrants, refugees, and migrants. Instead of asking how U.S. higher education can become more accessible for marginalized populations, U.S. higher education should ask itself, “How can we simplify and spread our language?” The inequities facing these populations are owed to a U.S. higher education system which excels in its own cultural reproduction but has failed to provide a conceptual scheme for immigrants, refugees, and migrants to learn its language and gain access to its culture. For Davidson, there is no such thing as an untranslatable language or incommensurable culture (p. 8); even though colleges and universities employ multiple registers unfamiliar to marginalized populations, there are ways in which bridges between languages can be built, interpretive communities can be developed, registers can be transmitted, and cultures can be reproduced.

Consider Erisman, Looney, and the Institute for Higher Education Policy’s (2008) report focused on increasing higher education access and success for immigrants. Their study produced three recommendations specifically targeting the immigrant population in the United States, and unsurprisingly, all three recommendations are versions of conceptual

schemes meant to disseminate the postsecondary polyglossia through interpretive communities (Erisman, Looney, & the Institute for Higher Education Policy, 2008, p. 2). The first recommendation called for an increase in support for programs that “address the barriers experienced by immigrants seeking a college education,” including increasing the “availability of ESL classes for both teenage and adult immigrants, as language can be a fundamental barrier to college access and success” (p. 2). Recommendation two demanded more transparent financial aid and college application processes, “including widespread dissemination of information, resources, and contacts,” akin to President Obama’s aforementioned simplification of the FAFSA. In fact, later in recommendation two, the authors assert that immigrants “are less likely to know that financial aid resources are available and how to apply. They are also less likely to have the language and financial literacy skills to navigate through the complex financial aid application process” (p. 2). Recommendation three urged the creation of state, local and institutional policies that “target the differing needs of various immigrant populations,” because “a lack of understanding of the American higher education system is a fundamental barrier that can prevent immigrants from gaining access to college” (p. 2). These researchers called for Davidson’s (1973) notion of a conceptual scheme for the dissemination of the postsecondary polyglossia, requiring institutions of higher education to acknowledge the oppressive nature of their “big D” Discourses (Gee, 1990) and provide interpretive communities (Fish, 1976) for marginalized populations.

Postsecondary Polyglossia and the Conceptual Scheme: Extant Practices

Although never articulated as cultural reproduction factories of the postsecondary polyglossia, several extant practices and programs demonstrate the positive effects of acknowledging and teaching the postsecondary polyglossia to marginalized populations such as immigrants, migrants, and refugees.

A National-Level Conceptual Scheme

President Obama’s national-level conceptual scheme—the simplification of the FAFSA—was a large-scale acknowledgement of the financial aid register (a “big D” Discourse) and its integration with other facets of society, a manifestation of Bourdieu’s (1977) structural structures. Deemed improvements over previous versions of the FAFSA, President Obama’s simplification encouraged students and families to apply for federal aid in October, as opposed to January, and allowed applicants electronic and instantaneous access to the previous year’s tax information (Office of the Press Secretary, 2015). For Obama, access to federal tax information and early access to application procedures provided students and their families more time and resources to societal structures regulating and organizing the financial aid register: college and university financial aid offices and bursars use the same register appearing on federal tax forms and applications because of their symbiotic and reciprocal employment of the register. However, as part of Obama’s initiative, a newly established “College Scorecard” was “redesigned with direct input from students, families, and their advisers to provide the clearest, most accessible, and most reliable national data on cost, graduation, debt, and post-college earnings,” (Office of the Press Secretary, 2015, para. 3). Here, Obama understood the relationship between the

financial aid register and the admissions register, so this particular conceptual scheme was effective as it translated a larger portion of the polyglossia instead of a single, context-specific register. Obama's work was a Davidsonian conceptual scheme cutting across socioeconomic lines to translate and simplify two "big D" Discourses, which then provided access to postsecondary culture, a modern realization of Bourdieu's cultural reproduction.

The Common Application

Over 700 institutions in 49 states—including institutions from Asian and European countries—use The Common Application to allow students to apply to multiple institutions using the same application, written in the same language (The Common Application, 2017). Since its inception in 2007, The Common Application system processed over 1.5 million applications during the 2017 application season, the largest common postsecondary application system in the United States (The Common Application, 2017). The Common Application also published an "Application Dictionary" that educates prospective college students on key terms they may encounter during the application process (The Common Application, 2018). In addition, the Common Black College Application has operated since 1998 and allows prospective students to apply to multiple institutions for a discounted rate of \$35 in total (Common Black College Application, 2015).

In these instances, institutions of higher education have communicated and collaborated to simplify the college application process for all prospective students. Although these applications still employ the postsecondary polyglossia—namely, the admissions register evidenced by the necessity for an "Application Dictionary"—a common application is a consolidated employment of the postsecondary polyglossia: this is a positive step toward linguistic justice for immigrants, migrants, and refugees. Even though The Common Application and the Common Black College Application are only available in English and still employ an oppressive "big D" Discourse, immigrants, migrants, and refugees benefit from this conceptual scheme. Subsequently, it is not inconceivable to imagine all postsecondary institutions in the United States employing the same application, written in English and other languages, using a consistent, but simplified version of the admissions register. However, such an effort would require unprecedented communication and collaboration among institutions of higher education, yet as a result, the interpretive community would explode and all immigrants, migrants, and refugees would have access to the same conceptual scheme for accessing a postsecondary education in the United States.

The First-Year Seminar

At the institutional level, first-year seminars serve as micro-level conceptual schemes meant to transmit the postsecondary polyglossia, which in turn reproduces culture. DeAngelo (2014) found that females participating in first-year seminars were more likely to persist than their male counterparts because of the academic engagement of females: females tended to discuss course content—an academic register (Biber et al., 2002)—outside of class more than males (p. 62). Furthermore, students who lived off campus but demonstrated an ability to meet with classmates on campus to discuss course content had a positive impact on student retention (DeAngelo, 2014, p. 63). Students who reported

studying with other students were also retained by their first institutions at a higher rate than students who did not report studying with other students (DeAngelo, 2014, p. 65). Here, the success of the first-year seminar was contingent upon an individual student's motivation to socialize with other students learning an academic register akin to Biber et al.'s (2002) work: students who recognized the power of the register formed Fish's (1976) interpretive communities. However, DeAngelo (2014) asserted that a first-year seminar is not enough to retain students, at its "best and most successful, first-year curricula as part of a comprehensive campus-wide first-year initiative that has strong executive and administrative leadership and support from the entire campus community," (p. 66). Here, the entire university needs to participate in the interpretive community, translating and simplifying their "big D" Discourses, to reproduce the university culture and the postsecondary polyglossia through its students and onto future generations. However, the first-year seminar does little to increase access to the U.S. higher education system for immigrants, migrants, and refugees: this conceptual scheme prioritizes those who have already found membership in an interpretive community and found belonging in the postsecondary culture.

Pre-College Student Profiles

The state of California's new Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) recently shed light on the emphasis of college and career readiness as it relates to the equitable funding of California's many public high schools. Analyzing the LCFF, Bae and Darling-Hammond's (2014) report found that California's secondary schools can increase college access by compiling student profiles that communicate academic and personal information with colleges and universities, publishing a graduation portfolio that "systematically assembles evidence of students' attainment of academic, technical, and dispositional competencies," and a recognition on a student's high school diploma of "particularly rigorous accomplishments, such as credentials, certifications, and cumulative badges," (p. 5). Each communication method of this local conceptual scheme effectively provides students with a liaison or scaffold (a member of the interpretive community) through which to communicate the register of their high school achievements. Just as "summa cum laude" written on a college degree—a particularly rigorous accomplishment—is meant to carry linguistic agency within the university's interpretive community, the organizing and distribution of a student's academic information and college readiness level conveys a student's ability to learn and transmit the postsecondary polyglossia. In short, a college readiness profile invites a student into the interpretive community and successfully highlights a student's ability to maintain the polyglossia and assist the system in the survival of its language and culture.

However, immigrants, refugees, and migrants may lack a codified, U.S. secondary education record to communicate their willingness to learn, transmit, and reproduce the polyglossia and culture. They may also be restricted in their access to an institution whose interpretive community has fully embraced and supports the first-year seminar. Members of these groups may even be without social security numbers and access to basic financial advising to finance one's postsecondary education. Given these hurdles, U.S. higher education must pragmatically embrace the following conceptual schemes to allow immigrants, refugees, and migrants access to an unnecessarily exclusive linguistic system.

Expanding Conceptual Schemes for Immigrants, Refugees, and Migrants

First and foremost, to elaborate upon Erisman, Looney, and the Institute for Higher Education Policy's (2008) report, colleges and universities should compose pre-college materials—including information on how to apply to the institution, how to apply for financial aid, and how to submit transcripts or educational records—in as many languages as possible and make these translations available on their institutional websites. The first hurdle to joining an interpretive community is the language barrier: to learn the postsecondary polyglossia, one must be provided access to the registers in their native tongue. Extant research has already demonstrated the hurdles facing immigrants, refugees, and English-language learners trying to access U.S. higher education (Kanno & Varghese, 2010; Rodriguez & Cruz, 2009), with Kanno and Cromley (2015) finding that most English-language learners (ELLs) struggle in the early stages of the college planning process and never apply to a four-year institution. These enrollment gaps could be filled if these ELLs and their support networks had access to pre-college materials in their native language. Given the incredible power and accuracy of modern language translation applications (e.g. Google Translate), this conceptual scheme challenges U.S. institutions of higher education to reject the Anglocentric origins of its language and produce polylingual pre-college materials and resources. There is no reason why each and every immigrant, refugee, and migrant cannot be granted access to any postsecondary register in their native language. Once English has been translated, the postsecondary polyglossia can follow.

Admissions offices in U.S. institutions must reciprocate efforts made by immigrants, refugees, and migrants to access and learn the postsecondary polyglossia by educating themselves on immigration, refugee, and migrant law to better understand these marginalized populations and the many administrative hurdles they encounter on their journey to higher education: this conceptual scheme must be a cooperative one. Akin to Rincón's (2008) call for institutions of higher education to learn more about immigration law to better serve immigrant students and DREAMers, admissions offices in these institutions must become more educated on international refugee and migrant issues as well, making sure to adopt best practices to transmit the postsecondary polyglossia and ensure a successful transition from secondary education to postsecondary education.

Because the United States is the most popular resettlement destination for refugees and their families (Zong & Batalova, 2017) and the top country for receiving immigrant families (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2015), U.S. higher education must catalyze a conceptual scheme structured to facilitate parent to child or family member to family member cultural reproduction: immigrants, refugees, and migrants who are nontraditional and adult students must be prioritized. Baum and Flores (2011) hinted at such a scheme when their study found that almost half of Mexican-origin youth have parents with no high school credential, illustrating the dearth of immigrant familial knowledge of the United States K-12 system, much less the language knowledge necessary to navigate U.S. higher education. Furthermore, the same authors found that children immigrating to the United States before the age of thirteen had a postsecondary

attendance rate nearly twice that (42%) of their thirteen to nineteen-year-old peers (26%): “Individuals who come to the United States as young children are likely to have an easier time learning the language and internalizing the norms of American society” (Baum & Flores, 2011, p. 175). In essence, younger immigrants have more time to find belonging in a Fishian interpretive community to facilitate a learning of the postsecondary polyglossia and subsequent postsecondary placement. However, little research has focused on what happens to these children’s parents and how these parents are invited into an interpretive community to learn the language. Therefore, U.S. higher education must intensify their efforts to educate parents of immigrants, refugees, and migrants—especially those with children aged thirteen to nineteen, the age demographic of immigrants less likely to attend a postsecondary institution—to catalyze the cultural reproduction process in the home. The postsecondary polyglossia could be spoken at the dinner table if immigrant, refugee, and migrant parents were invited into the interpretive community via a conceptual scheme.

On a micro level, partnerships between immigrant-focused community organizations and community colleges have popped up across the country in states as geographically and ethnically diverse as California, Minnesota, New York, and Kentucky. For instance, the Kentucky Dream Coalition (KDC) and Bluegrass Community and Technical College (BCTC) have been working in tandem, a part of the Building Community Partnerships to Serve Immigrant Workers (BCPIW) initiative driven by the Ford and Kellogg Foundations in 2014. The partnership between the KDC and BCTC was created “to help immigrant youth and their parents to access higher education through mentoring, programming and advocacy” (National Council for Workforce Education, 2015, p. 28), given the surrounding area’s high Mexican immigration rate. To date, this partnership has developed a 17-credit, entry-level biotechnology certificate pathway for Latino immigrant students to immediately address the local need for credentialed biotechnology workers in the region (National Center for Workforce Education, 2015). This 17-credit certificate teaches “the necessary language, concepts and mathematical tools for entry level jobs in laboratory employment,” as well as includes four new three-credit ESL courses that directly address immigrant student need for specialized speaking and listening, reading, and writing courses (National Center for Workforce Education, 2015, pp. 28-29). Moreover, in an effort to broaden the interpretive community of the conceptual scheme, “the team, in conjunction with the faculty, developed a calendar of local events and venues related to the immigrant/Latino community so the college can target market the new program option” (National Center for Workforce Education, 2015, p. 29). These marketing strategies will be bilingual in nature because the partnership recognized the final vocabulary of the immigrant population of the area and acknowledged the interpretive difficulty of the postsecondary polyglossia. This pragmatic focus on language education and bilingual marketing increased college access for thousands of Latino immigrants in the greater Lexington, Kentucky.

Similarly, the Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education (CCIE) is a national network of community colleges and research organizations dedicated to facilitating college pathways for immigrant, refugee, and migrant students across the country. In 2016, Montes and Choitz found that an emphasis on English language education connected with contextualized degree- or certificate-specific academic information was key to the success of community college partnerships and spikes in immigrant student enrollment, persistence, and degree completion. The authors asserted that although “many

immigrants lack the education and English language skills needed to succeed in today’s economy” (p. 4), immigrant-serving organizations stressed that a “significant value of partnering with community colleges is the ability to offer their clients programs to improve their skills—including English language skills—and earn credentials that can help them do better in their current jobs and prepare for better employment,” (Montes & Choitz, 2016, p. 9). In nearly every case study in the BCPIW and CCIE coalitions, an emphasis on language education and dissemination of pre-college materials to immigrant-focused community organizations succeeded in facilitating immigrant access to the postsecondary polyglossia, thus increasing postsecondary access and fostering cultural reproduction.

However, bachelor’s degree-granting institutions often lack this connectedness—this conceptual scheme to transmit the polyglossia—with community organizations and immigrant, refugee, and migrant families. United We Dream is the largest immigrant youth-led organization in the United States, with dozens of public university immigration offices endorsing the group, including elite, four-year institutions such as the University of Texas at Austin (The University of Texas at Austin, 2017), and the University of California at Berkeley (The University of California at Berkeley, 2017). These benevolent partnerships and mutual acknowledgements do little to provide the outreach necessary to broaden the interpretive community and transmit the postsecondary polyglossia to immigrant, refugee, and migrant populations, especially undocumented students whose belonging in a college or university could save their life.

Four-year institutions should model the behavior of community colleges and work to partner with immigrant-, refugee-, and migrant-serving community organizations to catalyze and accelerate the learning of the postsecondary polyglossia and cultural reproduction. This type of conceptual scheme—coupled with polylingual pre-college materials and intentional focusing upon the parents and guardians of these marginalized populations to intensify cultural reproduction—could rapidly broaden the interpretive community, thus working to secure postsecondary access for those whose lives would be infinitely enhanced through an earning of a college credential.

Conclusion

Ultimately, language has been and always will be the gatekeeper of U.S. higher education, and because of its evolutionary nature, the postsecondary polyglossia will continue to borrow its terminology from other cultures, and thus, change. Consider recent additions to the postsecondary polyglossia’s lexicon: MOOC, competency-based curricula, ROI, value-added assessment measures, financial affidavit of support, and digital badging. In what everyday context will immigrants, refugees, and migrants encounter these terms, interpret their meanings, and gain access to a postsecondary education? To be clear, the postsecondary polyglossia is not simply jargon: jargon is a set of terms or utterances unique to a group which are difficult for non-group members to understand. The postsecondary polyglossia is a set of registers with its own evolutionary lexicon, and educational researchers throughout the K-20 spectrum must channel their inner linguist and explore ways in which this language can be shared, taught, and reproduced across marginalized populations. For Bourdieu (1977), cultural reproduction only builds walls between marginalized populations and their privileged counterparts: conceptual schemes of language build bridges to better futures for all wanting to learn.

Considering the current U.S. president's many executive orders and anti-immigrant, anti-refugee, anti-migrant, and anti-foreign legislation, there is nothing restricting the free exchange of ideas and learning of new languages. A learned language cannot be stripped away, deported, or imprisoned. Information is free. For these reasons, 21st century U.S. higher education must recognize the oppressive nature of its own language move toward linguistic justice in the face of an unjust society.

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